

Working with parents

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Presentation Summary

Why work with parents?

1. Parenting is the most important potentially modifiable factor in child development and wellbeing
2. The NICHD Study of Early Childhood Care and Youth Development
Many family features are more strongly and more consistently linked to child development outcomes than are child care features for children up to age 4 ½ (and even into kindergarten). The following characteristics predicted children's cognitive/ language and social development.
 - Parent's education
 - Family income
 - Two parent family compared to single parent family
 - Mother's psychological adjustment and sensitivity
 - Social and cognitive quality of the home environment
3. Early childhood services are potentially non-stigmatizing sources of parenting support

Parents are your partners in child's development and wellbeing

Parent involvement improves your program

It can pay to develop your parent communication skills

4. Supporting parents
 - Spot early difficulties
 - First port of call
 - Encouragement
 - Information support
 - Social support

Social context of parenting

5. Parents experience unprecedented scrutiny and blame
6. Parents experience information overload
7. Hard for parents to seek help (Sanders et al 1999)
 - 25% have concerns about their child's behaviour
 - Only one third seek help
 - Only 10% attend parenting education

Foundations of partnership

8. Avoid the blame game
9. Avoid hierarchical approach
10. Partnership
 - See parent as part of the team
 - Equal but different roles
 - Recognise expertise and strengths
 - Respect values and beliefs
 - Recognising problem solving capacity
11. Tools for building partnership
 - Welcoming environment
 - Showing interest in parent as a person
 - Communicating positives about child
 - 'Quality time'
 - Paying attention
 - Listening

Constructive conversations

12. The primary goal in any communication with parents is to build/maintain the partnership
13. When a parent seeks help
 - Create space
 - Listen (really try to understand)
 - Clarify (seek an example)
 - Validate and check (their concerns)
 - Share information (observations)
 - Clarify the parent's goal
 - Be slow to give advice (get permission first)
 - Share information (your experience of child, information resources)
 - Prompt further help seeking
 - Follow-up
14. Handling a parent's concerns
 - Put the parent at ease
 - Listen for content and feelings
 - Don't defend
 - Validate the concern
 - Ask about other concerns
 - Clarify the parent's goals
 - Look for positive intention
 - Options (1) clarify; (2) little things; (3) dispute resolution
 - Buy time and follow-up
 - Make a plan and check with parent
15. Raising a concern with a Parent

- a. Choose your timing
 - b. State your goal upfront (assume responsibility)
 - c. State the problem (rather than your proposed solution)
 - d. Use 'observation language' (don't interpret or diagnose)
 - e. Elicit the parent's views (establishing a joint motivation to work together)
16. If parent recognises the problem
- Reframe the problem talk to solution talk
 - Invite parent to participate in problem solving
 - Convey optimism
17. If parent does not recognise a problem
- Project into the future
 - Invite them to help you with 'your problem'
 - Keep door open

Resources

www.parentingrc.org.au

www.raisingchildren.net.au