

Building Partnerships

What Parents Want From Professionals

Despite the differences in the ages and special needs of our children, we parents want very similar things from teachers, doctors, therapists and other professionals. We want to know that you are really listening to us ("**I hear**") and we want five basic things from our relationships:

- I** Information
- H** Hope & optimism
- E** Emotional support
- A** Access to services
- R** Respect

Information is key to helping us make good choices for our families. We want information that is:

- ★ easily understood (no jargon, please),
- ★ up-to-date
- ★ available when we need it
- ★ unbiased
- ★ complete (spelling out all our options), and
- ★ helpful in preparing us for next steps.

We really value honesty. If you don't know, just say so, and we'll find the answer together.

Hope and optimism are two more vital ingredients for positive partnerships. Help us to realize that:

- ♥ our child can learn and thrive,
- ♥ there are folks who are willing to help,
- ♥ we can both hold high expectations for our children, and
- ♥ each child has a gift to share.

Emotional support is truly helpful because sometimes we just need a strong shoulder. Giving us emotional support can include:

- ♥ understanding and allowing our grief,
- ♥ being sensitive to our feelings and cultural values
- ♥ honoring our sense of urgency, and
- ♥ knowing there will be good and bad days.

Accessing services is something we can look to you for help with. Sometimes this means:

- ★ helping us fill out our forms,
- ★ assisting us to understand the process,
- ★ making sure that services are coordinated and monitored for progress, and
- ★ seeing to it that the service fits our child's needs.

Respect, although last, but surely not the least, is what we need from you. Please continue to support us by:

- ★ respecting our privacy and confidentiality
- ★ honoring our family values and priorities and our commitment to our child and family
- ★ recognizing parents as experts and welcoming us to the table as equal partners
- ★ respecting the family's time constraints and other responsibilities
- ★ being tolerant of different styles of coping, and
- ★ understanding cultural diversity.

Together we can accomplish so much more for our keiki than we can alone.

(Contributors to this handout include the Learning Disabilities Association of Hawaii and its AWARE Project, the Community Children's Council Office, and SPIN.)