Old Home, New Home, Our Home

Many families move into a new home at one time or another. Planning a move can be both exciting and sad, causing stress for you and your children. Your attitude will greatly affect the attitudes of your children. Reassure them that they are not the cause for your stress and look for ways to make the move a positive one.

Before the move

- Model an optimistic attitude about the change. Try to stay positive even if the move is not a choice but a necessity because of financial reasons or an unwanted job transfer.
- Talk with your children about the new home. Answer their questions and encourage them to discuss any concerns. If possible, visit the new home and neighborhood ahead of the move. If it's too far, show them pictures in a book or online.
- Reassure toddlers and preschoolers the family will be together in the new home, if true.
- Read children's books about moving and play a pretend game of moving to a new home.

Making the move

- Encourage toddlers and preschoolers to help pack some belongings. Be sure they understand that their toys and clothes will be moved to the new home.
- Keep your child's eating and sleeping routine as consistent as possible. Be sure they can hold on to their favorite blanket or toy.
- Let your child's age, personality, and safety help you decide whether to have them with you on moving day or have them stay with a friend or relative. Some children will find it exciting while others will be upset by the confusion. Some may experience less fear by staying with the parent on moving day.

After the move

- Make the new home feel more welcoming by setting up your child's space as soon as possible. Familiar meals, books, and music can help them feel at home.
- Delay other changes, such as toilet learning or moving a child from a crib to a bed, until they feel at home in the new setting.
- Encourage your child to share their feelings. They may not understand until after the move that they won't be going back to their old school or neighborhood or friends.
- Help your child connect to the new community by meeting new neighbors. Take advantage of community resources such as library story times.
- If your child is in preschool, talk with the teacher about ways to ease their entry into the class.
- It can take many months for children and adults to adjust to a move. Children may need even more time to adjust if the move follows an upsetting event such as a divorce or death in the family. The first two weeks are usually the most stressful.
- Be patient if your child is more clingy than usual. Their caution around strangers can be a sign of their attachment to their family. Some behavior typical of children younger than their age is common.
- Be sure to reassure your child often that you love them and will be there to take care of them in their new home.

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this tip sheet are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois State Board of Education.

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