



# Handling Conflicts

(Possible Problems)

## Handling Possible Problems

As a day care provider, some problems you face can be prevented by having a **Parent Provider Agreement**. In the agreement, your rules and policies are clearly stated. If a parent does not agree with your policies, he or she can choose another provider. Even if you try hard and are well prepared, some problems will come up.

Some problems will be just misunderstandings. At other times, you may really disagree with the way a parent thinks you should handle a problem. The better you can handle a disagreement, the better your day care business will run.

## Seeing Things Differently

A provider who says there is never a problem in his or her day care program is not being honest with himself or herself. When you and a parent disagree, you must decide on how to handle it. The

first step with any problem is to say, "We have a problem."

Some problems just blow over. For example, it's late in the afternoon and a mother is tired. She snaps about the dirt on her son's pants. The next day she forgets about the dirt. At times people do not listen carefully. For example, a parent thought you said the field trip was next week. Be patient and let the parent know when the field trip is.

## When Parents Complain...

- \* **Listen to feelings** as well as words. Parents might be upset about other things in their lives.
- \* **Listen to parents**. They have a right to make suggestions about the care of their child.
- \* **Try not to get angry**. Begin with the word "I" to state your feelings. Try not to blame anyone.
- \* Remember that **parents have good ideas** about their child's care. Several minds are better than one.

A project of The Florida Partnership for Parent Involvement

Center of Excellence ♦ Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute ♦ Florida's Children's Forum  
Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters ♦ Hillsborough County Head Start ♦ Hillsborough County Even Start

\* **If you make a mistake**, say that you are sorry. Do what you can to correct the problem.

\* **If a parent asks you to do something** that is not right, do not make any promises. You might ask why the parent feels a certain way. Try to talk about it again at a different time.

### **When You Want to Complain...**

\* **Discuss a problem** when you and the parents are alone, and when you have time and energy to talk.

\* **Talk in a polite, calm voice.** Do not talk down to parents. You may be the expert, but you are talking about their child.

\* **Say something good** about the child first. The parents will know that you really do care for the child.

\* **Boost the parents' confidence.** Say something positive. They will be more open to your ideas.

\* You may not always agree with parents. That is okay. When is important is to live with your **different ideas**. Respect the parents' point of view. Try to find a way to work together.

### **Confidentiality**

When a parent confides in you, treat this information as a secret. Even if a parent makes a comment in passing, he or she may

not want you to tell anyone else. Your business depends, in part, on word-of-mouth recommendations. Talking about a persons children or family problems with other people can hurt your reputation.

### **Handle Common Problems**

\* **Contact your local support agency.** People there have heard many troubles.

\* **Contact your social service legal agency** to answer questions about your legal rights and responsibilities.

\* **Keep good records** of problem behavior or unusual activities. This will help when you talk with parents.

\* **Form a support group** of other providers.

\* **Be a resource** for parents. Give them information for handling problems. You can also refer them to other professionals for help.

### **Practice with a Friend**

Play out possible problems with a friend. Be yourself, and have your friend play the parent. Think about where you could go for help with each problem. Examples:

- ◆ parents are divorcing or separating
- ◆ a parent always comes late to pick up a child
- ◆ a parent seems not to care about your program
- ◆ a parent loses his or her job
- ◆ you, the day care provider, get sick
- ◆ a child bites another child in your program
- ◆ you and a parent do not share the same values

Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Koehler, C.R. (1991). "Handling Possible Problems" (\*Family Day Care Facts\* series). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts.

---

**For Further Information Contact:**



**The Center for Parent Involvement** (FCPI) was funded by the U.S. Department of Education; Goals 2000, Educate America Act from 1994-1999. Guided by an advisory board of parents and professionals, the FCPI's goal was to tap the power of parents.

The FCPI gathered information on parent needs, coordinated the information, and created a series of resources organized by theme, including fact sheets for parents and professionals, "Beyond the Basics" resources, and resource identification lists. Many of the resources have been translated into Spanish language versions, and every effort has been made to preserve the meaning and flavor of the original English documents. This series of materials provides a wealth of current information for both parents and providers; the complete set of resources can be obtained in PDF format on the Department of Child and Family Studies Website at [www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi](http://www.fmhi.usf.edu/cfs/dares/fcpi). The staff of the FCPI are hopeful that their work will continue to help children get ready to learn for many years to come.

The series' themes include:

- Family Empowerment
- Parent Involvement
- Parenting Support
- School Readiness
- Violence in the Lives of Children
- Transition to Kindergarten

The Center was one component of a project led by Hillsborough County Center of Excellence in collaboration with the Department of Child & Family Studies at USF's de la Parte Institute and the Florida Children's Forum. Other project partners include HIPPIY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters), Hillsborough County Head Start and Hillsborough County Even Start. For more information about these projects, call 813.974.4612.

Family Empowerment Series, Parent Tip Sheets, #1: Transition: Handling Conflicts

© 1999, Tampa, Florida

This is a publication of the Florida Center for Parent Involvement which was funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The opinions contained in this publication are those of the grantee and do not necessarily reflect those of the U.S. Department of Education. All or portions of this work may be reproduced providing the Florida Center for Parent Involvement, Louis de la Parte Florida Mental Health Institute, University of South Florida is properly credited on all reproductions.

---

Events, activities, programs and facilities of the University of South Florida are available to all without regard to race, color, marital status, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, Vietnam or disabled veteran status as provided by law and in accordance with the University's respect for personal dignity.

**University of  
South Florida  
USF**