

# Exploring

## children's social-emotional wellness

a tipsheet for parents and caregivers



Capital District  
Child Care Council

## Handling Parent Complaints With Diplomacy

- **Put yourself in their shoes.** Parents who have complaints are likely feeling fear and frustration regarding their child's safety. The parents may even feel powerless to protect their child, especially if the child has been physically hurt.
- **Thank the parents for sharing their feelings.** Make sure you convey that you have heard and appreciate the parents' concerns. Validate their fears, anger, or frustration.
- **Be open to trying the parent's suggestions.** The parents may have a good viewpoint (from the outside) on how to deal with the issue at hand.
- **Keep the focus on helping the child or children.** Without breaking confidentiality, explain to the parents that your center is committed to supporting a child that is presenting challenging behavior, while protecting the safety of the others. The children's well-being is the most important component of child care programs.
- **Keep the lines of communication open.** While parent complaints about challenging behavior may be uncomfortable, don't forget that these parents chose to tell you specifically about their concerns. You may be the person in your center with whom this parent feels the most comfortable and trusts – value this!
- **Check back.** Wait a few days and follow up with the parents. Let her know you are still observing and noting when the challenging behavior occurs.
- **Avoid parent-to-parent confrontations and maintain confidentiality.** Assure the parents that they will be informed about incidents pertaining to their children while maintaining confidentiality with each family. Angry parent-to-parent confrontations will not eliminate the challenging behaviors. "Thank you for sharing your concerns with me – I appreciate your feedback. I will speak to the other child's parent directly to ensure confidentiality for both of you."
- **Put the ball in their court.** In extreme cases where a parent is unsatisfied and persistent, validate the parents' concerns and assure them that you are actively pursuing a resolution to the challenging behavior. "If your concerns are persisting, we will understand if you wish to research other programs. Not all facilities are the best fit for every family."

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