

Resource 6.

Communicating with Families

What information do you share with families and when?





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Welcome

What will you find in this document?

This document includes a checklist for you to note **how you share or intend to share information with families in your program**. You will find spaces to add ideas for enhancing communication with families, spaces for reflection, and additional resources.

Why is this information important?

It is important to share information about children's successes and challenges with their families and learn about their routines or activities at home so that you can create **a supportive and collaborative partnership** that benefits the child's overall development and learning experience.

Guided Reflection Template and Example

This template will help you plan **how to communicate with families** for your program. You also will find an example of how an educator might plan communication with families using the template.



Guided Reflection Template

It's important to plan how you will communicate with families about their child, including what information you will ask them to share and what information you will share about the child's experiences in your program. You should think about:

- What information you will provide to new families when they first join your program.
- What kinds of information you will ask families about their child's needs, likes and dislikes, comfort strategies, etc.
- What you will share with families to help their child learn and practice new skills at home (such as books to read together, art activities to do together, or ways to practice using polite words like "please" and "thank you").
- What you will share with families about their child's learning over time, including both their successes and any challenges that might arise.
- How you will communicate with families about any challenges in a positive way that emphasizes that challenges are a normal part of growing up, and builds your partnership to support children together

You can also ask families for feedback about how they think their child is doing in your program, and if there are any ways you can make their experience better. Some families will share their wants and wishes with you easily, while others may need you to ask them directly to feel comfortable sharing. You can work with families to find a way to meet their wants or wishes that works for you and for them. For example, if a family asks you to hold their child's hand throughout nap time, you could thank them for sharing and suggest that you can hold their child's hand at the start of nap, but that they will need to learn to become comfortable napping on their own because you will need to attend to the other children during naptime.



A. Conversation and Interaction Ideas

Use the following checklist to mark the ways you share or plan to share information with families in your program or add new ideas.

Sharing information about my program with families	Check
Sharing a welcome packet with each family in the family’s preferred language, English, and the language you or other educators use in the program if different from English. Use a free language translation application (such as Google Translate or DeepL) if you need help translating materials into a different language or communicating with families who speak a different language than you do. Make sure to tell families what language(s) you are comfortable speaking and tell families if you are using a translation application.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving families ideas for books, games, or activities that each child can use to learn and grow at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing families with regular updates on the routines and schedules, such as the weekly snack menu and upcoming holidays and vacations.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Sharing information and updates with families about their child’s learning and development in formal and informal ways	Check
Sharing each child’s individual results from CDC’s “Learn the Signs, Act Early” screening with their family, including milestones met and any areas of concern. (The CDC provides information in many languages; provide information in the family’s preferred language, if possible).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing families with regular updates on their child’s interests, preferences, and social activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing progress reports with families on their child’s growth toward their goals and learning (including work samples or pictures of their child).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving updates on small or big achievements their child has while in my program.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Asking families to share information about their child	Check
Medical needs (such as allergies) or physical needs (such as needing extra sun protection outside or access to lotion during dry winter months) their child might have.	<input type="checkbox"/>



Asking families to share information about their child	Check
What routines families use at home (such as how they calm down their baby when they get upset, what nap routines work for them, and what kinds of foods and snacks they like to eat and when).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personality, strengths, challenges, and preferences (such as their favorite foods, games, celebrations, or interests).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Culture, language, and important customs or activities at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Goals or hopes families have for how their child will learn and grow in the next few months, including what they want their child to learn and do in your program (such as putting on their shoes and jacket by themselves or eating their lunch without prompting).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

Asking families to work together for their child	Check
Goals for their child’s learning and development when reviewing the results of screenings (e.g., CDC’s Learn the Signs, Act Early Screening, or the ASQ).	<input type="checkbox"/>
“About me” projects for their child (or children) in my program.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for families to meet and interact with each other (such as field trips or program celebrations).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>



For an example of how to plan your communication with families, see the Example section.

Additional Resources



For a sample enrollment template you can use with families that includes places for information such as the child’s allergies or medication, eating habits, toilet habits or challenges, nap schedule, fears, and daily schedule or routines at home:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/family-child-care-enrollment-packet/download>



For more information and tips on how to have difficult conversations with families, check out these resources from the Virtual Lab School and from Head Start:

- <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/preschool/family-engagement/lesson-3>
- <https://www.virtuallabschool.org/fcc/program-management/lesson-4>
- <https://headstart.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/preparing-for-challenging-conversations-with-families-eng.pdf?redirect=eclkc>



Example

Sharing information about my program with families	Check
Sharing a welcome packet with each family in the family’s preferred language, English, and the language you or other educators use in the program if different from English. Use a free language translation application (such as Google Translate or DeepL) if you need help translating materials into a different language or communicating with families who speak a different language than you do. Make sure to tell families what language(s) you are comfortable speaking and tell families if you are using a translation application.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Giving families ideas for books, games, or activities that each child can use to learn and grow at home.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing families with regular updates on the routines and schedules, such as the weekly snack menu and upcoming vacations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Sharing information and updates with families about their child’s learning and development in formal and informal ways	Check
Sharing each child’s individual results from CDC’s “Learn the Signs, Act Early” screening with their family, including milestones met and any areas of concern. (The CDC provides information in many languages; provide information in the family’s preferred language, if possible).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Providing families with regular updates on their child’s interests, preferences, and social activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sharing progress reports with families on their child’s growth toward their goals and learning (including work samples or pictures of their child).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Giving updates on small or big achievements their child has while in my program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Asking families to share information about their child	Check
Medical needs (such as allergies) or physical needs (such as needing extra sun protection outside or access to lotion during dry winter months) their child might have.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Personality, strengths, challenges, and preferences (such as their favorite foods, games, celebrations, or interests).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Culture and important customs or activities at home.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>



Asking families to work together for their child	Check
Goals for their child’s learning and development when reviewing the results of screenings (e.g., CDC’s Learn the Signs, Act Early Screening, or the ASQ).	<input type="checkbox"/>
“About me” projects for their child (or children) in my program.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opportunities for families to meet and interact with each other (such as field trips or program celebrations).	<input type="checkbox"/>