# PSFO Tip Sheet

# Communicating your concerns to Families

Communicating with parents/carers can be difficult at times, even for the most experienced Early Childhood Educators. The way you communicate can often either encourage partnerships or potentially fracture relationships. A partnership works best when messages are ***clear, specific*** and ***considerate of the other person’s feelings***. Always talk to parents with the goal of strengthening relationships.

**Approaching Parents**

* **Supportive Language**: Focus on how to support the child, using terms like learning, skills, and development instead of concerns or issues. This helps set the tone for the meeting.
* **Timing**: Approach parents when they are not rushed, and speak in a calm, relaxed tone.
* **Positive – Need – Positive**:
  1. **Listen First**: Gain initial feedback from the family to understand their perspective.
  2. **Positive Feedback**: Start with specific positive comments about the child.
  3. **Discuss Needs**: Address the child's needs sensitively, relating to developmental milestones and observations.
  4. **Next Steps**: End with another positive and outline the next steps or plan.

For example:

“I have prepared some notes on Grace’s participation in the program. She is doing really well at remembering and following the routine. (**Pause**) I am noticing she is finding it difficult to interact with her peers. She is mostly preferring to play alone at kindergarten. Could we meet together so we can work out how we can best support Grace? (**Pause**) When can we meet?”

Organising the Parent/carer meeting

* **Flexible timing:** Offer to meet at a time that suits the family/carers.
* **Attendees:** Allow both parents/ carers/ grandparents to attend and arrange an interpreter if needed
* **Be prepared:** Have notes on the child’s strengths and areas for improvement, and a section for actions from the meeting.
* **Comfortable setting**: Ensure the meeting environment is comfortable for everyone.

During the Parent meeting

* **Listen First**: Keep your notes away initially to focus on listening to the parents.
* **Parents Speak First**: Let parents talk about their child to understand their perspective.
* **Acknowledge Expertise**: Remind parents they know their child best and you value their input.
* **Purpose of Meeting**: Emphasise that the goal is to share information and support the child.
* **Share Observations**: State what you've observed at kindergarten.
* **Ask Questions**: Compare your observations with the child's behaviour at home and in other settings.
* **Relate to Development**: Connect the discussion to child development information.

\* Remember that the outcome of the meeting may not be the outcome that you had in mind. It is our role as Educators to share information and provide options for families to choose what is best for them

***Further information:***

* <https://raisingchildren.net.au/for-professionals/working-with-parents/communicating-with-parents/communication-with-parents>
* <https://www.understood.org/articles/having-difficult-conversations-with-families-a-teachers-guide>
* <https://beyou.edu.au/fact-sheets/relationships/communication-skills-for-educators>
* <https://allplaylearn.org.au/early/educator/educator-guide/>

The PSFO service can be accessed (phone or email) if any Educator requires further advice or support with this. A Request for Support form does not need to be submitted for you to receive this support.

**Tel: 9742 8199 or Email** [**psfo.service@wyndham.vic.gov.au**](mailto:psfo.service@wyndham.vic.gov.au)

Interpreting Service – All Graduates Interpreting and Translating (All Graduates)

**Have you considered utilising the All Graduates Interpreting Service to support building relationships with families & to support their understanding of conversations about their child and services available to support them?**

The Department of Education (DE) has partnered with ***All Graduates*** to provide free interpreting services to state funded early childhood services who do not receive direct funding for language services.

This can be used, for example, to support families from a language background other than English and require communication to be undertaken in their first language.

Visit the website for more info - [https://www.vic.gov.au/interpreters](https://www.vic.gov.au/use-interpreter-early-childhood-education-services)