

Role Plays for Parent Meetings

Joshua at Happy Daze Child Care Center

Child: Joshua is the only child in a single parent household. They are new to the area, having moved from another state to be near family. Joshua attends the program full days and has been in the program for about two months. In general Joshua seems to have transitioned into the program with ease. He seems to understand the basic routine and concepts presented during circle. Joshua seems to enjoy playing in the block area, doing puzzles, and exploring items in the science area. Joshua has been having issues with aggression. He hits other children especially when lining up to go outside or to the bathroom. He also seems to get hurt a lot. When he does get hurt he will scream very loudly. He also seems to trip when trying to navigate the classroom. This last week Joshua has become very aggressive. He seems to be hitting children more and more each day. Joshua had a complete meltdown when asked to line up and began to throw blocks around the block area. The director was visiting the classroom at the time and was hit by one of the blocks. Joshua was taken to her office until he became calm.

Teacher: You have been trying to figure out Joshua since he entered the program. You have little information about the family because he is transported by van to your site. You are very concerned about Joshua. You have been documenting his behavior for the past three weeks and feel that he may benefit from an evaluation of his ability to process sensory information. You have sent several notes home to his mother requesting a meeting to discuss your concerns. His mother sends back notes stating she is unable to meet at this time. You have spoken about Joshua with the director and want to seek outside support for Joshua. As a result of the latest incident involving Joshua having a tantrum, throwing blocks, and having to be removed to the director's office, the director has requested a meeting with the parent to discuss how best to support Joshua.

The Parent: You are a single parent who has recently moved to a new state to help support an ailing parent. You have recently started a new job and secured day care with transportation for Joshua. You are constantly running from your job to your parent's house to help care for them as they battle cancer. You are exhausted by the time Joshua is due to arrive home. When Joshua comes home he seems to be "off the wall" with energy. He always seems to be bumping into something, falling and getting hurt. You barely have the strength to get him fed and into bed before you start the daily grinds of chores before bed. You have received several notes from Joshua's teacher requesting a meeting. One part of you is avoiding talking to his teacher because you are afraid he is having trouble and will be kicked out of the program. Today there was a voice mail from the Director requesting a meeting at his day care tomorrow. You email her and confirm you will be there in order to avoid any conversations!

The Director: You have watched Joshua struggle more each day in his classroom. At team meetings you have advised his teacher to document his behavior over time to get a clear picture of what his needs may be. The teacher has shared with you her concerns and her inability to get in touch with his mother. You have tried to allow the teacher to lead however once Joshua began throwing blocks about the room it became clear that a meeting was needed to accelerate the plan.

Arianna at Miss Lucy's Family Day Care Program:

Arianna: Arianna is two years old and the fourth child in a busy family. Her mother and father both work full time and two of her siblings attend a school down the street from Miss Lucy's. Arianna attends Miss Lucy's family child care full time along with her four year old brother. Arianna is a very quiet child. She grunts and points to make her needs known. She bounces along to the music during singing time but cannot be heard singing. She can point to items when asked but never seems to be able or to name the objects. Her brother speaks for her throughout the day. Other than being quiet Arianna is a happy child. She is

able to play peacefully and purposefully with the toys provided and delights in the simple art project Miss Lucy provides.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Smith is the proud parent of four wonderful children. His newest little angel is Arianna. She is so sweet and cuddly and never causes any trouble. He has no concerns about her lack of language. He feels it is due to being the youngest in the family and will learn when she's ready. He enjoys being an involved father and will take time off of work to support his children in any way. He told Miss Lucy he thought she's read too many books on child development and she is over reading Arianna's lack of speech. He believes that love is the only thing children needs in order to learn and his little Arianna will be fine in her loving family. She will speak when she's ready!

Mrs. Smith: Mrs. Smith is a busy working mother of four children. She prides herself in meeting each child individual needs and doing it with a smile. He baby Arianna was a bit of a surprise in more ways than one. She has noticed that Arianna is the quietest child she has ever met! She also is a bit concerned about Arianna's drooling. She feels that maybe allowing her to suck on a pacifier too long has caused her to be a drooler. Unlike her husband Mrs. Smith is worried to hear Miss Lucy's concerns and is starting to feel guilty that she has not seen her lack of speech as an issue. She has agreed to meet with Miss Lucy even though she dreads the thought of her sweet baby girl having special problems.

Miss Lucy: Miss Lucy has been a family child care provider for over ten years. She has grave concerns about Arianna. She has been trying to entice her to name objects but Arianna has no interest. She repeatedly asks Arianna's brother not to talk for her. She has spoken to Arianna's parents as they race in for drop off and pick up about Arianna's lack of speech. Both parents brush aside her concerns stating "she's the baby" and change the subject. Miss Lucy wants to sit down and speak with them about EI. She has had several children who have had success with the local program. Miss Lucy has arranged to meet with Mr and Mrs Smith this afternoon during nap time.

Stephen at Munchkin Academy

Stephen: Stephen is a four year old child who entered your preschool classroom in September. He is the only child in a two parent family. Both parents work in the city, one at a large financial company and the other at a law firm. He is typically dropped off and picked up by as caregiver. Stephen has been having difficulty learning the routine of many of the activities. He seems unable to follow multi step directions. Stephen often seems lost during larger group circle time and storytime. He is unable to answer simple questions and appears to be confused during routine circle time activities such as naming the day of the week or talking about the weather. He never is able to answer any questions relating to the story during story time. Stephen appears to be accepted by the other children however they only seem to seek him out during outside time. Stephen has begun to act up during the large group circle and story times. He also refuses to participate in any of the projects done during the day. He prefers to play in the block area or at the sensory table.

