

When transitioning back to childcare settings, it's likely infants—and adults—may need help adapting to new routines and re-establishing relationships. Practitioners should ensure that routines are responsive to individual children's needs and implemented consistently to help infants and their families transition back after an extended break. Infants may also need extra support to connect with their caregivers, even if they are caregivers who were there before the break. Here are some tips and strategies to reconnect and build relationships with infants as they return to your program.

Warmth and Responsivity

- ▶ Use a positive, calm, and supportive tone.
- ▶ Interact at the child's level and make eye contact.
- ▶ When wearing a mask, it will be important to exaggerate your eyes and eyebrows and use other nonverbal communication strategies.
- ▶ Show physical affection (e.g., gentle pats, holding them, rocking gently).
- ▶ Greet children and address them by name throughout the day.
- ▶ Be responsive to children in distress (e.g., pick them up, rock them gently).



Daily Routines

- ▶ Be consistent with daily routines.
- ▶ Individualize routines for each child (e.g., diaper change, feeding, sleep).
- ▶ Narrate steps and activities during routines.
- ▶ Plan for extra time to complete routines with children. For example, a child might need extra time to calm down before they are ready to sleep.

Rhea, I am going to pick you up so we can change your diaper.

I know you are hungry, Devon. I am going to get your bottle, and then I can feed you.

Self-Care

- ▶ Practice mindfulness strategies that calm YOU throughout the day (e.g., breathing, taking a sip of water).
- ▶ Be present during your interactions with infants and avoid focusing on things out of your control.
- ▶ Ask for support when needed
 - When feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or frustrated, collaborate with a colleague to take a break.
 - Talk with other adults about your feelings.



Building Relationships & Communication

- ▶ Imitate and elaborate on infants' vocalizations and actions.
- ▶ Provide positive attention by engaging and commenting on infants' movements, vocalizations and behaviors.
- ▶ Use words and gestures to comment on other children in the classroom and help children notice their peers.

You are making music banging those blocks.

Look, Jason is crawling over to say hi to you.

I see you looking at the bird. Should I make it fly?

Emotional Support

- ▶ Label and describe adult and child emotions throughout the day.
- ▶ Create a nurturing environment by playing calming music or sounds to support regulation.

That was a loud noise. Did that scare you?

I see you smiling, Nat. You look happy holding the shaker.

Drop-Off and Pick Up

Because of new regulations, it is likely that drop-off and pick-up routines will be different. If this is the case, it will be important to be intentional in supporting families and their infants during these routines:

- ▶ Prepare families ahead of time for the new routines.
- ▶ Have a consistent caregiver greet the family each day.
- ▶ Bring a favorite classroom item to the drop-off location (e.g., book, toy).
- ▶ Post photos of classroom activities near the drop-off/pickup location.
- ▶ Expect that drop off/pick-up might take longer and stagger when families arrive.

