

Reaching Out to Schools

The children we serve are influenced and affected by many aspects of their lives. But while we make sure to gather a variety of important information about the families and home environments of the children we serve, we can overlook gathering important information about the school environment. Children spend a considerable amount of time in school, and what happens at school influences their attitudes and behavior during your program. So it is just as important to be informed about the school's overall climate and culture, as it is to be about the environment in the home.

Starting and maintaining open lines of communication with school personnel has many benefits. Aligning your program expectations with those of the school makes transitioning from one environment to the other smoother for your children. It also means the rules are familiar, and therefore easier for your children to learn and remember. Knowing when things are out of the ordinary, such as field days, substitute teachers or standardized testing, helps staff anticipate and plan for children that might be overly excited or tired. For children exhibiting especially challenging behavior, regular direct dialog between the after-school professional and the classroom teacher or school counselor is essential. They may be implementing interventions or have suggestions that can be used during the before or after school hours. For more information on developing partnerships with schools, follow this link:

https://www.naesp.org/sites/default/files/resources/1/A_New_Day_for_Learning_Resources/Building_and_Sustaining_Partnerships/Connecting_School_and_Afterschool_15_Ways_to_Improve_Partnerships.pdf

Programs often assume that the school is unwilling to share information about its programs or particular students, however this is not usually the case. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) has established guidelines on disclosing information to community based organizations including daycare programs. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/doc/ferpa-and-community-based-orgs.pdf>

To discuss specific information about a child, be sure to follow required protocol by contacting the school administration prior to communicating with the classroom teacher. Also inform parents in writing and specify what information may be discussed, such as existing behavior or academic interventions. For guidance on creating this type of form, or other information on connecting with schools, contact your SACC TA.