

Boulder County ABCD Partnership

Helping all Boulder County children thrive.



Cultural & Relationship Considerations

Developing a **relationship of trust** with a family is consistently noted by early childhood experts as an important factor that would encourage a family to act upon a recommendation. Having a conversation with a parent about referring their child for a more thorough evaluation can be challenging with any family, especially if the family has a cultural background that you are not familiar with. “Culture” may refer to a different country, but it could also mean issues related to poverty, teen parenting, family values, belief systems, etc. Below are tips from providers who have these conversations.

Learn About Their Culture

Prior to speaking with a family it may be helpful to research their culture. However, keep in mind that culture varies from region to region within countries. It really is best to ask the family questions about their culture instead of relying on preconceived ideas from research. You can ask, “What would be helpful for me to know about the (Mexican, Chinese, Arabic, etc.) culture? How are children prepared for school in (Mexico, China, Saudi Arabia)?” Remember that you might need the assistance of an interpreter.

Show Respect

Showing that you care about their child is key to a family being willing to take action on your referral. Some ways to do that include:

- Pronouncing their child’s name correctly
- Focusing on their child’s strengths before discussing possible areas of concern
- Asking the parents for their feedback

Listen

All families want to be heard. Take the time to really listen to their perspective when they are reluctant to pursue an evaluation. Realize that they may be preoccupied with other issues such as finances or transportation. Can you help identify and assist with these potential barriers?

Allow Time for the Referral

It is important to give the family time to make their decision. Sometimes this can take more than one meeting to accomplish. Respect families’ varying levels of readiness and do not rush the referral if they are not ready.

Explain American Culture

You may need to explain American culture and the importance of early childhood education. Parents may not realize that there is an expectation for school readiness before a child starts kindergarten. Teachers expect students to have solid speech, fine motor and social skills.

Offer Written Explanations

It is helpful to provide a written summary for parents in English, as well as their native language, after you discuss their child’s developmental concerns. This provides another way for them to understand and process the information and can be used as a future reference.