



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. III, No. 7

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ **Partner with parents**
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Partner with Parents

Balancing Different Perspectives

One area that addresses quality child care is partnering with the families of the children in your care. According to the National Association for Family Child Care, "good quality relations with the children and their families form the foundation of support needed for great experiences." However, Hawaii providers have shared that they find it challenging at times working with the children's parents.

Some contributing factors to this challenge are conflicting belief systems families and providers have formed through the culture, socio-economic status, family structure, etc. in which they each were raised. Family's stress, or your own stress, can also be the reason that providers and family members don't really "hear" and understand one another.

In order for children to thrive in their child care settings, it is important to have good trusting relationships between their parents and their providers. Good communication skills are the key to success. Plan for, and be intentional, with the way you speak with parents and other family members, especially when addressing issues that generate strong emotional feelings on either side of the conversation.

This newsletter will focus on communicating with parents and family members, and offer suggestions for engaging in challenging conversations. These ideas come from the various articles listed in our citations on Page 4. Your package also includes a reprint from Penn State Better Kid Care: Facing Sensitive Topics.



A Strong Start: Clear Policies and the Parent Handbook

To ensure that there aren't any misunderstandings with families, go over your written policies with them at the time of enrollment. Check that they understand and agree with your policies. If they have concerns about a particular policy, talk about it, emphasizing why a certain policy is in place. If they disagree with the policy, your program may not be a good fit for this child and enrollment is not recommended.

You should always enforce your policies in a consistent and respectful way. There may be times when issues will arise that are not directly addressed in your policies. This is when your communication skills will be most important. The following are steps that you can take to improve communication with parents.



7 Keys to Good Communication with Parents

- **Be interested**—each family has a unique life. Are you curious about their experiences and perspectives?
- **Be humble**—you may know a lot about children but the parents know more about their own child. Be willing to collaborate with them for the benefit of their child.
- **Be respectful**—believe that parents want what's best for their children. Acknowledging parents as their child's first teacher develops trust and opens the door for agreements.
- **Be inviting**—ask questions that show you are interested in their perspectives and are listening.
- **Be a good listener**—use your eyes, face, body, and words to show you are interested; allow pauses before jumping in; if you can't provide full attention, set up a phone call or private meeting for later.
- **Be positive**—keep the majority of your messages constructive and encouraging. Share fun stories regularly. These will provide a buffer for those times when you need to raise a concern.
- **Be creative**—use multiple ways to communicate, such as text messages, photos, communication logs, Face-Book pages, or web-sites, as well as in-person. Find out what works best for each of your families.

Setting up a Conference with Parents

Sometimes you will need to have conversations with parents about important children's issues such as behavior, health, toilet training, or development. In addition, you may need to talk about late pick-ups, or non-payment of fees. In these cases, when you may want a more formal discussion with the parents, approach the discussion carefully, thoughtfully, and respectfully. The following excerpts from Purdue Cooperative Extension Service's article *Communicating Sensitively with Parents; General hints for talking to parents about sensitive issues* may be helpful.

- **Schedule the meeting ahead of time**—find a time when you both can focus on the meeting.
- **Tell parents what the topic of the meeting will be**—this gives them a chance to prepare their own thoughts and feelings on the topic without being blind-sided.
- **Choose a place and time where you won't be disturbed** and make them comfortable by asking if they need anything like water or coffee before starting.
- **Think about what you are going to say**—spend some time preparing the words you will use and think about how those words will be received by the parents.
- **Thank the parents for coming**—begin by thanking them for taking the time to meet and communicate and that you hope the conversation will help both of you and the child.



- **Make sure the parents know that the conversation is private**—ensure them that any personal information they share will be kept confidential and explain to them why this information is pertinent. It's their choice if they want to divulge personal information.
- **Encourage parents to talk**—some parents may feel shy or intimidated. Ask them what they think or if they want to share their feelings about this.
- **Be patient**—it may take them time to find the right words.
- **Listen carefully when parents talk**—show them you are interested in what they have to say.
- **Let them finish before you talk**—hear them out before you form opinions.
- **Keep an open mind**—try to understand each other and find ways to work together for the child.
- **Give parents feedback**—restate what parents say in order to give them the opportunity to correct anything you might have misunderstood.
- **Finish the meeting in a positive way and with a plan**—say something positive about the child and/or his parents. Discuss what you can do together to take care of the issue. Plan your next steps.

For more information on the suggestions given here, go to the links in the citations listed on page 4.

Citations:

Copeland, T. (2016). *Tom Copeland's taking care of business/ contracts and policies*. <http://tomcopelandblog.com/handouts>.

eXtension (2017). *Provider-parent relationships: 7 keys to good communication*. <http://articles.extension.org/pages/67875/provider-parent-relationships:-7-keys-to-good-communication>.

National Association for Family Child Care. (2017). www.nafcc.com.

Purdue University, Purdue Extension, Knowledge to Go (April 2004). *Provider-parent partnerships: Talking with providers about problems*. <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/providerparent/PDF%20Links/TalkingwProvaboutProblems.pdf>

Purdue University, Purdue Extension, Knowledge to Go (April 2006-2013). *Provider-parent partnerships: Communicating sensitively with parents*. <https://www.extension.purdue.edu/providerparent/Parent-Provider%20Relationships/CommunicatingSensitively.htm>



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.

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 Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any time that you are submitting more than one reflection sheet at the same time, feel free to enclose them in a single envelope. It will save postage costs for our funder and facilitate efficient data entry when they arrive.



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