

Reflecting on Routines

WHAT'S WORKING AND WHAT'S A WORK IN PROGRESS?

To assess what's working and what isn't, look for signs in the way children and families engage with your routine, as well as your own stress levels. These questions below are only meant as a starting point for you to reflect on how well different times of day are working for your group at this time-- there will surely be other ways you notice that it's time to make a change!



Arrival & Departure Routines:

- Are most children able to separate from their caregivers on most days with relative ease?
- Are you able to talk briefly with families as they arrive?
- When children arrive, can they immediately begin an activity they enjoy?



Care Routines

- Are children hungry at mealtimes and tired (but not overtired) at rest times?
- Can children access the restroom appropriately as they need to?



Transitions

- Do children know what to do between activities?
- Can children take on "helper" opportunities if they are ready before their peers?
- Are the times between activities the most frequent times for children to engage physically with each other?



Large Group, Small Group, and Individual Exploration

- Are all children able to engage with provided materials appropriately the majority of the time?
- Are there enough materials for children to choose to play alone or in groups?



Indoor/Outdoor Time

- Do children have time to participate in most of the activities they enjoy both indoors and outdoors?
- When it is safe to do so, do children have at least 90 minutes at a time to spend outdoors?

Reflecting on Routines

PARTNERING WITH FAMILIES

When a new family is starting, or a child is growing and changing, communicating with families about their routines at home and in while attending care programs is important to ensure children's needs are being met over the course of the day.



Before the family starts:

- Have an up-to-date printed or printable copy of your routine to hand or email to prospective families
- Include in your enrollment paperwork a form that asks families when and what their child typically eats; when, how, and how long they sleep, their preferred activities, and anything else that might help you plan for their adjustment.



Day to day:

- Find a way to record and communicate what children are doing while they are in your care. Paper "daily sheets" or apps can be quick ways for families to see at the end of the day how much their child ate and slept, and compare to other days.
- Find time to communicate changes verbally. Whether a child was extra tired or not eating well, had a new interest in an area they hadn't explored much before, or played with someone new.



When there are developmental changes:

- Be sure to ask families to tell you about any changes at home that might impact your routines in care, such as an infant starting solid foods, or a toddler dropping to one nap.
- Your daily sheets or app may serve as communication that you've noticed changes in children's habits, but be sure to set aside time to touch base with families.



When concerns arise:

- Having the above practices in place before discussing concerns with families will build a strong relationship that will support challenging conversations.
- Wait for the start of a pattern. One bad day likely isn't cause for a family conference, but if a child is consistently struggling several days out of the week, reach out to the family to explore ways to problem-solve.