



ChildCareGroup

BEGINNING AN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION PROGRAM

Leaving your child with a caregiver can cause some anxiety for you and your child. This is normal and healthy. Whether you are just changing care arrangements, or your child is beginning an early care and education program for the first time, planning can smooth the process.

When your child is beginning an early care and education program, it may take some time until she begins to trust that you will return at the end of each day. Depending on your child and the situation, an adjustment period of up to six weeks can be expected. You may find some of these tips helpful:

Before starting an early care and education program:

- Visit the program with your child. Spend time becoming familiar with the program, the caregiver, and the other children before your child actually begins the program.
- Talk about the setting with your child. This helps your child know what to expect.
- Use the name of the caregiver and other children when talking about the program with your child.
- Be positive in talking about the program. Involve the child in selecting a new backpack, clothes, or anything that is special for this new experience.
- Listen to, identify, and respect the feelings your child may be experiencing. Let him know it is okay to be afraid of a new situation and that you will be there with him.
- Avoid making more than one major change at a time in your child's life, such as moving her to a new bed or starting toilet training at the same time you are starting her in care.

During the first few days or weeks:

- Allow some extra time in the morning to help your child get settled in the program. Spend a little time each day observing and talking with the caregiver about your child.
- Develop a regular routine of saying goodbye to your child. Make your goodbyes reassuring, but short. Remind your child that you will return later in the day. "Sneaking out" will more than likely make your child feel less secure. It is frightening for a child when he realizes you are gone and did not know you left.
- Bring a blanket, stuffed toy, pictures of you and your child, or another familiar item from home to help your child feel connected to home while she is in care.
- Set aside a few minutes at the end of the day to talk with your child about what happened and what was interesting. Talk about your day, too.

Remember:

- Providers report that most children are able to join in activities very soon after their parents have left. Some children have a longer adjustment period than others. Understanding your child's feelings will help her meet this new challenge.
- You may want to check your local library or bookstore for books to read with your child about beginning care.
- You will want to monitor the care your child receives. If you have concerns, discuss them immediately with the caregiver.

Call ChildCareGroup's Resource and Referral service at 214.631.2273 or 1.800.441.7865 for more free tips on choosing child care, other parenting resources, or assistance in finding child care. Or, visit us at www.ChildCareGroup.org/rr.

We encourage the widespread use of this information. Permission to use any part of this document is granted, provided all written uses give credit to ChildCareGroup. This document is not to be used in whole or part for financial gain.