



What Does your Child Care Provider Really Want to Know?



Have you ever wondered, “Should I tell our child care provider or not?” Good communication with your child’s caregiver is good for your child’s care. “It’s a lot easier to take care of a child if I know something about what’s happening in their lives,” says Joni, an experienced child care provider. “First, I like to know whether they’ve had little sleep or if they haven’t had breakfast. Sometimes when children come in who are sleepy or hungry, they misbehave and I don’t understand why. I can prevent a lot of problems by knowing this ahead of time.”

Other child care professionals say that knowing about changes in a child’s life can be valuable. “We usually see a change in children’s behavior when there is a change at home,” says Valerie, a family provider. Even positive, exciting changes in a child’s life, like moving to a big bed or a visit from an out-of-town relative, can cause children’s behavior to change. Don’t hesitate to share these changes with your child care provider. It also helps if you can talk about the stresses on your family. Stress that you feel can be felt by your child, too. When child care providers are aware of the situation, they can help your child cope with stresses. Some providers have books to share on common stressors such as parents losing a job, loss of a family member, or divorce. Sharing these things with your child’s caregiver lets you work as partners in helping your child.

Getting the Most out of a Parent-Provider Conference

More and more child care programs are offering parent conferences, just as elementary schools do. What do you need to know to make these parent conferences valuable experiences for you and your child?

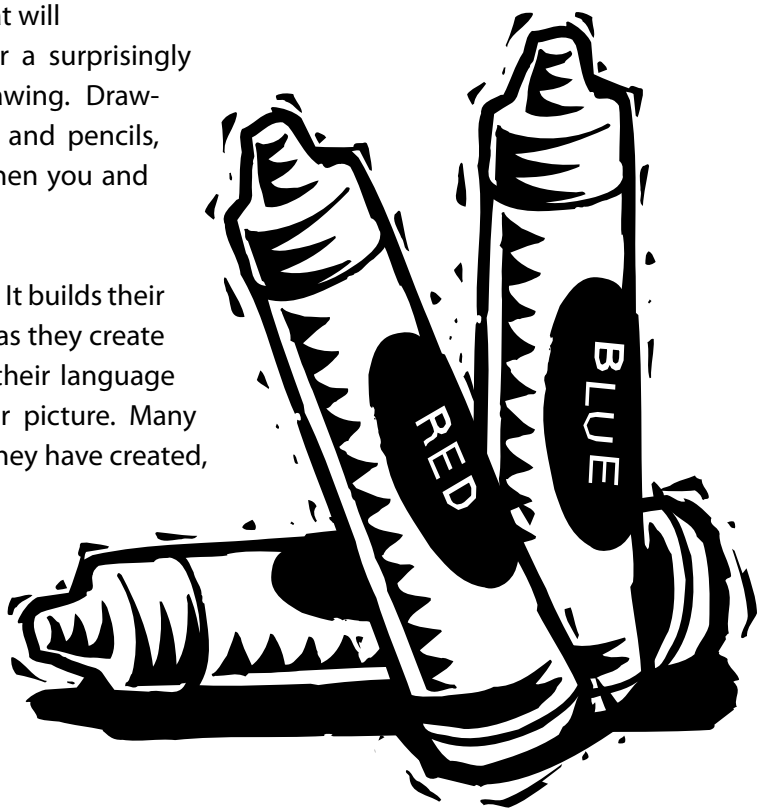
1. Use the conference time to ask any unanswered questions you may have. Since young children are often incapable of telling us what happens during the day, you may want to fill in the gaps by asking the caregiver.
2. Express your concerns in a nonjudgmental way. Start your sentences with the word I rather than the word you. Share your concerns by sharing observations. You might say, "I've noticed that Nathan doesn't drink much at home, and I have to encourage him to drink so he gets enough. What have you noticed at school?" This is better than saying, "You aren't giving my son enough water."
3. Show your child care provider that you take her seriously. Write down notes from the meeting to focus your thoughts.
4. Your child's care provider might express a concern about a particular behavior. Don't become defensive about this. Good parents are always ready to listen and learn to help their child.
5. Follow up on any recommendations from the parent conference. Your child care provider might suggest that you take your child to the pediatrician and possibly have a developmental assessment. This is important advice. The sooner any problems are caught, the simpler it is to help your child overcome them.

Drawing—A Great Activity for Young Children

What if you could carry something small in your bag that will entertain almost all bored and impatient children for a surprisingly long time? What would this secret activity be? Drawing. Drawing is simple, inexpensive fun. All you need is paper and pencils, crayons, or markers. Try pulling out a pad of paper when you and your child are stuck waiting and see how the time flies.

But drawing is far more than just a time filler for children. It builds their fine motor skills as well. It also feeds their imagination as they create scenes from their minds on paper. It can encourage their language development when you ask them to talk about their picture. Many children will tell you a long, detailed story about what they have created, building their storytelling skills as well.

So keep a pad of paper handy and when the kids need something to do, suggest drawing and watch your child gain the benefits of this simple but valuable activity.



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