

Telephone Tips

1. You may be a little nervous about your first few calls. Don't worry, it will become more familiar with practice. Remember your training and what helped you in the past.
2. When you make your call, try to set aside enough time so that the new family member doesn't feel rushed. Turn off your call waiting by hitting *70. Try to minimize distractions.
3. After introducing yourself and saying that you're calling from the Kawasaki Disease Foundations Bridges program, ask the new family member if it's a good time for them to talk. If it isn't, ask them when you can call back.
4. No family is contacted unless they have initiated the request in writing. They will have received a welcoming packet with information on what they can expect before you are given the referral. However, your name will be new to them and it's fine to remind them how this request came to you.
5. The new family member's story can stir up emotional memories for you. Be prepared for this. It's okay to be moved by a family's story, but try to keep your responses in perspective. Take advantage of connecting with other support volunteers and the program coordinator to find support for you.
6. It is NOT the responsibility of the support volunteer to solve the problems of the new family. It's perfectly appropriate to say I don't know in answer to some questions. It's impossible for us to have all the answers. A lot of parenting a child with special health care concerns involves figuring out the right system for one's own family. It's your role to listen with empathy and provide a safe, supportive environment for people to express themselves. Relate your own experiences when it's appropriate but don't be lengthy. This is their time to talk. Use your experiences to cue them, to validate their experience, to offer new ways of looking at situations. When using yourself as an example, qualify it by saying, "This approach worked for me." It may not be the best one for your family, but it may be an option to think about.
7. Be aware that some families may have other problems in their lives. Serious marital difficulties, problems with substance or alcohol abuse, etc., require the help of a trained professional. If people express these kinds of concerns to you, suggest that they contact the KDF Bridges (Tami Barrett). Don't forget that the resources and expertise of the Foundation are behind you to support you.
8. If the new family member asks you a direct question regarding physician referral, the best treatment for a certain situation or any question you feel uncomfortable with, feel free to say I don't know or The Foundation won't let me recommend specific providers. Here are some guidelines I use when choosing a doctor, therapist, etc. for my child.