

Family Conference - Tip Sheet

Why are formal conferences with families important? Formal conferences...

- Invite families into the program and encourage their participation as partners in their child's success.
- Give families an opportunity to communicate with you and ask questions
- Provide time to talk about a child's development over time and to set individual goals for the future.
- Strengthen the relationship with families as partners in children's development and learning.

What are ways I can notify families of upcoming conferences?

- Provide families with a schedule of conferences in a family handbook or contract.
- Highlight your conference schedule and/or policy in a newsletter.
- Post a notice or send a flyer home with the children.
- Use technology! Send out reminders via email and/or text message.

How do I plan scheduled conferences?

- An average conference can last about 15 minutes.
- Hold conferences before or after regular hours to avoid the need of a substitute.
- Plan conferences during naptime when children are resting.
- Offer phone conferences for family members are unable to attend in person.

How can I prepare for conferences?

- Gather information on each of the children using observation and ongoing assessments.
- Save work samples to share with family members.
- Create a list of topics you would like to cover with each family. Remember to leave time for questions from the families.

Final thoughts:

- Conferences are conversations between adults. Consider offering child care or an activity to occupy children while the adults are meeting.
- Aim to begin and end conferences on a positive note and share the accomplishments the children have made.
- Offer families the opportunity to bring a friend/additional family member to serve as a translator if English is not spoken by the family.

- Communicate major concerns to families as they occur, and schedule separate conferences to address any concerns as they arise.