



Series #3: Caregiver Support

Tips for Tots



Tip #3:

Talking with Families about their Child's Behavior

Strategies

Did you know?

Caregivers are in a unique position to observe children and provide valuable information to families about early childhood social and emotional development. Caregivers and families both want what is best for the child. Providing daily feedback to families about their child's successes and challenges is the beginning of developing a positive and open relationship between school and home. None of us likes to deliver difficult news. Observed patterns of concerning behavior, marked changes in behavior or activity level, and social, emotional, cognitive, or physical delays need to be addressed with the family. And if the child's behavior endangers himself or others, it is important to speak to the family immediately so you can develop a plan together that addresses safety. This may include providing outside referrals for added support. Initiating the discussion with families shows you care and know their child well. Sharing concerns is an important step toward early intervention. Some families may seem resistant or defensive. Consider what obstacles might be in the way of their ability to "hear the message." Remember that the end goal is to support the child's overall development in the best way possible and maintain open supportive communication.

- Daily communication will build connections with families. Share with families what their child learned in class, their strengths and any challenges that you are working on with them. Provide a few specific examples.
- Check in with families about how their child's night/morning was. Learn of any major changes the child is going through at home, such as a new sibling, moving to a new home, etc.
- Seek to understand more about families' culture and consider this when developing strategies or when communicating with the family.
- When you have concerns you need to share with a family, find out the best time to talk. Ex. "It is important for us to understand how to best support ____ there are some things I would like to discuss with you." "When do you have time to meet?"
- Choose a time when all parties can sit privately and speak in a relaxed atmosphere. Avoid the rush of drop off or pick up.
- Families feel strengthened and supported with knowledge. When presenting information help families understand the connection between development, relationships and learning. Introduce the positive goal that you are working on with the child. For example: "We are working to help ____ use words to express his anger rather than hitting."
- Share with families strategies that you have tried and ask what strategies they have tried.
- Provide documentation to families in the form of factual observations, resources and/or referrals.
- Provide time for questions and answers. Follow-up with a call to the family to answer any additional questions.
- You are the expert in childcare and child development. Families are the experts on their child. A relationship with the family will grow when there is trust and mutual respect. Caregivers and families are a team working in partnership for the best interests of the child.

Resources:

www.ncc.org; www.babycenter.org
www.inclusivechildcare.org
<http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly>

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