

Team Members Engaging in Quality Communication

Team members frequently communicate with one another. Sometimes this communication is with practitioners, and other times the communication is between practitioners and family members. The communication can include emails, text messages, notes, or written reports. Other times the communication includes phone calls, face-to-face meetings with another person, or group meetings. All of these communications involve verbal and non-verbal messages or actions to make sure others understand the intent of a message. A few simple things can help ensure communication attempts are successful.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Supporting Quality Communication

- Take the time to decide what type of communication is best for conveying a message. What do you want to say and to whom? Is it best to put the message in writing or is a discussion or conversation needed or desired? The method should fit the purpose of the intended communication.
- Simple and clear written messages leave less room for misunderstanding. Start by explaining the reason for the message. The message should consist of simple, short statements that are jargon-free. Avoid using language that might not be understood. Include a statement of what the other person can do with the information and who to talk to if there are questions or the recipient needs clarification.
- Face-to-face, verbal communication is more appropriate for communication that needs to be interactive. This includes such things as sharing information in order to inform others, gain new insight, or make a decision. The best verbal interactions use concise, clear speech spoken in a neutral tone. Additionally, verbal interactions should always be polite, open, and professional.
- Frequent pauses during conversations invite listeners to ask clarifying questions. This gives the speaker time to be sure they are being understood by engaging in reflective-listening practices. Conversations should end with comments about how the information will be used or what the next steps will be.

A Quick Peek

Example of written communication (e-mail):

“Before our meeting next week, please read the attached document, *Changes in Intake Procedures*, sent to us from the state office. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday the 20th at 9:30 in room 280. The purpose of our meeting is to discuss how the procedures outlined in the attachment will be used in our program. Come with your ideas about how we can do this and what information or training you might need in order to implement the revised procedures. If you have question after reading, please e-mail me or come by any afternoon to see me. I look forward to a productive discussion with your good ideas.”



You'll know the practice is working if ...

- Fewer team messages and communications are misunderstood.
- Participants report that they feel they function as and are seen as a valued part of team discussions.
- Information communicated is used.

A wealth of information and activities about quality communication practices on teams in family support and early childhood services can be found in online resources such as “[Communication Strategies to Build Collaboration](#)” from the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at the University of North Carolina.