Safeguarding Inclusive and Respectful Communication
Caregivers

Respecting the caregivers and families we serve

We must be able to recognize damaging phrases and redirect each other towards more inclusive and respectful communication for those we serve. Whether we are working with colleagues in our own school district or organization or supporting external stakeholders; inequitable responses and statements can surface. Below are phrases you may have heard about parents or caregivers.

You may hear…

Statements about parents and caregivers like:
- Parents/caregivers are so negative
- Aren't supportive
- Don't answer the phone
- Don't return work
- Never offer to help
- Don't ask questions.

Sometimes we hear even more racist or bias language like, "*those* families/caregivers" when referencing specific racial, cultural or income levels and groups.

Other racist and biased examples might be:
- "Free/Reduced Lunch families won't respond to schoolwork, but if there's food involved, then they'll show up."
- "Native American families don't value school."
- "Immigrant/ELL families never show up for anything."
- "Migrant worker families aren't going to stay long anyway. It's not worth learning their names."
- "If Black parents would have a calm conversation, it would go a lot further."

So what's the big deal?

Targeted statements promote racism, perpetuate stereotypes, create toxic and harmful school culture and climate and sever relationships between school and home. While any of these statements are harmful, racist or bias statements are a bigger deal. Now families and caregivers are not only being cast in a negative light; but because of inequities that exist based on race, class, gender, orientation, identity, ability, etc. these statements are even more damaging.

Each statement sets up an "us vs. them" mentality and indicates a lack of understanding for the complexity of barriers that exist for caregivers. General negative statements about families and caregivers that are not impacted by additional inequities are still problematic.

A Coaching Protocol

You most likely will need to offer direct support or responses to potential barriers. Naming the barriers you can control, and which are out of your control will also be helpful when offering support. Staying solution focused in your support will be key to healthy and lasting relationships. Keep in mind, not everyone may have had the opportunity to understand or recognize barriers.

Acknowledge the Feeling	Acknowledge the Value	Name the Barriers	Offer Support
Parenting or caregiving is a hard job. Teaching is a hard job.	We know that the success of a student is largely tied to strong school-home relationships. Both parents, caregivers and educators care about the student.	**Caregivers might:** ▪ Be working (multiple jobs, working out of the home, working in the home) ▪ Be focused on self-care or survival ▪ Be navigating poverty ▪ Have a language barrier ▪ Be navigating a variety of life issues (mental health, addiction, etc.) ▪ Have unreliable internet, access to technology or phone service ▪ Not have *any* access to internet, technology or phone service ▪ Have had negative school experiences themselves ▪ Be uncomfortable because of immigration status ▪ Need support navigating school language or systems ▪ Be uncomfortable asking for help or may be unsure of what questions to ask **Teachers might:** ▪ Lack awareness of bias or blind spots ▪ Have little professional learning around, systemic racism, cultural competency, or social and emotional learning ▪ Have limited life experience outside their own reality ▪ Have limited experience or relationships with people and cultures outside of their own culture or race	**Coaching Language:** Have you considered (name a possible barrier?) How can I help eliminate the barriers we can control, so students get the support they need to be successful? If we can't eliminate the barrier, what are some ways I can adjust so students get the support they need to be successful?