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1A Providing positive mealtimes

You need to ensure the environment is adequately prepared, and that safe food-handling and hygiene practices are put in place for children’s mealtimes.

Ensuring good hygiene

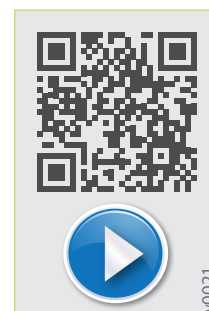
Good hygiene, including hand-washing, minimises the spread of infectious diseases. By using the guidelines outlined in the following table, you will be able to create and maintain safe and hygienic eating spaces.

<p>Prepare food areas</p>	<p>Before meals, clean surfaces that food may sit on. Food preparation areas, including serving benches and trolleys, can transfer germs to food, so pay attention to hygiene and safety in these areas.</p>
<p>Wash hands</p>	<p>Check that all children’s hands are washed before they eat or drink. This is important before all meals, especially when children are serving themselves.</p> <p>Teach children to turn away from food when they cough or sneeze, and then to wash their hands again. You can find fact sheets and posters relating to coughing and sneezing, and a sneeze-safe program at: http://aspirelr.link/sneeze-safe</p> <p>If you have a break between preparing or serving food, remember to wash your hands before recommencing. This includes when returning from a tea break, toilet break, meal break or smoke break.</p>
<p>Use individual utensils</p>	<p>Make sure children do not share food, plates or utensils. If children are choosing food from a shared bowl or plate, they should use a spoon or tongs because germs and bacteria can pass from hand to food. Remind children that if they share food, they may spread germs that could make them or other children sick.</p> <p>Use a separate spoon for each infant you feed. If a child drops their spoon, get a new one – rinsing it under a tap does not kill all the germs.</p>

Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services has information about infection control, food safety and the importance of hand hygiene, and is available at:

<http://aspirelr.link/nhmrc-staying-healthy>

Watch this video to learn about the correct hand-washing technique.



Learning checkpoint 1

Providing physical care

1. Read an organisational policy regarding children’s clothing requirements. What clothing requirements are set by the policy?

2. Read the scenarios below. Choose the scenario that you feel is most appropriate and explain your choice.

Scenario 1: Jemima the educator has served lunch to four preschool-age children who are sitting around a table. She stands at the food trolley so she can see all the children clearly and so she can serve the children more food if they want it.

Scenario 2: Don the educator has placed the serving bowl of lunch on the table where four preschool children are sitting. He sits at the corner of the table so he can see the children clearly, support them to serve themselves hygienically and discuss the food and their busy morning.

3. What are **four** topics of engaging conversation you could have with children during mealtimes?



Topic 2

In this topic you will learn about:

2A Following guidelines for physical activity

2B Encouraging movement and physical activity

Promoting physical activity

Play and physical activity are important parts of children's lives. Not only are they fun, but regular physical activity during early childhood impacts their health as they grow, and may help children develop healthy behaviours in the future. Active play also lays foundations for the development of physical, mental and social skills, such as sharing and taking turns.

As you implement activities to meet each child's physical needs, there are many opportunities for you to extend the child's understanding of themselves and others. From their direct involvement in these activities, children gain essential skills and knowledge that they can draw on throughout their lives.

The following table maps this topic to the National Quality Standard and *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia*.

National Quality Standard	
	Quality Area 1: Educational program and practice
✓	Quality Area 2: Children's health and safety
	Quality Area 3: Physical environment
	Quality Area 4: Staffing arrangements
	Quality Area 5: Relationships with children
	Quality Area 6: Collaborative partnerships with families and communities
	Quality Area 7: Governance and leadership
Early Years Learning Framework	
Principles	
	Secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships
	Partnerships
✓	High expectations and equity
	Respect for diversity
✓	Ongoing learning and reflective practice
Practice	
	Holistic approaches
✓	Responsiveness to children
✓	Learning through play
✓	Intentional teaching
✓	Learning environments
	Cultural competence
	Continuity of learning and transitions
✓	Assessment for learning
Outcomes	
✓	Children have a strong sense of identity
	Children are connected to and contribute to their world
✓	Children have a strong sense of wellbeing
	Children are confident and involved learners
	Children are effective communicators

Other relevant guidelines

Outside the education and care industry, child-focused guidelines and support materials have been developed as part of government programs to promote health. You can use the resources in the table below to get some great ideas for extending children’s understanding of their physical health and wellbeing.

