

This resource has quick tips on having respectful conversations with families. Program Leaders can use this Tip Sheet as an outline for a staff training or to role play a conversation with families. Program staff can use this Tip Sheet as a reminder when preparing for a meeting with families.

1

Recognizing the Goal of the Conversation

Communication and cooperation between program staff and families are key in successfully supporting a child or youth in your program.

Focus on shared goals & supporting the family

"We both want your son to be successful in our program. How can we work together to teach him to express his feelings without hurting others?"

Identify what the conversation should accomplish

- Address an issue
- Generate ideas
- Gather information

Get ideas from colleagues or supervisors

"How would you say this to a parent?"

2

Considering the Setting

The time and location of a conversation can impact the outcome.

Find a time that works for families

"I'd like to be able to talk today. Can we talk now or would this afternoon be better for you?"

Choose appropriate ways of communicating

- Phone call
- Text message/email
- Personal meeting

In a personal meeting, use a comfortable space that allows for privacy and protecting confidentiality
Seated side-by-side, outside of areas where others can hear (including children & youth).

3

Refining Your Approach

Expressing understanding to families is important and impacts the way they receive your message. Establish regular communication and acknowledge the youth's strengths regularly to make conversations easier when issues arise.

Stay calm while interacting

Speak softly and maintain relaxed body language

Acknowledge parents' efforts, stress & perspective

"I've noticed that you've been encouraging him to make good choices."

Be direct & sensitive, avoiding blaming, judging & threatening expulsion

"When I asked her to join the others, she turned away and continued to play alone. This is something we can all work on together."

Ask for input and listen patiently

"Do you have ideas that might help?"