

Tip Sheets

Sharing Developmental Concerns with Families



If you are routinely observing and recording development on all children in your program, you may find at times that a child has red flags in their developmental progress and it is time to talk to his/her parents about your concerns. This is often the most challenging conversation that early childhood providers anticipate having with families.

The strategies can help the provider set up the appropriate situation for this important dialogue.

Observation and Documentation

In addition to your observation forms, make some objective notes about the challenges you believe the child is having. Be as specific as possible.

Preparing for a Conversation

Request a time to talk to the family, preferably when you will both have plenty of time to spend talking and will not feel rushed. This should not take place at drop-off or pick-up time unless the parent has time to stay longer and you have staff who can attend to the children while you go to a conference room.

Choose a location for your conversation that is as private and comfortable as possible. Spend a few moments before the conversation to gather your thoughts and calm your nerves. Remember what you are doing is important for the child's welfare.

Think about any cultural differences that may exist, and take those differences into consideration before the conversation.

- What do you need to ask the family about their culture and the child's developmental needs?
- Are these cultural differences impacting the child's development?
- Are there cultural issues around which parent should be at the conference with you?

Gather contact information for assessment resources in your community. Providing a phone number and even the name of the person the family should talk to will make it even easier for them to follow-through with a difficult call.

Expressing Your Concerns

Present your documentation with specific, nonjudgmental examples of what you have observed and recorded.

Be respectful at all times, and give parents plenty of time to ask questions. It is difficult to hear their child may have a developmental concern. Understand their questions and comments in the context of fear and anxiety. Assure the family that the discussion you are having will remain confidential. A family may have fears that if information gets out about their child, they will be treated differently/expelled from the program.

For more information, visit www.inclusivechildcare.org.

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