The Teacher: you are very concerned about Stephen. You have tired many strategies to help support him during large group time but feel you need a better understanding of his needs in order to develop strategies that truly engage him. You would like his parent to have him evaluated by the Public Schools or private evaluators to determine why he has been unable learn the routines and be more engaged in the classroom. You have sent home notes to his parents requesting a meeting only to be told they are too busy. After three attempts to connect with the parents you met with the program director and asked for help. She suggested that you begin to send home notes with specific descriptions of the behaviors that are of concern and that she will contact them to schedule a meeting. The caregiver reports that Stephen's parents were very concerned about their son but feel resentful about having to take time off form their work to meet about these issues. Now you get a knot in your stomach every time you think about the upcoming meeting.

Stephen's Mother: you are very upset and concerned about your son. You are also overwhelmed and upset by the struggle between keeping up your status at the law firm and being a good mother to your son. You have hired a wonderful Nanny to help with child care and enrolled him in the best preschool program in town. Now it seems that Stephen may need to go to special education classes to learn. You are frightened about the prospect of him being labeled as less than perfect. Your sister had major learning disabilities when she was younger and never went to college. You yourself struggled hard to learn in school but studied with all you might to become a lawyer. All your husband can do is complain about the preschool and states that with the money paid in tuition any learning problem is the responsibility of the school. Her also clearly states that no child of his will be evaluated for anything! His boy is just fine! You just want to figure out what is best for your child. You are dreading the upcoming meeting!

Stephen's Father: You work six days a week for a big financial firm in the city. The last thing you feel you can do is take time off to go to your sons preschool for a meeting. You feel the teacher is not doing he job. Any learning issues should be dealt either by the staff at the overpriced preschool you wife insist on sending your son to. You know he is a smart boy and do not have time to deal with any of this nonsense. Beside, no child of yours is ever going to be labeled anything but a winner! There is a small part of you that is scared that something may be really wrong. Your brother had dyslexia and struggled all through school. You remember getting in fights with the other kids because they used to call you brother "Dummy" and other less than flattering names. All because he had to go to the resource room at school. No son of your will ever go through that. You're going to the meeting because your wife insists. Beside you are going to remind those teachers that you are paying good money for your son to learn!

The Director: You are attending this parent meeting to protect your teacher and try and diffuse what could potentially be a very explosive situation. As the Director of an elite preschool you have dealt with parents who feel “entitled” and know how to smooth things over between parents and teachers. You want to help focus the meeting on the teacher concerns and keep it from becoming a blaming match. Your teacher is quite young and has not yet learned how to present information to parent who are not ready to accept that their child may need support. You will try and keep everyone calm and focused on the child. You too are dreading the meeting. You need to keep both the teacher and the family happy. Stephen’s family just made a huge donation toward the school building fund. You need to keep them invested in your school and their son’s future.

Samuel at Children’s Village

Samuel: Samuel is a three years old boy who entered your preschool classroom in September. He is the youngest child in a two parent family. He has an older sister who is in third grade and attends the local elementary school. Samuel is one of the first children dropped off and the last child to be picked up. He has had a variety of issues since starting the day care. Samuel appears to have very little control over his impulses. He is constantly hitting and bumping into other children, dumping toys out and refusing to pick them up, and grabs at food and often tries to take the whole plate during snack and lunch times. When he does eat you have noticed that he is very messy often times his face is covered with food and he does not appear to notice. Samuel does not seem to be able to play with any of the other children in the classroom. He spends much of his day wondering from area to area. He does appear to enjoy outside time. He prefers to use the swings and the riding toys.

The Teacher: You are very concerned about Samuel.. He appears to be very “out of control” much of the day. You have tried to implement several behavior plans including incentives, having Samuel sit in a quiet space until he is calm and most recently taking him out of the room until he regains control. Snack and lunch times can be disastrous unless Samuel is allowed to get his food first and immediately eat. He is a very messy eater and once he finishes his first helping he always seems to want more. You are concerned about many of his behaviors however his aggressive behaviors take center stage. He seems to be getting more frustrated and angry with each passing day. Your assistant just chalks it up to his being “one of those kids” however you feel there is something going on that you need more information to understand. You have repeatedly tried to talk to his mother however she refuses to talk. Each day she breezes in and out of the classroom stating she’s late to pick up her other child. Finally you have arranged for coverage and set up a meeting first thing in the morning. Samuels’ mother has agreed to meet for thirty minutes but made it clear that this was all the time she has because her boss does not want her to be late. You have assembled your documentation and have the number of the local public schools to give to Samuel’s mother so that he can be evaluated. You are very anxious about this meeting because you need to understand why Samuel behaves the way he does in order to develop a good plan.

Samuel's Mother: Samuel's mother is extremely stressed. She is currently separated from her husband and struggling to make ends meet. Samuel's father left abruptly and has not provided any financial support. Samuel's mother is scared she will lose their house. Recently she has had difficulty buying food. She is glad both children receive lunch at school. She does not tell anyone about her situation. Now she has to be late to work to meet with Samuel's teacher. She knows he is very upset because he was close to his father. She also notices that he has excessive energy at home. One thing that drives her crazy is how Samuel always seems to get hurt from bumping into things or because he jumps on the furniture. He always seems to be getting in everyone's way. Samuel's mother is trying to hold everything together. She hopes no one will think she is the incompetent failure that her husband tells her she is each time she has tried to talk with him about the children and her financial plight. She is very proud and does not want anyone to know her issues.