




# BE YOUR CHILD'S CHAMPION

*Discover ways you can be a champion  
for your child*





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You may have heard the expression, "It takes a village to raise a child". Aside from a child's family, there are others who may be involved in assisting and supporting you to shape the way your child develops, what your child learns and how your child grows. There may be other parents, your child's child care

provider and healthcare professional. As an expert on your child, you may need to address all types of situations with the goal of telling your child's story and making things better for your child.

This booklet is designed to help you through four parts of communicating on behalf of your child.

1. **MY THOUGHTS** can help you identify, organize and prepare your thoughts before you begin a conversation.
2. **OUR CONVERSATION** can provide helpful phrases that you might want to use during a conversation to assist you in telling your child's story.
3. **MY REFLECTIONS** can help you determine how you feel about what occurred during a conversation and how you felt a conversation went, as well as any additional questions or concerns you have.
4. **NEXT STEPS** can help you outline what needs to be done next.

Each section contains questions or phrases to get you started, as well as a place you can fill in your responses. It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer! There is also a scenario provided so you can see a similar situation.

You may want to take this booklet with you when you begin the conversation, so you can reference what you've written.

Sometimes it may help to be able to see how someone else handles a situation, which is why this booklet contains four different situations in addressing concerns on behalf of your child:

- **Child Care Provider:** Meet John who addresses a concern about his daughter with their child care provider.
- **Healthcare Professional:** Meet Angie who addresses a concern about her son with his healthcare professional
- **Another Family:** Meet Latisha and Dan who address a concern about their son with a friend's family.
- **The importance of quality child care:**  
Meet Rosa who shares with her mother why the decision for quality child care is so important.



## Before You Get Started

Here are some helpful tips to consider before you begin.

- **Keep the lines of communication open.** Make sure you share the positive feedback, as well as the concerns. When you do start a conversation, make sure each person has a chance to participate.
- **Use your ears.** Listening is just as important as sharing, as communication is a two-way street. It is important to be committed to listening and problem solving together. By working together, it offers an opportunity to develop solutions that may not have been identified by one person.
- **Share concerns.** Don't be afraid to share a concern that involves your child. Other people can be great resources to help you problem solve and learn more about how you can support your child. Reaching out to others means that everyone can come together to find a solution.
- **Consider all circumstances.** Share any family circumstances that might be affecting your child. Changes in employment, family schedules, moving, death of a pet, family member or friend, or divorce can affect children in different ways. Others may be able to provide support for your child and your family.
- **Provide details.** If you have concerns, share them as soon as possible. Be specific by providing relevant details, such as what happened and when and how your child was impacted by this event.

- **Have a purposeful conversation.** When concerns arise, it can be an emotional conversation. Be prepared to have a conversation that looks for a solution. The outcome you want is what is best for your child and perhaps also for other children and their families.
- **Think ahead.** Consider what comments the other person might have, and what your possible responses might be. How will you handle the situation if it gets heated or emotional? Think about what your own emotional “hot buttons” are and what you can do to stay calm and focused on your child.

- Taking deep breaths
- Counting to ten
- Practicing a phrase to use, such as “Can we can have this conversation at another time?” “I need some time to think about this.”
- Bringing a visual support (like picture of your child) that you can use to refocus your thoughts
- Verbally acknowledging this is a difficult conversation

- **Listen to what's being said.** Even though you might have thought ahead and anticipated what the other person's comments might be, they might surprise you. Listen to what is being said, not what you *thought* would or should be said.

# Your Workbook:

## MY THOUGHTS

Take a few moments before engaging in a conversation to consider the situation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my child is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how my child is affected \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



This is what I think I would like to happen \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **OUR CONVERSATION**

Set up a time to speak with the other person. Tell them beforehand that you have a concern you would like to share with them.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my child is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how it affects my child \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## DURING THE CONVERSATION

Can you please tell me your thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What are your suggestions to resolve this? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How can we work together to make this happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What can I do to help make this happen? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Can I get additional information? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## MY REFLECTIONS

Take a few moments to think about the conversation. Consider what the other person said and then read what you've written about the conversation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

This is how I feel about the conversation \_\_\_\_\_

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What I learned or information I gained as a result of this conversation is \_\_\_\_\_

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The additional concerns or questions I have as a result of this conversation are \_\_\_\_\_

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## NEXT STEPS

You can use this section to record what needs to be done next, by either you or the other person engaged in the conversation. If you're not sure what needs to be done next, you may want to discuss it with the other person during the conversation. That way, each of you will have a clear understanding of the situation.

To get more information, I can contact \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I will need to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I will attempt to do this \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I expect the other person to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I can expect to hear from them \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how I will know the situation has been addressed or resolved

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I need help from someone else, this is who I can contact \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# Communicating with Your Child Care Provider

Families are the child's first teacher and the expert on their child. When child care providers and families engage in the shared care and education of children, the quality of the experience is rich and nurturing for everyone.

Some of the benefits of working together and sharing information include:

- Getting a richer, more accurate “picture” of your child and family.
- Gaining valuable insights about your family values, traditions and interests so teachers can develop plans that are more meaningful to you and your children.
- Providing on-going communication which supports consistency of care between the child care provider and your home.

Families certainly have clear expectations of what they want from their child's provider, but have families considered what they can do to strengthen that partnership?

Although each child care provider may be different, the following are a few helpful suggestions that will enhance and strengthen your partnership.

**Choose Quality.** Selecting a quality child care provider, like one that is licensed and certified by the Department of Public Welfare (DPW), and participate with Keystone STARS for example, can mean staff have special education and training in providing the best environments for your child. (For more information on selecting a quality child care provider and Keystone STARS, please visit the PA Promise for Children website at [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com)).

**Paperwork with a purpose.** This paperwork may sometimes seem not important, but these important forms help to ensure that kids are safe and to help maintain quality programs. These forms also assure that in an emergency the provider has the information they need to help your child. Those child care providers who are licensed & certified by DPW must have a complete child file as defined by DPW. This file must include:

- **An agreement** that specifies your charges per day or week, arrival and departure, persons to whom your child can be released, services to be provided by the facility, and date of admission;
- **Parent Consent & Emergency Contact Form** that includes all of the important information needed to be used in an emergency;
- **An initial health report** to be updated which will include your child's immunizations.
- You should also receive information (such as a Family Handbook) that may include an **acknowledgement that you have read the information.**
- Some centers may ask you to complete a **Pre-Enrollment Questionnaire** that will enable center staff to get to know you and your child.

**Walk your child to his/her classroom each day.** Help your child prepare for his/her day by following established classroom protocol such as taking off your child's coat, signing your child with the sign-in sheet, helping your child wash his/her hands upon entering the room, sharing information about your child's evening or morning if it might affect your child's day, etc.

**Call the provider if your child will not be attending on a scheduled day.** By letting the provider know your child will not be attending, the provider can then adjust staff to accommodate the change in ratios between teacher and child. (This may vary from provider to provider.)

**Update contracts and emergency forms.** In case of emergency, your child care provider should have up-to-date contact information with all current information. Anytime you have a change in your contact information, notify your provider. This information may include changes in: address, home or work telephone numbers, employers, physicians and/or dentists, insurance information, emergency contact, and any other important information. You should leave a current emergency telephone number if the number is different from the emergency contact form.

