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Parent-Provider Partnership Skill: Basic Communication Tips

The following tips can help set the stage for meaningful communication between parents and childcare providers:

- Recognize that effective communication might take more time at first.
- From the beginning, 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.
- People from varying cultures may have different assumptions about communication styles, but people from all cultures appreciate kindness and courtesy.
- Address questions and concerns when they first arise.
- Ask yourself, “Will this message strengthen the parent partnership?” or “How do I pose my concerns and questions without straining the relationship?”.
- Organize your thoughts before talking with the parent.
- Schedule times and a place to talk away from the child.
- Ask the parents questions that might help you understand the parent’s point of view.
- When facing criticism or complaints, avoid being defensive. Show calmness and willingness to meet a parent’s needs.
- Pay attention to your body language, making sure your posture and movements reflect friendliness.
- End conversations with a plan so that each person can get what he or she needs from the communication.
- Sometimes it is helpful to let parents know you want to take time to think about an answer to a question or a request they have.
- 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 short, routine newsletters to share information, and have a “note drop box” or designated place for parents to share written information.
- 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.

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