

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO GRADUAL SEPARATIONS



Welcome to Care for Newcomer Children (CNC)

Welcome to our CNC program!

To help your child feel safe, and to allow you to study without worrying, it's important to take some time to get comfortable with our program and staff.

Sometimes children cry, feel lost or react strongly when their parents first have to leave. This separation anxiety is normal—especially if it is your child's first time in group care. To help you both through this time, we manage initial separations carefully by using gradual separation.

What is gradual separation?

Gradual separation means increasing the length of separations between parent and child as the child becomes more comfortable in the program. It involves working with program staff and preparing your child for the first separations ahead of time.

Gradual separation:

- respects children's needs,
- helps your child feel safe and secure,
- supports a smooth transition into our program, and
- sets the stage for successful separations and healthy attachment as the child grows.

Children who have traumatic first separations take a lot longer to settle into the program, so please be prepared to stay with your child as needed. Each child is different, but it's important not to rush the process.

How does it work?

Before you start class:

- If possible, visit our program with your child.
- Casually talk to the staff about your child, the program and how they usually plan for separation. This helps your child to see staff as safe and trustworthy.
- If possible, show your child where your classroom will be.

Your child's first few days

- Try to be relaxed and enthusiastic.
- Go to the area that you think your child will most enjoy and tell the staff what your child likes to play with.
- Focus on your child. Talk to them, show them the toys and play with them.
- Be alert to any other areas they may seem interested in and follow their lead.
- Watch for cues from the staff.
- Encourage your child to play with other children or with staff when they are ready. If your child does not seem ready, it's okay to wait a little longer.
- When your child is able to play on their own or with others, this is a good sign that they are ready to try their first separation! Try taking a step back to watch.

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- If your child immediately follows you and seems to need you to stay close, they might not be ready.
- Full separation can take longer for children who have experienced violence and trauma.

Initial separations

When you and the staff see that your child is playing well and seems comfortable, you can start to leave the program for short periods of time.

- Tell your child that you are going to the washroom and that you will come back in two minutes.
- Never leave the room without telling the staff you are going
- Go to the washroom and be sure to come back exactly as you said you would.
- If this first separation is traumatic for your child, they might not be ready.

After the first separation goes well, then you are ready to try a second separation that is a little longer (5–15 minutes). And then a third, even longer separation (10–20 minutes).

These short separations build your child's trust and help them to understand that you will always come back. For each separation, make sure to:

- Be consistent.
- Tell your child that you are going. Sneaking out breaks trust and will make future separations more difficult.
- Keep your goodbye as short as possible and have a consistent/familiar staff member there to support your child when you go.
- Focus on positives when you come back. Try asking your child about which toys they played with or what they liked best.

When your child manages these short separations without too much upset, they're ready for you to go! When you first start leaving your child for the entire length of the program, try to be one of the first to come pick them up to reinforce the idea that you will always come back.

What if my child is upset?

If your child is still having trouble, try not to worry. You might need to spend some extra time with your child in the program to help them feel secure and comfortable. Bringing a toy or blanket, or leaving your scarf or sweater might also help your child feel more comfortable.

Program staff have helped many families through this process and they are there to guide and support you.



SUPPORTING THE CARE AND SETTLEMENT
OF YOUNG IMMIGRANT CHILDREN

For more parent resources, visit:
www.cmascanada.ca



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