

## EMS and Children with Special Health Care Needs: The TEAM Approach

The medically fragile child is one who depends on some form of technology assistance. This can be anything from a nasal cannula to a child who requires total ventilatory support. While such a child may not meet one's definition of "normal", he/she is loved and valued by parents and family. Even through the days are filled with uncertainties and the ride on the emotional roller coaster is unending, we count every day as a gift to enjoy the blessing of these special children.

Caring for a medically fragile child requires a full **TEAM** = **T**rust **E**very **A**vailable **M**ember. Do not be concerned about removing the family from the crisis situation but *inform* them about what you are doing and *include* them in your plan of care. In most cases, the parents and/or home care providers can be of great assistance to the EMS providers. It is vitally important that their knowledge and experience is utilized when treating the child. Parents/caregivers can supply valuable and time saving information. When given direction, they can provide an often needed extra pair of hands (e.g. hold the IV bag, bag ventilate, etc.). Most importantly, they can console, comfort and calm their child.

If at all possible, arrange to meet with families of medically fragile children before an emergency arises. This will allow you to become familiar with the child's needs, baseline condition and the parents' capabilities to provide care prior to your arrival. You will know what to expect and will feel more prepared and confident to treat the child in a crisis situation. This will enhance the TEAM approach.

This **TEAM** approach produces an outcome that will always be positive for everyone – the EMS providers, the parents and most importantly the child.

Thank you for the privilege of being a part of the EMSC team by serving as the parent advocate for the state of Ohio.

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