**Check for current information.** Updates or changes on class activities may be posted on bulletin boards or a specific area designated by your child care provider. In addition, when you share how you have extended some of the ideas at home it helps your child care provider learn how what's being taught in the class-room is being used at home. You can also ask about themes or activities that can be done at home to support what your child is learning in the classroom. You can also check out the Learning is Everywhere Calendar at [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com) to check out some fun activities you can do at home.

**Keep on top of supplies.** Provide a complete extra set of clothes for each season, labeled with the child's name and check monthly for size and any needed replacement items. Ensure your child has enough supplies such as diapers and wipes for the day (if applicable), as well as formula or other needed supplies. If your child is working on toilet learning, dress for ease of independence in toileting—no leotards or tights for girls or overalls for boys and girls. If your child's provider requires it, make sure the child's sheets, bedding and other napping items are taken home weekly, laundered, and then promptly returned.

**Keep in touch with your child's teacher.** Ask how your child's day went, any difficulties that came up, or things you should be aware of while at home. Is there available a daily activities record for your child that you can take home?

**Dress your children according to the weather.** Hats, mittens, coats and appropriate footwear are required for winter and lighter weight clothing for the summer. Scarves, hats that tie under the chin, mittens with strings, and coats or jackets with long drawstrings can present a strangulation hazard. Try to avoid outerwear that is unsafe for your child.

**Leave all toys and any valuable items at home.** When children bring toys from home it may be difficult to understand "sharing" or items be lost or broken. However, a security item may be acceptable throughout the day in order to assist the child's emotional development. If your child is having difficulty leaving their favorite toy at home, talk with your child care provider about their rules and preferences and get their ideas of how you can help your child to leave their items at home.

**Pick up your child based on the schedule agreed upon by you and your provider.** Your child care provider understands that emergencies occur, but if you are unable to arrive by the time scheduled, contact the provider. If you need earlier hours than scheduled, speak with your provider to see if that change can be made.



# Communicating with Your Child Care Provider — Meet John

Sometimes it may help to be able to see how someone else handles a situation. That's why we've provided you with John's situation.

John is a working single dad with a two year old daughter who recently moved to the toddler room. His daughter cries and clings to him when John drops her off at child care, and on several occasions, John has been late to work because of this.



With John's situation, you'll be able to see how John used the questions in the workbook to identify the problem, what is working and what he'd like to happen (My Thoughts), how he prepares for the conversation (Setting up the Conversation), what happens during the conversation, and the results of the conversation (My Reflections). You can also see the next steps John takes to resolve the situation. The boxes reflect what John wrote in his workbook.

## WORKBOOK: MY THOUGHTS

Take a few moments before engaging in a conversation to consider the situation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my child is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how my child is affected \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I think I would like to happen \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

# JOHN'S THOUGHTS

## What is Working

- *The child care center is close to my house and work.*
- *They accept Child Care Subsidy and are a Keystone STARS center.*
- *I like the director, my daughter really liked her old class, and I really like her teachers.*
- *My daughter seems to be learning so much and has friends in her class.*
- *When I pick my daughter up, she seems happy.*

## My Concern

- *Now that my daughter has moved to a new class, she doesn't seem to like coming to school.*
- *She cries and clings to me—it even starts before we even leave for the center.*
- *It's hard for me to leave in the morning and I have been late to work several times.*
- *I don't think that the new teacher is helping my daughter in the morning when she cries and gets upset.*
- *When I pick up my daughter in the afternoon, there is a different teacher, so I don't have the chance to talk to the morning teacher.*
- *I hate leaving my daughter when she's so upset—it ruins my day at work and I have difficulty concentrating.*
- *I wish someone would recognize that I am struggling!*

### *What I see in my child*

- *My daughter used to love school, but now she is crying and doesn't want me to leave. She seems so unhappy and doesn't seem to like her new teacher.*
- *She is so sad when I leave, and I am afraid of what this is doing to her.*

### *This is how it affects my child*

- *She is unhappy and I am afraid that she won't like school anymore.*



### *This is what I have done or tried to do*

- *I tell my daughter that I have to get to work on time or I will lose my job, but she doesn't cooperate.*
- *I remind my daughter that she likes school and that she can still see her old teachers.*
- *I try to tell my daughter that she will get to know her new teachers and that they are nice.*

### *The results I have gotten*

- *Nothing I have tried has helped. My daughter still cries and clings to me.*

### *This is what I think I would like to happen*

- *I would like for my daughter to begin to like coming to her classroom again and have fun like she used to do.*
- *I would like help from my daughter's teacher so my daughter can begin her day without tears.*
- *I would like not to have to worry that my daughter is unhappy while I'm at work.*

## **JOHN'S SETTING UP THE CONVERSATION**

When John picks up his daughter, he speaks with the child care Director about his concerns. He mentions his daughter is having a really hard time in the mornings with the new room and would like to talk about can be done to help, but John does not have time in the morning to talk to the teacher. (See *My Concern*)

The Director suggests that she, John, and his daughter's new teacher meet to talk about what can be done. They set a meeting time for a little earlier than drop off time for the following morning. The Director also offers to put some information in his daughter's cubby about transition.

## **WORKBOOK: DURING THE CONVERSATION**

- Can you please tell me your thoughts?
- What are your suggestions to resolve this?
- How can we work together to make this happen?
- What can I do to help make this happen?
- Can I get additional information?

## JOHN'S CONVERSATION WITH THE STAFF

John lets the Director & teacher know why he selected this particular child care center and how well his daughter had been doing in her old classroom. (See *What is Working.*)

John shares that his daughter seems very unhappy and no longer seems to enjoy coming to school and the situation is causing a lot of stress. (See *What I see in my child.*) John says that he wants to work with the staff to figure out how they can help his daughter like school again and help him be able to get to work on time. (See *This is what I would like to happen.*)

The teacher had no idea that John is so frustrated. She tells John that she frequently sees children having difficulty when they first move to a new classroom and what John and his daughter are going through seems normal. She also points out that John is doing a lot of the right things with his daughter to support this transition, like staying with his daughter for a few minutes and telling his daughter that he will be back after work.

The teachers admits that John's daughter is typically a little upset after John leaves, but it doesn't last long. Both the teacher and the Director thank John for bringing these issues to their attention and start thinking of ideas to help with John's concerns.

The teacher suggests that when John and his daughter come in, John walks his daughter to the group so his daughter can get comfortable engaging with the other children. The teacher offers to try to make sure there are some of his daughter's favorite toys available and to help by picking up his daughter or holding her. The Director offers



to change John's contracted times for drop off by 15 minutes earlier, so that there is more time for the transition. She also offers to provide written information for things John can do with easing drop off times.

In addition, the teacher offers for the next week to send John a text message or leave a message on his cell phone when his daughter gets settled, so John knows that his daughter is okay while he is at work. The teacher also offers to take pictures of his daughter and classmates having fun and post them in the room and give a few to John. This way, John can remind himself on difficult mornings that his daughter is learning new things and is not sad all day.

