

Parent Provider Communication

Sometimes it seems like all we hear from other providers is complaints about the parents. I'm sure that parents hear just as many complaints from their friends about their providers. I feel like most of these complaints could be prevented if parents and providers could just learn to communicate with each other better.

For Providers:

- Contract/Parent Handbook - You need to have a contract and parent handbook that thoroughly explain the policies and procedures for your program. However, your contract and policies are useless if you don't enforce them!
- Parent/Provider Expectations - Make a form stating what you expect from parents and what they can expect from you, or just cover this in your interview. Make sure that you know what parents expect from you and be honest with them about what they can expect from you as well - BEFORE you take their child.
- Daily Reports - For infants it is extremely important to let the parent know each day exactly what their child's day has been like. For older children, you could easily just write one note about what the children did that day and post it by the door for the parents to read.
- Parent Boards - You might use a bulletin board, a dry erase board, a chalk board, or just a poster that has been laminated. You might place a board on the outside of the door that parents enter through and write any important information you might have on there. You might include items such as - menu, holiday/vacation days closed, emergency numbers, daily schedule, monthly newsletter, articles, poems, etc. You might also want to put a clip of some sort for each child on or near the door where you can put their artwork, notes, receipts, etc. for the parents.
- A monthly newsletter is a great way to let parents know all about what their child will be doing and learning, give gentle policy reminders, share articles and information with them, take everything they say or do personally etc.
- Parent questionnaires are a great way to get parents feedback, ideas, suggestions, etc. and help them to feel more involved in the decisions made regarding your program and their child.
- Parent conferences, home visits, and get-togethers with all the children and families are all great ways to communicate with parents.
- Take time to show parents that you appreciate them and always give them the respect that they deserve as the most important person in their child's life.

Understand that parents aren't always perfect and they have bad days too. Try not to take everything they say or do personally.

Parents:

- Both parents should thoroughly READ the provider's parent handbook and contract and make sure that you completely understand and can agree to abide by all of the policies BEFORE you enroll your child in that program. If you have a question, or don't agree with anything at all, now is the time to discuss it with the provider.

- Be honest with the provider, and with yourself, about what all you expect of her. She cannot read your mind and may not be able to provide everything that you want. Make sure that your expectations are made clear from the beginning!

- Complete all forms, questionnaires, etc. as thoroughly and as quickly as possible. Make sure that you inform your provider any time your address, phone number, emergency contact information, etc. changes.

- Show an interest in your child's environment and activities. Read all notes, newsletters, articles, etc. that your provider posts or gives you and respond when necessary.

- Work with your provider and communicate any questions, concerns, feedback, suggestions, etc. that you might have about her program and the care that your child receives.

- Try to participate in any extra activities that you can. Getting to know the other children and families really benefits your child as well as your relationship with your provider.

- Let your provider know that you appreciate her and all that she does for your child. Understand that she's human and will have some bad days. Treat her as your partner and give her the respect she deserves.

The most important thing for both parents and providers to remember is to always be open and honest with each other. Never say that you will do something, unless it's something you can do. If child-rearing beliefs are extremely different, maintaining consistency for the child and a positive relationship between the parent and provider is going to be very difficult.

Be open and honest with each other about your expectations from the beginning and maintain open communication throughout your relationship.