



## Quick Tips for Providers: *Educating Families about Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*

ADHD is a brain-based disorder that impacts executive functions. Executive functions are like the coach of a team – they are our ability to plan ahead, organize, manage thoughts and actions, and helps us regulate our emotions and behaviors. There are three types of ADHD: inattentive, hyperactive/impulsive, and combined.

- ***Inattentive type:*** children with this kind of ADHD have difficulty concentrating/focusing, particularly on things they are not interested in. They may also get distracted easily, have difficulty following directions, make careless mistakes, forget or lose things, have trouble organizing their belongings and thoughts, and have a hard time sticking with challenging tasks.
- ***Hyperactive/Impulsive type:*** children with this kind of ADHD have a hard time sitting still, are fidgety, may talk too much or interrupt often, have trouble waiting their turn, and act without thinking or without thinking through short- and long-term consequences of their actions.
- ***Combined type:*** children with this kind of ADHD experience both inattentive and hyperactivity/impulsivity symptoms.

ADHD symptoms often change overtime. Young children show more hyperactive behaviors (e.g., trouble sitting still, interrupting often) which tend to decrease over time. However, impulsive behaviors (e.g., acting without thinking) and difficulties with attention are likely to continue as children get older.

Regardless of type, youth with ADHD often struggle in school, with peers, and at home. Without help, symptoms can last into adulthood leading to trouble in relationships, with work, at home, and with self-care tasks. People with ADHD are also more likely to have anxiety, depression, and to abuse substances (e.g., alcohol and/or drugs).

### **What to do if your child is experiencing ADHD symptoms:**

There are several treatments available to help with ADHD:

- ***Behavioral Parent Training:*** Parents learn skills to improve the parent-child relationship and reduce problematic behaviors by changing the environment to best support or compensate for the child's symptoms. This includes helping to create a more structured environment (e.g., routines), giving clear instructions, giving praise and positive reinforcement for desired behaviors, and setting limits on misbehavior. This type of training is used to prevent and treat child behavior problems.
- ***Medication:*** Medications, such as stimulants, are the gold-standard medication option for youth ADHD.
- ***Combination of behavioral therapy and medication:*** For many youth, the combination of therapy and medication has been shown to be the most helpful with improving ADHD symptoms.
- ***Collaborate with your child's school:*** Many kids with ADHD benefit from having in-school accommodations through a 504 plan or Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This may include strategies to reduce distractions in the classroom and support with executive functions (e.g., planning and completing assignments).