The teacher and director thank John for bringing up this issue and agree to keep in touch with each other.

# WORKBOOK: MY REFLECTIONS

## JOHN'S REFLECTIONS

John feels really uncomfortable at first talking with the teacher. He is surprised when the teacher mentions that she did not know that John and his daughter are having such a hard time. After the conversation, John feels so much better. He learns that the child care staff is willing to be flexible with the drop off times for his daughter, the behavior his daughter is displaying is normal, and his daughter is happy during the day.

### *What I learned*

- *Difficulty with the transition to a new classroom is normal.*
- *I am doing some things right to help my daughter.*
- *The teacher and Director do care--they just didn't recognize how frustrated I was.*
- *I can make adjustments to my daughter's pick up and drop off times. This means I can spend more time with my daughter in the mornings, helping her get adjusted to her new classroom if I need to. I just need to talk to the director and she will check and see if it is possible.*
- *I can help my daughter get engaged by bringing her to the group before I start to say goodbye.*
- *The teacher is willing to help my daughter separate by holding her and are comforting her so I can leave for work and not be late.*
- *That I can have a difficult conversation and it is ok!*



### *What I need more information about*

- *I realize I could still use some ideas of how I can stay calm and not show my daughter how upset I am when she is upset. In the information they sent home with me, I read that if I got upset, it could make it harder. It still makes me sad to see her cry—then we both start to cry or I just get so frustrated and afraid I am going to be late that I am short with her.*
- *I need more information on what I can do to help us get started from home easier.*

## **WORKBOOK: NEXT STEPS**

You can use this section to record what needs to be done next, by either you or the other person engaged in the conversation. If you're not sure what needs to be done next, you may want to discuss it with the other person during the conversation. That way, each of you will have a clear understanding of the situation.

To get more information, I can contact \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I will need to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I will attempt to do this \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I expect the other person to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I can expect to hear from them \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how I will know the situation has been addressed or resolved

\_\_\_\_\_

If I need help from someone else, this is who I can contact

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## JOHN'S NEXT STEPS

### *My Next Steps:*

- *Keep talking with the teachers and the Director if I continue to have concerns.*
- *I need to get up 15 minutes earlier and get our stuff organized the night before, so it is easier to get out of the door in the morning.*
- *I need to try to get my daughter closer to the teacher & group before I leave.*
- *I need to give the teacher some suggestions of what my daughter likes, so there can be ready a toy or activity.*
- *I need to calmly tell my daughter that she is ok and that I will be back at the end of the day to pick her up.*
- *I noticed there is another parent who drops off her daughter at the same time and her daughter is also having a hard time, but that parent seems so calm! I am going to try to talk with her to find out how she does that.*

In the next few weeks, John, the classroom teacher and the Director worked together to help John's daughter with the transition to a new classroom. At first, it was difficult, but the teacher quickly engaged John's daughter when they entered the classroom. Getting up earlier in the morning and preparing the night before really helped John be able to get ready quicker in the mornings, and he was able to spend a few extra minutes with his daughter in the new classroom. After a few weeks, John realized that his daughter is more comfortable entering her classroom, and even has a friend she looks for each morning. During the day, John frequently looks at the photo of his daughter playing in the classroom to remind himself that both he and his daughter are doing great.

# ■ Communicating with Your Child's Healthcare Professional

From well baby visits to health emergencies that occur in a moment's notice, establishing good communication with your child's health care professional can ensure that you are understanding the options and treatment for your child, and that your child's health-care professional understands your concerns.

There are several key items to consider when communicating with your child's healthcare professional.



## **Choose the “right” healthcare professional for your child.**

Don't underestimate the importance of choosing your child's healthcare professional. They will shape the feelings your child has of healthcare visits. If your child is in need of specialty care or if there are a lack of providers in your area, this could be challenging. However, doing a little homework prior to deciding on a provider may make for a more positive experience you and your child.

**Ask around and get referrals.** Finding the right healthcare professional for your child can be a confusing and scary time. You may be faced with many choices—a clinic, a pediatrician, a family doctor, a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant—or you may feel as if your options are limited.

Choosing the best healthcare professional for your child may begin before your child is born! You may want to get recommendations of friends, family members, or even the healthcare professional that provides your prenatal care.

You might also want to check with your insurance company to see if they have a physician referral number or online searchable provider feature. The last thing you want to do is find the perfect healthcare professional, only to find out that they do not accept your insurance. If your child has more than one insurance, you need to make sure that the healthcare professional will accept both insurance plans to get the maximum benefits on behalf of your child.

You will usually be able to determine if this healthcare professional is a “good fit” for your family within the first six months or so. During this time, there is a lot going on within the family adjusting to your new baby. Working with your healthcare professional during this time can help you decide if you are a good match for each other. If after a few visits, you are uncomfortable then don’t be afraid to change!

**How do you know if you’ve found the right healthcare professional?** The right healthcare professional will be a **good listener**. If you have a concern, the healthcare professional should take the time to answer your questions or provide a resource where you can find more information. Your child’s healthcare professional should be **respectful, value your input** and understand that you are the primary expert on your child and know your child better than anyone else. Your healthcare professional should **be able and willing to communicate** in a style that you can understand, while being sensitive to language, educational or cultural differences. A medical office with **polite, friendly nurses and office staff** is a good place to take children because often these are the people who you will deal with in addition to the primary healthcare professional.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR CHILD'S HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONAL.

- What are their regular hours? Do they have extended hours on evenings and/or weekends?
- If they do have weekend or evening hours, what types of appointments will they schedule, such as sick visits or well-child checks?
- What is their policy regarding filling out of physical and other forms? For families of children with special needs and/or involved in sports, this may be an important factor.
- What is their philosophy or policy regarding referrals to specialists? Families may want a healthcare professional who is comfortable with referring to outside specialists, but who also views their role as helping to coordinate care across specialties.
- Does the practice use nurse practitioners and/or physician assistants? How are they used within the practice? Ask yourself if you are comfortable with this arrangement.
- If the office uses an automated phone tree or directory, is it helpful? Is it easy to use?
- Do they have separate rooms for sick visits versus well checks? If not, and your child has a particular type of disability or special need that would make this important, would the office offer an accommodation for your child?
- How do they handle insurance claims and billing? Do they accept the type of insurance you have for your child? Do they bill on a sliding fee scale if necessary?
- How do they handle calls after hours? Can you reach or speak to a physician if you need to?

**Preparing for a visit.** If you know you have a lot of questions when you schedule the appointment, let the office know so they can schedule accordingly. The healthcare professional may prefer to schedule a longer visit, have a conversation on the phone before or after your scheduled appointment, or refer you to a nurse or someone else in the practice to spend more time answering your questions.

Write down any questions or concerns so you don't forget. For example, prior to a well-child check, ask what they will be screening for, what immunizations your child will be receiving, etc. This will help you be better prepared and have appropriate questions ready.

