



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

CENTER ON THE FAMILY ★ UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII

Vol. I, No. 1

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

1. Build trusting relationships
2. Provide consistent care
3. Support children's health
4. Provide a safe environment
5. Provide positive guidance
6. Provide a language-rich environment
7. Foster curiosity and development through play
8. Individualize care and learning activities
9. Partner with parents
10. Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Build Trusting Relationships

Building Trust with Parents of Children with Special Needs

Part of your job as a child care provider is to regularly share about children's development and learning with parents. In order to have a good basis for open communication, it is important to develop a relationship of trust with the parents of the children, and work to communicate about the positive things the children are doing each day in your program. A fair amount of trust was established from the beginning when you presented your policies clearly and encouraged parents to visit any time. This trusting relationship will be an important foundation in the event that you start to observe a child having developmental or learning challenges.

Sharing a concern about a child's development with a parent is never easy, but it is needed to ensure that the child receives all the support he/she needs. That's why it's important for you to establish a relationship of trust with parents prior to having this kind of sensitive conversation.

The following pages provide some specific suggestions for talking to parents regarding your concerns about their child's development. These recommendations for discussing your concerns in a respectful way come from the Extension Alliance for Better Child Care—a research-based consortium of American land grant universities that specializes in child and family issues. For the complete article and other related articles, see the Citations on page 4 of this newsletter.



August 2014

Your Important Role

Children develop very quickly. If a child has a special need that affects his development, it is best **not** to take a “wait and see” approach. Getting professional help early for children can make a tremendous difference in their quality of life, their learning, and their later development.



- **Be prepared for strong emotions.** Parents often sense there may be a problem but have been afraid to talk about it. Often they may not know how to put their concerns into words. Parents also may be worried that if their child does have a special need, you will no longer want to provide child care for them.
- **Be caring, supportive, and respectful.** Some parents may be relieved to visit with you, but others may be defensive or scared. Showing warmth and respect will help parents trust and listen to what you have to share.
- **Begin by saying something positive about the child.** You might point out several things you really like about the child — his curiosity or love of puzzles. Or you might mention something positive the child did recently such as helping a friend. Say something positive about the child’s relationship with the parent. When things go wrong, parents sometimes tend to blame themselves. Pointing out the positives helps reassure them that they are good parents.

Specific Tips for Communicating Concerns with Parents

- **Choose a time and place where you can talk alone.** Share your thoughts in person; this is not a conversation to have on the phone.
- **Make sure both you and the parents have enough time to talk.** This should not be done in a hurry as a parent is rushing out the door to work. You may want to schedule this conversation ahead of time. You might say, *“Fay, I often have regular chats throughout the year with parents about how their children are adjusting to child care, or just general things we need to touch base on. It’s time to schedule a chat with you. I wonder if you would have time this week to drop by in the afternoon?”*



- **Ask if parents have concerns or questions about how the child seems to be developing.** Quietly and respectfully ask the parents to share what they have noticed. Who, what, when, where, how questions will help you gather more information and help parents focus on the issue. You might say, *“I wonder if you have had any concerns about Jason being able to follow through on your instructions?”* You might also say, *“How long has this been happening? When does this seem to happen? What happens next? Has anyone else noticed this? Where does this seem to happen most?”*
- **Share your own observations and concerns.** Do this only after the parents have had a chance to talk. Share information on typical developmental milestones or other developmental checklists so parents will have something to look at. If it makes you feel more comfortable, practice what you will say beforehand.
- **Choose your words carefully and don’t use labels.** Remember you are not trying to present yourself as an expert. It is not your job to identify the specific disability. Keep it simple. Use words that describe only what you have seen. Rather than saying, “I think Sara might be deaf,” instead you might say, “I noticed the other day a gust of wind blew the door shut. It made a loud bang and scared all of us, but Sara didn’t even flinch.”
- **Keep your eye on the goal.** Your goal is to encourage the parents to get a professional evaluation for their child so that any concerns can be checked out. You might say, “It never hurts to check things out. Think about how relieved you will be to find out for sure. And if it does turn out that there is a problem, getting help now will make a big difference.”
- **Stress the importance of checking things out right away.** Parents often feel doubtful, confused, and scared. Reassure parents of your support and remind them that if there is a problem, getting help early can keep things from getting worse.



- **Be ready to offer information and resources.** Be prepared to guide the parents through the next steps to get an evaluation, developmental screening, or help for the child. The first step is usually to have the child’s doctor assess the situation. Share contact information about Early Intervention. For children younger than three years, parents can call the **Department of Health Early Intervention Section Hawaii Keiki Information Service System (H-KISS) information and referral line at 808-594-0066 for Oahu or 1-800-235-5477 for Neighbor Islands.** Children age three and older are served by the child’s local elementary school.
- **Continue your support.** If parents find out that their child has a disability, they may be in shock. Many parents go through a period of grieving, and experience a range of emotions. It is possible they may even consider removing the child from your care because they don’t want to face the issue. If this happens, continue to be understanding, listen, and offer help. Sharing your concerns respectfully with parents shows that you really care about their child.

Citations:

Extension Alliance for Better Child Care.
[Retrieved on-line 6/16/14] <http://www.extension.org/pages/25362/extension-alliance-for-better-child-care-community-of-practice-description#.U59v14ZBnlb>

Tips for Child Care Providers to Communicate with Parents Concerns about Children's Development [Retrieved on-line 6/16/14]
<http://www.extension.org/pages/28228/tips-for-child-care-providers-to-communicate-with-parents-concerns-about-childrens-development#.U59jZoZBnlY>



Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Center on the Family in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate if you would like to receive free technical assistance from PATCH related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

REMINDER: Registered QCC Participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of "increased knowledge." Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

