

Asking for Help Early Is a Sign of Strength

Many parents wait to ask for help because they fear being judged, overreacting, or admitting failure. Early help-seeking is not a confession that the family cannot cope. It is a practical step to understand a problem while more options are still available. Start with what you can observe. Write down the behavior, how often it happens, how long it lasts, and where it occurs. Replace labels such as “lazy” or “out of control” with specific facts: “She has cried before school four mornings this week.” Choose the first person based on the concern. A teacher can describe school patterns. A school counselor may know available supports. A pediatrician can consider emotional and physical health together. A mental health professional can evaluate concerns and recommend treatment when needed. Ask for help with a clear sentence: “I am concerned about a pattern I am seeing, and I would like help deciding what to do next.” You do not need to know the diagnosis or the perfect solution before making contact. Bring notes and questions. Ask what the other adult has observed, what support is available, what the first step will be, and when progress will be reviewed. If an appointment or referral takes time, continue documenting changes and follow up. Getting help early can reduce problems at home, at school, and with friendships.¹ NIMH recommends seeking help when emotions or behavior last for weeks, distress the family, or interfere with daily functioning.² Pediatricians and schools can help families locate additional support.³

Did You Know?

- ✓ The CDC says getting help early can reduce problems at home, at school, and in forming friendships.¹
- ✓ NIMH advises parents to begin by talking with people who regularly see the child, such as a teacher, and then share observations with a health care provider.²
- ✓ The American Academy of Pediatrics explains that pediatricians, schools, relatives, and community resources can all be part of a child’s support system.³

Research Sources

¹. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. “Treating Children’s Mental Health with Therapy.” May 12, 2026.

². National Institute of Mental Health. “Children and Mental Health: Is This Just a Stage?”

³. American Academy of Pediatrics. “Finding Mental Health Care for Your Child.” HealthyChildren.org. Updated May 20, 2025.

Ten-Minute Early Support Request Plan

Use this page to prepare one clear request for help. The goal is to describe the concern accurately and identify the best first contact.

Child's name: _____

Date: _____

Main concern: _____

Person to contact:

1. Describe What You See - About 2 Minutes

Write observable facts instead of labels or conclusions.

What happened: _____

How often or how long: _____

2. Identify the Impact - About 2 Minutes

Note how the concern affects home, school, friendships, sleep, or daily routines.

The concern is affecting: _____

3. Choose the First Contact - About 1 Minute

Select the person most likely to have useful information or access to support.

☐ Teacher ☐ Counselor ☐ Pediatrician ☐ Other: _____

4. Prepare Your Request - About 3 Minutes

Use one direct sentence and one question.

My opening: "I am concerned about _____."

My question: _____

5. Set the Follow-Up - About 2 Minutes

Record the next action and when you will follow up if you do not hear back.

Next action: _____