

Saying Goodbye & Separation

Feelings of fear and loss are very common during the transition time. Children and parents feel the hardship of separating from one another, especially if this is a first-time child care experience. Things to think about:

- If you are leaving one provider or program and beginning another, be sure to allow yourself and your child time to say goodbye. Make sure you talk with the teachers or provider about a goodbye procedure that works for them and for your child.
- Decide how you will stay in touch, and be sure to follow through, even if it is just to send a postcard with a message from your child to her old teacher and classmates.
- Many children seem to adapt to a new place or provider quickly, then later have feelings of separation anxiety. Be patient with these changes, which can even include some "backsliding" in areas such as toilet training. Be calm and reassuring; your child will recover soon.
- Your child may have disturbances in sleep or eating patterns during this time.
- Understand that it may take a few months for your child to adjust completely to a new situation.
- Remember that infants between the ages of 7 to 12 months may experience a heightened stranger-anxiety phase which makes separation more difficult (more crying or fussing). If you can stay with your baby for the first time or two, and be present while your baby becomes familiar with a new adult, it can be helpful.
- Sometimes leaving a photo of yourself or the family is helpful for your child to have during the day.
- Make sure the provider or teachers know how to reach you during the day. Sometimes a parent can reassure a child over the phone.
- Be sure to say goodbye to your child before you leave at drop off time. A firm, loving goodbye goes a long way to help your child to have a good day in child care!