Talking with Parents When You Have Concerns About a Child In Your Care

Developed by California Map to Inclusive Child Care WestEd Center for Child & Family Studies
Based on the article “Talking with Parents When Concerns Arise” by Linda Brault and Janet Gonzalez-Mena

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Outcomes

To provide a framework for caregivers:

– when they have concerns that a child in their care might have a developmental delay, disability, or significant behavior problem
– when preparing to share concerns with a child’s parents or family members (anyone raising the child)
– in understanding different ways family members will receive and act on the expressed concern
Think back to a time when you’ve needed to discuss a concern with a parent....
As a caregiver, you may be the first person to notice a child who learns or communicates differently

– How do you determine that the difference is something to be concerned about?
– How do you decide when to have a formal conference to talk to parents or family members about your concerns?
When to Have a Conference

• When you notice a difference in a child, you must think about that difference in relation to:
  – typical, expected development
  – individual variations
  – interference with the child’s ability to learn and grow

• If your careful observation and efforts to work effectively with a particular child:
  – do not seem to be meeting the child’s needs and/or
  – you feel that additional expertise is needed

It’s time to look for help and plan to formally discuss your concerns and ideas with the parent
Why is it important to have a good understanding of typical development?

What resources do you utilize for typical development information?
California’s Early Learning and Development System

- Program Guidelines and Resources
- Curriculum Frameworks
- Learning and Development Foundations
- Professional Development
- Desired Results Assessment System

California Department of Education, Child Development Division
The foundations are for all children, including children learning English and children with disabilities. They describe the knowledge and skills that young children typically exhibit:

- at around 48 and 60 months of age;
- as they complete their first or second year of preschool;
- with appropriate support; and
- when attending a high-quality preschool program.
## Map of the Foundations
### Language and Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Substrand</th>
<th>Foundation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Phonological Awareness</td>
<td>At around 48 months of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Children develop age-appropriate phonological awareness.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Description
- *Phonological awareness* is defined for the preschool learning foundations as an oral language skill: an individual's sensitivity to the sound [or phonological] structure of spoken language. Phonological awareness is an important skill that children start to acquire during preschool and continue to build in early elementary school as they learn to read. Even though it is defined as an oral language skill, it is also an important skill for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. A teacher of the deaf should be consulted for strategies for facilitating phonological awareness in individual children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### Examples
- The child plays the "What's That Word?" game while on a swing. With each push of the swing, the teacher says one part of a compound word (e.g., sun, shine) and then asks the child, "What's that word?" The child responds, "Sunshine."
- While playing in the dramatic play area, the child responds, "Hairbrush" when asked, "What word do you get when you say 'hair' and 'brush' together?"
- Orally puts together two familiar words, making a compound word. For example, "The child puts together the words 'cat' and 'toy' to say 'toy cat'."
- During mealtime conversation, the child participates in the guess-the-food game. The teacher says two-syllable words (ba-ko, su-sh, crack-er, apple, but-tar) and says each syllable distinctly. The teacher asks, "What food is this?" The child responds, "Taco."
- The child chants, "sister" after singing along to, "What word do you get when you say 'sis' and 'ter' together?"
- The child responds, "Aunt!" in unison with other classmates during circle time when the teacher says, "I'm thinking of a classmate's name that has two parts, like 'Aunt'. Whose name is that?"

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*Includes notes for children with disabilities*
Utilizing Foundations for Understanding

• With your group:
  – Look at the foundations on your table
  – How would you use these to prepare for a parent meeting?
  – How would you use these to support knowledge of typical development?
The Curriculum Framework Strategies Are

– Developmentally appropriate
– Reflective of thoughtful observation and intentional planning
– Individually and culturally meaningful
– Inclusive of children with disabilities and other special needs
CA Preschool Foundations and Frameworks

• All three volumes are available in PDF format at:
  https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psfoundations.asp
  https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/psframework.asp
  To purchase books:
  https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/
Infant Toddler Foundations & Frameworks

- Infant Toddler Learning and Development Foundations:

- Infant Toddler Framework:
  https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/re/documents/itcurriculumframework.pdf

- To purchase books:
  https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/pn/rc/
Often when you, as a caregiver, are concerned about a child’s development or behavior and you will probably have an emotional response.

You may feel

• worried about what the future will be for this child
• the needs of this child are beyond your abilities
• frustrated that the family members have not done something to help
It can be helpful to explore your reactions and feelings regarding your concerns for this child

- What does the possibility that there are delays or behavior differences bring up in you emotionally?
- Talk with a trusted colleague or other appropriate person about the situation
Milestone Reflection

- Find and complete your Milestone Reflection Handout
- Compare your responses with your table mates
- What do you notice?
## Mean Age Expectation in Months for Milestone Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Puerto Rican</th>
<th>Filipino</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eat Solid Food</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training Cup</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finger Food</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wean</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep by Self</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>14.6</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep all Night</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose Clothes</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress Self</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play Alone</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>24.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Trained-Day</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>20.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Trained-Night</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Carlson & Harwood (2000)*
# Behavioral Expectations of Two Groups of Mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Korean-American Mothers</th>
<th>European-American Mothers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believe parents and children should play together</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prefer children play with sex-typed toys (e.g., boys play with trucks)</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide children with many chances to decide (e.g., give child choices)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

California Map to Inclusive Child Care  (Farver & Lee-Shin, 2000)
“Programs demonstrate respect for families by partnering with them to exchange information about their children’s learning and development and to share ideas about how to support learning at home and at school.”

