

Communication Tips for Families Navigating Systems

Sometimes, **the way you phrase a question can change the response.**

Here are some examples:

1. “Can he get more CLS hours?” Answer is, “Yes, or “No.”
“Can you help me understand what determines the number of CLS hours he gets?” leads to an open-ended answer.
2. “Isn’t he eligible for supported employment services?” Answer is, “Yes, or “No.”
“I’m not sure why he isn’t receiving supported employment services. Can you explain that to me, so I understand?” leads to an open-ended answer.
3. The following scenario is an example of asking questions that lead to deeper understanding:
You: “I see he’s not attending a group with his DBT therapy.”
Case manager: “You’re right; he isn’t.”
You: “If DBT is designed for both individual and group settings, how is that an acceptable standard of care? How is it possible for him to receive the full benefits?”

When the public mental health systems say, “We don’t handle that,” **pivot and think about what agency/agencies can handle it.**

Here are some examples:

- Employment:
 - [Vocational Rehab](#)
 - [Center for Independent Living](#)
 - Local School District / Educational Services Agency
 - [State Employment Agency](#)
- Housing:
 - [Housing and Urban Development](#)
 - [Rural Development](#)

- [Subsidized Housing Properties](#)
- [Area Agency on Aging](#)
- [Community Action Agency](#)
- Community recreation:
 - [Local ARC Chapter](#)
 - [Disability Support Services Agency](#)
 - Local Churches
 - [Adaptive Sports League](#)

When you call any agency and they can't help, always ask, "Could you give me the name of someone who could?" Then, call that place and say, "Hi _____. I got your name from _____ at _____, and she thought you might be able to help me with _____." Repeat as often as necessary.

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