

The Parent-Caregiver Partnership

by

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Q. By working hard and sending my child to childcare, I often feel disconnected. Is there a way to feel more connected with my child and with what goes on in the center?

A. Yes, there are many ways for parents and caregivers to work together. These ideas will make you feel better as you leave your child in someone else's care, and they will also help your child feel better as well. Here are some suggestions:

1. Explain to your child how much you like and respect the caregivers and that you know that they take good care of him/her.
2. Build a relationship with your child's caregivers and then explain that relationship to your child. It will help your child to feel secure if he/she knows that you know and like each other.
3. Set up a consistent communication system with your child's caregivers. It can be a regular time each day to meet and talk or it can be a written report that you each send back and forth to each other daily. It could also be some combination of the two. This communication is very important because it allows both of you to learn more about the child than either one of you could learn on your own.

During each year of childcare the focus of the partnership should be different. Here are some guidelines.

First Year – A Focus on Milestones of Development

Your baby is rapidly moving through many different stages of development. Physically, there are many changes starting with holding up the head, pushing up, rolling over, sitting up, crawling, and then walking. There are also many learning accomplishments, social interactions, and evidences of language growth. During this year it is recommended that caregivers report often to parents about their child's development. They should also inform parents about upcoming milestones so that parents can be ready to catch them when they happen. Sometimes parents will even be able to facilitate the developmental process. Your parent pride means a lot to your child. If you have an infant in childcare, be sure to ask for this kind of guidance.

Second Year – A Focus on Exploring

Your toddler is busy learning how the world works. "On the move" describes this time. Just by getting around, he/she is learning many simple concepts like in and out, front and back, and top and bottom. He/she points at objects of interest and performs actions to get a result. During this year it is helpful for caregivers to suggest to parents appropriate play activities that will be fun and also enhance this exploratory stage. Feel free to ask for this type of play program.

Third Year – A Focus on Routine

Between the ages of two and three your child is making the transition to normal daily schedules. Some parts of the routine take place in the childcare center, and other parts take place at home. It is a good idea to coordinate so that one major routine flows from morning until night. Eating, sleeping, playing, and educational stimulation are all part of the picture. A parent can share home information by writing a note. Caregivers can provide center activities with newsletters, calendars, and also by sending home notes.

If possible, seek out parenting classes, parent workshops, or parenting information. Some may be available at your child's center. Most caregivers are quite knowledgeable about taking care of young children and will be happy to answer your questions. The more well-versed you become in childcare skills; the better able you will be to provide the most optimal environment for your child at home.

While many parents would prefer to provide the major care for their own children, especially during the infant-toddler years, today's lifestyle does not usually allow it. Therefore, learning to work effectively with caregivers in a partnership is the best alternative we have for helping children to grow and develop well.

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