

Parent Aware Tip Sheets

Children's Needs

How can you be responsive to children's needs?

Children in child care/early education settings must rely on adult caregivers to provide for many of their needs throughout the day. Responding quickly and in a positive way lets children know they can depend on adults for assistance and helps develop caring relationships between caregivers and children.

How can you create a welcoming environment?

A warm greeting at drop-off time in a positive tone of voice and in the content of the greeting acknowledges that the child has arrived. Other ways to create a welcoming environment include allowing parents to stay for a few minutes while their children get settled, providing lots of warm physical and verbal interactions with all children throughout the day, being responsive to individual needs, and using calm, warm voices throughout the day.

What are some ways to be more responsive to children's needs?

- **Provide comfort and assistance quickly** when children need it. It is important to understand that young children use crying as a means of communicating so view the amount of time spent waiting for comfort from their perspective. Caregivers can respond more easily to children's needs when careful supervision is maintained throughout the day. Supervision is best when it is individualized to meet each child's needs.
- **Responding to children's emotions sensitively** is important, as it shows children that caregivers notice and validate their feelings. Even if the child is showing emotions that are considered unacceptable, like anger, crying or whining, caregivers should respond in a kind, gentle way. Ignoring the child or responding negatively can convey the message that providers do not understand or care that the child is upset. This is not to say that inappropriate behaviors should be allowed. When a child hits, kicks, bites, throws things, etc., providers can explain that the child is not allowed to behave in this way and then help the child to calm down. Often, when a sympathetic response is received, the original problem can be reduced and children will accept comfort more easily.