

1 Please address your letter, Dear Parent of a child (with, diagnosed with, suffering from, born with) type of illness or case. This standard format was selected so that parents of children with cases similar to yours, can find and read your letter more easily.

2 Take a little time to provide other parents with the most important details surrounding your child's case. In addition to information you might include about how your child was diagnosed; how or why you selected Children's National for their care; and some specific information about their course of treatment. It's helpful to include any personal details you feel are relevant. These details might help parents going through similar circumstances feel less alone, knowing that others have faced the same things before. That can be as helpful as anything else in your letter.

3 Consider including some of the conclusions you drew... the most important things you learned that were helpful to you during your child's time at Children's National Medical Center. You know a lot more than you did at the start of your child's treatment. That's information other parents might like to have right now.

4 Offer some advice based on your experience. That experience is very valuable. Don't spare the details. Don't be shy. Put it out there. What should other parents be sure to do?

5 If you think you made the right choice in choosing Children's National for your child's care, you might choose to tell parents right here. We don't wish to put words in anyone's mouth. In fact, there's no obligation to include information like this at all. But if you think you made the right choice for your child, that information might help a parent too.

6 Parents are signing their letters with their first names and the name of the child who was treated. Doing so makes the letter feel personal, but allows you to retain some privacy.

1 Dear parent of a child born with a heart not fully developed,

2 Just a few days after his birth in June of 2004, our doctor told us our son Max needed to see a heart specialist. We chose the Children's National Medical Center after looking at 2 alternatives. He was diagnosed with something called Hypoplastic Left Heart Syndrome, where the chambers of the left side of the heart are under-developed and the valves don't work right. We hope telling you about this experience will help right now.

3 We're convinced that without the brilliance of Max's pediatric heart surgeon, the experience of his anesthesiologist and the complete dedication of the rest of his team in the cardiac critical care unit, (the only one of those within about 200 miles) he might not be riding his big boy bike like a madman.

4 You're going to be talking to cardiac specialists. Please make sure you work with ones who exclusively with children. Their heart issues are very different and kids don't react to anesthesia like adults. That's very important.

5 You're probably going through hell. We just want you to know that, looking back on our experience, we're completely positive there is no way we could have taken Max anyplace better for him than the nation's children's hospital.

6 Sincerely,
Max's parents
Stan and Lisa



The nation's children deserve nothing less.