



Staying Involved In Your Child's Care

Being Hands-On

After you've made your child care decision, your work continues. In order for your child to have a positive experience, we encourage you to stay involved. Your involvement will aid your child's early learning and development, and keep you informed about daily child care experiences.

Even with busy schedules, there are many ways for parents to be involved. We've listed some suggestions, but you may need to become creative depending on your schedule. If these suggestions don't work for you, sit down with your child care provider and talk about ways you can stay involved.

Things To Keep In Mind

Sometimes it's the little things that matter. There may be times your provider needs assistance with program preparation, including tasks that you may be able to help with from home. These duties will allow you to remain involved in your child's child care experience, even if your schedule doesn't allow it during the day.

Drop Off. Take a few minutes at the beginning of your child's day to inform your provider about how your child's night was, or how the day has started. Share any important information that may give your provider an outlook on how your child's day might go.

Pick Up. Check in with your provider to see how things went throughout the day. Discuss your child's behavior and what activities she participated in. Some providers will have a daily report, note or brief form to let you know how your child's day was.

You may offer to bring snacks or art supplies. Maybe your provider has some toys that need repair or projects that need to be prepared. Some programs may have advisory boards or committees that need parent participation. Check with your provider to see what you can do.

Special Meetings. Some child care providers will have regular conferences with parents to discuss a child's progress and experience in child care. Whenever you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to schedule a one-on-one meeting with your provider. There are times when discussing matters at drop-off or pick-up may not be appropriate. A private meeting may make these conversations easier. If necessary, schedule a phone call.

Volunteer. If you are able, attend special events or celebrations. If your child's program takes field trips and you can make it work with your schedule, volunteer to be a chaperone. Read stories once or twice a week during pick-up or drop-off.

No matter what works for you, take the time to remain active in your child's early development. Starting early will give you the fuel to continue your involvement



- You and your caregiver are partners in caring for your child.
- It's very important to everyone—you, your child and the caregiver—that you communicate regularly with one another.
- Ongoing communication can help you feel more involved with your child's care and help build a solid, trusting relationship.

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Tips For Transitioning to Child Care

Child care can be filled with mixed emotions, whether it is your child's first experience or you are moving from one environment to another. Preparing yourself and your child for this important

change in your lives will make the transition easier. Following are some tips to help with the transition to child care, as well as some tips when you drop off and pick up your child.

Building bridges between home and child care can make your child's transition from one to the other much easier. The more connected his two worlds are, the more secure he will feel in both.

Transition Tips

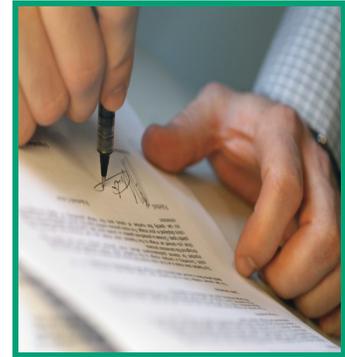
- ◆ Be aware of your own feelings. If you are feeling unsure about leaving your child, your child will sense your ambivalence and may have a harder time saying goodbye. Try to understand why you are feeling ambivalent.
- ◆ Ask the provider for any suggestions he/she might have to ease the transition.
- ◆ If your schedule allows, start with a part-time schedule to ease the transition.
- ◆ Talk positively about the experience in front of your child.
- ◆ If your child is old enough to understand, explain what will be happening. Go over the details of the routine and activities of the new child care arrangement.
- ◆ You may want to consider staying with your child for a couple of hours during the first few days. If you do, make sure your child is clear on how long you will be staying. If you leave when you say you will, you are establishing trust and reliability with your child.
- ◆ Visit the home or program with your child. Spend time visiting with the provider, exploring the program, and watching or playing with the other children. Take pictures while you are there and hang them on the refrigerator or make a book.
- ◆ Try not to make other major changes in your child's life during the transition to child care.



Parent-Provider Contract

Child care is a business arrangement. Therefore parents and providers are encouraged to have a written contract. There are fewer chances for misunderstandings if expectations are in writing.

The written contract will make sure that all details are covered in a clear, understandable manner. Here are some key items that should be included in your contract.



Main Elements of a Contract

1. Child and parent are identified
2. Payment rate/discounts/scheduled payment dates
3. Termination procedure
4. Scheduled times child will be in care
5. Signature of parents and provider

A contract deals with those items that are focused on the rights of the parent and the provider.

