

MOVING & Young Children



Moving is not easy for families. A new city or community means having to rediscover important places and services, like the library, post office, doctor, dentist, grocery store, etc. The list goes on and on. It's often tough as well to find "kid-friendly" places like museums, zoos, family restaurants, bookstores with good children's sections... even hair stylists who are great with children.

As a provider, you might think about a "getting-to-know-you-gift" for a new family in your program. Ask other parents to write down their favorite place for children. This helpful gesture might also start some valuable friendships.

Don't forget about children and families who are leaving the program as well. "We-will-miss-you" ideas include children writing or drawing their favorite things at school or designing and signing a goodbye note. Assemble these in a class book to give to the child who is moving. Discuss with the other children their feelings about their friend moving.

See the sample article on the next page. You can send it home to parents to learn strategies to help children during a big move!

Dear Parents,

Whether a family moves a few blocks or thousands of miles, relocating is stressful for everyone, especially children. Stress-related behaviors such as aggression, loss of appetite, regression to less mature behaviors, and withdrawal are not uncommon in children experiencing a move.



There are many things adults can do to ease a child's stress. Before the move, parents can model positive attitudes. Children are quick to mirror the emotions of people important to them. If they sense that their parents are worried, they will dread the move. But if children sense that family members are enthusiastic, they will see the move as an exciting – perhaps even promising – event.

Kids should be included in planning whenever possible. Although many decisions made during a move are not

appropriate for children, house-hunting excursions or walks around a new neighborhood help them retain a sense of control during this period of change.

If a visit before the move is not possible, show the child pictures or video of the new house – don't forget his or her room! – and the neighborhood. Ease the fear of the unknown as much as possible. Encourage your child to participate in the packing process. And allow time for goodbyes in the old neighborhood.

After the move, as your kids begin to make new friends, observe their strategies. Often, strategies that worked in the old environment don't work with children they don't know. They may need help in joining neighborhood games or groups.

Moving is a process rather than a single event in children's lives. And their needs differ at various times during the process. Our attention, understanding, and interaction can ease stress and facilitate children's adjustment to a new environment.