Resource	What it includes
<i>Get up & grow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Age-appropriate activities and equipment ▶ How to promote physical play ▶ Safety recommendations
<i>Get set 4 life – Habits for healthy kids</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Lots of parent tips, pictures, posters and stickers to use to teach children healthy habits ▶ Pages of activity ideas
<i>National physical activity recommendations for children 0–5 years</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Active play ideas and tips to help children develop healthy television viewing habits
<i>Staying healthy: Preventing infectious diseases in early childhood education and care services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Hand-washing and other information related to hygiene and how it prevents infectious disease

Get up & grow

Some physical activity recommendations from *Get up & grow: Healthy eating and physical guidelines for early childhood settings* are outlined in the following table.

Development stage	Recommendation
Infants	Floor-based play in safe environments
Toddlers and preschoolers	At least three hours of physically active play across the day
Infants, toddlers and preschoolers	Should not be sedentary, restrained or kept inactive for more than one hour at a time, except when sleeping
Children under two	No time using screens, including television, tablets, computers and electronic games
Children aged two to five	Limit of one hour per day using television, tablets, computers, electronic games, etc.

Development stage	Discussion ideas	Examples
Infants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Talk about activity and movement. ▶ Celebrate achievements such as learning to crawl, walk, etc. ▶ Incorporate song into movement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ‘Look at your strong legs.’ ▶ ‘Yes! You are walking!’ ▶ ‘Row, row, row your boat.’
Toddlers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Talk about the activities they are completing. ▶ Describe their movements. ▶ Add words that describe the skills they are developing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ ‘Look at your strong arms sweeping the floor.’ ▶ ‘That is a huge jump.’ ▶ ‘Now your legs are running fast.’
Preschoolers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Involve the community through activities and visits. ▶ Talk about their body structures and how these work, such as muscles, bones and the brain. ▶ Discuss individual abilities and achievements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Invite a dietitian to talk about how food gives you energy. ▶ ‘Milk and cheese provide calcium to our bones to make them strong.’ ▶ ‘Hayley jumps very high and Stacey can run fast. They both have strong legs.’

Practice task 4

1. Access the EYLF and look at the outcome that says: ‘Children take an increased responsibility for their own health and physical wellbeing’, then answer the following questions.

a. Write down an activity that provides children with a choice of how they use their physical skills. Explain how the activity meets the outcome.

b. Write down a physical activity where there are high expectations of children’s physical skills. Explain how the activity meets the outcome.

2B Encouraging movement and physical activity

All age groups need to be given many opportunities for movement and physically active play. Children need to be able to:

- ▶ extend and develop their skills through challenging activities and experiences where they can try new things
- ▶ involve themselves in physical movements, such as rolling, crawling, walking, running, jumping, digging, pushing, skipping and climbing
- ▶ actively manipulate their play space by redesigning and reinventing it with movable equipment and props, and practise skills of balancing, bouncing, lifting and pushing.



Emotional and physical needs

Simple emotional needs must be provided for if children are to explore, develop and use their physical skills confidently. Consider the following information about different development stages.

Development stage	Emotional needs	Physical skills
<p>Infants</p>	<p>Need to trust their educators and the environment. This allows them to explore freely and use their physical skills to expand their knowledge.</p>	<p>Using the senses to find out about objects and constantly using their body to explore; for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ mouthing ▶ touching ▶ pulling ▶ pushing ▶ tasting. <p>Sequentially learning to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ roll ▶ sit ▶ crawl ▶ stand ▶ walk around with support ▶ stand independently ▶ walk.

Indoor play

Indoor play mainly provides opportunities for children to develop fine motor skills. Infants and toddlers usually use indoor areas for:

- ▶ discovery – exploring interesting items with their senses safely
- ▶ playing with wheeled toys
- ▶ manipulative play
- ▶ block play.

Preschoolers develop their physical skills from indoor activities such as:

- ▶ dramatic play
- ▶ building with blocks
- ▶ puzzles, threading and construction sets
- ▶ clay modelling, painting, drawing and collage
- ▶ sand and water play
- ▶ woodwork
- ▶ cooking.

As children's bodies grow larger and take up more space, their skills also increase. However, it becomes unsafe for them to practise gross motor skills in busy indoor areas. A gymnasium is a perfect place to develop gross motor skills indoors.

