

You also have things to do to get ready for a child's first day. You will need to put the child's name on a cubby and cot or crib. Add the child's name to the sign-in list. Put the family's name on the parent bulletin board. Make a cheery welcome sign. These little touches can help a child and family feel welcome and make the transition to your center go smoothly.

When the child and parent(s) arrive, greet them warmly. Parents may react in different ways to leaving their child. Every family is different. Some adults may find it very difficult to leave. Others will know just when to say goodbye to their child. Still others would prefer to rush out the door and not deal with their own or their child's feelings about this major change in their lives.

All parents will benefit from your support and understanding during what may be for them a difficult time, even if they treat it casually. You set the tone by being calm and friendly, welcoming the parent and the child alike.

During those first few hours, the child may have a lot of difficulty getting used to the new people and surroundings. Watch carefully and take any steps necessary to make the child and the parent feel a part of your program.

Parents of very young children, or of those who are enrolled in a group for the first time, may want to stay a full day and then gradually decrease the number of hours over the next week or two.

Some parents do not have the luxury of that much time and some children do not need this kind of a transition. Talk with the family about the best arrangements for everyone involved. Saying goodbye is not easy, but it is not in the best interest of child or family to prolong it unnecessarily.

If a parent must leave a clinging child in tears, you are responsible to comfort the distraught child. After the child has calmed down, be sure to take a minute to call the parent and offer reassurance that the child is now feeling more comfortable. Let the parents know that it is okay for them to call and check on their child. Then, at the end of the day, again describe how the child settled into the day.

Communication with Parents

Each day, you and the parents will need to exchange information about important events that occurred since you saw each other last. Take just a few minutes when the child arrives and again when the parent returns to fill each other in on what is happening with the child.

If parents do not have the time to spend even a few moments in casual conversation, you might want to arrange a time when you can call them to talk about how their child's day has been. Or if parents are always in a hurry, jot down a quick note about the day's events and pin it to the child's backpack. You will need to find ways to share information about the child with the parents.

If you have a large program with many staff members, written notes between teachers and parents may be essential. If caregivers change between arrival and pick-up time, work out a system that is easy to use and allows everyone to feel well-informed about the children. The system should work for both parents and staff.

Advising Parents of Their Child's Individual Progress

WAC 170-295-2080 states that you must have written documentation signed by the parent in each child's file stating that you have "advised the parent of the child's progress and issues relating to the child's care". This may include documentation that they have received written observations or assessments, reviewed a child's portfolio (a collected sample of their work), or attended a parent-teacher conference. You can contact your local resource and referral agency or community and technical college for more information about developmentally appropriate assessments of children.