



**NAVIGATING YOUR
CENTER'S REOPEN WITH
FAMILIES**



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INTRODUCTION

As you conduct your self-assessment to ascertain your comfort and preparedness to reopen, you'll also want to assess your parent communication strategies.

You have likely been keeping in touch with families for multiple reasons: to explain closures and related details, to answer questions, to provide distance learning opportunities, and simply to stay connected.

Now, you'll also need to determine their need for child care, as well as their understanding of the new procedures they should expect.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

REVIEW YOUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

First, review your current communication strategy to determine its effectiveness. Spend a little time assessing both your methods and your message. Are parents reading your emails? Are they engaging with you on social media? Do they reply to your texts or phone calls? In addition, do they seem to be “hearing” you? Or are they asking questions that lead you to believe your message wasn’t clear?

REVIEW YOUR PARENT HANDBOOK

It’s also important to review your parent handbook, where you’ve likely identified several communication strategies. Considering that your handbook serves as your promise to families, so it’s important to follow through on the procedures you’ve outlined. Put simply, if you said you’re going to connect via email, the Kangarootime app, and Twitter, make sure you’re using those channels consistently. In fact, this is a great time to make a simple list of the methods you plan to use to communicate (website updates, email, social media, messaging services, etc.); you can use it as a checklist to ensure that you consistently share your messages across the appropriate channels.

NEXT STEPS

Once you’ve evaluated your current strategy, you’ll have a good idea of what’s working well and where there’s room for improvement. With that understanding, you’re ready to move forward with your reopening communication plan. The following strategies can help.

DETERMINE YOUR PRIORITIES

ARE YOU WELL-INFORMED?



It's important to be sure that your communication demonstrates the thoughtfulness and intention that you have put into your reopening plan; **parents want to know that you are well-informed and well-prepared.** You want to avoid overwhelming families with information, but at the same time, want to maintain the positive, personal relationships you've established over time.

IS YOUR COMMUNICATION CONSISTENT AND CLEAR?



As always, **it's important that your communication with families is clear and consistent;** families are relying on you to provide information that is timely, relevant, and accurate. In a crisis, it's equally important for your messaging to be authentic and optimistic. You should expect lots of questions. It can be helpful to plan ahead to dedicate some time for phone calls; as you follow up with families, draft a list of their frequently asked questions so you can widely distribute a FAQ document later.

QUICK TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING DURING A CRISIS

1

COMMUNICATE IN A TIMELY MANNER

2

SEND CORRESPONDENCE DIGITALLY

3

**STAY UP-TO-DATE ON BREAKING NEWS FROM
RELIABLE SOURCES**

4

**CREATE AND SEND OUT A PLAN FOR
MANAGING DURING THE CRISIS**

5

**OPEN A DIALOGUE TO SHARE THOUGHTS,
FEELINGS, AND CONCERNS ABOUT WHAT'S
HAPPENING**

SPECIFIC MESSAGES TO PREPARE

Although each center is unique, there are several messages that will likely need to be universally communicated. For your convenience, we have compiled a collection of documents that address these messages, including an editable sample letter.



Personalize this editable **letter** to announce your reopening plans.

Consider sharing a link to the **CDC guidelines**, to reassure families that your program changes are aligned with best practices.



Ellie Poleon, CEO of LE3 Inc., created this **comprehensive update** for families; it was shared across several social media platforms. The “our new normal” section (pages 4-7) provides an excellent example.



Amanda Hellebush, director of Full Heart Child Care, shared **this flyer** with enrolled families. Consider creating a similar summary of key program changes, including exclusion criteria.



Cheri Nowicki, national manager for Skies the Limit Child Care, regularly updates **this letter**, to keep families informed of the changing pandemic-related policies, procedures, and regulatory guidelines.



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