

Building Partnerships

Keys to Building Successful Partnerships

One thing parents can do is give clear information about their child to the people involved in their child's care. As soon as a parent becomes concerned, they should begin to keep a record of their child's behaviors. Parents can also help professionals by sharing information about their child's likes, dislikes, temperament, and sensitivities. For example, a parent might tell the occupational therapist that their child really, really likes the color yellow and that Thomas the Tank Engine is the current favorite toy.

Parents should also share information about their child's behaviors that may indicate a delay. Although parents may feel embarrassed to share that their 5-year-old still wears diapers to bed or that their 3-year-old refuses to go to sleep alone, this kind of information may help a therapist design a more effective treatment plan. Parents should also be sure to share the triumphs, no matter how big or small.

One Key Is Clear Communication

It is also important for family members and early childhood care professionals to communicate with each other about the child's goals. By knowing each other's expectations, family members and care providers can agree on goals and specific ways to achieve them. For example, it may be important to the early childhood professional that a child learn to participate in group time, but the parent may not see that skill as necessary. Instead, the parent may want their child to spend more time learning how to express frustration. In fact, group time may be a great time for the child to learn how to express frustration, but the parent and professional need to recognize their shared goal and talk about how that goal will be accomplished.

Getting Past Jargon

When it comes to communications between parents and professionals, parents sometimes need to ask professionals to explain the terms they are using. Have you ever heard something like this: "Mia seems to be showing some signs of apraxia of speech—do you notice that at home?" In order to bridge information gaps, parents need to be sure they ask for clarification when they don't understand the information they are given.

Despite all the best efforts to build effective partnerships, parents and professionals do sometimes have disagreements. Although these disagreements may stress the partnership, if both parties continue to keep open and clear communication, even differences of opinion can become building blocks upon which an even stronger partnership can be built.

Effective Partnerships

Children benefit most when parents and professionals work together effectively. However, successful partnerships can sometimes be time consuming to develop, emotionally exhausting, and at times uncomfortable when feelings are hurt.

But partnerships can also be very rewarding. There are several things parents can do to build a successful partnership, but the most important thing overall is to keep the lines of communication open!

