

## Building a Good Relationship with Your Child's Caregiver



*As a parent, one of the most important things you can do is to work on establishing and maintaining a good relationship with your child's caregiver.*

### GET OFF TO A GOOD START

**Keep your side of the contract.** Pay tuition and fees on time. Provide all requested items for your child. Try to be prompt for pick-up and drop-off time. Don't assume extra responsibilities without discussing the first.

**Talk things over.** A short talk each day is all you need. You may want to talk about your child's stage of development and what his or her needs are at this stage. You might also want to mention anything that has happened in your family's life that is affecting your child. Be attuned to any changes in your caregiver's life that might affect your child's day with her.

**Consider the caregiver's feelings.** Show the caregiver that you appreciate what she is doing. Make sure to thank her or let her know when you are especially pleased with something she has done. Don't just wait for problems to arise before you provide feedback to your caregiver.

**Participate in any way you can.** Getting involved in your child's care arrangement can make both you and your child happier. You may feel you can't do much if you work all day, but make an effort. Suggest activities for the children to your provider. Contribute simple materials for art activities. Offer to purchase or lend books or magazines to the program. Prepare a special meal or dessert for lunch. Get together with other parents to help plan ways to support the program. Ask your child's caregiver about other ways you might participate or contribute to the program.

### IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS, TALK TO YOUR CHILD CARE PROVIDER:

- *If you feel the caregiver demands more from your child than your child can handle at this stage of development:*
  - Discuss with the caregiver what children of your child's age can and cannot do. Focus on your own child's rhythm and style. Explain that you want your child to move at a comfortable pace.
  
- *If you disagree with the caregiver's child care methods: **State your reasons and listen to the caregiver's response . . .***

- Before talking with the caregiver, separate those you can accept from those you cannot, then discuss these differences with her. State how you would like things done and your reasons for it.
  - Be willing to compromise, if possible.
- *If you find out your caregiver's home situation has undergone a change that affects your child: **Ask the caregiver to keep you informed on a daily basis . . .***
- Let the caregiver know how important it is for you to know about anything that affects your child.
  - Explain that you are aware of the new situation and that you feel your child has been affected by it. Find out how long the situation will last.
  - Decide if your child can or should remain there until it is over.
- *If your child develops behaviors, habits or language you don't like: **Remember, children develop new habits and ideas over time . . .***
- The new behavior may or may not be directly related to the child care setting he or she is in.
  - Talk to the caregiver and to your child about the problem. See if you can find out what is causing the new habit and what can be changed.
  - Work with your child to help him choose better behavior. Encourage the new behavior.
  - Share your strategies with the caregiver and ask the caregiver to do the same.
- *If your child begins to forget his toilet training: **Don't get too upset . . .***
- Young children sometimes forget to go to the bathroom.
  - Find out how the caregiver handles the children's toilet needs. Make sure your child understands when and how he can use the facilities.
  - Determine if your child is unhappy or disturbed. If so, discuss the possible reasons with the caregiver and decide on ways to overcome them.
- *If communication breaks down with your caregiver: **Overall, be as positive as possible . . .***
- **Do not** confront your caregiver in front of your child, other children or other parents. Set up a specific time to speak with her.
  - Make a list of questions to ask ahead of time. If it is a serious disagreement, take time to cool down before discussing the problem.
  - Stick to the specific issues you are discussing.



### **Remember!**

Open communication is one of the most important aspects of quality child care. If you have an open, comfortable, and trusting relationship with your provider, it is likely that any of these issues can be easily resolved. On the other hand, if you are nervous or uncomfortable about talking with your provider, or if your provider is continually unresponsive to your questions and concerns, you may need to consider choosing another child care setting.

Even without communication problems, periodically reassessing your child's care is important. Although you might feel like your child's care provider or center is perfect and will be right forever, sometimes things change. There are many reasons why: your needs change, the staff changes or maybe your child's needs have changed and could be better met in a different type of setting. If you need to find another program, visit [www.GetChildCareNOW.com](http://www.GetChildCareNOW.com).