

## **How providers can help children adjust to a new child care situation**

Here are suggestions to help a new child adjust to your child care program:

Let parents spend time in your center or family childcare home. Look for chances to invite the children to do things as a group while the parent is there. The parent can wait while the child goes with the group. This way, the child can leave the parent in these first days and find that the parent is still there when he returns.

Offer activities to the child. Encourage other children to invite the child to do things. But do not force the child to go with you or the children. Let the child come to you at her own pace.

When parents leave, always make sure the child knows they are leaving. Have them say goodbye and tell him they'll be back to pick him up later in the day. Help them to leave quickly and to avoid long goodbyes. Tell them to avoid sneaking out to prevent a scene. As you know, in most cases the crying will stop quickly after they have left. Explain this to parents, but realize that it may be difficult for them. Also tell them that you will contact them if the crying does not stop after they leave.

Ask parents to be on time when they pick up the child. Picking up the child every day at the same time will help build the child's trust and help her understand that she is not being abandoned. Ask parents to call if they will be late, so that you can prepare the child. If a parent is late, allow the child to continue fun activities. Listen to the child if she talks about being angry or sad that her parents are not there yet.

Let children bring a piece of home with them; a special blanket, toy, or teddy bear can be very comforting. You may want to have a special place for them to keep those things so that they do not cause problems with other children. (Make sure parents understand your rules for bringing things from home.) Offer to keep photos of family members, neighbors, and pets to help remind children of familiar people if they feel lonely during the day.

Children may slip back to an earlier stage of development during their adjustment to childcare. Thumb sucking, wetting pants and other behaviors may occur. Set clear expectations for the children in your care, but be patient. Give the children time to adjust. Help the parents to relax when the child does these things. It is important not to react too strongly.

Encourage parents to allow for some time when they drop off or pick up their child. Children need a few minutes to say goodbye to Mom and Dad and to get involved in the activities at childcare. But parents need to finish saying goodbye and then leave. It is hard for the child if they take too long. At the end of the day, children need time to say goodbye to playmates and to you, the provider. The child may sometimes be unwilling to leave. It is not unusual for children to want to stay where they are when they are involved in an activity. You also need a little time to talk with the parent. Encourage the parent to notice the child first and then talk to you about how the day has gone. This is a good way to show the child the parent is glad to see him, and behavior problems may be avoided. Make sure that someone is watching the children when you are talking to parents.

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