Movement and physical activity can be integrated into daily activities, not just play. For example, where appropriate, encourage movement, participation and development of independence through activities such as:

- ▶ allowing children to help set up or pack up activities
- ▶ setting tables for meals and snacks
- ▶ cleaning up their own activities
- ▶ dressing themselves.

Outdoor play

The outdoor space needs the same level of consideration as indoors; there should be opportunities for activities that help to develop children's fine and gross motor skills.

Many services provide children with the opportunity to move indoors and outdoors as they please – usually called an 'indoor-outdoor program'. Your staff ratios and service design will determine if this is an option for you. Almost all activities planned indoors can be offered in an outdoor space, so if an indoor-outdoor program is not possible, consider this extension.

Outdoor play spaces need to be clearly defined so children can immediately see how the space can be used. This allows them to move easily between spaces without interfering with the play of others. Stepping stones and the use of other natural features can provide children with creative options for their physical play. Open-ended materials allow educators and children to rearrange equipment, change location, add or remove materials, and provide either simple or complex play arrangements. Open-ended materials encourage children to engage in spontaneous play. Spontaneous play stimulates children's creativity and imagination, and allows them to develop their own ideas and themes of play.

You can encourage spontaneous physical play by providing things such as:

- ▶ wooden planks
- ▶ car tyres
- ▶ small ladders
- ▶ A-frames
- ▶ outdoor blocks
- ▶ off-cut logs.

4. Access the National Quality Standard (NQS) at: <http://aspirelr.link/national-quality-standard>

Which element of the NQS identifies how indoor and outdoor spaces must be fit for purpose?

Part B

1. Using the following table or similar, describe **three** activities that would encourage children to be active. Come up with one activity appropriate for each age group of infant, toddler and preschooler.

Indicate whether the activity would be indoors or outdoors, planned or spontaneous. Also write down how it would allow you to participate, engage or encourage the children, and discuss physical health and wellbeing.

	Infant	Toddler	Preschooler
Activity			
Indoor/ Outdoor			
Planned/ Spontaneous			
How I could participate			
How I could engage and encourage the children			



Topic 3

In this topic you will learn about:

3A Setting up

3B Providing opportunities for participation

Adapting facilities

Children will become more aware of their ability to manage tasks themselves as you provide opportunities for them to participate in their environment, practise their skills, and develop into capable and effective individuals. These opportunities help them to become interested in how they can increase their skills. By encouraging this exploration and skill development, you will help children increase their self-esteem and sense of self.

Children's developing independence (autonomy) is particularly influenced by their environment and the ways in which you provide opportunities for this to occur.

3B Providing opportunities for participation

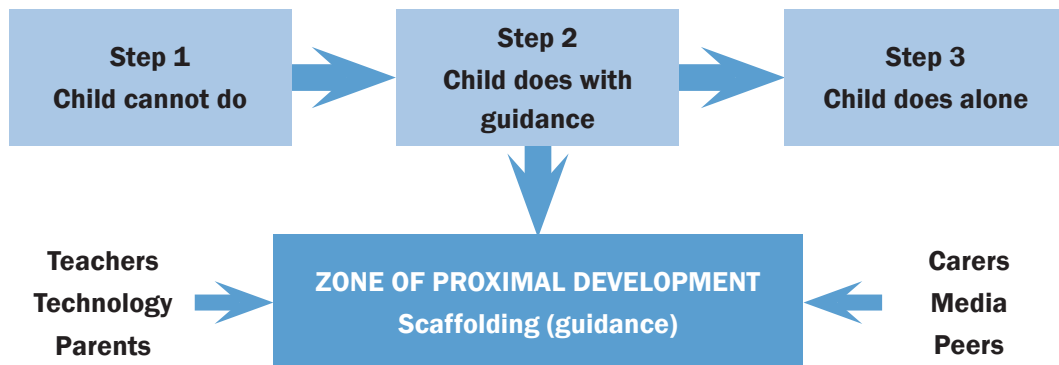
To facilitate opportunities for children to participate in movement and physical activity, you can:

- ▶ scaffold children's learning and offer chances for risk-taking
- ▶ use day-to-day activities as opportunities to develop movement skills
- ▶ incorporate movement and physical activity into life skill development.



