

# Communicating With Families



When working with children, educators may observe unsafe behaviours when a child is communicating an unmet need. It is important they explore the unmet need and communicate with families about the concern. Acknowledging the family as the child's first teacher and collaborating with them can be effective in creating a successful environment for the child to learn, grow, and thrive.

In this tip sheet we provide ways educators can successfully and respectfully share information, collaborate, and communicate with families.

## Considerations for educators when communicating with families:

- Have you developed a strong and **connected relationship** with the family?
- Access to clear information and observations of the child that can be communicated confidently.
- Previous experience of communicating with the family.
- Sensitivity to the family's unique cultural backgrounds.
- Time and space to have an in-depth conversation.
- Awareness of who is important in the child's life such as other family members or systems that support them.



### Steps to building strong and collaborative partnerships with families:



Plan **daily check-ins** with families to make this a regular and predictable routine.



Use **icebreaker questions** to find commonality with parents (such as a shared interest or experiences). Show **genuine interest** in their daily activities, work roles, and special events.



Consider the family's preferred method of **communication** (emails, communication books, or digital platforms).



Leading with, or including, information about the child's **strengths** can help build connection with families (e.g. *"I have noticed how good James is at building Lego! Sometimes he gets so focused on his designs it can be tricky to move onto other tasks."*).



Utilise **whole class approaches** (e.g. *"This term I want to focus on packing up our toys as I know this is tricky for most children in the class."*).



Use **open-ended questions** to reduce judgement and support parents to voice their opinions and ideas. Allow them to share insights and strategies that support their child (e.g. *"I have been thinking about Ryan's toileting. I was wondering if there was anything you do at home to support this?"*).



Focus on the **observable behaviours**. Describing what the behaviour looks like and your concerns can remove perceived judgements about the behaviour, child, or family (e.g. we may reframe: *"We're having a problem with Owen, he keeps hurting other children"* to *"I've noticed Owen is getting really frustrated when we get the trains out and sometimes may push friends and throw toys."*).



Establishing **collaborative problem solving** with families builds the partnership and creates a team dynamic where everyone feels included. This could involve creating a shared document that details the perspectives of the child, family, and educator in written or visual forms.

Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:



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