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**PROVIDERS: SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR IMPROVING
PARENT/PROVIDER RELATIONSHIPS**

DO

- ...say positive things to the parents about their child—they've heard plenty of negatives over the years. Make routine phone calls with good news.
- ...arrange the individual's team meetings at a time and place convenient for the family and allow a realistic amount of time for meaningful discussion
- ...work with families in coordinating home visits so that you can plan house activities accordingly. Remember, a special family occasion trumps any policy on visitation.
- ...provide the family with the program's policies and procedures in writing and discuss them up front. Make sure to provide a good rationale for your policies.
- ...take the initiative to contact families about any unusual happenings involving their child. You can be sure they are going to hear about it in any case!
- ...communicate thoroughly and regularly with your supervisor about any issues you are experiencing or foreseeing with parents and families. You may need guidance in order to be proactive, not reactive
- ...ask the parents questions about their child. They possess a wealth of information and would love nothing more than to share it with those who need it most—you.
- ...be sensitive to parent concerns over restrictions regarding calling and visiting. While such policies serve an important function for the program; they can alienate some parents, especially those with children who are unable to articulate their experiences.
- ...tell the truth and take responsibility for your mistakes. (You will make a few.)
- ...work together to establish balanced and realistic expectations

DON'T

- ...be disrespectful or lose your temper with family members no matter how upset you may be. Instead, respectfully end the conversation.
- ...discuss internal agency or personnel issues with family members. It only serves to confuse and create ill will.
- ...discuss confidential matters pertaining to other program participants or discuss the family member in front of other program participants
- ...contradict a parent's decision in front of their family member
- ...believe everything an individual reports about their latest home visit...like the apple pie and quart of ice cream their mom let them eat.
- ...say you are going to do something and then not do it. Parents count on you to follow through.
- ...be afraid to ask for help...Whether it's a new approach to managing a behavior or needing a new treadmill...most parents will do whatever it takes to support their child's program
- ...make assumptions

Finally...

Don't expect that parents are going to understand all the complications and intricacies in managing a program for several people. That's not their job. Do recognize that most families are very grateful for your support and care for their family member, even if they don't always show it.

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**PARENTS: SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR IMPROVING
PARENT/PROVIDER RELATIONSHIPS**

DO

- ...say positive things to the staff—your support means more than you can imagine
- ...attend your child's planning meetings
- ...coordinate your child's home visits with the staff so they can plan house activities accordingly
- ...ask for the program's policies and procedures in writing and discuss any questions or concerns up front
- ...follow-up with staff when your child tells you about something terrible that happened to him or her at the program
- ...follow the communication chain—creates good faith with the staff (and doesn't preclude you from going straight to the top when you really need to)
- ...ask questions
- ...adhere to program guidelines regarding calling and visiting
- ...work together to establish balanced and realistic expectations

DON'T

- ...blame, threaten, or yell at direct service staff—bring your concerns to the appropriate supervisor
- ...question a decision made by a staff person in front of your child or other program participants
- ...do your child's household chores for him/her
- ...forgo his diet plan entirely during home visits
- ...believe that absolutely every behavior issue that arises is a result of PWS and isn't subject to change (after all-do we really know for sure?)
- ...believe everything you hear from a staff person about an incident-check it out with a supervisor who usually has the bigger and more complete picture
- ...give cash or credit cards directly to your child (and worse yet, neglect to tell staff about it!)
- ...make assumptions

FINALLY...

Don't expect that any program can provide all that you provide as a loving parent, but do acknowledge what your child gains by being in a work or residential program. There may be several trade-offs, but most are very worthwhile.

bjg:6/05