

The Importance of Schedules and Routines

Familiar activities can provide comfort for both adults and children during challenging and uncertain times. Just like adults, children feel more confident and secure when their daily activities are predictable and familiar. A consistent daily schedule and step-by-step routines give children a predictable day. Schedules and routines in the group care setting and at home help children:

- Feel in control of their environment
- Feel safe, secure, and comfortable
- Know what is happening now and what comes next
- Know how to do an activity or task
- Engage in learning



Why are routines and schedules important?

When infants and toddlers are part of familiar activities and routines, they develop relationships with the people they interact with and gain a sense of belonging and self-confidence.

As older toddlers and young children grow, they can follow routines, demonstrate emerging independence, and adjust to change more easily.

Engaging, predictable environments and ongoing positive adult-child interactions are necessary for promoting children's social and emotional development and preventing challenging behaviors. You can help by following clear and simple schedules and routines. (Hemmeter, Ostrosky, and Fox 2006).

Partnering with Families on Schedules and Routines

- Keep it simple. Ask families about things they do every day. They don't have to do anything new!
- To start, help family members break down one of their scheduled tasks into steps to create the routine.
- Encourage families to let their children help. For example, ask parents if there are parts of the routine the child can do on their own or with a little assistance—and let them do it.
- Let parents know that reviewing the schedule every morning and throughout the day with their child helps them know what is going to happen next.
- Remind families to keep the routine and schedule as similar as possible each day.
- Let parents know they should also be flexible. You can say something like, "Plans change, things happen, but give your child a warning ahead of time if things are going to be different. Let them know what is going to happen."
- Encourage parents to offer a choice in activities or the steps of a routine whenever possible.

Reinstating Schedules and Routines When Programs Start Back Up

- Re-teach and remind children of the:
 - Schedule and routines using visuals
 - Steps in common group care routines, such as sitting at circle time and washing hands
- Note changes in the schedule that result from being away from the program.
- Review the schedule at the beginning of each day.
- Refer to the schedule before and after activities throughout the day.
- Model the steps and allow children to practice them.
- Provide positive, descriptive feedback when children both attempt to follow or succeed in following the routine.

What is the difference between a schedule and a routine?

A schedule represents the big picture and includes main activities that happen across the day.

Routines are the steps needed to complete each part of the schedule.

Hemmeter, Mary Louise; Michaelene Ostrosky, and Lise Fox. "Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning: A Conceptual Model for Intervention." *School Psychology Review* 35(4) (2006): 583–601.

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