



Fact Sheet

Communicating with parents about your concerns

General Overview

A major part of providing a high quality service is the relationship that staff have with parents. Communicating with parents on the whole is a positive experience enabling the sharing of how the child enjoyed doing certain activities, how they are settling in etc. However not all interactions are easy and some information sharing can be difficult.

When concerns arise it is imperative that staff enlist the support of parents in order to address the issues. The foundations of sharing information is reliant on a two way communication. Once having identified the concern it is now important to consider the parents perspective as well as the staff. Both staff and parents may not be too keen to discuss the concerns.

Issues that affect social behaviour can often be difficult to address. In approaching issues of this context, it is important to take each child and their behaviours in context and respond according to your knowledge of the child and situation. The ultimate goal is to support the child in learning to be thoughtful and considerate to both themselves and others.

Each child involved in inappropriate behaviour play will be different and individual. How we respond to the behaviour is the key to assisting children to develop responsibility for their behaviour. In regards to issues for these children, it is important to gain information and collaborative support from the parents to implement the philosophy, policies and procedures of the service. The following strategies are just some examples which may be applied to support the process. This list is only the start and it is dependant on a variety of factors such as environment, length of time child is in care, child's interest, likes, dislikes and skills already achieved.

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Suggested Strategies

- Review your program. Perhaps the behaviour can be diverted if activities are changed or modified.
- Spend time observing the overall social relationship behaviour of the child/children as well as the responses of the other children.
- Identify within your service what is acceptable and what is not i.e. If parents are not willing to discuss and regard your concern as an non issue it is important to reinforce with parents that the service has policy and procedures to abide by and that while the child is in care rules and limits and strategies will be adhered to.
- Consult with the parent discussing what you have observed and what support your service needs from them in implementing the policies and procedures of your service.
- Let the parents know that a balanced approach is what the service aims for.
- Provide opportunities for children to learn what behaviour is okay and what is not. e.g. reading children's non fiction and fiction books on the topic.
- Consider what information you want to present to the parent. i.e. write down your concerns in fact form and try to avoid giving messages of your own personal values.
- Be clear on what it is you want to say. Focus on the behaviour rather than the child.
- Approach the parent with the assumption that you have a common goal. i.e. you are not out to prove them wrong, bad parenting etc but that your aim is provide a high quality service for the child.
- Avoid using judgemental words such as "naughty" or "bad".
- Have a list of strategies and resources that the service is using to address this issue.
- Be open to suggestions from the parent that will still comply with guidelines and legislation.
- Pick your time well. It is not appropriate to discuss the issue when the child is clinging to the parents leg or when other parents and children are around.
- Consider setting up a meeting outside these times in private and allow the time for the parent to share their observations from home.
- Review your enrolment procedure and how your service gains and provides information about the services philosophy, policy and procedures.
- Ask the parent how they would like the service to raise concerns and indicate that the procedure is the same for all families.
- Show your professionalism by showing parents that there are limits to your competence and that your service is seeking ideas, support and collaboration to address issues that arise. Develop an action plan with the parent to address the specific behaviour and regularly review the progress.



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References

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| Geers H (1999) | <i>Talking to parents about your concerns</i> , Playworks |

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