# Continuity of Care Overview

**WHO?**

<u>3, 4, & 5 Star centers</u>
- Three, four, and five Star centers implement a written plan of how children remain with specific teaching personnel throughout the majority of the day and are not regularly assigned to another group.
- Out-of-school time programs are exempt from this criteria.

<u>4 & 5 Star centers</u>
- Four and Five Star centers that implement a written plan ensuring that children three years of age and younger are placed with consistent teaching personnel for at least one year can count this toward one of their additional program criteria.
- Four Star centers implement three program criteria and five Star centers implement five. Four Star out-of-school time programs implement two program criteria and five Star out-of-school time programs implement three.

**WHY?**
- Children need stable, trusting relationships with caring adults to easily explore and learn from their surroundings.
- Longer-term, caring adult-child relationships are highly related to child self-regulatory behavior, which is critical to success in school and later life.
- Greater child self-regulation also leads to fewer classroom behavioral issues.
- Continuity of care practices help children's development progress smoother, with fewer developmental problems and behavioral regressions.
- The practice increases teacher knowledge of individual children and child development, leading to increased sensitivity in responsiveness.
- It decreases caregiver, child, and family stress.
- It builds stronger family-caregiver partnerships and trust, enabling a deeper knowledge of family strengths and needs and more effective interventions.
- Caregivers receive greater emotional satisfaction from longer-term relationships with children and families, leading to greater job satisfaction and higher retention rates.

**WHAT?**
- Children and their caregiving team are kept together throughout the majority of the day and are not regularly assigned to another group or an even more effective plan--children remain in a consistent group of familiar caregivers and peers over a long period of time—up to two or three years.
- Is based largely on attachment research findings that children thrive in secure relationships with a small number of key adults, that secure relationships take time to develop, and that these important relationships are most beneficial when long-lasting.
- Includes programming and policies that help children develop secure relationships by minimizing disruptions such as changes in settings, assigned caregivers and teachers, and staff turnover.

**HOW?**

- Programs promote the continuity of care by developing implementation plans and procedures and ongoing professional development.
- Plans focus on promoting attachment between child/caregiver/family and include how this will be accomplished for all newly enrolled children and children transitioning to a different childcare setting.
- Policies include strategies that promote teacher retention, such as personnel benefits and resources, increase the likelihood of the continuity of teachers.
- Some strategies for ensuring children and their caregiving team are kept together throughout the majority of the day and are not regularly assigned to another group include:
  1) Developing purposeful staffing schedules (that are regularly reviewed) based on the ages and schedules of children assigned to teaching staff.
  2) Staffing schedules plan for the least transitions /disruptions for each child.
  3) When children must be moved to another classroom or teacher, carefully consider which child(ren) to move based on temperaments and needs, not moving the same child repeatedly, and moving children in pairs.
- Some strategies for ensuring children remain in a consistent group of familiar caregivers and peers over a long period of time—up to two or three years. include:
  1) Primary Caregiving: caregivers/teachers are assigned primary responsibility for assuring that a small group of children receives the care they need.  This gives staff the ability to deepen relationships with children and their families.
  2) Mixed Ages: caregivers/teachers remain in a classroom and are assigned primary responsibility for a mixed age group of children.  As the older children age out of the group and move to another classroom or school, a new group of the youngest age children move into the classroom.
  3)  Looping: caregivers/teachers stay with the same group of children for several years.  The entire group of adults and children move to more age-appropriate classroom spaces as the children grow older.
  4) Same Room: caregivers/teachers stay with the same group of children for multiple years.  The classroom environment is adjusted to meet the needs of the children as they age.

**Resources**

McMullen, M.B. (2018, July). The many benefits of continuity of care for infants, toddlers, families, and caregiving staff. *Young Children,* NAEYC*.*

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