

3.7 Creating Partnerships: Listening to Wants and Needs

Questions to consider:

When you ask a parent their wants and needs, what are you hoping to learn? Will you be able to truly listen to the parent without judgement and consider them when making decisions?

Why are listening to wants and needs important?

When you take the time to listen to a parent's needs and desires, you gain a better understanding of what is important to them, what their desired outcome is, and what they expect to happen.

The Outcome:

1. Parents feel that their viewpoints, wisdom, and experience are valued.
2. Parents feel that they have input into decisions regarding their child.
3. Mutual respect is established between you and the parent.
4. You create a sense of trust and opportunities for parents to share information or ask questions.
5. Communication between home and your program is increased.
6. You will find out if resources are needed and will be able to make connections.

Putting it to practice

Engage a parent in a conversation about an issue or concern you have noticed about their child. What did you learn from this conversation? How did this change your plans for addressing this child's needs?

BY LISTENING TO A PARENT'S WANTS AND NEEDS, YOU SHOW HIM/HER THAT THEIR VIEWPOINT MATTERS, THAT YOU CARE, AND THAT YOU VALUE THEIR WISDOM AND EXPERIENCE.

Reach out to parents and seek their input regarding their child's education or development or observe if they show any signs or stress or worry.

Steps:

1. **State your observation about the parent or seek the parent's input on a specific issue.**
2. **Use active listening:**
 - **Make eye contact.**
 - **Stay focused on the current issue.**
 - **Use warm facial expressions.**
 - **Maintain good body posture, e.g., lean forward.**
 - **Silence-This is hard at first, but it gives the parent a chance to talk and shows him/her you are here to listen.**
 - **Reflect back what you heard the parent say.**