Scaffolding

Lev Vygotsky provides a clear picture of how a child's environment and community enrich critical learning periods, windows of opportunity or teachable moments. Vygotsky shows that if a child is assisted to develop a skill when they are ready – that is, when the skill is emerging – they will be able to learn that skill and use it independently soon after. Vygotsky calls this window of opportunity 'the zone of proximal development', which can be put into a diagram, as follows.



When a child demonstrates an emerging skill, they seek guidance. Alternatively, you may identify the emerging skill and offer guidance. Vygotsky calls this guidance 'scaffolding' and does not limit it to just what the educator provides; there are many different ways for a child to receive scaffolding.

Scaffolding is when you support a child to learn a new skill through small learning experiences that build on their current knowledge and skills.

Scaffolding occurs through many actions you provide, including:

- ▶ showing
- ▶ explaining
- ▶ demonstrating
- ▶ talking about
- ▶ instructing
- ▶ encouraging.

Example

Removing shoes and socks

Consider the skill of taking off shoes with velcro fastenings and socks.

Task analysis

Prior to commencing the task, the child needs to employ some essential skills and use them throughout the task:

- ▶ Attempting each step of the task requires the social and emotional skills of developing autonomy or independence, curiosity and interest.
- ▶ Identifying what to do first, second, etc. requires the cognitive skill of remembering and sequencing.
- ▶ Placing themselves in a position that enables them to complete each step of the task requires the physical and cognitive skill of remembering, problem-solving and moving.

Steps

1. Hold the end of the velcro tab – a physical skill of pinching two fingers together tightly.
2. Pull the velcro tab open – a physical skill of pinching fingers together while pulling across.
3. Hold the back of the shoe and pull it off the foot – a physical skill of grasping with the whole hand while pulling away from you.
4. Pull the sock down to the ankle or ball of the foot – a physical skill of using two hands at once and holding the sides of the sock with fingers; also a cognitive skill of problem-solving and knowing how far the sock needs to come off the leg before it is free.
5. Pull the sock off the foot by the toe – a physical skill of pinching fingers together while pulling away from you.

Life skill development

Life skills are the abilities to handle problems and questions that occur in everyday life. For children to develop these skills, you must provide environments that allow for exploration and access appropriate for their age and stage of development.

Consider the following when preparing an environment in which children are encouraged to do or try things for themselves:

- ▶ Ensure materials are accessible to them.
- ▶ Keep storage areas open to children.
- ▶ Organise shelving and equipment.
- ▶ Ensure equipment needed to complete tasks is available.
- ▶ Provide access to rooms and spaces where personal care is undertaken, such as lockers and bathrooms.
- ▶ Provide different selections of materials and equipment, showing that children have choices.
- ▶ Display children's work to show individual experimentation and ideas.
- ▶ Provide activities that support self-help skill development, such as using pegs or play dough to strengthen grip.
- ▶ Provide directions, instructions and recipes.

Learning checkpoint 3

Adapting facilities

Read the case study and look closely at the photos, then answer the questions that follow.

Case study

Bella, a family day care educator, has prepared the play area for the children.

The following is a picture of her indoor setup, which includes paper and pencils; blocks; cushions and open shelves with books, puzzles and other tubs.



This is a picture of her outdoor setup, which includes collage with scissors and glue, sand play and a farm scene.



The children attending today are Michael, aged five, and Tamara, who has just turned three.

Bella is unable to supervise the children unless they are both in the same area at once. She allows the children to move between activities, but they must both be indoors, or both be outdoors.

When the children go outdoors, Bella ensures they follow sunsafe procedures. Today the UV level is above three.

Each child has their own pace when settling into a new environment. Some will conclude this process in days, while others may require a few weeks to settle in. The age and stage of a child, the child's experiences and temperament, and the needs and abilities of the parents also influence this process. To cater for these variables, allow as much time as necessary for parents to help their child settle into the new environment, so that separation is relaxed and unhurried.

Some parents may be unable to complete a suitable orientation process with you; for example, due to work commitments or being unwell. If this is the case, be particularly aware that the child may experience more difficulty settling in than other children who complete an orientation with their parents. If possible, ask parents to allow their child to attend orientation with another adult who is familiar to them, such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. This allows you to collect as much information as possible about the needs and interactions of the child.

Meeting basic needs

Psychology theorist Abraham Maslow identified basic needs that must be met before you can progress to satisfying other needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs includes the needs of children and adults. You may recognise Maslow's theory, presented as a pyramid:



The hierarchy of needs demonstrates that emotional needs link with most human needs. Basic needs are food, rest, sleep, clothes and basic body functions, such as toileting and swallowing.

4B Responding to emotions

Your response to the feelings children express may have a lasting impact on their long-term emotional stability. Parents rightfully expect all educators to support their child’s feelings, fears and responses to change.

Examples of positive and negative emotions are listed here.

Positive emotions	Negative emotions
▶ Enthusiasm	▶ Hatred
▶ Empathy	▶ Grief
▶ Happiness	▶ Shame
▶ Excitement	▶ Anger
▶ Curiosity	▶ Fear

Every individual experiences emotions to different degrees and may experience different emotions relating to the same event. In addition, some emotions are used as cues to communicate messages. Your response to these emotions and your demonstration of empathy is crucial; the way you respond can have a lasting effect and can influence a child’s self-esteem throughout their life.

Simple comments made to a child may affect their life. Your role as an educator has a profound effect on the children you care for. The way the day is planned and how tasks are implemented communicates messages to children about who they are and how others feel about them, so carefully consider your attitudes and interactions.

Example

An educator’s impact

Mandy is out for dinner with her friends celebrating the end of the year. In the past year, Mandy, who has been a stay-at-home mum for 25 years, found a position as an educator in a service that really values her abilities. She has also studied and finished her Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care. Mandy is now commencing her Diploma in Early Childhood Education and Care, as her director told her she would love Mandy to be a room leader in the centre.

As Mandy tells her friends about her achievements and how much her colleagues value her input, she begins to cry. Mandy’s friends are worried that something is wrong. Mandy keeps saying she is okay, and eventually tells her friends that she is crying because she is so happy. She tells them that when she was in grade three, her teacher told her she was useless and that she would never amount to anything. This has always stuck in Mandy’s mind and kept her from trying new things. Now, at 48 years old, she has finally rid herself of her teacher’s negative comments.

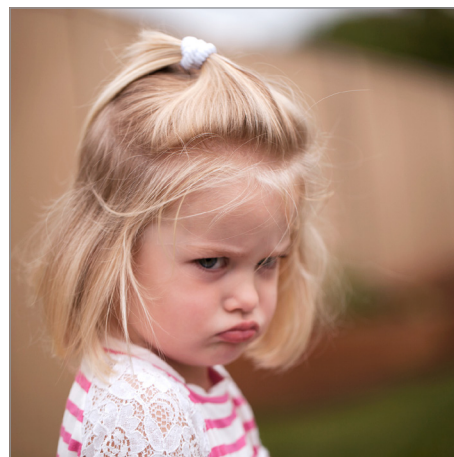
Identifying children’s feelings

Feelings are identified and responded to through verbal interaction and body language. Body language is a way of communicating by using body movements, gestures and facial expressions to give more meaning to verbal communication.

Identifying uncharacteristic behaviours

Uncharacteristic behaviours are those that are unusual for the particular child. These include:

- ▶ excessive crying or tearfulness
- ▶ refusal to participate
- ▶ withdrawal
- ▶ irritability
- ▶ clinginess
- ▶ regression in development or abilities
- ▶ tantrums
- ▶ aggressive behaviour
- ▶ an increased need for comfort
- ▶ sensitivity to small changes.



At times these behaviours are expected; for example, a child who is new to the service may be clingy and sensitive to the change in environment.

When you witness uncharacteristic behaviour, you need to pay special attention to the child and attempt to identify the cause. Often, uncharacteristic behaviour is caused by illness or impending illness; however, other emotional issues may be involved, such as:

- ▶ family issues
- ▶ lack of sleep or rest
- ▶ peer or sibling problems
- ▶ managing change
- ▶ misunderstandings
- ▶ concern for others
- ▶ fears
- ▶ school problems
- ▶ the death of a pet.

After you have identified the cause of the uncharacteristic behaviour, you can then respond to the child. Some issues can be dealt with by your intervention and support. Others may require you to provide support and comfort to the child, provide an outlet through play, and be available to the child in times of need.

Ensure that you respond at all times in a manner that is appropriate to the child, and that you act consistently and ensure other children are not disturbed in the process.

For example, if one child becomes upset because another child has a toy he wants to play with, it is important to defuse the situation without disrupting the other child. If possible, provide the upset child with a toy the same as the other child's. If this is not possible, you could take the child to another play situation or toy and explain that he needs to wait until the other child has finished. It is never appropriate to take the toy from the other child and give it to the upset child just to calm him down, as this reinforces his behaviour. Your interest in the upset child's play will most likely encourage him to settle into a new activity.

Practice task 9

1. What are some ways that children communicate their feelings? Include positive and negative feelings.

2. Look at a service policy and identify any sections that relate to children's emotions. Write down what the policy says about how you should manage children's emotions.

3. Write down one idea of how you could provide children with the opportunity to express their feelings.

4. Write down one idea of a time when children could communicate, listen and treat others with respect.

Summary

- ▶ Children need to be supported to deal with change.
- ▶ Routines should be meaningful and child-focused to help minimise distress when children are separating from their family.
- ▶ When separation times occur, you should be prepared to support the child to deal with change and to minimise distress.
- ▶ Show respect and respond to children's feelings openly.
- ▶ Assist children to identify their feelings and learn appropriate strategies for expression.
- ▶ When you communicate, listen and treat others with respect, children will follow your lead and do so as well.

5A Managing arrival times

The routines that occur during busy arrival and departure times should be flexible so that you can acknowledge, talk to and support families.

Effective management of arrival times means:

- ▶ following a responsive arrival time routine
- ▶ encouraging relaxed and unhurried separation
- ▶ observing families for signs of distress.



Arrival time routines

A routine arrival process prepares the child for separation. Interaction with the child should begin while parents are still present. On arrival, warmly welcome both parent and child, and acknowledge the family in an individual way. The routine should be flexible and should allow you to acknowledge, talk to and support families. Settle the child into an activity they enjoy before the parent leaves. This unhurried approach enables each child and parent to manage the transition calmly and allows you to gather information.

A parent may find it difficult to leave their child, but they may also find it difficult if their child shows no signs of distress upon separation.

As an educator, you must provide reassurance to the parent that both these responses are common and expected. Through this supportive and respectful communication, parents will develop a relationship of trust with you and they will feel increasingly at ease leaving their child.

Watch this video to learn more about supporting parents during arrival times.



Responsive arrival time routines

A responsive arrival time routine is about taking time to ensure you are welcoming everyone, gathering information about family needs and allowing for active participation of children and their families. Responsive and child-centred arrival time routines help to minimise the distress of children and parents when they are separating.

The following table shows an example of a responsive routine. The order of these steps may vary depending on individual situations, but the basic points should still be covered in all situations.

9

Reassure the parent

If the parent is distressed, you may need to offer suggestions for support, such as having a coffee in the staffroom before leaving, going with a staff member to have a chat or cry, calling the service later to find out how their child is doing or using a support service if the situation relates to family distress.

Some signs that a parent is distressed include:

- ▶ obvious emotions like crying
- ▶ checking over and over that you understand what their child needs
- ▶ watching for a long time after they have said goodbye
- ▶ calling or contacting you frequently to check on their child.

10

Farewell the parent

Say goodbye to the parent. If the parent and child are comfortable with the goodbye ritual and have been reassured if needed, they will separate well and move into their daily routines.

Encouraging relaxed and unhurried separation

Arrival and departure times are often very busy and demanding as you attempt to satisfy the needs of family members, and cater for children who are already present. Parents often use these busy times to gain an impression of you and the service, and may use what they see and how you interact with them as evidence of how the entire day will proceed.

A staff member should promptly attend to each child or parent who enters the service. Part of your role is to assist during arrival and departure times. Be aware that parents and children may have different feelings about separation. Sometimes, a parent may be more anxious or concerned about their departure than the child is, and may require support and reassurance during this time.

Encourage parents to stay and participate as long as they want to. This may involve having a parent stay for an hour on the first day and then decreasing the time they stay each day. This helps parents feel confident that their child is being cared for, and gives you the opportunity to observe and react to any signs of distress from the parent or child. Parents should also be encouraged to call the service to check on their child if necessary.

Many parents and children find separation quite stressful and upsetting, so remember to show empathy and acknowledge their feelings and reactions as expected responses. If distress is evident, you must provide support to the parent. Parents may be managing a range of tasks that you are unaware of. The key is to be non-judgmental and to accept parents' strengths and weaknesses.

Watch this video to learn more about separation anxiety.