If your child is sick or seems to have developmental issues that are of concern, have a list of things you've noticed, or complaints your child has expressed that you can discuss with the healthcare professional. Before the visit, ask other adults who care for your child what they may have noticed. All of this information may be helpful to the healthcare professional in diagnosing or making referrals. Don't be afraid to ask for a referral for a second opinion, especially for issues like surgery, concerns about a child's development, or a new diagnosis or treatment plan.

Parents often have a need to share medical information with those that are in charge of their children at child care or school. The CD 51 form, available on-line at the DPW website<sup>1</sup> or from your care provider has questions about medical conditions which a child care provider should be aware of to provide the best care daily or on an emergency basis. The Pennsylvania Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics' ECELS program<sup>2</sup> can help providers, health professionals and families share this important information with further documents as necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.dpw.state.pa.us/partnersproviders/childcareearlyed/003671041.htm](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/partnersproviders/childcareearlyed/003671041.htm)

<sup>2</sup> [www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org](http://www.ecels-healthychildcarepa.org)

Don't ignore your instincts! If you have concerns regarding your child, express them to your healthcare professional. Try to be as concrete as possible and give examples. Every child is unique and grows and develops at his or her own pace, but if you have concerns, then share them. You know your child best, and health care professionals rely upon you to tell them concerns you may have. If you are not satisfied with a recommendation you receive, it's okay to ask for a second opinion.

If you should switch healthcare professionals, don't forget to request that your child's records be transferred to the new healthcare professional. Usually this can be as simple as filing out a form at the new healthcare professional's office, but contact both the old office and the new one to make sure.

**Whenever a medication is prescribed.** Before you leave the office, make sure you know the dosage amounts, the times to give the medication to your child and any other special restrictions (like taking medicine with food, or avoiding particular foods while taking the medicine). Make sure you can either read the prescription, or write it down yourself and confirm with the healthcare professional before you leave.

Ask if this will interfere with any medications your child is already taking, including vitamins, herbal treatments, or over the counter medications. You can also ask this of the pharmacist. Ask what the anticipated side effects are, and what you should do if your child exhibits the side effects. You can also ask this of the pharmacist.

Before you leave the pharmacy with your medication, check and see if what you have matches what the healthcare professional ordered. The pharmacist may provide you with a generic medication. It is ok to ask if you are not sure.



If you are nursing your baby, and you are taking medications, make sure your doctor knows what medications you are taking.

**Where to find additional information.** During well-child checks, ask your healthcare professional what you should expect from your child, plus any words of advice or tips that will help you understand and be aware of what should be coming next with your child.

There are many books, websites and videos available which can provide information about specific milestones in your child's development and when you can expect them. Ask your child's healthcare professional, early learning provider, or a local librarian to recommend their favorites! There are also many great programs and resources available for children who are found to have developmental delays or health issues.

If you have questions about your child's development, contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288. The CONNECT Helpline assists families in locating resources and providing information regarding child development for children ages birth to age 5. In addition, CONNECT can assist by making a direct link to a local Early Intervention program or local preschool Early Intervention program.

Check out the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standard<sup>3</sup> for milestone recommendations your child may reach. The Learning is Everywhere Calendar<sup>4</sup> can provide everyday activities which align with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards and will support your child's early learning.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/standards/8709/standards%2C\\_assessmentUand\\_curriculum/522220](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/standards/8709/standards%2C_assessmentUand_curriculum/522220)

<sup>4</sup> <http://paprom.convio.net/site/PageServer?pagename=LIECIndex>

# Communicating with Your Health Care Provider – Meet Angie

Sometimes it may help to be able to see how someone else handles a situation. That's why we've provided you with Angie's situation.

Angie is a working single mom with a two year old son. Her son has experienced a lot of ear infections and she fears he has another one. She has concerns that she should be doing something else to help her son, but she does not know what else could be done.

With Angie's situation, you'll be able to see how Angie used the questions in the workbook to identify the problem, what is working and what she'd like to happen (*My Thoughts*), how she prepares for the conversation (*Setting up the Conversation*), what happens during the conversation, and the results of the conversation (*My Reflections*). You can also see the next steps Angie takes to resolve the situation. The boxes reflect what Angie wrote in her workbook.

## WORKBOOK: MY THOUGHTS

Take a few moments before the visit with the healthcare professional to consider the situation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my child is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is how my child is affected \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I think I would like to happen \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## ANGIE'S THOUGHTS

### *What is Working*

- *Other than the ear infections, my son seems healthy.*
- *My son's healthcare professional is nice and seems smart.*
- *The treatment that is prescribes does clear up the ear infection.*

### *My Concern*

- *My son keeps getting ear infections and they are really painful for him.*
- *We keep doing the same thing when he has an infection, and he keeps getting them.*
- *I think that we need to do something different to treat his ear infections.*
- *I can't help but wonder if with all the ear infections, if my son can hear well enough to learn what he needs to learn at this age.*

### *What I see in my child*

- *He tugs on his ear, tells me it hurt. He cries and sometimes does not want to eat or drink.*
- *He has a much shorter temper when his ear hurts—it seems like the smallest thing makes him throw a temper tantrum.*

### *This is how it affects my child*

- *He is in pain and his behavior is worse when his ears hurt.*
- *It seems like for the past year, either he has an ear infection, or is getting over one.*

### *This is what I have done or tried to do*

- *I take him to the doctor right away now when I think he has an ear infection.*
- *I follow the doctor's instructions for treatment.*

### *The results I have gotten*

- *The treatment does clear up the infection, but then it just happens again a few weeks later.*

### *This is what I think I would like to happen*

- *For the doctor to do something else to treat the ear infection.*
- *For my son to stop getting ear infections.*

## **ANGIE'S SETTING UP THE CONVERSATION**

When Angie calls to schedule the visit for her son with her health care professional, she tells them she thinks her son has an ear infection. She also lets them know that this has been an ongoing issue and that she would like to talk to the doctor about other options in treating her son's ear infections. (*See My Concern*)

The scheduler lets Angie know that she is going to have a nurse call her back to get some more information on her concerns, and schedules an appointment for later that day.

## **WORKBOOK: DURING THE CONVERSATION**

- Can you please tell me your thoughts?
- What are your suggestions to resolve this?
- How can we work together to make this happen?
- What can I do to help make this happen?
- Can I get additional information?

## ANGIE'S CONVERSATION WITH THE STAFF

When the nurse calls, Angie lets her know that her son keeps getting ear infections and that even though the treatment works, they keep reoccurring. (*See What I see in my child.*) She lets the nurse know that she is concerned that something else should be done to treat the ear infections. (*See What I see in my child.*) The nurse lets Angie know that the doctor is going to want to know how many ear infections her son has had and what has been prescribed. She let Angie know that she will alert the doctor of Angie's concern so the doctor can review that information in her sons chart. She also lets Angie know there is information in the waiting room about ear infections that Angie can get when she comes in for the visit. The nurse thanks Angie for letting the scheduler know of her concern, because it helped them to make sure that the doctor would have the information needed to discuss her concern. (*See What is Working.*)

When she sees the doctor, she lets her know that she is very concerned that although the treatment for the ear infections seems to be working, her son keeps getting them. It is hard for Angie to see her son hurting and her son's behavior is more difficult to manage when she is sick. She also shares her concern that the ear infections may be damaging his hearing, or at least affecting it so he's unable to properly hear well enough to learn. Angie wants to know if there's something else that can be done.

