
How to give good parents bad news: Communicating with parents throughout a behavioral crisis.

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Giving Good parents Bad News - Overview

- Basis for Parent Communication
- Pre-Crisis Communication
- Active-Crisis Communication
- Post-Crisis Communication
- ESI, Seclusion, Restraint Issues



Historically, schools have focused little on families as regarding the education of students with Emotional and Behavioral Disorders other than to place blame (Petr & Allen, 1997).



Being parents of student's with Disabilities is Difficult!

Families of student's with disabilities experience:

- Increased stress,
- Poorer relationships among spouses,
- Poorer relationships among other children,
- More difficult relationships among friends.

Farmer, Burns, Angold, & Costello, 1997



Parent Involvement

- Parents who are more involved in their child's school and the child at home have a positive effect on their child's achievement regardless of the socioeconomic status of the family (Department for School and Family, 2008).
- Parent involvement in the classroom through volunteering and other classroom involvement has been found to be associated with less frequent student behavior problems (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor and McClowry, 2013).



Positive Parent Communication

Positive parent communication is important because it helps foster positive parent/school relationships.

- When parents have positive communication with schools they were more likely to perceive that the school's actions were more appropriate (Parker, Paget, Ford, & Gwernan-Jones, 2016).
- Effective parent communication along with other factors is important in the education and support of families of students with EBD (Simpson, Peterson, & Smith, 2011).



Negative Parent Communication

- More often, school-parent communication is centered around behavior problems (McCormick, Cappella, O'Connor and McClowry, 2013).
- Parent's report their experiences with the Special Education process, specifically the discipline process to be very long and frustrating (Parker, Paget, Ford, & Gwernan-Jones, 2016).
- Negative parent/school communications are reported to escalate problems and lead one party to assign blame (Parker, Paget, Ford, & Gwernan-Jones, 2016).



Parent Communication (A legal Basis)

- **Sec. 300.501 Opportunity to examine records; parent participation in meetings.**

The parents of a child with a disability must be afforded an opportunity to participate in meetings with respect to --

- (i) The identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child; and
- (ii) The provision of FAPE to the child.



Pre-Crisis Communication

Prior to a crisis there are communication steps that must be taken to build school/parent relationships.

These communication and relationship building strategies may occur at either the **Building/District Level** or the **Classroom Level**.



What steps can be taken at the school and district Level to promote positive parent relationships?

- Organize activities which encourage parents to come into the school and classroom on a daily basis (Staples & Diliberto, 2010).
- Organize career days.
- Plan after school events that allow parents with day-time jobs to participate.
- Through the use of monthly award ceremonies, liberally give awards and invite parents to attend the ceremonies.



What steps can be taken at the classroom level to promote positive parent relationships?

- Promoting positive parent relationships begins prior to the beginning of the school year.
- Provide parents with procedures of classroom expectations and behavior management plans.
- Establish a regular communication system with parents, the primary focus of this communication system should be positive.
- Engage parents in the planning process prior to IEP meetings.

(Staples & Diliberto, 2010)



Crisis-Defined

A crisis is when a student physically acts out.

Physically acting out consists of a student:

- Trying to injure others, including staff, by any means (hitting, kicking, throwing, biting, etc.).
- Trying to injure themselves by any means.
- Possibly severe damage of property, as determined by each State or District.



Active-Crisis Communication

Your district plan should consider communication with the following entities:

- Other crisis team members.
- The student who is in the crisis.
- Other students not involved in the incident (innocent bystanders).
- The parents of the students who are involved in the crisis.
- Law Enforcement personnel and outside agencies.



Active-Crisis Communication:
Communicating with parents during the crisis.

- During a crisis, parents may respond with anger, hostility and fear.
- This communication during this time is essential to maintaining a positive relationship with parents.



Active-Crisis Communication:
Activity



Active-Crisis Communication
(Activity continued)



Active-Crisis Communication (Activity continued)



Post-Crisis Communication

Immediately after the crisis you should follow your district plan for individual student crisis.

Most often these plans should include:

- Staff debriefing and support
- Medical checks, if needed
- Written documentation
- A determination about the immediate status of the student whom was in the crisis (school discipline procedures).



Post-Crisis Communication (The Parent Pick-Up)

Inevitably, a situation will occur when working with students who exhibit aggressive behaviors in which the student will be sent home from school early because of a behavior crisis. In most cases a parent or caregiver will pick the child up from school. It is important to consider the following:

1. The parent is also in a crisis.
2. The student can hear and understand what you are saying (or you should proceed as though they can).
3. This is a better time to schedule a meeting than hold a meeting.
4. It's OK and most likely appropriate you tell the parent you are sorry.
Sorry for what??? That the child has to go home; That they had to come pick the child up; That the BIP did not work in this instance.



Post-Crisis Communication (Informing while respecting confidentiality)

- Within the School building/district: "Need to know"
- Among the other students in the classroom.
- Among the parents' of the children in the classroom.
- Among the Community
 - Grocery Store
 - Pick-up Chatter
 - Facebook



Post-Crisis Communication

- Documentation
 - School
 - District
 - State
 - Law Enforcement



Restraint Considerations

“Students with disabilities (served by IDEA) represent 12% of the student population, but 58% of those placed in seclusion or involuntary confinement, and 75% of those physically restrained at school to immobilize them or reduce their ability to move freely.”

(U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014. p. 1)



Seclusion Defined - Kansas

Seclusion (according to Kansas Law) is “The placement of a student in a location where all of the following conditions are met:”

1. The student is placed in an enclosed area by school personnel;
2. The student is purposefully isolated from adults and peers; and
3. The students is prevented from leaving, or the student reasonably believes that the student will be prevented from leaving the enclosed area.

* Seclusion does not include timeout so long as the student is only temporarily removed from a learning environment and is not secluded.



Seclusion Considerations (Kansas)

When a student is placed in seclusion, a school employee shall be able to see and hear the student at all times.

- All seclusion rooms:
 - Locks must automatically disengage when school employee not present.
 - Safe place with similar proportions to other rooms where students frequent.
 - Free of any condition that could be a danger to the student.
 - Well-ventilated and sufficiently lighted.



ESI Considerations (Kansas)

Emergency Safety Interventions (ESI) are seclusion and restraint that are used when the student presents a reasonable and immediate danger to self or others. (91-42-2)



ESI required communication (Kansas)

Written documentation of the emergency safety intervention incident must include:

- The events leading up to the incident;
- student behaviors that necessitated the use of the emergency safety intervention;
- steps taken to transition the student back into the educational setting;
- the date and time the incident occurred;
- the type of emergency safety intervention used and the duration of the incident;
- the school personnel who used or supervised the ESI;
- Opportunity for parents to provide written feedback or comments to the school about the incident
- A statement that invites and strongly encourages parents to schedule a meeting to discuss the incident and how to prevent future use of emergency safety interventions, and the email and phone number for the parent to contact the school to schedule a meeting.



ESI Considerations (Kansas)

- Mechanical and chemical restraints are prohibited.
- Law enforcement may use mechanical restraints so long as they do so in accordance with law enforcement duties.
- “Mechanical restraints” do not include: seatbelts and protective or stabilizing devices.



Wrap-Up

