

Hellos and Good-Byes

With support, these sometimes challenging routines can be made easier for children and their families.

When saying my hellos and good-byes, I may:

- need my comfort items to help me feel better when saying good-bye to my family and caregivers. Saying good-bye may be hard for my family too.
- become upset when my family or my caregiver leaves. I may cling to them and cry. This anxiety may increase at some ages (6 to 8 months, 12 to 14 months) and then go away.
- begin to expect the arrival of my family when it's time to leave, or the separation from them when I arrive. This is easiest with a consistent routine.
- begin to manage my feelings, with support. I may become upset when my family or caregiver leaves, but I can calm down after they have gone.
- become upset at the end of the day when everyone is going home.
- not show enthusiasm when my family comes to get me, although I have missed them. I may glance at them briefly and continue my activity. Or I may become upset, and resist going home.



My family helps me with hellos and good-byes by:

- creating a specific “good-bye” and “hello” routine with my caregiver.
- keeping the good-bye short and sweet. Saying good-bye can be hard on everyone.
- always saying good-bye, no matter how old I am. No sneaking off when I’m not looking.
- talking about my emotions with me. This helps validate my feelings.
- bringing a special toy, blanket, or comfort object to help me say good-bye.
- bringing pictures of my family to my caregiver. He or she can share them with me throughout the day.
- allowing enough time for me to make the change when dropping me off or saying hello at the end of the day.

Children can share their “special place” with their parent(s) or show them a favorite activity at the end of the day.

My caregivers help me with hellos and good-byes by:

- supporting my feelings and those of my parents about separating.
- talking with me and naming my feelings when separating from my family. Offer support as I need it.
- placing pictures of my family in child care where I can see them. You could also make family books for me to look at when I miss my family.
- offering my family the opportunity to call and “check in” if they want.
- encouraging my family to spend time in child care with me to help me feel secure.
- preparing activities that I enjoy during drop-off and pick-up times.
- helping me to know when it is almost time for me to go home. This will help my reunion with my family go smoother, and I will know what is coming next.

Creating a Good-Bye Routine

Alex’s mother knew that separation would be one of the biggest challenges of starting him in child care. Alex was two and a half and he still had a hard time separating from her at home. She shared her concerns with his teacher and they created a plan that worked well for Alex and his mother. Alex’s primary caregiver met him and his mother at the classroom door for each drop-off. The teacher helped Alex find his name card to hang up (an activity he enjoyed). Alex’s mother said good-bye to him as the teacher walked him into the classroom. She was encouraged to wait and watch through the window, where Alex couldn’t see her, until she was comfortable enough to leave. Most days, Alex would ask his teacher to hold him, and he frequently cried. He and his teacher would then go to his cubby and take out his family pictures for him to look at. After a few weeks, Alex rarely cried but would quickly glance at his family photos before hurrying to join an activity.

For younger children, the familiar scent of their mother can be even more powerful than the visual example in Alex’s story. To ease transitions for a younger child, you can create a good-bye routine including something soft to hold that smells of mom. This could be a “blankie,” a t-shirt, or other comforting object.

To learn more about hellos and goodbyes, view the Resources and References found at the end of these materials.