



Preparing for return to on-site learning for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities

Information for educators

Prior planning and a whole-centre approach can support positive transitions back to early childhood education and care settings for children with neurodevelopmental disabilities, such as autism, ADHD or anxiety. AllPlay Learn have created stories, emotions cards and many other resources to support the return of children to long daycare or kindergarten. To view these resources and other helpful information, visit allplaylearn.org.au/covid-support

Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will transition best when there is a consistent whole-centre approach.

- **Provide clear communication and support to staff** in order to create a consistent whole-centre approach. This could cover communication about COVID-19, and consistency around new routines for children.
- **Identify ways in which all staff can provide a positive transition** to specific children with disabilities. Diagnosis does not have to be disclosed to all staff. Instead, this can be as simple as noting if a specific child may take time to understand some of the new routines, or providing strategies to use with a specific child if they're distressed.

Children with neurodevelopmental disabilities and challenges will need time and support to transition back to long daycare or kindergarten.

- **Provide families with tools for the transition.** Create visual schedules and social stories about the return, and any new routines that children will learn. Use positive language while acknowledging that this transition can be challenging.
- **Re-orient children to the centre; highlight what has stayed the same and what will be different.** Children may feel more confident about transitioning back to long daycare or kindergarten when they know what to expect. Emails or letters prior to commencing transition which include photos of familiar faces and places around the centre, alongside information about any new routines may also help with the transition.
- **Check-in with parents.** Take time to speak to families about how their child coped during this period and what areas they may need support in during the transition. Communicate with families prior about the purpose of calling to give them time to prepare too.

During times of increased anxiety & change, some children with disabilities may experience greater challenges in their learning, behaviours or emotion regulation.

- **Consider separation anxiety in planning.** Some children may need additional support after having spent most of their day with their families over the past weeks. Consider how this can be provided when planning how drop-off time will be initiated in line with Victorian Government and AHPCC guidelines.
- **Additional supports may be needed.** Consider where additional supports may be needed, who can provide that support, and how this support can be implemented for most impact.
- **A whole-centre approach to well-being is important during this time.** Consider how safe spaces for distressed or anxious children can be adapted or created, and ways wellbeing activities could be integrated into the day. Positive wellbeing activities to support staff will also have positive flow-on effects for children. Self-care can help staff overcome some of the demands and challenges associated with supporting students with the transition.