

Tips for Home Visits

High-quality, home-visiting programs for young children can improve family relationships, increase school readiness, reduce child maltreatment, and increase family economic self-sufficiency. Community home visiting is most effective as a part of a comprehensive early childhood system that includes and enhances a family-centered home (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2017).

SCHEDULING A HOME VISIT

Explain the purpose of the home visit

Home visits provide the opportunity for the child to meet their teacher in a familiar environment. It helps the child understand that their family thinks school and learning is important. It provides the teacher with the chance to meet the family one-on-one and invite them to be a regular part of the classroom. Home visits also give the teacher the opportunity to observe the child's home life and culture, something that is invaluable when planning for individualized classroom experiences.

Tell the family how long the visit will be

Home visits typically take around 20–40 minutes. If you are scheduling more than one home visit in the same day, inform each family of your schedule constraints (e.g., “I will arrive at your home at 3:00, and I will be able to meet with you for 40 minutes before I will have to leave to get to my next visit.”).

Arrange to meet in the child's home or in a familiar public place

It is important that the child and their family feel comfortable during this first meeting. For some adults, a meeting with teachers can be quite uncomfortable, and it is the teacher's responsibility to put the family at ease. Therefore, every effort should be made to conduct the home visit at the child's home. Under special circumstances, home visits can be conducted at a public place familiar to the family (e.g., a local park, library, or fast food restaurant), but home visits should not be conducted at the school.

During the Home Visit

- Briefly explain your program's philosophy, the Early Learning Outcomes, and give the parent a copy of your parent handbook. Also, it is always nice (but not mandatory) if you can bring something to leave with the child (e.g., a book, a picture of their new classroom)
- Briefly go over the daily schedule of the classroom and the classroom rules/expectations
- Invite family members to tell you about the child and their home culture
- Ask the parents about any allergies or special needs their child has
- Bring an “art supply box” and encourage the child to create artwork to display in the classroom
- Bring a camera and take a picture of the child with their family. Display the picture in the classroom to remind the child of your home visit
- Ask the child what their favorite toys and activities are at home and what things he/she hopes to learn at school.
- Always end by asking the parents, “What questions do you have for me?” and telling the child how excited you are to get to be their teacher!

References:

Duffee JH, Mendelsohn AL, Kuo AA, et al. (n.d.). Early Childhood Home Visiting. *Pediatrics*. 2017;140(3): e20172150

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