A GUIDE FROM THE PRACTICE OF SHARIFUL A. SYED, MD

Five doctors, five diagnoses: who to listen to

Many families see a pediatrician, a psychologist, a social worker, a therapist and the school team, and come home with a different label from each. Autism, ADHD, anxiety, OCD and tics often show up together, so more than one answer can be partly right. Dr. Syed's advice: don't try to pick a winner. Ask three questions instead.

If anyone may be in danger, call 911. For the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, call or text 988.

Ask three questions about each person

- Who here is a medical doctor?
- Who has focused clinical training in this area?
- Who has spent the most time listening to my child, and talking with us?
- Whoever comes out on top on all three, follow that lead for now. In his words: "Even if it's not correct, I would follow that lead." You can still ask questions as you go.

Put it all in one place

- One folder for every report, school evaluation and doctor's note, newest first.
- One page in your own words: what you see at home, what the school sees, what you've tried, what helped and what didn't.
- When each thing started. What came first is often a clue.
- Ask each office for its written report, not just what they told you in the room.

Get more than one point of view

- Ask a teacher to write down what they see in class, in their words.
- Ask the other parent, a grandparent or a coach: where does your child do well, and where do they struggle?
- Ask your child. If they tell you about something you don't see, believe that it's real for them, then look for more information.

Bring it to one conversation

- Take the folder and your one page to a doctor who will look at everything together.
- Ask: which of these explains most of what we see? What should we work on first? What would change your mind?

When to call a doctor

- The diagnoses keep changing and nothing is getting better.
- School, sleep or friendships are getting worse while you wait.
- You've been told different things and don't know what to do next.
- Your child talks about feeling hopeless or not wanting to be here: call or text 988 now.

Talk with Dr. Syed for 30 minutes, free, by video or phone: **(516) 522-0410** or sharifulsyedmd.com/autism.

General education for families, not medical or legal advice and not a diagnosis. Every child is different; talk with your child's doctor about yours.