



Guidelines for Professionals

*Questions to ask yourself, reflect on, and obtain answers to,
concerning your client's medication use:*

About the Client

- What are the client's symptoms or observed behaviors of concern and who has observed them?
- Has the client experienced any recent or chronic life events or stressors that may contribute to the problems?
- Could any of the client's problems be caused by a current medication?
- Does the client's psychiatric diagnosis truly reflect the client's problems? Is the diagnosis useful to plan for interventions with this client?
- What interventions have been tried to address client's problems? By whom, and with what results?
- Are alternative interventions available to address client's problems? Why have they not yet been tried?
- Why is medication being prescribed for this client? What other medication has been prescribed currently or in the past?
- How long before we see improvements? How will the improvements be measured?
- How long will the patient be on the medication? How will a decision to stop be made?
- If client is a minor, is the medication designed to benefit the child, or the child's caregivers?

About the Medication

- Why is this particular medication prescribed for this client?
- How long has it been on the market? Is it FDA-approved for use in children? Are there any FDA "black box" warnings about this medication?
- What is known about the helpfulness of this medication with other children with similar conditions?
- Have any studies about this drug been evaluated by the professionals working with this child? Is there scientific support for this medication's helpfulness with other children with similar conditions?
- How much scientific evidence exists to support the safety and efficacy of this drug with children, whether used alone or in combination with other psychotropic medications?
- What is the recommended dosage? How often will the medication be taken? Who will administer it?
- Has this medication been shown to induce tolerance and/or dependence? What withdrawal effects may be expected when it is discontinued?
- Do any laboratory tests need to be done before, during after use of this medication?

- Are there other medications or foods the child should avoid while on this medication?
- What are the potential positive and adverse effects of this medication?
- How long will the effects of the medication be monitored? By whom, how, and how often? Where will the effects be documented? What should be done if a problem develops?
- How will the use of medication impact other interventions being provided?
- How much does this medication cost? Who is paying for it? Are there cheaper, safer, generic versions of this medication?

About the Prescriber

- What is the experience of the physician prescribing the medication?
- Would you consider the physician's prescribing habits cautious and conservative?
- Does this physician have any financial relationships with pharmaceutical companies? Have these been disclosed to patients?
- Have all the risks and benefits of this medication and those of alternative interventions, been evaluated and discussed by the physician with the client or the client's family?
- Is there an adequate monitoring schedule and follow-up in place?
- Do I or my client/client's family have the opportunity to speak regularly with the physician and other healthcare providers about the medication's effects? Should my feedback be expressed in writing?

About the Therapist's Role

- Has a comprehensive assessment (e.g., biopsychosocial, holistic, integral) been conducted? Does it offer plausible reasons for the client's problems?
- Are there other explanations for the client's behavior?
- Am I familiar with all the risks and benefits of this medication, as well as those of alternative interventions? Have I discussed them with the client/client's family?
- Do I know how the client/client's family feel about the use of medication?
- What is my role and has it been clearly delineated with all other providers?
- Has the client/client's family been provided with all the information necessary to provide informed consent? Do they understand their choices?
- Do I feel confident that I can recognize the effects, adverse or otherwise, of this medication on my client? How should I record my observations?
- Will I be able to educate my client about these effects so he/she can raise concerns with the prescribing physician?
- What alternative services/interventions does this family need or want?
- Can I provide these or help them obtain access?

Source: "CriticalThinkRx" A Critical Curriculum on Psychotropic Medication. www.CriticalThinkRx.org

For more information contact: The Mental Health & Recovery Board of Ashland County (419) 281-3139