

The Parent Provider Partnership

Communication, Communication, Communication

What's the Standard-?

Communication between caregivers and parents is essential to both the safe and healthy operation of the center and to the parent's ability to assess the care their children are receiving.

Parental notifications:

- You must notify the parent immediately after a child:
 - o Is injured and the injury requires medical help
 - o Has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the child-care center
 - o Has been involved in any situation that placed the child at risk.
 - o Has been involved in any situation that renders the center unsafe
- You must notify the parent of less serious injuries when the parent picks the child up from the child-care center
- You must notify all parents of children in the center in writing and within 48 hours of becoming aware that a child in care or an employee has contracted a communicable disease
- You must provide written notice within 48 hours to the parents of all children in a group when there is an outbreak of lice or other infestation in the group.

Sharing clearly written policies about the Center's day to day operation will help parents understand what type of service their children will receive, and may help to avoid later misunderstandings and complaints. The must provide parents with a copy of your operational policies. Parents must sign a child-care enrollment agreement or other similar document that includes at least the operational policies on or before the date of admission. The Center must notify parents in writing of any changes to your operational policies and enrollment agreement.

The Center must share a copy of Incident/Illness report forms with the child's parent and obtain the parent's signature on the report indicating the parent has reviewed it or received a copy of the report within 48 hours of when the incident occurred. Requiring a parent to sign the report verifies the parent was informed of serious situations, which affect the health or safety of their child.

Posting a written description of the planned program of daily activities helps caregivers and parents have a common understanding about the center's child-care and education practices and allows for monitoring and accountability of these. The Center must post the activity plan for each group of children in the child-care center in a prominent place where parents and others can see it.



Because infants are not able to communicate essential information to their parents, it is important that the caregiver do so. In the child-care centers, several caregivers may care for an infant or there may be a shift change. A report for each parent allows the parent to know how their infant spent the day, so the parent can supplement the infant's activities, meals, and so on at home, based on the child's activities. This is a good way of creating solid communication and healthy relationships with parents, and it enhances the protection and well-being of infants. The center must provide a daily written report to the child's parent when the child is picked up from the child-care center. The report must contain:

- Times the child slept
- Times and amount of food consumed
- Times of diaper changes
- Child's general mood of the day
- A brief summary of the activities in which the child participated.

Although a written report is not required for toddlers, children benefit when caregivers share any significant information with the parents. The center must have a plan for personal contact with parents that provides for an exchange of information regarding observations, comments, and concerns regarding their child.

The Center must have a written discipline and guidance policy that complies with minimum standards. You must provide a copy of your written discipline and guidance policy to parents and employees. You must keep documentation showing that all parents and employees have received a copy of the Center's written discipline and guidance policy.

What the experts say-

Caring for children is hard work for childcare providers and parents alike. Working together as partners can make the task easier. Providers have an opportunity to assist children and family unit as a whole. Being knowledgeable in child development as well as understanding issues that parents and families face, provides an avenue of support for both parents and children.



Pre enrollment discussions with parents help tremendously in understanding each other, but like all good relationships they need continuing attention. Here are some helpful hints when communicating with parents.

- Listen carefully to what parents say about their children
- Figure out what they are asking for and why
- Explain your position
- Don't be defensive
- Look for a common ground
- Learn from each other
- Be open to trying out parent's suggestions
- Put yourself in the parent's shoes
- Smile
- Share good events of the day
- Report any accidents and how they happened. Parents are understanding and realize scrapes and bumps occur.
- Be available and understanding
- Keep personal information shared by parents confidential
- Don't talk about a child's problem in front of the child. Set up a time to call and discuss the issue
- Continue to talk.

Research has shown that children do better when parents and childcare providers are consistent. And the children's well-being is the most important part of childcare. Consistency and connection between the provider and parents are very important. The parents or guardians and the childcare provider should understand each other. They should do similar things with the child and have similar goals. Therefore it's important to have meaningful communication between parents and caregivers. Here are some tips in setting the stage.

- Recognize that effective communication might take more time a first
- Build a trusting, open relationship based upon clear, honest, compassionate communication.
- Let the parents know you care about and enjoy their child. All parents want their child to be liked by others.
- Practice a positive attitude- attitude is contagious
- Ask yourself, "Will this message strengthen the parent partnership?" or "How do I pose my concerns and questions without straining the relationship?"
- Schedule times and a place to talk away from the child.
- Show calmness and willingness to meet a parent's need
- Pay attention to your body language, making sure your posture and movements reflect friendliness.
- Make your program and physical environment "communication friendly" by emphasizing communication at orientation; point out bulletin boards or special posting spots and how they are used; use routine newsletters to share information, and have a "note drop box".
- Find out what method of communication works best for the parent-in person, telephone, e-mail, or journal.
- Make parents feel welcome at any time.

