



Scenario

Communication & Collaboration

Barbara is an RECE who has been working in the profession for close to 20 years but recently moved from a rural community to a city, leaving her long-time position in a child care centre. Now, Barbara is working as a supply staff at a number of licensed child care centres with a range of age groups. While she's feeling overwhelmed by the larger community, Barbara is confident she will apply her knowledge and skills in any employment environment.

This week, Barbara is working in one centre in a school. Every day, her time is split between the toddler room and the before and after school-age program. Communication with the toddler room staff is clear and open. Barbara feels like she knows where to access the necessary information about the children and families and so far, the staff and students she's worked with have been helpful and responsive to her programming ideas. Her experience in the school-age program, however, has been different.

One day, upon entering the school-age room, her colleague barely glances up and hands her the attendance sheet and walks away. Barbara frantically tries to learn the children's names and ensure that her attendance is accurate. A parent arrives to pick up their child and asks for information about the school-age activities, schedule and weekly snack. Barbara quickly shares that she is a new supply staff and cannot provide the details of the program. The parent appears confused and looks for another staff to speak to. Barbara's colleague is nowhere to be seen. The parent walks out in a hurry looking frustrated.

Concerned about the conversation and the information she was unable to provide, Barbara takes a closer look around the room trying to find

the daily schedule and other available resources for families. All of a sudden, Barbara looks at her attendance sheet and realizes that she didn't know if one child had been picked up. One child is not in the room and has not been ticked off the attendance.

Barbara goes over the afternoon's interactions with families in her head: What was that new parent's name? Was the missing child hers? Did she leave with their child after that earlier conversation about the program?

Barbara's colleague finally returns to the room. "Yes, yes that was Leo's mum. Didn't you ask her who she was? I saw her in the hall with Leo on her way out. It's fine," she says.

But it wasn't fine to Barbara. She was completely lost in this program. She wanted to talk to the supervisor and sent an email after her shift.

The next morning the supervisor texts Barbara to say she's not needed for the rest of the week. Barbara is left feeling confused and with her concerns unresolved: Did the parent complain? Did her colleagues say something about her? At the end of the day, how could she be held accountable when she was just a supply staff? Why didn't the supervisor email her back about her concerns?

Reflecting on the Scenario

1. How did Barbara's recent move and employment change impact her practice and her communication and collaboration with others?
2. What were the challenges Barbara faced as a new supply staff in the employment environment?
3. How did her communication experiences differ between the toddler room and school-age program?
4. At what point in the scenario did the communication between Barbara, her colleague and the parent break-down?
5. What did Barbara need to know about the children and the school-age program?
6. What were the consequences of the communication challenges?
7. What were Barbara's, the colleague's and the supervisor's professional responsibilities to share information, communicate, collaborate and ensure appropriate professional supervision?
8. What are some strategies that Barbara, the colleague and supervisor could have used to avoid communication challenges, established professional relationships and maintained appropriate supervision?

For more information about ethical and professional standards please contact the College of Early Childhood Educators at practice@college-ece.ca.

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