Strategies for Communicating With Parents

Resource Bundle

I. Strategies for Communicating With Parents

II. References
**What are some dos and don’ts when it comes to parent communication?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dos</th>
<th>Don’ts</th>
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<tr>
<td>Operate with sensitivity; understand that parents may have strong feelings about issues related to their child.</td>
<td>Ignore the parent’s perspective and move forward with your own plan/agenda.</td>
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<td>Be sincere and straightforward; avoid educational jargon.</td>
<td>“Sugarcoat” information, or use terminology that is unfamiliar to parents.</td>
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<td>Pause and reflect before responding to a communication. Ask the parent if you can get back to him or her at a later time, if necessary.</td>
<td>Respond when you’re tired, angry, frustrated, or upset.</td>
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<td>Ask questions to seek understanding.</td>
<td>Make assumptions. Get defensive.</td>
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<td>Listen to the parent and encourage him or her to continue talking.</td>
<td>Cut off the parent, or ignore what he or she just said and redirect the conversation to a different topic.</td>
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<td>Use neutral language and share factual evidence or observations.</td>
<td>Use language that is “loaded” or value-laden, and make generalizations about the child.</td>
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<td>Adjust your communication style, format, or tone based on the preferences of the individual parent.</td>
<td>Communicate in the same way with everyone.</td>
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<td>Respond to the parent’s affect; use emotion words to identify how you think the parent may be feeling (e.g. “Based on what you just told me, it seems like you’re feeling frustrated.”)</td>
<td>Ignore feelings and focus on saying what you want to say.</td>
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<td>Invite collaboration.</td>
<td>Tell parents what to do or blame them (or the child) for a problem.</td>
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<td>Acknowledge your own limitations; apologize for mistakes.</td>
<td>Show no vulnerability; position yourself as the expert who knows best.</td>
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<td>Paraphrase and summarize to check your own understanding of what has been said and agreed upon.</td>
<td>Assume that you understand the parent perfectly and that everyone is on the same page.</td>
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(Conderman et al., 2010; Smrekar & Cohen-Vogel, 2001)
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