PCF, Vol. 1, p. 7
Remember the Child

When focusing on concerns, possible implications, and the family’s response:

– keep the child foremost in your mind
– focus on child positive qualities and strengths
– remember the child is the focus of the family’s love
Preparing for a Formal Conference

• With prior regular small conversations, conferences won’t come as a surprise to family members

• Make careful observations of the child

• Plan to discuss what you have observed in terms of **specific behaviors**

• Research possible local resources and have the information and phone numbers ready for family
The Best Setting for a Conference

- Ask the family member or parent to schedule uninterrupted time
- Make the family member feel comfortable and at ease as much as possible
- Provide for privacy
- Set aside enough time
- Arrange for an interpreter, if needed
Conducting the Conference

• Start by asking the family members how they see their child’s development
  – Listen carefully to what they say
  – Share positive qualities you’ve observed
  – Ask how the child behaves at home
  – Ask for concerns they’ve not already indicated
Sharing Your Concerns

• Tell the family you are sharing concerns to get ideas for how to best meet their child’s needs, to help their child be successful in your setting

• Communicate your observations
  – clearly
  – without judgment
  – with concrete examples
What it might look like:

- CONNECT Module 4 - Family Professional Partnerships, Video 4.6 Libby & Kim Middle Ground Conversation: http://community.fpg.unc.edu/connect-modules/learners
After Concerns are Shared

- Assure the family that you are there to support the child
- Share information about services
  - within your program
  - local early intervention services
  - special education services
  - other potential resources
The Family’s Response

• Wait patiently as the family members think about and process the information you have shared
• Let the family members take the lead in determining the next steps
  – The family may be interested in referrals and welcome your support or
  – The family may be upset and/or not ready to access resources at this time
• It is important to be ready for any reaction and response from the family member
Supporting Families Who Want to Access Resources

• Refer to early intervention program, local school district, or primary health care provider (pediatrician, family doctor, etc.)

• Before the meeting with the family, know which agency is most appropriate and have phone numbers or contact information available in writing
Everyone moves at a different pace and accepts information differently

Unless behavior or medical urgency prevent you from caring for child without assistance, allow the family to proceed on their own timeline.
When the family does not agree with your concern or is upset, suggest the family discuss this observation or information with other family members or another professional such as their doctor.
After the Conference

- Maintain ongoing communication with the family
- If the child is assessed by a health care provider, early intervention, or special education team, ask for them to share suggestions and recommendations
  - If the child is not eligible or does not receive services from an outside agency, the suggestions will still be useful to you
  - If the child does receive outside services, your communication will have set the stage for partnership and collaboration with family as well as the specialists to meet the needs of the child in your setting.
Rules of the Road “Do’s and Don’ts”

• Find the envelope on your table

• As a table group, sort the strips into one pile of Do’s and one pile of Don’ts
### Talking with Families about Problem Behavior: Do’s and Don’ts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Begin the discussion by expressing concern about the child.</td>
<td>Begin the discussion by indicating that the child's behavior is not tolerable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let the parent know that your goal is to help the child.</td>
<td>Indicate that the child must be punished or &quot;dealt with&quot; by the parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask the parent if he or she has experienced similar situations and are concerned.</td>
<td>Ask the parent if something has happened at home to cause the behavior.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell the parent that you want to work with the family to help the child develop appropriate behavior and social skills.</td>
<td>Indicate that the parent should take action to resolve the problem at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tell the parent about what is happening in the classroom but only after the parent understands that you are concerned about the child, not blaming the family.</td>
<td>Initiate the conversation by listing the child's challenging behavior. Discussions about challenging behavior should be framed as &quot;the child is having a difficult time&quot; rather than losing control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer to work with the parent in the development of a behavior support plan that can be used at home and in the classroom.</td>
<td>Leave it up to the parent to manage problems at home; develop a plan without inviting family participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize that your focus will be to help the child develop the skills needed to be successful in the classroom. The child needs instruction and support.</td>
<td>Let the parent believe that the child needs more discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress that if you can work together, you are more likely to be successful in helping the child learn new skills.</td>
<td>Minimize the importance of helping the family understand and implement positive behavior support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sharing concerns with a family member is one of the most demanding tasks for a caregiver.

Remember:
- To reach out to colleagues and supervisors for support before, during, and after the conference
- That your sensitive communication with the family can support the child’s success
Websites For More Information

California Map to Inclusive Child Care:
  • www.CAinclusivechildcare.org

California Preschool Instructional Networks
  • (CPIN) www.cpin.us/

Program for Infant Toddler Care Partners for Quality (PITC PQ) Regional Support Network;
  https://www.pitc.org/pub/pitc_docs/pqintro.html

California School-Age Consortium
  • (CALSAC) www.calsac.org
For More Information

– Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL): http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/

– CA Teaching Pyramid: https://www.cainclusion.org/teachingpyramid/

– Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention for Young Children, also known as TACSEI; http://challengingbehavior.org
Resources for Families

• Health and medical service systems:
  – Start with the child’s primary health care provider
  – The California Childcare Health Line is a good resource for health information at www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org/

• Local special education or early intervention services
• The Family Resource Centers funded by California Early Start can be a starting point for early intervention or special education in the community at www.frcnca.org/

• The local school district should be able to identify resources for referrals at www.cde.ca.gov/ds/si/ds/pubschls.asp

• Child Care
  – Find the local Resource & Referral Agency at www.rrnetwork.org
Resources for Teachers

• Working together for Inclusion and Belonging: https://cainclusion.org/

• Santa Clara County Inclusion Collaborative: http://www.inclusioncollaborative.org/

• Handouts for this session:
  – Talking with Parents When Concerns Arise About a Child in Your Care by Linda Brault, MA and Janet Gonzalez-Mena, MA
  – Talking with Families about Problem Behavior: Do’s and Don’ts
  – Reflecting on Milestones Quiz
Thank you for Coming!