

Settling into early childhood education and care services



Settling into an early childhood education and care service can be stressful for you and your child. Here are some ideas to help you prepare for this new experience.

Preparing your child

- Before starting care and education, talk to your child about:
 - where they will be going
 - what they will be doing
 - who they will meet
 - why they will be going.

Explain that they will stay at the service for a period of time until you pick them up.

- Answer your child's questions openly and honestly and reassure them they will be fine.
- You could read some books about new experiences to prepare your child.
- Drive or walk past the service to show your child where they will be going.
- Visit the service with your child a number of times before you leave him or her there for the first time. This will give your child an opportunity to get to know the staff and surroundings.



First day

- If possible, gradually increase the time your child spends in care and education during the first few weeks. Start with short visits and increase the time to include a lunch and a sleep or rest.
- Try not to rush in the mornings. Spend time signing in, putting belongings away and settling your child into an activity.
- Once your child is involved in the activity, this is your chance to hug and kiss them goodbye before you leave.
- Always say goodbye to your child and reassure them they will be picked up at a certain time. For example: "I'll be back to pick you up after afternoon tea." Ensure you come back when promised.
- If your child is upset when you leave, do not prolong your departure as this may upset your child further. Reassure your child that you will be back at a certain time. You could also add that you look forward to hearing about their day with their friends when you return. Once you are at work you can telephone the service or carer to ask whether your child has settled down. Don't be afraid to call the service or staff if you are worried or concerned about your child during the day.
- Staff will also call you if your child continues to feel upset throughout the day.
- When picking up your child, talk to the staff about how your child has gone on their first day. You could also talk to your child about their first day, for example, who they met and what they enjoyed. Ask your child to show you what they have been doing.

Next few days

- Continue with your goodbye routine. When you leave, say goodbye and reassure your child by telling them when you will be back to pick them up.
- Find out the activities your child enjoys at the service by asking your child and the staff. You can then involve your child in the activity before you leave.
- Your child might settle in with more ease on some days. This can depend on what's been happening in their life, for example, late nights, visitors or other children crying.
- Talk to the staff about important events in your child's life such as how well they slept the night before or what they did on the weekend.
- Always talk to your child about what they have been doing during the day.

Following weeks

- Once your child has settled in, you could spend some time with your child at the service.
- Be kind to yourself, take one day at a time.
- You might like to join the parent committee and get involved in the service.
- Talk to the staff and ask for help or advice if you have any concerns.
- Meet other parents or carers to share ideas and support.

Getting involved in the care and education of your child

Families are encouraged to play an active role in the care and education of their child. Every family has something to offer to enrich the care of all the children in the service. Early childhood education and care services have formal and informal opportunities for families to find out about the progress of their child or to discuss any concerns.

Some examples include:

- **Newsletters** — many early childhood education and care services produce regular newsletters to inform families about activities, developments and initiatives in their service.
- **Personal appointments** — families are encouraged to meet with any of the staff members at a suitable time for both parties to discuss relevant issues and concerns affecting their child.
- **Parent/teacher nights** — many child care services often hold these nights to discuss how your child is performing and progressing. These are also opportunities to talk about issues or concerns and what is happening in the service.
- **Parent information** — many services have management or advisory committees which develop policies and make decisions for the service and welcome parent involvement.
- **Service activities** — families can be involved in a range of activities, such as helping at the service and excursions, or offering a special talent to help organise additional activities.



Further information

Child Care Information Service

This service, provided by the Department of Communities, is free and provides families with up-to-date information about child care services and facilities in their local area. The service will not make recommendations about a particular service.

Child Care Services Search

Visit the department's website to locate child care services in your area.

Other resources

Parent tip sheets and information about licensing requirements and building standards for child care services in Queensland.

Telephone: 3224 4225

Freecall outside Brisbane: 1800 637 711

Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.

Email: ccis@communities.qld.gov.au

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Other languages

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450 and ask to be connected to 13 13 04.

National Relay Service

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech disability and need help making calls, contact the Department of Communities through the National Relay Service on 13 36 77.



Queensland Government
Department of **Communities**