

Getting the new school year off to a great start

Many children are in child care all year and some only from September to June. In both situations, transitions often take place in the fall and planning ahead can make life simpler and happier for everyone. Establishing routines at home and at drop-off time can be critical in how the day will go for your child (and you!). Communicating respectfully and effectively with your child's provider/teacher can be critical in the mental and emotional well-being for your child (and you)! The list below is offers some suggestions to create routines and support communications.

Preparation Routines

1. Before your child's first day in his or her program make a list of things your child will need. Post it in a convenient place and refer to it every morning. This information should have been provided by your child's caregiver when you enrolled your child. Pack everything in a bag the night before and add perishable foods in the morning right before heading out the door. As your child starts walking and talking, let them help with this routine.

2. It is also important that your provider know about your child's routines, likes & dislikes, fears, sleep habits and health concerns in advance. If you haven't already done this, take the time to put this information in writing. A caring provider will want to know in advance if your child bites, has trouble sleeping, is not completely potty-trained, is a picky eater, etc. Trust works two ways - you are trusting them to take care of your child, and they are trusting you to help them in a way that will provide a nurturing, loving environment.

Drop Off Routines

1. Letting your child know that he or she is going to have a great day in a safe environment is the next step in setting the tone for the day. If you convey to them in words or behavior that you don't feel comfortable leaving them, they will notice.

2. Say hello to your provider to make sure they know you are there. Help your child put his or her belongings where they need to go. If you have an infant, ask your provider where to put your child's things each day so that you can do this and your provider won't have to take her attention away from the children to do it.

3. If possible, speak with the teacher and let them know how your child's morning has been. The caregiver will need to know when the child ate, last went to the bathroom, might be ready for a nap. This is very important if you are leaving an infant. As your baby grows, your caregiver needs to know if they are rolling over, pulling themselves up and trying to walk. They also need to know when you introduce new foods so that they can be on the lookout for reactions. It is always a good idea to leave this information in writing and if your provider does not already do so, ask them to leave a pad of paper or a notebook

available for you to leave notes.

4. Before you leave, say good-bye to your child and the caregiver. Your child may cry for awhile when you leave, but they often stop before you even get to your car. Keep in mind, also, that children go through various stages as they grow and may suddenly start crying when you leave for no apparent reason. This doesn't mean that anything is wrong - it is just a developmental stage that may recur off and on.

On-Going Routines

1. Keep the lines of communication open. Children continuously change as they go through different developmental stages. Your caregiver needs to know what's happening at home! Keep them posted at least weekly about what is happening with your child.

2. Let them know what information you would like at the end of the day or week. If they don't have a form to fill out, perhaps you could make a simple list for them. Your child's caregiver knows it is difficult to be apart so much and that parents sometimes miss important events in a child's life. They will be glad to share stories if you are truly interested.

3. Greet your child with a big smile and hug every day, no matter how rough your day has been! Let them know they are the most important thing in your life.

4. Greet your caregiver with a smile; they deserve it. If this job was easy, everyone would be doing it.

5. Follow through on requests for clean clothes and any other supplies your child needs. If your child has an accident and there are no clean clothes (diapers, wipes, etc.) you have put your child in a situation that is uncomfortable and embarrassing as well as frustrating for the provider. They may not have the resources to provide extra diapers and clothes, not do they have the time and extra manpower to leave the children and go look for them if they aren't in the room.

6. If they take the time to fill out written communications, do them the courtesy of reading them. You will learn things about your child interests and friends and if they are old enough to talk, this will give you the opportunity to ask questions.

7. If you have questions and concerns, talk to your child's provider. You are the child's parent and are the one responsible for your child's safety and well-being. Knowing your child is safe and happy allows you to do your job at work with a peace of mind that will benefit everyone!

Information for this article was provided by Early Learning New Hampshire. The organization is committed to ensuring that all New Hampshire children have the opportunity to reach their full potential by expanding access to affordable quality child care and early education, supporting the child care industry; business public-private partnerships; and helping families balance work and family.

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