

How parents can communicate effectively with professionals

Parents and professionals must team up to meet the needs of kids and their families. Good communication is an important step toward this kind of effective collaboration.

*When
parents and
professionals
communicate
well, children
win.*

As parents, you know your children better than anyone and remain a constant influence in your child's education and development. The guidelines below suggest ways you can use your knowledge and skills as a member of any team working with your child.

- Attend all meetings having to do with your child.
- Stay in frequent contact with your child's teachers, doctors, therapists, tutors, coaches, or other professionals, either by phone, in writing, or in person. For instance, a home-school notebook that is sent back and forth to school each day is a good way for parents and teachers to stay in touch.
- Share with professionals your ideas about your child, and ask them questions about things you don't understand.
- Encourage professionals to contact you regularly to discuss your child's progress. They can be a valuable source of information.
- Let professionals know how you feel. Be sure to tell them when they are doing a good job as well as when things aren't going well.
- Keeping in mind your child's needs, try to work out disagreements through discussion and compromise.
- Help your child develop a positive attitude toward the programs and professionals with whom he or she is involved.
- Get to know the people who work with your child. If you can, become involved in parent-teacher organizations and other activities that will help to support your child's development.
- Recognize that you are an equal member of any team with important information to share.
- During meetings and personal contacts, look directly at the person who is speaking and listen carefully to what they say.
- Make comments in a clear and positive manner.



To order copies of this fact sheet, or to learn more about VFN's materials and services, contact the Vermont Family Network
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You can also contact us via e-mail at info@vtfn.org. And don't forget to visit our website at www.vtfn.org.

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- Be sure to talk about your child's strengths, interests, and abilities.
- Offer facts to support your point of view.
- If you don't understand something someone has said or something you have read, ask for an explanation.
- If you don't agree with something that has been said or written, speak up and say so. You are a member of your child's team and your input counts.
- Understand your rights, particularly as they pertain to your child's education, health care, or other services.