
INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE

Communication and Problem Solving



First Edition, 2006



California Childcare Health Program
Administered by the University of California, San Francisco School of Nursing,
Department of Family Health Care Nursing
(510) 839-1195 • (800) 333-3212 Healthline
www.ucsfchildcarehealth.org



Funded by First 5 California with additional support from the California Department of Education Child Development Division and Federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

This *Instructor's Guide* is a supplement for trainers of the California Training Institute's curriculum for Child Care Health Advocates.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM SOLVING MODULE

This *Instructor's Guide* provides trainers with an outline for the teaching of the *Communication and Problem Solving* module. Participants will learn the components of clear communication and of an effective problem-solving process. They will practice dealing with case scenarios and will discuss methods for developing and maintaining effective communication between parents, providers and children. This module describes the ways that Child Care Health Advocates (CCHAs) play a crucial role in modeling effective communication and problem solving and in supporting best practices in others.

Learning Objectives:

1. To improve verbal and non-verbal communication skills utilized in early care and education (ECE) programs.
2. To utilize improved communication skills for problem solving in the work setting.

Primary Messages:

1. To be effective, CCHAs need to use excellent communication and problem-solving skills.
2. Effective communication begins with listening that is nonjudgmental.
3. Ongoing training in the area of communication and problem solving is important.
4. Clear communication is the foundation of warm and trusting relationships between parents, providers and children.
5. The Three C's of communication are: contact, clarification and closure.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

1. Copy of module: *Communication and Problem Solving*
2. Copy of *Instructor's Guide: Communication and Problem Solving*
3. Flip chart/whiteboard and markers, or chalkboard and chalk
4. Masking tape for posting flip chart paper
5. LCD projector or overhead projector
6. Computer for PowerPoint slides
7. CDs of slides or transparencies
8. Handouts:
 - a. Handouts in the *Communication and Problem Solving* module
 - i. Handouts from California Childcare Health Program (CCHP), Oakland, CA

Handout Title	Page Number in Module
<i>Fact Sheets for Families: Communicating with Your Child Care Provider</i>	19

- ii. Handouts from other sources

Handout Title	Page Number in Module
<i>Being a Good Listener</i>	20

- b. Handouts in the *Instructor's Guide*

Appendix Title	Appendix Number
<i>Communication and Problem-Solving Case Scenarios</i>	5A
<i>Using the Communication and Problem Solving Module</i>	5B

SUGGESTED TRAINING OUTLINE

Outline	Method	Time (Minutes)
I. Introduction to the Communication and Problem Solving Module	—	10
A. Assessment of Group Knowledge	Questioning	2
B. Introduction/Rationale to Communication and Problem Solving	Lecture	3
C. The Role of the CCHA in Clear Communication and Problem Solving	Lecture and Discussion	5
II. Effective Communication	—	20–35
<i>A. Optional: Building Trust</i>	<i>Reflection</i>	5
B. Communication Skills	Lecture and Discussion	10
<i>C. Optional: Information for Parents</i>	<i>Small Group Activity</i>	10
D. Communication Scenarios	Small Group Activity	10
III. Problem Solving	—	5–20
A. The Problem-Solving Process	Lecture	5
<i>B. Optional: Communication and Problem-Solving Case Scenarios</i>	<i>Small Group Activity</i>	15
IV. Summary and Closure	—	10–20
<i>A. Optional: Using the Communication and Problem Solving Module</i>	<i>Small Group Activity</i>	10
B. Next Steps for the CCHA	Large Group Discussion	5
C. Summary and Closure	Brief Closing Activity	5

Total time: 45–85 minutes

OUTLINE AND INSTRUCTIONS

Communication and Problem Solving

I. Introduction to the Communication and Problem Solving Module

A. **Topic:** Assessment of Group Knowledge

Method: Questioning

Instructions:

1. Ask participants several of the following questions, choosing questions most appropriate for your participants. Ask them to raise their hand if they:
 - Make sure that they begin by listening whenever there is a conflict.
 - Have ever learned about effective communication techniques.
 - Have a method for problem solving.
 - Are in a program that provides communication skills training.

B. **Topic:** Introduction/Rationale to Communication and Problem Solving

Method: Lecture

Instructions:

1. Give participants the following information. The role of the CCHA is to effectively promote changes in health and safety standards and behavior, and work collaboratively with ECE providers and families. One of the main tasks of a CCHA is to support parents and staff; therefore, he or she must be skilled at communicating and dealing with conflicts when they arise. Although this module deals with communicating with adults only, the benefits of clear communication are felt by children in the ECE program as well. Children learn from the behaviors of adults and pick up on emotions that the adults around them are feeling. The CCHA plays an important role in modeling, teaching and advocating for the importance of excellent communication and problem-solving skills.

