

# Discussing Developmental Concerns *with Parents*



As a childcare provider, you spend a lot of time with the children in your care. You work closely with each child and get to know the children very well. There will be times when you need to talk to parents about important issues. These may be issues related to the child, such as development, challenging behaviors, or health problems. You may be worried about a child's development and want to talk to the parents about your concern. The way you talk to parents is important. Here is a guide to having a successful conversation with parents:

## **Schedule a Meeting with Parents.**

- Don't try to fit it into a hectic pick-up or drop-off time
- Tell Parents the topic of the meeting.
- Make sure the area is private and comfortable.
- Prepare what you are going to say.

## **During the Meeting**

- Start by talking about the child's strengths.
- Ask questions that will allow a parent to share their own observations, then share your own. This encourages a back-and-forth conversation that may validate a parent's hidden concerns and fears.
- When communicating your concerns, use a developmental checklist. This provides a visual and gives parents something to think about without putting a label on it. It helps get the conversation started and the information is objective.
- Be supportive and respectful.
- Practice active listening techniques.
- Be calm, but show your concern.
- Focus on developmental milestones, specific behaviors and the need to "rule out" possible concerns.
- Be honest but kind.
- Reassure parents that you will support them and their child.
- Be prepared to offer resources for follow-up.
- End meeting in a positive way and with a plan.



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**Be prepared with resources to help.**

**Provide parents with the information they need to have their child evaluated.**

**Always refer them to their medical provider.** A family should go to their pediatrician or primary care provider to discuss concerns.

**For infants and toddlers under 3 years of age,** provide parents with information on BabyNet. Anyone can make a referral online at <https://msp.scdhhs.gov/babynet/>.

**For children 3 years to age 5,** provide parents with information on Child Find at their local school district.

**Family Connection of South Carolina's** Parent Training and Information Center that helps parents understand how to navigate the complex medical system, educational system, and will be matched with parents who have lived through the experience and understand.

**Help Me Grow South Carolina** is a free resource that is available to parents of children birth to five years old. To learn which counties are currently served, visit [HelpMeGrowSC.org](http://HelpMeGrowSC.org)

## **After the Referral**

Explain next steps to families including what they might expect if their child was referred to BabyNet or the local school district for a screening or evaluation to determine if a child is eligible for Early Intervention or Preschool Special Education services.

## **Tips for Successful Conversations**

- Be careful not to use jargon, acronyms and labels.
- **Do not diagnose.** This should only be done through a comprehensive developmental or medical evaluation.
- Acknowledge a parent's concerns if they are not the same as yours.
- Remember that parents may tell you that you are wrong. Find out what the parents see their child doing in other situations. Agree to revisit the issue and check in again.



**Family Information Center**  
**1-800-578-8750**

Para Español: 1-888-808-7462