The doctor listens to Angie's concerns and lets her know that she did review the chart to make sure that she had all of the information. She lets Angie know that she understands the concerns and thanks her for bringing it to her attention. The doctor lets Angie know that there are other options and talks to her about the pros and cons of the options. The doctor provides a recommendation and also suggests that Angie can seek a second opinion. The doctor offers assistance in getting a second opinion.

The doctor also asks Angie about the behavior that she is seeing her son exhibit. She lets Angie know that illness can influence behavior and that the types of behaviors she is seeing with her son are typical for children her age. She also reassures Angie that she is correct to make the connection between his behavior and his ear infections, and that it is not surprising that her son is exhibiting more difficult behaviors when he doesn't feel well. The doctor gives Angie some suggestions of what she can do to help her child with his behavior.

## WORKBOOK: MY REFLECTIONS

### ANGIE'S REFLECTIONS

Angie feels a little concerned that she is not sure exactly what she wants to happen. All she knows is that what they are doing was not working. This is also the first time that she "questions" a doctor. She is not sure how that is going to go. After the conversation, Angie feels that she has a plan and feels even more comfortable in her choice of a health care provider. She is also happy to realize that her doctor will give her suggestions on how to deal with her son's behavior. She is happy that her doctor also addresses that concern. She does not expect that.

#### *What I learned*

- *If I have a concern about my son's medical care or health, I can talk to his doctor about it.*
- *That if I let them know of my concern when I schedule the appointment, it is helpful for the staff.*
- *Getting a second opinion for medical treatment is being a good advocate for my son.*
- *There are some things I can do to help my child's behavior.*

### *What I need more information about*

- *Who I can go to that accepts my insurance for a second opinion.*

## **WORKBOOK: NEXT STEPS**

You can use this section to record what needs to be done next, by either you or the other person engaged in the conversation. If you're not sure what needs to be done next, you may want to discuss it with the other person during the conversation. That way, each of you will have a clear understanding of the situation.

To get more information, I can contact \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I will need to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I will attempt to do this \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I expect the other person to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I can expect to hear from them \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



This is how I will know the situation has been addressed or resolved

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If I need help from someone else, this is who I can contact

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## ANGIE'S NEXT STEPS

### *My Next Steps:*

- *Speak with the nurse to get suggestions of where I can go for a second opinion.*
- *Get a referral to and schedule an appointment with the doctor for the second opinion.*
- *Follow up to make sure that my son's medical records are shared with the second doctor.*
- *Talk to my child's teacher to let them know what is happening with my son's ears.*
- *Reconnect with the first doctor to review the second opinion and decide what the next steps will be.*

In the next few weeks, Angie schedules the second opinion; speaks with her son's teacher about the plan so school is aware of the situation, and arranges for the referrals and medical records transfer. She feels much better about the situation, because she has a plan in place and is feeling confident that she is being a good advocate for her son.

## ■ COMMUNICATING WITH ANOTHER FAMILY

As family members, we are thrilled when our children make new friends, are invited to play dates, birthday parties and other events. Family members learn so much from each other by sharing experiences, problem solving together, and celebrating the joys and successes of parenting.

Connecting with other families is beneficial to both children and parents. These relationships can establish bonds of friendship that can last a lifetime, provide support through difficult times, and create opportunities to share ideas, goals and experiences.

However, these relationships can also bring up issues that you might never have imagined. A difference in values and parenting styles can be difficult to navigate at times. Sometimes there can be a need to have a conversation that requires more diplomacy than you would have ever imagined necessary to simply plan a play date!

Families have different values, goals and traditions. Often these go unspoken, not because they are a secret, but more likely because they are so much a part of how we view the world, that it doesn't occur to us that others may do things differently! What is important to one family may not be important to another.



**Keep an open mind** and try not to assume that the way your family does something is the only way or the correct way. Even though someone has a different value or parenting style than your own, it doesn't make them right or wrong. Just as there is more than one type of child, there is more than one way to parent.

**It is important for children to know and understand that families are different.** Different homes might have different rules, and it is important to be respectful of others.

**Address the issue without judgment and focus on your child.**

As a parent, you may encounter situations with other families that you feel puts your child in a health and/or safety risk. If this is the case, then it needs to be addressed, but doing so without judgment and focusing on the child may mean the outcome is a positive one.

**Speak up, especially with a health or safety concern.** When you feel there is a health or safety concern, it is even more important to address the situation. Issues such as car safety, bike safety, eating of unhealthy foods, and firearms safety can make even the savviest parent want to avoid the play date or situation all together. While that is understandable, the health and safety of a child should always be most important.

**It is better to have a difficult conversation than to not have the conversation at all.** Not every conversation will go the way you hope. However, if you keep your child as the focus and keep in mind your role as a parent, the conversation may go much better than you anticipated!

**Stay focused.** During a conversation with another parent about a sensitive issue, it is important to focus on your child. As a parent, your role is to keep your child safe, healthy and to support their positive and healthy relationships with their peers. While it may be difficult to remember, your role is not to change another parent's or child's behavior!

# COMMUNICATING WITH ANOTHER FAMILY

## MEET LATISHA AND DAN

Sometimes it may help to be able to see how someone else handles a situation. That's why we've provided you with Latisha and Dan's situation.

Latisha and her husband, Dan, have a four year old son, Nathan. Nathan and his neighborhood friend, Bruce, occasionally get together to ride their new Big Wheels®, and sometimes Bruce's grandfather takes the boys to the neighborhood park to ride. However, they have noticed that Bruce's family does not require him to wear a helmet when he rides his Big Wheel®. Latisha and Dan have a very clear rule in their house that if something has wheels then a helmet must be worn!

Latisha and Dan know this is one conversation that could be ripe for conflict. They understand and support Bruce's family's authority to set rules for him. However, they would like Bruce's family to support their helmet rule if Nathan is in their care. In addition, they feel that if Bruce is in their care, he needs to follow the helmet rule. Latisha and Dan are struggling with how to approach this without alienating Bruce's family.

With Latisha and Dan's situation, you'll be able to see how they used the questions in the workbook to identify the problem, what is working and what they'd like to happen (My Thoughts), how they prepare for the conversation (Setting up the Conversation), what happens during the conversation, and the results of the conversation (My Reflections). You can also see the next steps Latisha and Dan take to resolve the situation. The boxes reflect what Latisha and Dan wrote in their workbook.

