

## TRANSITIONS TO THE NEXT AGE GROUP

**You may want to consider moving the caregiver with the children as they progress through various stages rather than just moving the children.**

Sooner or later, children move on the next age group. For some children and parents (and some attached primary caregivers), this time is a time of anxiety. For others, it is a time that has been eagerly anticipated, and there are a few tearful looks back.

Successful transitions depend on good planning and on recognizing and understanding the perspective of children and parents. Some things to keep in mind:

- Children cannot move up until there is a space in the next group. Sometimes children get “stuck” in a group waiting for an opening, and sometimes children get moved up a little earlier than expected to take advantage of an opening. Because of this, it is important to make sure the group works for children at both ends of the age spectrum.
- Care must be taken to avoid giving the impression that there is something competitive about moving up, that it is like graduation of some indication that the child has superior skills and abilities.
- Most children need more than a few days of visiting to feel comfortable. Preparing for transition is an ongoing process that begins a long time before the actual move.

**Ongoing Relationships Between Rooms.** Ideally, even in large centers there is a sense of community and relationship between different age groups and different rooms. A child in an infant room will come to know the toddler staff and the toddler rooms through visiting, shared activities, and common space. The same is true of toddlers and preschoolers. Through the newsletter and other communication, parents will come to know about the people and aspects of life that their children will soon become a part of.

**The Ready List.** Once a child is ready to move, whether or not space is available, perhaps a few months before a move is anticipated, staff in the two rooms should make a concerted effort to begin the transition. This involves visiting, also with the primary caregiver, sharing activities, and other efforts to gradually familiarize the child with the new room. At the same time, parents should be made aware of the approaching transition and be given information on the child’s soon to be new home base.

**The Last Few Weeks.** When a moving date is known, the current primary caregiver and the newly assigned primary caregiver should get together and map out a plan for daily visits to the new group and make sure that parents have all the information necessary to feel secure about the move. The needs of each child and each parent will be different.

**The New Group.** Consider ways to help children and families to feel welcome; especially in the first week of transition. Have the child’s picture on their new cubby, a welcome sign, a first day note to parents, and a reassuring phone call if necessary. It is also important for many children to keep in contact with the old room. “Cold turkey” transitions are not a good idea.