C. **Topic:** The Role of the CCHA in Clear Communication and Problem Solving

Method: Lecture and Discussion

Instructions:

1. State that the CCHA has a significant opportunity to improve communication and to promote effective problem solving. The CCHA can do this by:
 - a. Modeling respect and compassion for the views of others, especially when they are different.
 - b. Modeling excellent communication skills, especially listening attentively to others and making sure the CCHA understands first before speaking.
 - c. Providing or coordinating trainings on topics related to communication and problem solving.
 - d. Providing relevant information and keeping all parties informed.
 - e. Understanding that different cultures have different communication styles.
 - f. Using a problem-solving process and teaching it to others.
 - g. Communicating policies both verbally and in written form, and ensuring translation (verbal or written) of these policies whenever necessary and possible.

h. Maintaining a commitment to the importance of communication and problem solving to strong, warm and trusting relationships.

2. Ask participants to add to this list.

II. Effective Communication

A. **Optional Topic:** Building Trust

Method: Reflection

Instructions:

1. Tell participants that to be an effective CCHA, one must be able to build relationships with parents, children and colleagues and to solve problems with them as well. When there are trusting relationships between ECE staff, the CCHA and families, it becomes much easier to communicate about issues and resolve problems that inevitably arise. Building relationships requires the development of trust—relationships built on mutual trust are essential to the work of a CCHA.
2. Ask participants to think of a time when they trusted someone with something or someone important—maybe someone was caring for their pet, child or a beloved object. What did the other person (the caretaker) do to show that they were trustworthy?
3. Debrief by asking participants what the behaviors were that generated trust in those caretakers.

B. **Topic:** Communication Skills

Method: Lecture and Discussion

Instructions:

1. Providing a Context: State that developing caring relationships with children, families and other ECE providers requires excellent communication skills. These skills are key to building trust and to understanding the perspective of others.
2. Reviewing the Three C's of Communication:
 - a. Contact: State that it is important to make a connection with the person you are talking with. Make sure they know you are really paying attention, you care about what they are saying and you are listening without judgment.
 - b. Clarification: State that during the clarification phase, the focus shifts to the problem or issue. Why has the ECE provider or parent come to you today? What motivated him or her to share this information, this concern or these feelings with you? Ask questions to clarify their feelings further.
 - c. Closure: State that the focus here is on action. Make sure everyone has been listened to and use the problem-solving process in Section III to resolve the situation. Summarize what has been said and make sure everyone knows the agreement. Restate who is going to do what either immediately or in the future.
3. Listening:
 - a. State that listening is at the heart of clear communication. Much conflict or upset can be relieved just by listening to what the speaker is saying. When people feel listened to and have their feelings accepted, they feel relief and can move on to problem solving. When they do not feel understood, or they feel judged or are interrupted, their annoyance or upset increases. Emphasize that effective listening involves acceptance of what the speaker is saying, even if one disagrees with what he or she is saying. It is important to be nonjudgmental. An accepting, nonjudgmental approach is also part of cultural competence practice—respect of cultural differences and the recognition of the perspectives of others.

- b. Ask participants to define *active listening*: the listener shows that he or she is attentive to the speaker, in both verbal and nonverbal ways, by listening to the message and indicating to the speaker that the message is understood, either through summarizing or paraphrasing what the speaker has said. Ask participants to list behaviors that improve active listening and write these on the chart pad (refer to page 3 of the module). Include examples of nonverbal behaviors (e.g., nodding, facing the speaker).
 - c. Refer participants to *Activity 1* on page 8 of the module and ask them to follow the instructions. Afterward, ask participants if they would like to share their strengths or if there were any surprises.
4. Speaking: Ask participants to list the characteristics of effective speaking (refer to page 4 of the module).
 5. Working with Non-English-Speaking Families:
 - a. Ask participants to discuss the ways that they maintain communication with non-English-speaking families.
 - b. State that the use of interpreters is recommended if none of the adults at the ECE program speak the primary language of the families.
 6. Written Forms of Communication: Ask participants what written forms of communication they use. Then have them state the pros and cons related to each form of communication. Be sure to include e-mail. Ensure that participants discuss how written communications can both prevent problems and cause them, depending on how they are used. It is important, for example, to communicate policies in writing, but important also to reinforce these policies verbally. Misunderstandings may arise in “one-way” forms of communication, such as letters or e-mails. Make sure that all written materials are translated into the language of families. When this cannot be done, it is imperative that the materials be translated verbally.

