

Building strong links between home and child care services

Children benefit when their routines and experiences at home and in early education and care services such as child care and preschool are similar and supportive of each other, especially babies and young children, who may be starting early education and care for the first time.

Having familiar routines and practices help relieve a child's separation anxiety while they settle in. It allows them to predict what is going to happen next and encourages them to feel as though they have a sense of control over what is happening in their environment.

How can I help to support consistency in my child's early education and care?

- Imagine the types of experiences and routines your child is likely to have in the service
- Think how the routines might differ from what happens at home and how you can help your child to understand the routines at the service e.g. you could talk to your child about or practise sitting in a chair for meals and snacks if your child is developmentally ready
- Share information with the staff at the service about the experiences that are important to your child's daily routine – your child's orientation visits are a good time to talk and share information
- Tell the staff at the service about any particular words, phrases or visual cues that you use at home with your child for routines e.g. certain words you may use during feeding or toileting.

Remember: when attending the service children will be part of a group and while staff will give individual attention it may not be the same as they receive at home. Staff working in services must comply with standards and regulations and consider how each activity, experience and routine affects the wellbeing of the whole group, as well as an individual child. By working together, you can implement a range of routines, experiences and strategies for your child, to work at home and at the service.

What types of routines and experiences should be consistent?

+ Behaviour

Having consistent behaviour guidance strategies establishes clear expectations and helps children to understand limits. It's important that appropriate behaviour is role modelled by both your family and staff to ensure your child receives consistent messages about what is acceptable behaviour.

+ Sleep and rest

It's best to advise staff about the routines you use at home for sleep and rest, such as settling techniques and if your child has a comfort item like a blanket or special toy. It's important to talk with staff about routines or practices that are used at home for rest and sleep time. Services need to comply with regulations and best practice and safe sleeping guidelines.



+ Sun safety

Ensuring that the 'slip slop slap' message is emphasised at home and at the service is extremely important to protect your child's skin from sun damage.

+ Toilet training

Share your toilet training routines and strategies to help at home and in the service e.g. the signs you can identify to tell that your child needs to use the toilet.

+ Hygiene

Share your hygiene routines e.g. the correct way to wash your hands. Visit www.startingblocks.gov.au for a step by step process.

How does effective communication promote consistency in your child's routines and experiences?

The key to maintaining consistency across home and the service is open communication between families, staff and children. This provides a strong foundation to develop partnerships, programs, experiences and routines that meet the needs of your child and family.

It's also important for you to provide the service with current information about your child's experiences at home, as well as information about any requirements that you have or issues that are affecting your child. This will help staff to understand what is happening with your child outside of the service and follow up on this during your child's daily experiences and routines at the service.



What kind of information is helpful to share with staff at the service?

- Your child's interests, likes and dislikes, favourite toys, patterns of sleeping, eating and toileting, and any behaviour guidance that you may use at home
- Issues relating to your child's health or wellbeing e.g. if they were ill over the weekend
- Significant events that are happening at home such as a visit from relatives or moving house
- Any new interests or skills that your child is developing
- One-off events that have significantly affected your child e.g. the loss of a pet. Staff will want to work in partnership with you and will regularly share information with you about your child. This can help you to understand why your child may be doing certain things or behaving in certain ways when they come home, and can help you to talk with your child about their day and experiences at the service.

What kind of information is helpful for staff to share with you?

- If you have a younger child, details about their sleeping, meals/feeding and toileting
- Your child's daily experiences, who they have played with, what they liked doing and any unusual events that have affected them e.g. a special activity that has taken place, such as a visit from the fire brigade, or something that may have upset them, such as not being able to find a favourite toy
- Details about your child's relationships with other children and the adults at the service
- Feedback about your child's learning, development and interests
- Any health related issues or details of accidents or injuries.