

Tip Sheets

Relationships with Families



Relationships don't just occur on their own, they have to be fostered and developed.

Caregivers have to actively work to grow relationships with families and ultimately become an intermediary between the children in their care and their families.

Communication Strategies

Create written policies and standards to set expectations and share them with families in a handbook before enrollment.

Policies and standards should include:

- How frequently communication should occur.
- Which communications will be held on an individual level.
- Which communications will be held as a group or program.

Forms of effective formal communication

- Written notes to help parents stay informed about the goings-on at the school
- Telephone/web conference calls to share sensitive information
- Parent teacher conferences (held regularly)
- Family engagement nights to get families together and involved
- Home visits (if applicable)

Forms of effective informal communications

- Personal notes for highlighting a child's efforts
- Face-to-face interactions
- Private social media messages (use cautiously)

Informal communication is often not held to the same standards. These forms of communication allow for more relational communication that can extend outside work duties.

Perspective Taking

Everyone has their own perspective regarding life. Our personal perspective shapes how we view our lives and the choices we make so it makes sense to us, but can be very different from another the perspective of others.

As caregivers trying to relate with families, it can be useful to look at a situation from another point of view. The American Association of Psychology refers to this practice as *perspective taking*. This involves temporarily taking the perspective of another person as your own.

Psychology Today states that there are three benefits and several aspects of perspective taking.

Benefits of perspective taking

- Added dimension
- Building empathy
- Learning and growth

Important aspects of perspective taking

Everyone in a relationship will have a unique perspective, and people can have different perspectives at different times. Each person's perspective selects and organizes what the person attends to and experiences. This means:

- If you only look at a situation from your own perspective, you will only see one side of a

situation and will be less adept at understanding the other person's experience.

- Perspective taking allows us to see something from another's point of view. This in turn can help you change someone else's perspective, what drives them, and how they view new life experiences or events.
- Perspectives are not set in stone and can change with new or different experiences.

Perspective Taking and Messaging

Your child has successes that we can share.

Successful communication comes from sharing positive messages. This can build trust over time and will create a happy, child-care environment.

When you share a child's success with parents, it can create an atmosphere of trust and partnership between you and the parents, making them more likely to work with you if any problems arise.

Your child is heard in my classroom/program and has "lightbulb" moments you should know about.

It is important to acknowledge "lightbulb" moments that happen in a child's academic life. Parents appreciate nothing more than a teacher or care provider taking the time to share their child's development with them. This can also be encouraging to families to foster learning moments with their children outside of the classroom.

I'll work with you. Here's how.

Educators and care providers have years of experience fostering the growth of children, but parents are often new to the relationship a provider and their child. Providing clarity for about why you have specific recommendations can empower parents to make informed decisions. This also helps parents engage with their children and makes them aware of the value and impact their support can have on their children.

Additional Resources

NAEYC | Education for a Civil Society (book)

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/books/education-civil-society>

Psychology Today | The Importance of Taking the Perspective of Others

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/constructive-controversy/201906/the-importance-taking-the-perspective-others>

Psychology Today | The Power of Perspective Taking

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-power-personal-narrative/201906/the-power-perspective-taking>

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