## WORKBOOK: MY THOUGHTS

Take a few moments before engaging in a conversation to consider the situation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my child is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how my child is affected \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I think I would like to happen \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## LATISHA AND DAN'S THOUGHTS

### *What is Working*

- *Nathan and Bruce have become fast friends and Nathan loves going to the park with Bruce and his grandfather to ride Big Wheels®!*
- *Bruce's family are neighbors, so it's easy to have Bruce come to our house, or have Nathan go to Bruce's when the boys want to spend time together.*
- *Next year, when the boys enter kindergarten, they will be in the same school, so their friendship could last for some time.*

### *My Concern*

- *Nathan will not receive a clear message that our rule is to wear his helmet.*
- *Bruce's family may not understand why we feel it's important that Bruce should wear a helmet when he's in our care.*
- *In explaining how and why it's important for Nathan to wear a helmet, we may offend Bruce's family.*

### *What I see in my child*

- *Nathan loves being outdoors and can be a bit of a daredevil. We want to support Nathan's sense of adventure, but keep him safe so he doesn't get hurt.*
- *Nathan readily accepts that he should wear a helmet when he rides his Big Wheel®.*
- *He also accepts that both Mommy and Daddy wear a helmet when we bike as a family.*
- *When he sees someone on a bike without a helmet, he points out that it's not safe.*

### *This is how it affects my child*

- *Right now, Nathan doesn't know any different—helmets are just part of what we do, and we don't want him to question that.*
- *With a helmet, he's safer than if he wasn't wearing one.*

### *This is what I have done or tried to do*

- *Nathan always wears a helmet, but talking to other families about our rules is new to us!*

### *This is what I think I would like to happen*

- *When Nathan is with other families, we feel he needs to follow the safety rules we have established in our family.*
- *We want other families to support our safety rules with Nathan, even if we aren't there!*
- *If Bruce comes to our house to play, we feel that he needs to follow the safety rules of our family.*

## **LATISHA AND DAN'S SETTING UP THE CONVERSATION**

Latisha and Dan were very uncomfortable to have this conversation with Bruce's family—but they knew it had to happen. Nathan was so excited to play with Bruce and they did not want their discomfort to be a barrier to him having fun with a friend.

### **WORKBOOK: DURING THE CONVERSATION**

- Can you please tell me your thoughts?
- What are your suggestions to resolve this?
- How can we work together to make this happen?
- What can I do to help make this happen?
- Can I get additional information?

## **LATISHA AND DAN'S CONVERSATION WITH THE BRUCE'S GRANDFATHER**

One afternoon, Latisha and Dan were able to speak with Bruce's grandfather. They pointed out how much fun the two boys were having, and how well they played together. They conveyed how much fun Nathan had at the park with Bruce and his grandfather. (*See What is Working.*)

They pointed out how fast and sometimes out of control Nathan tended to be on his Big Wheel®. Latisha and Dan told Bruce's grandfather of their family rule that if something had wheels, a helmet was required, and expressed why this safety rule is in place. (*See What I see in my child.*)

Latisha and Dan asked Bruce's grandfather if he would be willing to help with Nathan and their safety rule. They asked Bruce's



grandfather if he noticed Nathan was not wearing his helmet to please remind him that his parents said that he always had to wear a helmet. Latisha and Dan also said that if Bruce was under their care, he would need to wear a helmet while riding Big Wheel® or bike. (*See This is what I would like to happen.*)

Bruce's grandfather said he had never thought of the Big Wheel® as a bike, and that when he was raising his children, helmets weren't even available! He also stated he hadn't known how important it was to wear one while riding something like a Big Wheel®. Latisha and Dan thanked him for respecting her family rule and acknowledged that a lot has changed over time with safety rules. They mentioned that Nathan was an adventurous boy and they were sometimes concerned for his safety. Latisha and Dan wanted to do everything they could to instill some respect for safety rules while he was young. They mentioned that they understood that different families have different rules, but this was one that they felt Nathan always has to follow. Bruce's grandfather didn't necessarily feel the same way, but respected their family's rule, stating that he would make sure Nathan kept his helmet on.

## WORKBOOK: MY REFLECTIONS

This is how I feel about the conversation \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I learned or information I gained as a result of this

conversation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The additional concerns or questions I have as a result of this conversation are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

***How I feel about the conversation***

- Neither of us feels that Bruce’s grandfather really “buys into” why wearing a helmet is important, but we feel that we made our safety rule known without offending Bruce’s grandfather.
- We also feel that we made an important step in conveying to Bruce’s grandfather why it’s important to wear a helmet.

***What I learned***

- Although Bruce’s grandfather didn’t see eye-to-eye with our rules, he was willing to respect them.

***The additional concerns or questions I have***

- Even though Bruce’s grandfather said he’d make sure Nathan was wearing his helmet, we want to be sure that it gets back on if he stops to play at the playground or stops for a snack, then returns to his Big Wheel®.

## WORKBOOK: NEXT STEPS

You can use this section to record what needs to be done next, by either you or the other person engaged in the conversation. If you're not sure what needs to be done next, you may want to discuss it with the other person during the conversation. That way, each of you will have a clear understanding of the situation.

To get more information, I can contact \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I will need to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I will attempt to do this \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I expect the other person to do next is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is when I can expect to hear from them \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how I will know the situation has been addressed or resolved

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I need help from someone else, this is who I can contact

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## LATISHA AND DAN'S NEXT STEPS

### *My Next Steps:*

- *Get a copy of the bicycle helmet safety pamphlet from The Bicycle Helmet Safety Institute<sup>5</sup> about why it's important for everyone to wear a helmet. We can give this to Bruce's family.*
- *Offer for one of us to go to the park with Bruce's grandfather and the boys for awhile to show how to get the helmet on properly after it's been removed to play at the park.*



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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.helmets.or/pamget.htm>

# ■ COMMUNICATING WHY QUALITY CHILD CARE IS IMPORTANT

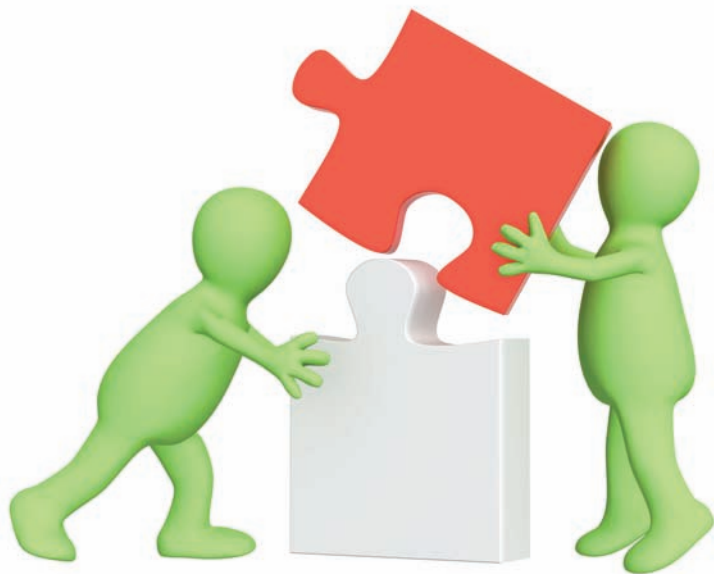
Every day, families make many decisions related to the care and safety of their children—from watching TV, to selecting the right toys, to what types of activities are a right fit. One of the most important decisions families make is where their children will receive child care services. It can seem that everyone has an opinion of what is best for your child! And your friends, family and colleagues may want your opinion as well!

You take the time to research what quality is and to find a quality child care provider that is best for your family. But you may need to talk to others about why you choose a particular child care provider. How can you convey that the provider you chose is the right one for your family?

