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Communicating with your Provider

A solid relationship with your provider, built on mutual trust and respect is key in making your child care arrangement work well for everyone involved. Keep these tips in mind as you begin to build your relationship:

- Keep the lines of communication open at all times. Let your provider know if there is something going on in your child's life that may be affecting her behavior.
- Be aware of the program policies and honor them. Respect the drop-off and pick-up times, and call if you are going to be late for any reason.
- Express interest in your provider's professional development. Both the program and child will benefit from this.

Daily Communication

Every day you should have the opportunity to connect with your child's teacher or provider. This check in, even if brief, helps to build trust and share important information between you and your provider. Here are some ways to foster daily communication:

- Tell your provider how your child's morning has been so far, if he had a hard night or anything special that happened at home.
- If there is a change of plans, let your provider know who will be picking your child up that day.
- When you pick up your child, ask your provider how her day went, how she napped, ate, etc.
- Leave the more in-depth questions or issues you have to discuss for another time or perhaps over the phone or at an arranged time.
- If there are changes in your routine, let your provider know how you can be reached that day.
- Ask your provider how the child's day went.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Another way to build understanding and communication between you and your child's providers are through parent-teacher conferences. These are a more formal way for teachers and parents to discuss a child's development, and make the connection between home and school. When thinking about getting the most out of these conferences, here are some points to consider:

- Be prepared. Have a list of questions or concerns that you may have about your child and his development.
- Talk to your child before the conference about what she likes to do at school, who his friends are, etc.

- Find out what you can be doing at home to enhance your child's learning and development.
- Arrive at the conference on time. Usually there is a very limited time for these meetings and you will want to make the most of it!
- Most teachers will have examples of your child's work on hand to look through. If there is something you want to see, ask about it.
- Talk about any action you both may want to take regarding your child's progress and future growth.
- Stay in touch!

Discussing Difficult Issues

There are bound to be certain topics or situations that are difficult to talk about with your provider or teachers. If you have developed an honest, open way of communicating with one another, discussing these issues as they arise will not be so hard. Things to consider when discussing difficult issues:

- Raise issues when they first develop. If you put off a discussion, it may be harder to bring it up again later, or you may never bring it up at all, and instead end up harboring resentment.
- Avoid confronting your provider in front of other parents or children. Set up a time to speak privately, in person, or over the phone.
- Think about what you want to discuss ahead of time, and even practice how you would say it.
- Be specific about your concerns: Give examples of things that have happened or observations you have made.
- Never discuss a problem when you are feeling angry or not in control of your emotions.
- Remember that conflicts are normal and part of most relationships; they can usually be resolved when both parties can see each other's views and are willing to compromise.