

Open Communication with Families

Relevant Satellite Accreditation Standards

I. Interactions and Relationships

C. The provider strives for effective and open communication with parents.

4. The provider encourages conversations with parents about changes that may affect the child or the care of the child.

G. The provider gives parents the information they need about daily activities in order to stay in touch with how and what their child is doing in the family child care program.

1. There is opportunity for daily exchange of information about the children's activities, feelings, and needs (for example, notes, telephone calls, time to talk at drop-off or pick-up).

H. The provider has established formal and informal ways to communicate with parents about their child.



"Anna had a tough day today. I struggled to find ways to help her calm. Have you noticed this lately? What works for you at home?"

"Yeah, that sounds like what is happening at home. I wonder what is going on. She did just move into her own room at night, so maybe that has something to do with it. She loves when I sing her favorite song You Are My Sunshine."



"That sounds like a big transition, which would explain her mood. Growing up is hard! I will try singing that to her tomorrow if she is feeling sad. Thank you!"

"No, thank you! It's good to know that you think it's a normal response. I know Anna is very loved and cared for here. See you tomorrow!"



The Basics

Open communication, illustrated in the scenario above, is characterized by honesty and transparency. It is a style of communication in which both individuals feel free to openly share their ideas, thoughts, and perspectives.

Why establish open communication with families? Strong partnerships with families are critical in early childhood care and education. Open, responsive communication is an essential component of this partnership and helps support...

- **trust.** When trust is established, families and educators more often assume the other person has good intentions and feel safe to express weaknesses which helps strengthen relationships.
- **consistency.** When their home and child care settings align, children are more equipped to explore, take risks, manage emotions, and solve problems because they feel safe and know what to expect.
- **intentionality.** Communicating openly with families provides the educator with more information about the child, including their preferences and experiences, to inform the program's curriculum.

Communication about changes in a child's life also helps educators and families provide more responsive, intentional support. For example, an educator may read a story about welcoming a new sibling and a parent may remind a child when there will be a substitute.

- **family education.** Educators help families gain a deeper understanding of child development through continuous communication about their child's learning and growth. As a result, families feel more comfortable asking questions, brainstorming solutions, and working collaboratively with educators.

Open communication is bidirectional, meaning educators must also share changes occurring in their life that may affect the program and the child.

How can I support open communication? Educators establish open two-way communication with families by...

*asking questions to understand,
acknowledging challenges,
sharing successes,
providing updates,
and respecting family expertise.*

Use diversified methods of communication and consider the educator's and the family's preferences. Notes, phone calls, face-to-face conversations, surveys, home visits, texts, scheduled meetings, photos, and videos all engage families in open communication about their child's learning and support strong family-educator partnerships.

I want to learn more!

- [Communicating with Families: Helpful Suggestions](#)
- [Communicating with Families About Children's Learning](#)
- [Five Rs for Promoting Positive Family Engagement](#)
- [Family Engagement, Diverse Families, and An Integrated Review of the Literature](#)

