

## **USING MEDICATIONS**

Medications may be prescribed for young children when mental, behavioral or emotional symptoms are so severe and persistent that they would have serious negative consequences for the child if left untreated and psychosocial interventions alone are not effective. Although psychotropic medications affect children differently than adults, medications may be prescribed because the benefits outweigh the risks. Parents will want to ask questions and evaluate with the doctor the benefits and the risks of starting and continuing with medications. Parents need to learn everything they can about the medications and side effects, including which side effects are tolerable and which ones are threatening.

Whether or not medications are prescribed, parents need to learn about, understand and support the goals of a particular treatment (i.e., change in specific behaviors) and be prepared to follow-up consistently and report observations.

There are several major categories of psychotropic medications: stimulants, antidepressants, anti-anxiety agents, anti-psychotics, and mood stabilizers. Dosages for medications approved by the FDA for children depend on body weight and age. For more information, check the National Institute of Mental Health home page: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov>