



Tips for Tots



Tip #5:

Manage Ratios Through Supportive Relationships

Strategies

Did you know?

Infant/Toddler:

Caregiver stability within early care environments is important to the social emotional development of young children. Young children benefit from close relationships with their caregivers. This connection provides children with a sense of safety and security that enables them to experience and explore their world. While most programs understand it is essential to provide children with a consistent primary caregiver, many struggle with issues related to managing ratios (covering breaks, absenteeism, staff turnover, etc.). Supporting young children through such changes can reduce the level of distress a child may experience.

Preschool:

Preschoolers need the consistency and security of a caring teacher. The teacher-child relationship is critical to forming a child's foundation for early learning. Children thrive where they feel confident and supported, and when their environment and the people in it are predictable. While staffing or room changes may be inevitable, caregivers can establish a system of supports intended to reduce the degree of disruption while guiding children through such changes.

Infant/Toddler:

- Assign each child a primary caregiver who is sensitive to the child's needs and who maintains close communication with his/her parents and any substitute caregiver.
- Consider the temperament and needs of each child when making a decision to transition a child or change a caregiver.
- Reduce the number of caregivers with whom children are in contact. Always provide a familiar caregiver. Use the same substitute caregiver for breaks and absences.
- Allow time for the child and caregiver to adjust to each other. Do this while the child is in a familiar environment and in the presence of his/her primary caregiver.
- Very young infants can react to change in caregivers and can be profoundly affected. Avoid changes in the room or routine at the same time, as this can increase distress. Utilize soothing techniques and transition objects to help the child with the upcoming change. Continue to monitor and support the child.
- Leaving caregivers should always let toddlers know they are leaving. Explain to children that the absent teacher will return if this is so. Provide comfort items or photos of the absent teacher.

Preschool:

- Be prepared for absences and breaks by providing familiar substitute staff, anticipating children's reactions to the staffing change, and giving new staff information related to each child such as routines, likes, etc. Keep a journal between caregivers.
- Work with children on hello and good-bye rituals for times that teachers or children are leaving or returning to classrooms. Place a set of bells by the door that teachers use to signal their leaving; wave when they go on break. Sing a special song upon return.
- If it is not possible to maintain a child in his/her own classroom, allow visitation with new classrooms/caregivers well in advance.
- Plan in advance which children might be temporarily switched to another class in the case of an urgent need. Consider the child's adaptability when choosing who to move; warn them in advance.
- Provide a comfort bag a child can use in his/her host classroom. Include a comfort item, books, or small manipulative activities. This can be especially important if the child is going into a classroom where they will be at developmental disadvantage.
- Consider providing the visiting child with a peer partner.

Resources:

- http://www.naeyc.org/files/academy/file/Teacher-Child_Ratio_Chart_9_16_08.pdf
- [http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/daycare/pdf/Statutes and Regulations Centers.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/dph/lib/dph/daycare/pdf/Statutes_and_Regulations_Centers.pdf)

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