There are several ways you can explain what you are looking for in a quality child care or early learning program. When talking to friends and family about your child care choices, remember to share the elements of quality most important to you!

- **A Good Match.** Quality early learning programs should be a good match for both your child and your family. You'll feel that you can talk with the provider and/or your child's teacher, and that you can trust them as a partner in your child's growth and learning.

***Why is this important?*** Quality providers will welcome your thoughts and experiences as a parent or family member and will see themselves as a partner to help your child grow and



develop. This will help your child feel more secure, and you can feel that your child is in a positive and supporting learning environment.

- **Well-Educated Teachers:** Quality early learning programs have friendly child care teachers who are trained professionals with an education in child development. They may also participate in Keystone STARS, a voluntary program that awards a STAR 1 to STAR 4 to child care, Head Start, and select PA Pre-K Counts programs.

***Why is this important?*** Qualified and better educated providers are more likely to develop strong and responsive relationships with the child in their care, which affects each child's motivation to learn, interact with their peers, and do well later in school. They also recruit teachers and aides who reflect the cultural diversity of the children and families they serve.

- **Family Engagement:** Quality early learning programs talk with parents and families about how their children are learning and suggest ways families can help children learn at home.

***Why is this important?*** Quality providers involve and inform parents and families, including them in what their child is learning, and sharing with them their children's progress and development on a regular basis.

- **Classrooms:** Quality early learning programs have smaller class sizes which helps children receive more individual attention. This creates a comfortable environment where children can build a strong bond with teachers and fellow students.

***Why is this important?*** Quality teachers get to know the children well, which can help in planning learning activities for the children. Children also get to know each other and the teachers, and are comfortable, happy, and energized in the classroom.

- **Activities & Curriculum:** Quality early learning providers use research-based standards to provide fun and activities which match a child's age and development (like language, math, science, art, and music). This provides learning experiences in all areas of a child's development.

***Why is this important?*** Children have FUN while learning in quality early learning programs! The fun activities are intentional – what children learn is based on research and is age-appropriate learning and developmental standards. What they learn also builds on each child's interests and natural curiosity, and gives children opportunities to direct their own learning.

- **Observation and Assessment:** Quality early learning providers continually observe how and what children are learning and will adjust activities to build on what a child has learned to teach a new concept.

***Why is this important?*** A quality provider gives children a competitive edge by preparing them with skills to start school ready to learn. Children who start early, start strong!

Quality child care benefits everyone, not just a child or his or her family. When young children receive high-quality early education, they enter school ready to learn, do better in school, graduate, attend college and get better jobs. Early education saves tax dollars in special education, remediation, crime control, and public assistance, and strengthens our economy with a higher quality workforce and larger tax base.



**No matter who you talk to, EVERYBODY  
benefits from quality early education!**



# COMMUNICATING THE CHOICES TO BENEFIT YOUR CHILD

## MEET ROSA

Sometimes it is helpful to hear how someone else handled a similar situation. That is why we've provided you with Rosa's situation.

Rosa is a new mom who is going back to work when her baby, Sophia, is 10 weeks old. Rosa started doing research about child care options while she was still pregnant. She spoke to her best friends and co-workers about their arrangements and realized that these people made many different decisions. Rosa also heard about her local Child Care Information Services (CCIS), which were able to provide her with information about the different types of child care providers in her area. Rosa also had several relatives and a friend who offered to help her take care of her baby. Through her local CCIS office, Rosa learned about Keystone STARS.

When she was reading about Keystone STARS and how quality early learning is important to her daughter's development, Rosa realized that her baby would be learning as soon as she was born! She was already committed to making sure that Sophia was happy, safe and with people that cared about her. Now Rosa realized how important it was to make the best child care selection for her and Sophia, and decided that for her family, the best decision would be to choose a child care provider that would be able to provide care to her child until she would be ready for school. She thought that this decision was hard enough and didn't want to have to keep making changes in her child care arrangement as her child got older.

Rosa visited several child care providers--one that a co-worker recommended, one that a friend recommended, and two programs

she learned about from the Child Care Information Services office. Rosa also considered the offer from one of her friends to watch Sophia.

Several of the programs Rosa considered participated in Keystone STARS. When she visited each child care provider, she asked what a "typical day" would look like, and asked to see where Sophia would spend her time. She also asked questions about feeding, diapering, what they would do if Sophia cried. Rosa had questions about how they would communicate with her about Sophia's day and how she was learning and growing. It took some time for Rosa to visit the different child care providers, but she felt this was time well-spent in investing in Sophia's future!

After considering all of the options, Rosa saw that the Keystone STARS providers answered her questions in ways that made her feel comfortable about leaving Sophia in their care. She liked that they would provide her daily information about Sophia. She liked that the staff held the children while they were being fed their bottles, and she noticed that when babies cried in the room, they were picked up and comforted. After her visits, Rosa narrowed down her choices between two Keystone STARS providers and her friend.

After much consideration, she chose a Keystone STAR 4 provider who was close to her work. She was very comfortable with her choice of child care provider; however, she was not looking forward to telling Mama about her decision. Rosa's Mama had mentioned that she was really happy that Rosa's friend offered to watch the baby, and Rosa felt that Mama may not be supportive of her choice of a child care center.

## WORKBOOK: MY THOUGHTS

Take a few moments before you engage someone in a conversation to consider the situation.

Remember: It's not necessary to provide a response to every question. Sometimes, it may even be helpful to admit that you just don't know the answer!

What is working well in this situation is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My concern is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What I see in my children is \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how it affects my family \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I have done or tried to do \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

These are the results I've gotten \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is what I think I would like to happen \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## ROSA'S THOUGHTS

### *What is Working*

- *I did a lot of research & spoke with several trusted people about my options for child care.*
- *I feel I know what is available & the different types of care I could choose for Sophia.*
- *I feel fortunate to have so many choices!*
- *I feel like I made the choice based upon facts, as well as my emotions. The Keystone STARS provider felt right and they met the requirements for Quality in the Keystone STARS. I feel confident that Sophia will be in good hands while I'm at work.*

### *My Concern*

- *That Mama and some of my friends won't understand my choice. They either stayed home when their children were young, or had relatives or other friends watch their children.*
- *I want Mama to understand why I made the choice that I did and see that's it's a good and safe place for Sophia.*

### *What I see in my child*

- *Even though Sophia is so young, I see how she acts when she's being held by someone who interacts with her. She loves being talked to, held and feeling loved.*

### *This is how it affects my child*

- *This is a big decision that can affect Sophia's learning & development. I want to make sure that whoever provides care to her is a partner with me.*

### *This is what I think I would like to happen*

- *I want Mama to understand my choice. I want her to know how the Keystone STARS provider will be supporting me in my parenting role and how Sophia will benefit from being in their care.*

## **ROSA SETTING UP THE CONVERSATION**

Prior to talking to Mama, Rosa found materials about the Keystone STARS program, and she had the brochure from the child care center that she chose.

