

# Planning For Summer

Volume 4

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

Summer is right around the corner and it's not too soon to start planning. While your need for child care is year-round, summertime offers special opportunities as well as challenges. Even for very young children, child care schedules often follow a school year model with transitions in June or September. For some children, the end of the school year will mean a move to a new classroom. For others, it may mean choosing a camp or recreational program followed by a new class or new school in the Fall. Summer might also mean vacation travel to visit friends and family.

Some children will be uneasy about the changes ahead. Changes in children's behavior and anxiety levels can occur when these changes take place. Try to think about each transition as an opportunity to teach your child how to handle new situations. Adults know that change is a constant, inevitable part of life. Talk with your child about the changes. Knowing what to expect and getting support from you can help your child gain the confidence to manage the road ahead.

## **Anticipating The Changes**

For some children summer will mean changes in their regular child care program. There may be more outdoor play and exploration, and extra water play from bubble making to swimming. There will be new faces as familiar staff take vacations and substitutes join the program for the summer. Check with your child's program about the changes so you can help your child anticipate them.

For families using family child care arrangements, it is important to talk with your caregiver early about vacation plans. You may want to plan your vacations for the same time. Even very young children need explanations and reassurances about changing routines. A favorite blanket or stuffed animal may become even more important.

## **Summer Trip Tips**

Planning ahead can make your trips more fun for everyone. Let children know what to expect. If you know the vacation sleeping arrangements, talk them over in advance. Perhaps familiar bedtime routines and a favorite breakfast cereal will help them feel comfortable away from home. Blending familiar things with new experiences helps create an enjoyable vacation.

Ideally each child will have his own travel bag with toys, books, and games. Each child can help pack his own bag so it reflects his own interests and abilities. Try to include at least one drink and a few snacks.

For long automobile trips, a picnic at a roadside park or a stop at a restaurant with a playground gives children a chance to exercise and recharge. Balance your eagerness to get to the destination with your children's needs for breaks and bathrooms.

### **Travel Toys**

One inexpensive idea for infants is to paste colorful pictures into a spiral notebook. Turn the page every so often so the baby has something new to look at.

Some favorite items for older children are:

- coloring books and crayons
- foam rubber puzzles
- press and peel sticker games
- tapes and headsets
- word game books
- stickers
- finger puppets
- books
- string games such as Cat's Cradle
- magnetic board games

### **Books about Summer and Camp**

The books below are recommended by parents, librarians and book stores. Use them as a starting point - there are many other good ones.

For younger children:

- Arthur Goes To Camp by Marc Brown
- Pig Pig Goes To Camp by David McPhail
- Raymond's Best Summer by Jean Rogers
- The Berenstain Bears Go To Camp by Stan Berenstain
- Sophie's Knapsack by Catherine Stock

For older readers:

- Buddies by Barbara Park
- Camp Pinetree Pals by Judy Baer
- A Wonderful, Terrible Time by Mary Stolz
- Hail, Hail Camp Timberwood by Paula Danziger
- Dump Days by Jerry Spinelli

### **Arrangements For School Age Children**

For many parents, the end of the school year can leave you scrambling for care. Think about your older child's growing skills and needs. If you want help finding resources, call your local child care referral agency.

Summer care can be a combination of arrangements. Sometimes these can be shared with friends or relatives. You may be willing to share a caregiver half the day so that children can attend an arts and crafts program the other half. Meet your children's needs for summer by blending interests and talents with a carefully planned schedule for care.

The key to success is to start early . Programs and camps are booked quickly or have registration days with long lines and often require applications and deposits well in advance.. If you are expecting to hire a teenager for child care help, make that phone call as soon as possible. You may want to post a help wanted ad at your local high school, church or community center.

### **Summer Programs**

Overnight camps are one summer choice for school age children and may have several enrollment options.. Some accept campers for several days; others require a two, four or eight week schedule. Some camps concentrate on one specific interest, such as baseball or creative arts or computers.

Overnight camp is not the only child care choice however. Local schools, churches, temples, YWCAs and YMCAs and other community organizations often sponsor day camps and other summer programs. Although it is difficult to visit summer programs in advance, there may be open houses for families considering a camp. You can also write or call camp directors to ask for brochures and gather information.

Other parents can often provide the best tips, general advice and perhaps shared child care if the daily program is shorter than your work day. For most children it will be important to learn whether some of their friends will enroll too.

### **Self Care**

Sometimes families will consider self care as an option for summer. Although this may be a satisfactory arrangement for a short period after school, the long days of summer require additional consideration. Find a balance for your child between the responsibility of some hours alone and meaningful programs and activities. For some middle school children who are too old for care and too young to work, you may find places where they can become counselors-in-training. These years are an important time for building self-esteem, learning new skills and broadening one's understanding of the world.

### **Considerations For Your Family**

Combine a schedule of your family's needs with your child's interests. You can support growth in responsibility and independence, as well as providing rich experiences. Choosing the right summer arrangement for your child is a matter of knowing your child and asking the right questions.

### **Scheduling And Cost**

1. When and how often does the program meet?
2. What are the arrangements for transportation?
3. Does the program accommodate your family's work schedule?
4. Does the program's start date and end match your child's summer vacation or leave you a gap in child care?
5. What is the cost and is financial assistance available?

### **Children's Needs, Safety And Quality**

1. What are the camp's strengths and philosophy?
2. Is the camp accredited by the American Camping Association?
3. What are the experiences and skills of the director and counselors?
4. What is the ratio of counselors to campers?
5. What food is provided?
6. How does the program respond to children of all ages?
7. Do the program's activities address your child's interests and abilities?
8. What are the condition and safety of the facilities and equipment?
9. What medical care is available?
10. Are some of your child's friends enrolled?
11. How does the program help children develop new friendships?

### **Setting Up The Family Calendar**

A multi-month working calendar, from end of school to the beginning of school next 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. The calendar takes over the task of daily reminders and can also serve as family message center and emergency phone list.

### **For More Information...**

About choosing and using child care and before and after school care, call the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency which serves your community. To find the number of the CCR&R in your area, call **1.800.424.2246**.

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The Daily Parent is prepared by NACCRRRA, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies.

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