Other Contract Elements to Consider

- ◆ Any additional fees with explanation
- ◆ When and how payment is due
- ◆ Overtime policy/Late Fees
- ◆ Rates for absences: Either parent or provider's holiday, sick time, vacations...
- ◆ Any charges for supplies or activities
- ◆ What equipment (i.e.: car seat, pack n play etc.) is supplied by provider or the parent?
- ◆ How much notice is given for a rate increase
- ◆ Is non payment immediate grounds for dismissal
- ◆ How much notice is given if policies change
- ◆ Will there be a trial period? If so, for how long? Can the provider or parent terminate care at any time during that trial period?
- ◆ A clause requiring parents to abide by the policies

Neither party can change the contract terms without the agreement of the other party.

Building a Good Relationship with Your Child Care Provider

The relationship between a parent and child care provider takes a lot of work. You have to become partners in the nurturing and caring for your child. A meaningful relationship does not just happen.

It takes effort, practice and willingness from both parents and providers.

Here are some components of building a good relationship with your child care provider:



Things to Keep In Mind

- ♦ **Mutual Respect:** Mutual respect is the basis of any good relationship. If this is missing there is little chance for a long-lasting relationship. Both parent and provider need to respect each other and their involvement in the child's care.
- ♦ **Compromise:** Try to work *with* your provider, not against them. Parents will never find a provider who is exactly like them. Remember that the provider you choose will have their own unique strengths and weaknesses. Try to voice your concerns as soon as they come up.
- ♦ **Communication:** Communication is vital in building a strong relationship. A lack of it could destroy an otherwise good relationship. Remember communication is a two way street. Here are some suggestions to consider:
 - * Write daily or weekly notes to keep informed of your child's activities or talk with your provider when dropping off or picking up your child.
 - * Ask what activities are planned for the day or what they did.
 - * Set aside time to discuss your child's care with your provider.
 - * Ask your provider for advice. This will show that you respect their opinion and may strengthen the idea of a "teamwork approach."
- ♦ **Kindness:** Kindness is a great way to let your provider know she/he is valued.
 - * Remember special occasions with a small gift or card
 - * Offer to help out when you can
 - * Be courteous and polite
 - * Write a note of appreciation
 - * Invest in the relationship
 - * Live up to the agreement you made with your provider
 - * Ask how your provider's day was when picking up your child

One of the best things you can do for your child is to keep up a good association with the childcare provider.

Problem-Solving with Your Child Care Provider

Even in the best relationships conflicts happen and should be expected. It is normal and okay. The way a parent chooses to respond will have a direct impact on a resolution and their child's care.

How you deliver a message is almost as important as the message itself!

Here are some things to consider doing when problems arise:



Clearly Identify the Problem

Determine specifically what is bothering you before raising the matter. Address the problem with your provider as soon as possible to avoid added anger or frustration.

Be aware of the possibility that what you think the problem is and what the problem really is may be different.

Listening is a good way to solve any problem

Discuss the Problem

- ◆ Don't discuss the problem in front of the children
- ◆ Try to stick to the issue
- ◆ Focus on the best interest of the child
- ◆ Use "I" statements by telling how you feel, not how you think someone else is feeling or should be feeling
- ◆ Try to see it from the provider's point of view
- ◆ Ask the provider if they have noticed the same thing or has any concerns
- ◆ Be direct and open to feedback
- ◆ Try to stay calm
- ◆ Make every effort to be professionally respectful and constructive

- * Set up a plan with your provider and evaluate it together after a few days or weeks. If it is not working discuss other options or set up another plan.
- * If you feel or think it is not going to work out, start looking for a new child care arrangement.

Be A Partner With Your Provider

Things to Keep In Mind

- ◆ Make a point to speak to your child care provider daily. Schedule a conference after hours if you have any concerns you would like to discuss regarding your child.
- ◆ Establish and maintain a close relationship with your child care provider. Make a habit of having open, ongoing communication. Ask questions and express any concerns you might have.
- ◆ Children may experience separation difficulties during their development. However, extreme displeasure about going to child care, especially after the child has been attending for a month or more, should be discussed with the child and provider. Encourage your child to talk about their daily activities and their feelings about their child care provider or facility.
- ◆ Monitor the child care situation closely. Visit the program often, and be aware of changes in your child's behavior.
- ◆ Periodically arrive unannounced at different times of the day to observe the typical day.
- ◆ Volunteer to share a special skill you might have such as cooking, sewing, woodworking, playing a musical instrument, or storytelling, etc.
- ◆ Offer to bring in some simple, free items the children can use for activities such as old magazines, empty cereal boxes or fabric scraps.
- ◆ Attend parent/teacher conferences, volunteer to go on field trips and make sure your child knows that his/her work is important to you.
- ◆ Get to know other parents at the child care facility.
- ◆ Call the regulatory agency, State Licensing or County Certification, a couple of times per year to check for any complaints or concerns that may have been filed against your provider.

Ask yourself:

- *How do I keep informed about my child's growth and development?*
- *How can I work with my caregiver to resolve issues or concerns that may arise?*

