

Preschool Field Officer Service

Integrated Child, Youth and Family Services



COMMUNICATING YOUR CONCERNS TO FAMILIES

Communicating with parents can be difficult at times, even for the most experienced Early Childhood Educators. The way you communicate can either encourage partnerships or get parents offside. A partnership works best when messages are clear, specific and considerate of the other person's feelings. Always talk to parents with the goal of strengthening relationships.

Approaching Parents

- Asking a parent to talk with you, for the purpose of discussing how you can both SUPPORT the child, is best. Try to avoid saying you want to meet to discuss your concerns. This helps set the tone for the meeting.
- It is really important to catch the parent as they are not rushing and to say what you want to say in a calm (not rushed and relaxed tone) kind of way.
- Remember: *positive – need – positive*
 1. Start by providing some positive feedback about the child to the family
 2. Discuss the child's needs in a sensitive manner
 3. Finish on another positive

E.g.: "I have prepared some notes on Grace's participation in the program. She is doing really well at remembering and following the routine. (Pause) I am noticing she is finding it difficult to interact with her peers. She is mostly preferring to play alone at kindergarten. Could we meet together so we can work out how we can best support Grace? (Pause) When can we meet?"

Organising the Parent meeting

- Offer to meet and discuss concerns at a time that suits the family.
- Consider who will attend – provide the opportunity for both parents / grandparent to attend and arrange an interpreter if necessary.
- Be prepared – have notes/observations prepared to refer to. Base these notes on the child's strengths as well as areas to work on. Have a section to note actions as a result of the meeting. This is important!
- Consider appropriate setting for meeting and seating; ensure the attendants feel at ease.

During the Parent meeting

- Have your notes put away in a folder/diary or similar so that you can listen well to the parents without focusing first on what you want to say. The parents should talk first about their child. Listening well to the parents allows you to hear where they are at with their understanding of their child's learning and development and can give you a place to begin, depending on what the parent says e.g. Yes, we've noticed that Ashaz can have trouble talking with his peers at kinder too. I know what you mean... and so on.
- Remember to let parents know at every opportunity that they know their child best. You are after their input to understand the situation better.
- Remind the parents that the purpose of the meeting is to share information with each other, and to work out how to support the child.
- State the factual information you have observed at kindergarten.
- Ask questions as to how this information compares to the child when at home / in other social settings.
- Relate this to child development information.

Further information:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/working-with-parents/communicating-with-parents/communication-with-parents>

The PSFO service is able to be accessed (phone or email) if any Educator requires further advice or support with this. A Request for Support form does not need to be submitted for you to receive this support.