

Listen Actively



The Listen Actively strategy allows you to discover what matters most to families. You can use this strategy with families and other providers to help you shift from immediately reacting to what is said, to listening to what families and providers are sharing.



You can use three tools to help you Listen Actively with families and other providers:



- **Being Present**
- **Paraphrasing**
- **Engaging Questions and Statements**

Strategies for Building Relationships with Families



Being Present

By being fully present, you use nonverbal and verbal techniques to help you understand what a family or provider is saying. The table below outlines the types of communication you can use to be present.

Communication	Includes
1. Limiting distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cell phones turned off • Private spot for communicating • Focused attention
2. Using nonverbal methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facial expressions • Posture/body language • Gestures
3. Using verbal methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tone of voice • Pace of talking • Amount of talking versus listening • Interrupting or not • Word choices

Paraphrasing

The paraphrasing tool can help you confirm and clarify what a family says. There are five communication techniques that you can use when paraphrasing:

Techniques	How
Restate	Repeat what you heard the parent or provider say. For example, you can pause after you restate what you heard or ask if what you heard is correct. This technique gives the other person a chance to confirm or clarify.
Reframe	Propose another way of thinking about what the family did or said. For example, you might think of a positive way to think about something a family did or said instead of a negative way.
Summarize	Review and organize or sort out the main points of what you hear into a sequence or categories. Be sure to let the other person know you want to see if you got everything and ask him or her to tell you if anything is missing.
Clarify	Make a comment that confirms what the family has told you and that helps enhance and deepen your understanding.
Validate	Recognize what is important to families, including their emotions.

Engaging Questions and Statements

The engaging questions and statements tool can help you have meaningful conversations with families and providers. The table below outlines how to use open-ended questions, declarative statements, or closed-ended questions when communicating with families.

Question Type	Example
Open-ended <ul style="list-style-type: none">Used to engage in meaningful conversations with families and providersAllows for a variety of responses instead of just “yes” or “no”	What types of activities do you enjoy doing with Juan?
Declarative statements <ul style="list-style-type: none">Another way of learning what the other person thinks about something without directly asking a question	You really worked hard on that activity with Maya.
Closed-ended <ul style="list-style-type: none">Used when you want a short or quick answerLimited and requires specific answers	Do you want to read a book or color with Bailey?