## ROSA'S CONVERSATION WITH MAMA

When Rosa visited Mama, she started the conversation by saying she had made a decision about Sophia's child care and made a point to say that she had considered many options and had thought about it a lot. She told Mama about her conversation with the CCIS office, the materials they had available, and about her visits to the Keystone STARS providers and what she saw while there. (See *What is working*) Mama was very interested in her decision and asked her why it was so hard--Mama just assumed that Rosa would let a friend watch Sophia.

Rosa talked to Mama about how she felt really lucky that she had several options, and that a friend was one that she really considered. But after learning more about how Sophia could benefit from being in a quality child care setting, Rosa felt more comfortable with the decision she made. (See *My concern*)

Mama didn't understand this at first. She wasn't sure what else Rosa and Sophia needed, other than a nice person to make sure Sophia got fed, her diaper changed and lots of love. Rosa said that all of these things were first on her list, too! She explained how she made sure that the place she chose held the babies while they were fed their bottles, and that she would be able to come in and nurse her baby or send in milk if she wanted to do so. She let Mama know about the questions she asked about diapering to make sure that it was clean. Rosa also talked to Mama about what she saw when she was in the infant room. She shared how attentive the staff were with the babies, both when they were happy and when they cried. (See *What I see in my child* and *This is how it affects my child*)

Rosa told Mama how she realized that in addition to feeding and changing diapers, babies started learning right away. She talked about how the staff explained how they monitor development of

the children and how they help the babies to learn new things by paying close attention to what they are doing now & they have a lot of knowledge about what comes next. Rosa thought it would be helpful to her, having a child care partner who really knew Sophia & could help her anticipate what would come next developmentally and what she could do at home to help Sophia's development. (See *This is what I would like to happen*)

Rosa shared how several parents at the child care provider seemed to know each other. She liked how she felt that the center was very open, friendly and just seemed like a fun place to be. Rosa and Mama looked at the information from the brochure and discovered that the child care provider even had special events for grandparents! Mama seemed to like that a lot.

When Rosa told Mama about Keystone STARS, Mama was surprised—she didn't think that people could go to school to learn about how to care for little babies. She thought that people only went to college to learn how to teach in grade school.

At the end of the conversation, Rosa could tell Mama still had questions. But she also felt that Mama understood this was a difficult decision that Rosa really thought about before making. Rosa realized that both of them wanted what was best for Sophia, and she felt much better after she had the conversation.

Over the next few weeks, Mama asked more questions about Keystone STARS. Rosa felt stronger and more comfortable in her ability to make decisions and to talk to others about them. She knew this might be the first of many decisions that she and Mama might not see eye to eye at first. However, she felt much more comfortable realizing she was able to look at the facts, follow her heart, and feel good about her choice.

## ■ HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO EXPLORE OTHER OPTIONS?

You may find that it's time to find another child care provider, seek a second opinion from a healthcare professional, give your family a break from another family, or stop a conversation if you feel that you're just not getting anywhere with all the conversations you've had.



### HOW DO YOU KNOW FOR SURE?

- Listen to your instincts
- When the needs of your child are not the focus of ongoing conversations
- When you feel your child's health or safety is at risk
- When that's what you want to do



## ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS AND RESOURCES

**CCIS:** Child Care Information Services (CCIS) agencies are the hub of child care information in your local area. CCIS agencies provide you and your family with information on quality child care and personalized child care referrals to child care providers based on your specific needs or preferences. CCIS agencies also administer the Child Care Works subsidized child care program. For all of your child care questions and needs, contact the CCIS agency for your local area. Visit [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us) for additional information.

**CHILD CARE WORKS:** If you are concerned about the cost of quality child care, Child Care Works may be able to help. Working parents may be eligible for assistance for child care expenses if they meet the income guidelines. The annual income for a family to be eligible to receive subsidy is 200 percent or less of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines. Visit [www.dpw.state.pa.us](http://www.dpw.state.pa.us) for additional information.

**PROVIDER SEARCH (COMPASS):** COMPASS is an online application for Pennsylvanians to apply for many health and human service programs. Visit [www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass.web](http://www.humanservices.state.pa.us/compass.web) for additional information.

**CONNECT HELPLINE:** If your child, up to age 5 years, has a disability or developmental delay, Early Intervention services can provide access to as many opportunities as possible to help them reach their promise. Families interested in early intervention services may contact the CONNECT Helpline at 1-800-692-7288.

**PA PROMISE FOR CHILDREN:** A great place to find out how we can help our young children learn, learn about Pennsylvania's early learning programs (such as child care, Head Start, and preschool), and why we all need to help Pennsylvania's children reach their promise. Visit [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com) for additional information.

**WIC:** WIC provides Federal grants to States for supplemental foods, health care referrals, and nutrition education for low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, and non-breastfeeding postpartum women, and to infants and children up to age five who are found to be at nutritional risk. Visit [www.pawic.com](http://www.pawic.com) for additional information.

**PA CHIP:** Pennsylvania's program to provide health insurance to all uninsured children and teens who are not eligible for or enrolled in Medical Assistance. Visit [www.chipcoverspakids.com](http://www.chipcoverspakids.com) for additional information.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:**

Visit [www.papromiseforchildren.com](http://www.papromiseforchildren.com) for additional information about any of the following programs.

- **EARLY HEAD START:** Early Head Start's programs are designed to provide the same kinds of comprehensive child development and family support services to families with children under age three, and pregnant women that are already involved in Head Start. Early Head Start's services include home visits, health and nutrition services, and referrals to other social services that may be needed.
- **EARLY INTERVENTION:** For parents of children ages birth to five with disabilities or developmental delays, Pennsylvania's Early Intervention (birth- five) program provides individualized support and assistance for both child

and family. Early Intervention provides children from birth to five with developmental delays with services to help maximize their development so they are successful in any early education setting.

- **HEAD START:** Head Start is a comprehensive preschool program for low-income three, four, and five year olds. It provides children with a developmentally appropriate early childhood education. The program ensures that young children get health checkups and treatment, and that they are fed a nutritious hot meal every day.
- **KEYSTONE STARS:** Keystone STARS supports child care and Head Start programs that are committed to continuous quality improvement and offers families a valuable tool to gauge quality in early learning programs. Programs may enter Keystone STARS at the Start with STARS level and earn a STAR 1 through STAR 4 rating based on research-based standards for staff education and professional development, early learning environment, and business management. Child care programs receive professional development, technical assistance and, when eligible, targeted financial supports to continue to improve the quality of the early learning they provide.
- **NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP:** In the Nurse-Family Partnership program, through ongoing home visits from registered nurses, low-income, first-time moms receive the care and support they need to have a healthy pregnancy, provide responsible and competent care for their children, and become more economically self-sufficient.
- **PA PRE-K COUNTS:** Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts provides free half-day or full-day pre-kindergarten throughout Pennsylvania.

- **PARENT -CHILD HOME PROGRAM:** Pennsylvania's Parent-Child Home Program, provides a home visitor to help parents learn how to read to and play with their children in a way that promotes early learning and builds a positive parent-child bond.



[illegible]

[illegible]

**Regardless of how difficult a situation gets,  
you always have a choice.**

**A choice to remain in the situation, to continue forward, or not.**

**A choice to speak up for your child and your family.**

**A choice to be your child's Champion.**





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