THE ENGAGEMENT

Participant Handout

Engaging Conversations
Team Building Between Families and Professionals to Support Planning for Young Children

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TRAINING SERIES

Supporting Transition and School Readiness

Section 1: Families & Professionals Build Successful Teams with Effective Verbal Skills

Barriers to Productive Conversations

A _____ is something that obstructs or separates, often by emphasizing differences.

Barriers to productive conversations include:

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-
-
-

Verbal Communication

Balance is the key to effective communication.

Things to consider when communicating verbally include:
- Keep your voice tone and pitch level – not too loud or soft and not too high or low.

- Make assertive statements in a situation where necessary.

- Respect the need for privacy.

- Honestly represent your thoughts and feelings without judging others.

Types of Statements

- _____ comments: angry, blaming, judgmental, directive

- _____ comments: sole function is to please the listener or express a helplessness to address the situation

- _____ comments:
  - clearly communicates message from the speaker
  - speaker takes ownership of the message using **I-messages** (e.g., I think…, I feel…, I believe…, I hear you saying…, So if I am understanding you correctly…)
  - goal is to speak and listen to each other to promote mutual understanding

Section 2: Families & Professionals Build Successful Teams with Effective Non-Verbal Skills and Writing Skills

First impressions count!

- Look pleasant.

- Make eye contact.

- Greet the person.

- Be aware of your body language.

Non-Verbal Communication

- Turn your face and body, leaning slightly toward the person.

- Make normal gestures if necessary.

- Continue with regular eye contact.

Handshakes[1]

The handshake is a vital tool for an encounter and can empower or weaken the encounter. A firm handshake is always the best. Again, experts say that a man's handshake is typically strong and firm because they naturally have a strong grip. When women grip they get noticed! Some examples of handshakes and usual outcomes follow:

- *Controller:* If when you extend your hand to shake and you immediately maneuver yours on the top of theirs, you are gesturing that you want to be in charge. (Be careful with this one when you are trying to establish an equal relationship.) Use this technique wisely as a tool not a weapon.

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[1] Adapted from Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children Leadership Academy Materials. For more information contact them at Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc., 207 Holmes Street, First Floor Frankfort, KY 40601 or go to www.kypartnership.net .

- *Sandwich:* This handshake can be invasive and should only be used with someone you know. Enveloping another person's hand can be used to show affection or compassion. Beware when people you are a meeting from the first time use this handshake. This handshake is called the Politician's handshake!
- *Dead Fish:* Everyone gets nervous sometimes, but whenever possible do not hold out a wet hand to shake. Many times this handshake is viewed as anxiety ridden or masking something you are trying to hide. In either event it sends a negative message. Go ahead and wipe your hand on the side of your pants or you shirt.
- *Limp Fingers*: OK ladies!! It is said that women have a habit of extending their fingers instead of their entire hand. Besides this technique having the potential to be painful to the extender when shaking with a party who shakes with a strong grip, it gives the impression of submissiveness. Nip that in the bud unless it is a tool to appear fragile!

Recipe for a Good Handshake
- Hold the person's hand firmly
- Shake web to web (3 times at a maximum)
- Maintain constant eye contact
- Radiate positive energy

Personal Boundaries

- Respect personal space.

- Respect job descriptions and responsibilities.

- Respect family knowledge.

- Acknowledge challenging issues for children.

Section 2: Writing Techniques to Facilitate Positive Connections and Interventions for Children

Audience: Write a letter to the person with the authority to respond to your issue. The address should include the person's name, job title and work address.

Presentation: You should utilize a business format and have the letter computer processed on business paper. In your letter include your name, address, phone number and e-mail.

Content: Explain why you are writing and what you want from the reader in the first paragraph. Use facts to support your request. It is best to keep the letter concise, preferably no longer than one page.

Tone: You choice of words should reflect a polite and respectful attitude. It is important NOT to vent emotions nor apologize for writing. Thank the person for their assistance and attention to your request.

Request a Response: Offer to meet at a convenient time and politely request a return contact in the next two weeks. Two weeks is a standard time to request a response. If you do not receive a response, write a second letter or go higher up the chain of command for a contact person.

Section 3: Families & Professionals Partner to Develop Successful Action Plans

Action Plans

Action plans can address a variety of child issues:

- Learning and development
- Social functioning with others
- Emotional coping and expression
- Behavioral self regulation
- Adjustment to life changes

FUN action plans are:

Family driven & youth guided

- Expertise of family is recognized
- Family members partner in the development of action plans
- Child's expertise is recognized

Understandable for the child

- Clear
- Described with simple words
- Include child appealing content and graphics

Needs based

- The child's need should be the driving force of the action plan, NOT the needs of the organization, the professional, nor the needs of adult family members.

SMART action plans:

Specific goals that are clearly defined.

Measurable
- Must be able to document and measure change
- Use charts, graphs, and assessments

Action oriented

Realistic
- Set small short term goals
- Encourages change with frequent success

Time line
- Time line determined in plan

Section 4: Families & Professionals Document and Follow-Up Action Plans for Successful Results

Documentation

Documentation is an organized _____ of child behaviors in the context of initiated support.

Documentation provides a _____ record that:
- Captures child's growth
- Assists in assessment
- Guides future goals
- Helps child qualify for needed services

Documentation for the child should be:
- Visual
- Interesting
- Understandable

Documentation for the family and professional:
- Includes data and nature of the child's response
- Clearly recorded
- Data should be easily accessible

Seek referrals when:
- There are identified issues outside area of professional training
- Action plans are solid & well implemented but have poor results
- More extensive assessment is needed
- There is disagreement among adult team members

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