

Sliding into Summer: Easing the Transition for Children

For children, summertime offers special opportunities as well as challenges. The end of the school year may mean some adjustments in a regular child care program. Some kids might start attending a camp or a recreational program. Summer might also mean vacation travel or spending time with friends and family. Some children will be uneasy about the changes. The following are tips to help your child through the transition:

- **Find out about the changes your child will experience and talk to your child about those changes.** Knowing what to expect and getting support from you can help your child gain confidence. If your child will be going to a new camp, arrange for a visit to the facility ahead of time. Talk about the planned activities with your child. If you are continuing your regular care arrangement, discuss the different things your child might experience over the summer, such as outdoor play and exploration, water play, and new faces as familiar staff take vacations.
- **For middle school children, find a balance between the responsibility of some hours alone and meaningful programs and activities.** You may find places where they can become counselors-in-training. These years are important for building self-esteem, learning new skills, and broadening one's understanding of the world.
- **Let your children know what to expect on summer vacations, help them prepare a special travel bag, and take breaks during long car trips.** Include toys, books, games, and snacks in the bag. Bringing along familiar things, such as bedtime routines or a favorite breakfast food, is helpful. For long car trips, a picnic at a roadside park or a stop at a restaurant with a playground will give children a chance to exercise and recharge.
- **Set up a family calendar.** A working calendar, from end of school to the beginning of school in the fall, placed where everyone in the family will read it, is a wonderful way to organize new routines and schedules. Children gain a sense of control over their own activities, and parents can troubleshoot potential problems.