Sharing Concerns with Families

Families everywhere go through times in their lives when they need help understanding their child and accessing information to help them navigate the circumstances they are dealing with. Families may have a question or concern, and you may be asked to provide information, suggestions, or recommendations about a variety of topics, such as child development, challenging behavior, language, community connections, services providers, etc. Sometimes you may have answers and sometimes you may have to look for answers. Sometimes the conversations you need to have with families will be more difficult for various reasons. If you have questions about how to handle situations in which families share information with you or you need to know how to address a concern with a family, talk to your trainer, coach, or family child care administrator. You can also consider some of the suggestions and ideas listed as part of this handout.

- Establish relationships and effective communication early on.
- Create a comfortable atmosphere for meetings and choose times when everyone can feel relaxed and have time to talk, preferably when you are not actively supervising other children.
- Share strength-based information that is easy to understand, objective, and nonjudgmental.
- Arrange for someone to translate information if a family speaks a language unfamiliar to you.
- Think about your own culture and values and ways these things affect your practices—consider possible differences in culture, values, opinions, and practices.
- Ask families questions and think about what it is like to be the primary caregiver of the child you are discussing.
- Describe behaviors by sharing what you see and hear and ask families questions about behaviors at home:
  - “Today I saw her_____. What are you seeing her do at home?”
  - “He seems to like books. You must spend lots of time reading together at home. What else does he really like to do?”
- Ask families for feedback; provide time for families to think, process and respond.
- Help families learn more about child development relating to their child's specific developmental stage.
- Help families make connections with community resources and organizations.
It will also be helpful for you to be aware of existing services and approaches to early identification and intervention for children and families. To learn more, consider seeking information:

- By reviewing your Service’s, State’s or local policies and documentation regarding screening and referrals if concerns emerge in a child’s development.
- Regarding community services such as health consultation and mental health consultation.
- About your state’s early-intervention system.
- About your school district’s service provisions.