



Tips for successful meetings

What to consider when meeting with families and caregivers

- Meetings can be challenging to organise around busy schedules for everyone. Approaching meetings with sensitivity can establish trust and ongoing, open dialogue between parties.
- Allow time for repeating and explaining information.
- Make reference to the child's unique personality.
- Use humour wisely in ways that show appreciation of the child's qualities.
- Be aware of participants' emotions or responses during the conversation.
- Have information on hand regarding further support available to the family.



Consider your actions

- Let family members speak.
- Listen attentively to their comments.
- Discuss one topic at a time.
- Give precise information based on your observations.
- Present complete (rather than piecemeal) information.
- Avoid suggesting a diagnosis or a therapy. Encourage families to seek their own diagnosis.

What to do when there is potential conflict

- Give yourself time to consider before you speak.
- If caregivers seem to disagree with you, ask: *Is this different from what you think?*
- If they argue or disagree with your observations, respect their views and emphasise that you want to do everything to help their child reach their full potential.
- Reiterate that you are keen to find a solution to support their child in their learning and wellbeing.
- Try not to take any conflict personally. Understand that families with neurodivergent children may be in contact with multiple institutions at any given time, all giving input about what they think should be occurring within the child's world and the family domain.
- Set boundaries for your conversation. If the discussion escalates or reaches a stalemate, end the meeting and schedule another time to follow up.
- Consult with your school leadership and support team regarding relevant school policies to ensure that your actions align with reasonable school practice.
- Ask for help from a colleague with expertise in supporting students on the autism spectrum and their families. Remember, you are not alone!

Language and tone to use in your meeting

- Be aware of your tone of voice and body language.
- Be brief, concise and sensitive when describing a behavioural issue.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use plain language.
- Explain any acronyms you use.
- Pause periodically to allow time for clarifications or questions.

Non-verbal communication methods to use in your meeting

- Show empathy for the parents' or caregiver's feelings.
- Show compassion for their experiences.
- Allow participants time to process the information being shared.
- At times silence can be more supportive than words.



Resources for educators: <https://studentwellbeinghub.edu.au/educators/topics/autism/starting-school/>