

Transitions

Transitioning from home to early childhood education and care settings

Starting to go to an early childhood education and care setting such as long day care or kindergarten is a significant milestone for children and their families. Preparation can positively impact on how your family experiences this milestone.

Planning the transition

Communicate with your child's early childhood education and care setting

Building a partnership with your child's educators can support your child's full participation at the new setting. Work with your child's educators to identify the best ways to include your child in all aspects of preschool life. Find out what your child's routines, care and learning will be so that you can talk to your child about what they will experience.

Read more about communicating with educators in our [parent guide to parent-educator meetings](#).

Support for children at early childhood education and care settings

The early childhood education and care setting should organise the support that your child will need for their development and learning. This may involve identifying reasonable adjustments the setting needs to make sure that your child can participate in the program fully (e.g. adaptive technology or additional educators if required).

Where appropriate, the early childhood education and care setting should organise applications for additional funding, and will work with you to do this.

Access further information about supporting your child

Read tips from The Department of Education and Training (DET) to help your child [prepare for kindergarten](#).

You may also wish to become familiar with practical guides and information from DET on [learning in the early years](#), and on [support services and packages](#) for young children with developmental challenges or disabilities.

Supporting your child with the transition

A child with a disability or developmental challenge may feel anxious about the upcoming changes and so may you! These are a few strategies that may help your child with the transition:

Attend a transition program

Many early childhood education and care settings offer a transition program. This usually means that you and your child will have opportunities to visit the setting for shorter periods of time before staying for the full length of the program.

If this is not available, consider asking if you can visit and stay with your child for short periods of time and build these visits up. You may want to organise for your child to explore the settings inside and outdoors, and know where the toilets and quiet areas of the room are located.

Help your child be prepared

Consider preparing a visual schedule (or similar) for getting ready for long day care and/or kindergarten. You can access AllPlay Learn's home schedule on our [parent resources](#) page.

If this is your child's first experience in a group setting, you may also want to consider increasing your child's social experiences. Playgroups are a great option and some playgroups cater for families with specific needs (see for example, [PlayConnect Playgroups](#) for children with autism).

Other relevant experiences may include [AllPlay Footy](#) and [AllPlay Dance](#). Have a look at the resources available to see if these types of activities might be a good fit for your child.

Consider how you communicate with your child

Parents often feel apprehensive and have mixed feelings about this transition. Reach out to your friends, family and health professionals for advice and support. It is important that you remain enthusiastic and positive when you speak to your child about their early childhood education and care. Your positivity will increase your child's confidence.

You may also want to aim to have little change in your family's everyday life apart from this transition to provide a calm and relaxed environment prior to and during change.

Consider how you might communicate with the community

You may want to think about how and if you will discuss your child's disability or developmental challenge with other families and children at your early childhood education and care setting. You may wish to seek advice from health professionals, your family and/or from families who have already had experience doing this. Some ideas to discuss with your child's educators may include:

- Inviting one of your child's health professionals to come to your child's room and talk about the disability or developmental challenge
- Writing a short letter for families about your child
- Availability of training or professional development opportunities for educators about your child's disability or developmental challenge

You may prefer not to disclose your child's diagnosis – there is no right way and the educators should support you in whatever decision you make.

Support for separation anxiety

Separation anxiety in very young children is common and usually reduces from around the age of two. Children with separation anxiety become upset when separated from caregivers or family members. Separation anxiety can be more severe in children with developmental challenges or disabilities.

Talk with your child's educators to support you and your child. They could consider evidence-based strategies from our educator's page about anxiety.

Read positive stories about early childhood education and care settings

You can support your child's transition to by talking with them about common routines and behaviours that are part of preschool life so they know what to expect. AllPlay Learn early stories have been designed to read with your child to talk with them about what happens at long day care and kindergarten and to feel positive about the new situations they may face in these settings.

Starting kindergarten

Some children's first experience at an early childhood education and care setting may be when they enrol in a kindergarten program. If this is your experience, the considerations above should be helpful for planning and supporting your child through this transition.

Some children will begin kindergarten at a long day care they are already attending as many four year old (funded) kindergarten programs are increasingly being run within long day care centres. In this case, your child may only need help adjusting to a new (usually slightly more structured) routine within a familiar space, and to a new educator. Talk with your childcare educators to fully understand what the key differences will be for your child's day-to-day experience at long day care.

Some children might join a kindergarten program at a different long day care centre or at a community kindergarten. If this is your experience, keep in mind that your child already has experience in a group setting by being at long day care. This means that your child will already have some practice spending time with other children and will have developed trust in other adults. Remember what worked well when first transitioning your child between home and long day care and try to replicate this.