

PRIMARY CAREGIVING AND TRANSITION POLICY

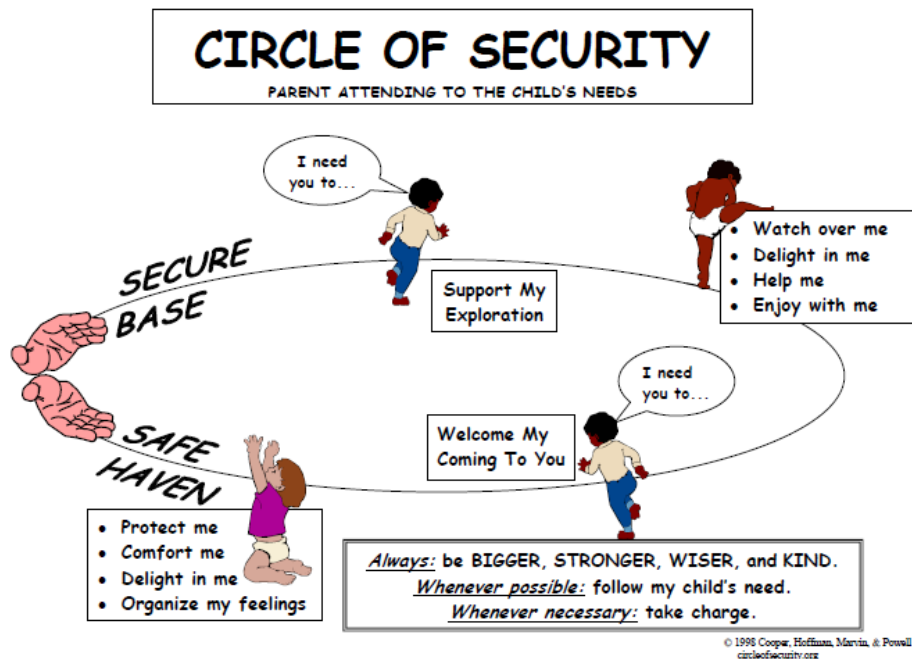
AIM

To ensure children experience relationships that support secure attachments which optimise emotional wellbeing and development.

IMPLEMENTATION

The focus of the primary caregiver is to develop a close, trusting and responsive relationship between the professional, child and family. A child's primary carer is responsible for the care and education needs of your child. We believe that 'primary caregiving' provides a consistent relationship for your child and their family. This strategy is based on the "Attachment Theory" and the "Circle of Security".

'Attachment theory' refers to the idea that children need to make deep emotional attachments to adults who care for them (such as parents and guardians) in order to experience healthy emotional and physical development. The 'Circle of Security' is a guide to understanding children's emotional and relationship needs.



Primary Caregivers will:

- Consciously seek to develop secure relationships with children in their primary caregroup through warm and nurturing interactions.
- Work within Playspaces at arrival and collection time to encourage attachment and secure transitions.
- Use the Responsive Relationships model in the birth to three spaces to support strong relationships between children and staff.
- Seek to share routines and times of the day that provide opportunity for more intimate connections with the children in their care group (i.e. nappy changing).
- Be the primary contact for families to share information about the child wherever possible.
- Provide primary care for siblings or children they have previously formed an attachment to in another room wherever possible and in consultation with families or partnership.
- Maintain Learning stories, All About Mes and portfolios as well as any other systems that are required to ensure quality care that fosters a sense of belonging.
- Liaise with families to share and receive information through transition packs, AAMs, Learning Stories and Floorbooks. Families should seek out their child's primary carer whenever they wish to talk to a staff member about their child's needs or interests.
- Be available wherever possible to children in their primary group during times of transition or difficulty (including transition between rooms where new attachments are still forming).
- Provide comfort to children in their primary care group in response to injury or distress wherever possible.

- Accompany children with NEPs during school visits to support transition
- Exchange information with a child's primary school teacher during transition to school. This may include visiting the school to support children and families.

Room leaders will:

- Ensure the importance of primary care relationships as foundational to all aspects of learning and wellbeing are considered in making decisions about routines or staff practices.
- Ensure daily interactions between primary carers and children are in accordance with this policy.
- Ensure primary carer working days matches attendance patterns of the child particularly in children aged under 30 months (i.e. it is not good practice to match a baby that only attends two days to a primary carer who works part time and is not at the centre on one of those days.)

Leadership staff will:

- Ensure all aspects of the operation of the centre (including the Statement of Principles) acknowledge the foundational importance of primary caregiving.
- Ensure staffing of primary caregivers is achieved with permanent or core staff with consistent hours wherever industrially possible to provide continuity of relationships.
- Permanent or contract staff who act as primary caregivers may elect to work either a 5-day week or a 4-day week to support their work-life balance.
- Leadership to ensure coverage of a 4-day work week is consistent with familiar staff to support primary caregiving.
- Ensure transitions into rooms are staggered to provide a supportive environment within which secure attachments can be achieved more readily.
- Ensure a staffing profile that allows for staggering of transitions (i.e. rooms build to capacity over time reaching a peak enrolment early in term 3), whilst still maintaining financial stability for the centre.
- Ensure a policy that supports staff retention is in place.
- Ensure regular training opportunities to support staff understanding of Circle of Security and Marte Meo.
- Ensure this policy is reviewed regularly and developed alongside current literature about best practice.
- Guide Team Leaders where required in supporting educators to implement this policy

Transition between rooms and primary caregivers presents a period of vulnerability for young children (particularly those under 36 months of age). In regard to transitions:

Educators will:

- Provide opportunities for children to move between rooms/spaces to encourage familiarity with other environments and educators (i.e. open up room doors, encourage shared access to outdoor spaces).
- Move with primary care children to new environments upon initial transition visits (i.e. staff swaps).
- Wherever possible support friendship groups to transition together
- Follow child's lead around level of comfort they are displaying in their new environment. If the child wants to return to their previous room or primary caregivers accommodate this wherever possible.
- If after a reasonable period of time (i.e. four to five months) a child is still demonstrating a strong preference to return frequently to their previous environment a plan is developed to examine and address underlying factors as to why this might be.

Team Leaders will:

- Ensure educators within their room are aware of and act in accordance with this policy.
- Model policy practices

The Transitional Leaders

A transitional leader is a nominated educator in each room who oversees transition visits for both children and families. They are the first point of contact in each room for families during transitions. The transition leader will:

- Use a consultative process with transitional leaders and primary care educators from other rooms to plan transitions.
- Ensure considerations are taken regarding friendship groupings, emotional needs and primary attachments when planning transitions for all children.
- Confirm start dates and attendance patterns with the assistant director.
- Communicate start dates, attendance pattern and transition schedule to the room educators.
- Communicate start dates and attendance with the administrative staff.

EVALUATION:

This policy is seen to be working effectively when:

The process for assigning a child a primary carer is clear and undertaken with the child's needs considered.

Primary caregivers are aware of their responsibilities.

National Quality Standards:

Element 5.1.1 Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.

Implemented: February 2014

Reviewed: October 2022

Next Review: October 2024

Source: Richard Bowlby, 2007. "Babies and toddlers in non-parental daycare can avoid stress and anxiety if they develop a lasting secondary attachment bond with one carer who is consistently accessible to them."