

Partnering with Parents to Support Transition Back to Care

1. **Check in with the family**
 - a. What has it been like for this family during quarantine?
 - b. What has time at home looked like for the family and child?
 - c. Are there specific stressors that the center should be aware of, for example, a sick family member or a job loss? How has the child responded to this stressor? What does the child understand about this change?
2. **Validate the parent's experience.** This is an opportunity to offer support and align with the parent. Statements such as, "that sounds hard" or "despite all these challenges, you really showed up for your child," will help the parent feel seen and understood, making it easier partner with the parent.
3. **Assess current functioning/level of distress of the child**
 - a. What is the child's overall mood and presentation? Has the family noticed any changes in the child's behavior?
 - b. Has there been changes in the child's eating and sleeping patterns?
 - c. Have there been periods of more intense dysregulation? What did that look like? How did the parent respond?
4. **Ask parent if they have a plan for how to transition back to care?**
5. **Provide some education to parent.** Children thrive when there is consistency and predictability. Consistency and predictability create safety for children that allows them to anticipate what will happen next, reducing anxiety and fear. Because of young children's dependency on consistency and predictability, change can be hard. We can mitigate the impact of change by creating a plan that incorporates the needs of your child and helps his/her develop an understanding for what will happen next.
6. **Elicit their expertise**
 - a. How does your child manage change? How do you anticipate your child will adapt to coming back into care?
 - b. What do you feel like your child needs to be successful in this transition? What has been successful in the past?
7. **Create partnership**
 - a. How can we work together to help your child? What do you need from me?
 - b. Ask for what the center needs.
 - i. We may need more time from you to check in with you about your child.
 - ii. We will need an update from you letting us know if you notice any changes in your child during this transition.
 - iii. Communication around pick up and drop. Who will be picking up and dropping off and what time?

Ideas for Parents to Support Transition Back to Care

- 1. Create a social story.** Generate a short story or explanation for your child that is developmentally appropriate and reassuring. “We had to stay at home because of the virus. Now it is safe enough to go back to school. You may have some big feelings about returning to school. I am here to support you with all those feelings.” Make a book with your child describing the change and allow them to draw the pictures.
- 2. Picture Routine.** Young children thrive on routine and structure. Create a visual routine that describes his/her day. This will help alleviate anxiety because your child will know what is happening next.
- 3. Slow entry.** Your child may have a harder time with transitions and change. If this is the case and you have the flexibility, plan for a slow transition back to care. Drop off your child for several hours a day, gradually adding more time as indicated by his or her behavior.
- 4. Drive by and practice.** Drive by the school and provide the narrative that he/she will soon be returning. Practice elements of your routine beforehand. If it is a new school, ask for a tour. This will allow your child to meet his/her teacher and visualize the classroom.

If you have questions or concerns, call our warm line at 303-245-4418.