There are two sides to this dynamic partnership. Leaving a child in someone else's care can be hard for parents. They may worry about their child's behavior, whether you and the other children will like their child, and if you can understand and meet their child's needs. Here are some expectations that parents may have of providers.

- Open Door- The parents should feel welcome to visit at any time
- Written statement of policies
- Detailed information about every adult who may work with their child
- An early explanation about any changes in schedule or routine
- Information about important events such as field trips
- Supplies and equipment
- An understanding of child growth and development
- Knowledge of important rules and regulations
- A safe and healthy setting for your child
- A rich learning environment
- Supervision
- Respect and support
- Feedback about the child's day
- Information about the child's development
- Advice on important issues

How it works at Faith Academy

At Faith Academy our motto is Supporting Families in a purposeful life based on Christian Character and Academic Excellence. That starts with the relationships that we have with the families walking through the door on a daily basis.

Communication is Big! Communicating in a variety of formats is a great way to reach to needs of the families in our program. Faith Academy uses- personal one on one, phone, email, website, Facebook, bulletin boards, postal mail, and notes home. Please be aware of what goes out and what is shared in each format to assist in communication with families. There are key things that each family receives on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis:

- Menus
- Calendars
- Newsletters
- Weekly bible lessons
- Director's Desk editions
- Personal Mail to each child.
- Cuddle grams (for those children under the age of 2)
- Pictures
- Monthly Science Summaries

Communicating with Parents

Listen- Let parents know that you are available for them and that you value any opinion or concern they raise.

Listening well is one way of showing you mean it.

Stop what you are doing and look at the parent when they're talk to you.

- Let them know you are listening and interested
- Use active listening skills.

Speak- The way we communicate to parents will either encourage partnerships or get parents offside. A partnership works best when messages are clear, specific and considerate of the other person's feelings. Always talk to a parent with the goal of strengthening your relationship.

- When we are feeling rushed or get caught, we may say things that we later regret. It is okay to pause and think about how you want to respond.
- Use I messages. Talk about how you are feeling about the situation rather than focusing on what you want someone to do.
- Keep your comments to the present. Do not bring up issues from the past.



Raising concerns with parents

- Talk to the Director
- Make an appointment to discuss concerns
- Give the parent accurate information
- Ask if they experience the same kind of opportunities at home.
- Add some knowledge about the nature of the problem.
- When communicating difficult issues, be prepared to offer a range of solutions as well. Ask for the parent's opinion. Brainstorm solutions, and then jointly evaluate the pros and cons of each solution.

Helping the parents of new children:

New experiences are part of growing up. All children experience some change in their lives as they mature. A new setting can be difficult even if it is not the child's first time in childcare. There are some things you can do to help parents, children, and yourself during this stressful time:

- Allow parents to begin new child care situations gradually
- Establish good communication with the parents- Ask the parents if you can do anything to help them. Ask them about their children. Ask what words the child uses to ask for things, likes and dislikes. Think about the child's unique characteristics as you care for them.
- Help the child say good bye and hello- Transition time can be very difficult. Children need to learn to trust the new situation and their parents.
- Help children adjust to a new child care situation- Offer activities to the child. Encourage other children to invite the child to do things. But do not force the child to go with you or the children. Let the child come to you at their own pace. Offer to keep photos of family members and pets to help remind children of familiar people if they feel lonely during the day. Children may slip back to an earlier level of development during their adjustment to childcare. Thumb sucking, wetting pants, and other behaviors may occur. At the end of the day make sure someone is watching the children when you are talking to the parents.
- Talk with the children about what is happening- Everyone in your program will be affect when a new child enters. Introduce the children when the new child visits. Tell the children ahead of time that a new child is coming.
- Share your positive attitude about childcare with the children- Remind yourself what you love about our job. Smile. Let the parents know about the fun activities that are planned for the child's first day.
- Expect a reasonable amount of adjustment time.

Tips to follow when sharing opportunities:

Follow all procedures that are required by your employer and the state that licenses your program.

- Document
- Notify Director
- Notify Parent

Don't leave a note for the parent

- A written note often seems more negative than the writer intended.
- The parent may be confused or upset and have questions regarding what happened.
- If you are not present when the parent arrives, request time to visit via phone or designate the director to speak with parents.

Share something positive

- As we take time to share the positive things about children's behavior on a day to day basis, they many not respond as negatively to the bad news.
- Use the sandwich method. Start with a positive and end with a positive.

Be willing to listen to the parent

- Listen to the parent's concerns and answer any questions they have regarding the issue.
- After you have given the parents a chance to talk, share any solutions you have for the opportunity.

Don't share negative news with staff members not involved in the situation or with parents of other children.

- The news we share with other staff may affect how staff view the child.
- The news may be overheard by parents, the child you are talking about, or other children.
- You should never share information about one child with the parents of other children.