C. *Optional Topic: Information for Parents*

Method: *Small Group Activity*

Instructions:

1. *State that CCHAs should encourage families to communicate clearly and often with ECE providers. Concerns and issues identified by the family should be addressed in a supportive and family-centered way. This will improve the relationship between the family and the ECE program, and issues will be resolved more effectively and efficiently.*
2. *Give out Handout: Fact Sheets for Families: Communicating with Your Child Care Provider (page 19 in module). Instruct participants to read and discuss the handout in pairs. What potential problems would this fact sheet prevent? Often parents have so much to read or do that they may not read all the handouts given to them. To ensure that this handout is read and understood by the parents, what are other ways that this fact sheet could be used?*

D. **Topic: Communication Scenarios**

Method: *Small Group Activity*

Instructions:

1. Divide participants into small groups. Refer participants to *Activity 2* on page 9 of the module and ask them to follow the instructions. Give them time to answer the questions at the bottom of the activity in the small groups.
2. With participants still seated in the small groups, have each group share their answer to the last question: How might a CCHA assist this program and this teacher to make it easier to communicate more effectively?

III. Problem Solving

A. **Topic:** The Problem-Solving Process

Method: Lecture

Instructions:

1. Give the definition of *problem solving*: to identify a concern and take steps to correcting it (Young-Marquadt & National Training Institute for Child Care Health Consultants Staff, 2005).
2. Describe the steps of problem solving:
 - a. identifying the problem
 - b. clarification
 - c. brainstorming solutions
 - d. selection
 - e. evaluation

B. **Optional Topic:** *Communication and Problem-Solving Case Scenarios*

Method: *Small Group Activity*

Instructions:

1. *Group participants into small groups. Ask participants to discuss a situation where there is a problem to be solved. Ask participants to follow the directions on Appendix 5A.*

If you have experienced CCHAs in the room, do one or more of the following:

1. Group them in separate groups and ask them to share with each other their successes and challenges in maintaining clear communication and problem solving.
2. Ask them to discuss the ways they teach about communication and problem solving.
3. Ask them to describe an effective problem-solving method they have used in their setting.
4. Ask them to describe how they teach children to communicate and to solve problems.
5. Pair them up with nonexperienced participants and instruct the nonexperienced to ask questions of the experienced CCHAs about how to help children communicate and solve problems when they come up.

IV. Summary and Closure

A. **Optional Topic:** *Using the Communication and Problem Solving Module*

Method: *Small Group Activity*

Instructions:

1. *Explain to the participants that the curriculum is a rich resource for them and encourage them to become familiar with it. Towards this end, spend a few minutes looking through it together. Explain that participants will work in pairs to go through the module to find the answers to these questions.*
2. *Hand out Appendix 5B. Tell the participants they have 5 to 10 minutes to locate the answers.*
3. *Note to Trainer: Participants may feel that this is “busy work.” Let them know that our goal is to use our time today to give them new tools and resources, and the curriculum is one such resource. Explain that becoming familiar with the curriculum is one way to help them determine how they will improve quality in their setting.*

B. **Topic:** Next Steps for the CCHA

Method: Large Group Discussion

Instructions:

1. Ask participants to think of the ways they can improve communication in their setting. Direct them to think for a moment, and then ask for answers.
2. Ask participants to think of the ways they can improve problem solving in their setting. Direct them to think for a moment, and then ask for answers.

C. **Topic:** Summary and Closure

Method: Brief Closing Activity

Instructions:

1. Summarize the key points shared by participants. Review that the key role for the CCHA is to model and promote clear communication and respectful problem solving.
2. Next Steps: Direct participants to write down their next step for improving communication and problem solving in their own ECE setting. Ask participants to share these with the group.

APPENDIX 5A

Communication and Problem-Solving Case Scenarios

Optional Topic: Communication and Problem-Solving Case Scenarios

Method: Small Group Activity

Instructions: In small groups, ask a participant to share a situation where there was a problem in his or her ECE setting. Answer the following questions:

1. What was the problem? Who did it involve?
2. Describe the problem in neutral terms, with an explanation from each party's perspective, so that all members of the small group understand the situation. Avoid placing blame.
3. Have two people role play the scene using the problem-solving process. Ask the others to observe closely.
4. Discuss what happened and what was effective in resolving the problem. If the problem was not resolved, have observers give feedback and make suggestions about what could be done to improve the problem solving and conduct the role play again.

APPENDIX 5B

Using the Communication and Problem Solving Module

Topic: Using the Communication and Problem Solving Module

Method: Small Group Activity

Instructions: Review the module and find the answers to the following questions.

According to the module:

1. What are the implications or positive effects of having clear communication on the part of the ECE providers? The families?
2. How should ECE providers respond to people who are angry?
3. What are five barriers to clear communication?