

Program Action: Discuss Child's Transition

Purpose

Families learn what their child's actions can tell them about her feelings and thoughts. Using developmental information, they plan ways to help the child feel secure in the new program.

Staff work with parents to identify strategies that have helped a child with previous transitions and those that might help with the current transition.

Suggested Materials

- Tool 2—Parent Action: Help Your Child Adjust
- Videotape of child in classroom
- Stories, examples, or records of the child's classroom behavior

Suggested Time

During home visits, parent-teacher conferences, at the beginning or end of the day, or other one-on-one meetings with parents

Tips for Leaders

- ◆ All parents want to know that their child is *normal*. Make sure you explain that children of the same age behave in many different ways.
- ◆ Keep in mind that some parents may have difficulty reading the developmental chart by themselves. Take time to go over it with them.
- ◆ You can use a videotape of the child or written records to share what you have observed in the classroom.

Guiding a Discussion

- ◆ Ask parents to talk about how they feel about their child's transition and how they think their child feels about it. You can use the information on side 1 of the Parent Action pages to share basic things parents can do to help their child.
- ◆ Refer to the first Action Step and ask parents what has helped their child deal with change in the past. Suggest that they list these to start a record of strategies that can be shared with new teachers.
- ◆ Show parents how they can use the charts to find out what their child's behavior means. Talk about the suggestions for parents listed in the last column of the chart. Find out the things parents feel will help their child most and how they plan to use the ideas.

Parent Action: Help Your Child Adjust

**Purpose: Learn what your child’s actions can tell you about his or her feelings.
Plan ways to help your child feel secure in the new program.**

Parents can do some basic things to help their children feel more comfortable with transitions. For example:

- Talk with your child about what will be happening
- Visit the new program or school ahead of time
- When possible, avoid making lots of changes at once
- Create daily routines so your child knows when you will leave and return

Even when you use these strategies, your child may have a hard time understanding and dealing with change. When you learn more about your child’s development it is easier to choose other ways to help him adjust.

🔑 Action Step: Choose strategies that will help your child deal with change

Think about what has helped your child deal with change in the past:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Use the chart for your child’s age group to find out what else you can try:*

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

* Remember your child is unique and all children grow at their own pace. The behavior listed on the chart for each age group just gives some examples of ways your child may act.

Infants approx. 0 – 2 years		Infants explore the world when they feel secure. They develop trust and security through nurturing, consistent caregiving.		
Does your child do this?	Y E S	N O	Maybe your child feels:	You could try this:
Cries when you leave			Anxious about being away from you Doesn't understand or know that you will return	Always let your child know when you are leaving. At first, leave him for short periods of time, and then gradually add time.
Clings to security objects (e.g. a blanket or favorite toy)			Misses familiar habits and routines	Bring security objects from home and share all you can about the child's routines, likes, and dislikes.
Demands extra attention			Unsure about the new caregiver	Help your child and teacher develop a relationship before the first day. Visit the program several times and complete home visits.

Toddlers approx. 18 mos – 3 years		Toddlers want to do things on their own, but they often need help. They are sensitive to moods and know when adults are stressed.		
Does your child do this?	Y E S	N O	Maybe your child feels:	You could try this:
Has temper tantrums			Afraid or out of control Upset that you left for the day	Talk with the teacher daily so that you know what happens at school and if anything is troubling your child.
Clings to you			Safe with you Doesn't want you to leave	Create rituals for saying good-bye. Give a big hug and kiss. Wave at the window.
Does not sleep well			Worried about changes she does not understand	Stay calm and reassuring. Make sure you talk about your concerns with the teacher in private.

Preschool Age approx. 3 – 5 years		Preschool age children try to explain things but they often mix up fantasy and reality. They are learning what they are able to do.		
Does your child do this?	Y E S	N O	Maybe your child feels:	You could try this:
Cries about school or complains of illness			Unsure about whether the new environment is safe and secure	Spend time with your child in the new setting. Always say good-bye and tell the child you will see her at the end of the day.
Acts like he did when he was younger			Uncomfortable with new routines, activities, teachers, and friends	Give the child some control over the situation. Share his interests and abilities with the teacher and suggest some things that he might enjoy doing in the new program.
Uncooperative at home and/or at school or has angry outbursts			Overwhelmed by new expectations	Encourage her to talk about her feelings with you. Tell her about times when you had similar feelings and how you dealt with them.

Primary Age approx. 5 – 8 years		Primary age children can explain their thoughts and feelings. Peers are becoming more important to them now.		
Does your child do this?	Y E S	N O	Maybe your child feels:	You could try this:
Complains about the new teacher			Happy with the way things were and misses old friends and teachers	Have your child draw a special picture or spend extra time with old friends before leaving. Keep in touch after the transition. Invite new and old classmates to play.
Asks for help often			Unsure if he will be able to do what is expected. He is under pressure to do a lot of new things, such as sitting in a desk and following a set schedule.	Find out what is expected and help him practice his skills at home. Remind him of what he knows already and what he does well.