



Preschool Field Officer Service

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 often either encourage partnerships or fracture relationships. 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.
- Speak in a calm tone and choose an appropriate moment to raise the idea of a parent meeting (eg – rushing out the door late for work is not an ideal time)
- 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) However I am noticing she is finding it difficult to interact with her peers. She is 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; be as flexible as possible.
- 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 your notes on the child's strengths as well as areas to work on. Have a notepad on hand to add any actions that may be discussed.
- Consider appropriate setting and seating for the meeting; ensure the attendants feel at ease.

During the Parent meeting

- Initially have your notes away in a folder/diary 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.
- 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.
- Make suggestions and ask for parent input on how to support child. Eg: offer to record goals and strategies onto an ILP (individualised Learning Plan), suggest a PSFO Request for Support, suggest providing a list to the parents of local Paediatricians or Therapists.

Further information:

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

<https://www.understood.org/articles/en/having-difficult-conversations-with-families-a-teachers-guide>