

Handout 27: Conference Checklist*

Instructions: Read the following statements. Do they describe the practices you use to plan and hold conferences with families? If so, mark the column labeled **Yes**. If not, mark the column labeled **No**. Use the **Comments** column to record your ideas. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Although Head Start staff regularly share information about each child with his or her family, it is important to set times when you can focus on one child without distractions. Staff-family conferences can be scheduled at certain times of the year and as the need arises. These meetings are opportunities to examine the contents of portfolios, review the child's progress toward achieving developmental goals, review the effectiveness of strategies used at home and in Head Start settings, set new goals, and plan new strategies for encouraging the child's development.

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Scheduling the Conference</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain to each family at enrollment how often conferences take place, their purpose, when and where they are held, and what is discussed. 2. Ask the family what times would be convenient, offer several options, and provide lead time so the family can make arrangements. 3. Ask the family to think about questions and issues about their child's interests, skills, and progress that they would like to discuss at the conference. 4. If necessary, use a cultural or language interpreter or translated written communication. 			

*Adapted from Diane T. Dodge, Derry Gosselin Koralek, and Peter J. Pizzolongo, *Caring for Children in Preschool Programs*, Volume II, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: Teaching Strategies, 1997), 236-238.

Note: Use with Activities 4-3 and 4-4

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Planning the Conference</p> <p>5. Review and prepare a summary of the child's portfolio—ongoing observation recordings, anecdotal records, checklists, work samples.</p> <p>6. Organize the portfolio contents to make sure all areas of development—physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional—are covered.</p> <p>7. Discuss how to carry out the agenda, if two or more staff will participate.</p> <p>8. Contact a cultural or language interpreter, if needed, and discuss your plans.</p>			
<p>Beginning the Conference</p> <p>9. Anticipate at least 5 minutes of social conversation at the beginning of a conference. If appropriate, use a cultural or language mediator or interpreter.</p> <p>10. Explain to the family how the conference will proceed and stress that it is a time to share information, review progress, set goals, and plan new strategies.</p> <p>11. Begin with a positive statement about your relationship with the child.</p>			
<p>During the Conference</p> <p>12. Discuss all areas of the child's development; use portfolio examples as appropriate.</p> <p>13. Review goals set for the child at the last conference; use portfolio examples to show progress.</p> <p>14. Discuss the effectiveness of strategies used at home and in Head Start settings.</p>			

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
15. Discuss issues and concerns, new interests, and changing needs.			
16. Involve the cultural interpreter or mediator as appropriate.			
17. Set new goals for the child in all areas of development; make sure the goals are at an appropriate level—neither too advanced nor too easily achieved.			
18. Develop new strategies for encouraging the child's development at home and in Head Start settings.			
19. Ask open-ended questions to encourage families to share information and raise issues and concerns.			
20. Explain how you will use information that families provide so they will know the importance of their contributions.			
21. Listen carefully without interrupting or rushing the family member who is speaking.			
22. Restate a family's comments and suggestions to make sure you heard them correctly.			
23. Accept families' thoughts and feelings even if they are different from your own.			
24. Use factual, objective information when sharing information with families; avoid preaching, blaming, criticizing, and judging.			
25. Respect cultural preferences related to communication practices. Maintain an appropriate physical distance, eye contact, and tone of voice; respect response times to questions; use or avoid physical contact as appropriate.			

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
26. Offer more than one suggestion when asked for advice about handling a specific situation and encourage families to work with you to develop effective strategies.			
Ending the Conference			
27. Summarize your discussions; use the cultural mediator or interpreter as appropriate.			
28. Note the follow-up actions each person has agreed to take.			
29. Review the goals and strategies planned during the conference.			
Documenting the Conference			
30. Take notes, with the family's permission, during the conference, especially when discussing a complex or difficult situation; explain to families that the notes will remind you to follow up on their concerns.			
31. Complete a conference evaluation form by answering questions about what you did before, during, and at the close of the conference.			
32. Document the new goals and strategies in the child's portfolio.			

Note: Review your responses on this checklist. Are there practices that you do not use now but would like to use? Are there practices you do not use because you believe they are unnecessary? Discuss the checklist with your Head Start colleagues.