

## 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. This can involve new routines, new relationships, new skills, and longer separations from a parent than a child has had previously. This can be particularly challenging when a child has a disability or developmental challenge.

#### Planning the transition

##### Partnership with families

Families of children with a disability or developmental difference may feel particularly anxious about the upcoming changes. Working together to understand their child and develop goals and strategies that are strengths-based is important.

Some families may not wish to disclose that their child has a developmental challenge or disability, or they may not be aware of it yet. If you notice that a child has some developmental or learning challenges, you can discuss these with the family. When talking with family members, focus on the developmental milestones or learning task/s the child is finding difficult, as well as the child's strengths. Read more about communicating with parents in our [educator guide to parent-educator meetings](#). Work with the child's family to develop effective practices and modifications for their child.

Be sensitive to cultural and language differences. Check that the family are comfortable with all aspects of their child's learning. If you develop the practices together everyone will likely have more commitment to them.

##### Support for children at early childhood education and care settings

The early childhood education and care setting should organise the support a child will need for their development and learning. It is important to identify reasonable adjustments the setting needs to make so a child can participate in the program fully. This may include the provision of specialised supports such as adaptive technology or additional educators if required. Kindergarten services can consider using the School Readiness Funding for building capacity with multi-disciplinary teams with allied health professionals or other items from the menu of evidence-informed programs and supports for access and inclusion. You may seek advice from Preschool field officers (PSFO) and Education support officers. Where appropriate, the early childhood education and care setting should organise applications for additional funding for individual children (e.g. kindergarten inclusion support (KIS) program), and work with the family to do this.

#### Supporting a child with the transition

A child with a disability or developmental challenge may feel anxious about the upcoming changes. Below are a few strategies for educators that may help a child with the transition:

##### Transition programs

Many early childhood education and care settings offer a transition program. If this is not available at your setting, consider asking the family and child to visit and stay a few times for short periods of time. These visits can be made longer as a child becomes familiar with the setting. If a transition program is offered, consider the child's strengths and abilities to create a respectful and safe environment, and to group children and manage noise levels during the visits. Allow opportunities for the child to explore the room and outdoor space at their own pace, and show the child where the toilets and quiet areas of the room are located.

## Separation anxiety

Separation anxiety in very young children is common and usually reduces from around the age of two. It can be more severe in children with developmental challenges or disabilities. Children with separation anxiety find separation from their caregivers difficult. This may make leaving a child at an early childhood education and care setting an emotional and challenging experience for children and families.

- Visit our [anxiety](#) page for evidence-based strategies for separation anxiety
- Talk with the child's family to jointly develop suitable solutions for the child and their family

## Read positive stories about early childhood education and care settings

Help a child and their family access AllPlay Learn's [early stories](#) for children with disabilities and developmental challenges. These stories show a child what happens at long day care and/or kindergarten. This helps them feel confident about new situations they may encounter and to feel positive about the new situations they may face in these settings. You could show the stories to the children during transition and give them some printed copies as a take-home item.

## Starting kindergarten

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

Other children will begin kindergarten at a long day care they are already attending. A transition program that supports the child's ongoing sense of belonging and wellbeing may be put in place by providing time and opportunities for the child to become familiar with the new room, peers and educators; and by talking with the child about what the key differences will be, and communicating these changes to the family. Consider using the child's previous experiences settling into long day care to guide your planning for this transition.

Some children may move between settings to attend a kindergarten program at a different long day care centre or at a community kindergarten. Encourage the child's family to participate in the transition program. If a transition program is not available, consider asking the family and child to visit and stay a few times for short periods of time. The length of these visits can be increased as a child becomes familiar with the new setting. If a transition program is offered, consider the child's strengths and abilities to create a respectful and safe environment, and to group children and manage noise levels during the visits. Allow opportunities for the child to explore the room and outdoor space at their own pace, and show the child where the toilets and quiet areas of the room are located. Collaborate with the child's former educators (where possible) to build on the children's previous experiences settling in an early childhood education and care setting.