



## Separation from Parents

CSLOT recognizes that separation from a caregiver is an important process in a child's development and is therefore an area that is addressed in the early intervention program. Each child and his family is considered when deciding on the appropriate approach to separation. Support is provided for both the child as well as the parent. During the separation process, we ask that parents stay on-site. If you feel you or your child are not ready to separate, please talk with the therapist about your concerns. The decision to separate is a joint decision made between the therapist and the child's parents. Here are some helpful tips for successful separation:

### **DO**

- Be understanding, patient, calm, matter of fact, focused and confident rather than joking, annoyed or angry.
- Tell your child that you love him and will see him at a specific time (after snack, in five minutes, after school), but don't say things like "I will miss you."
- Spend 15 minutes actively engaged with your toddler prior to separation. Set up an engaging activity to redirect the child's attention to something enjoyable when you are gone (e.g. reading, playing on the slide).
- Wait for the signal from the therapist that it is time for you to leave.
- Give your child a reminder of you (e.g. picture of the family, your purse) so that he remembers you care about him and will come back. If it makes him more upset, don't use it.
- Follow the therapist's recommendation regarding how long to stay away. The process may start with two minutes away and occur once during the session. As your child learns to trust that you'll be right back, the time to be gone and how often it will occur per session will be increased.
- Develop a ritual for goodbyes. Keep it brief, casual and light "Mommy will be back." "See you later Alligator." Smile convincingly, wave and leave.

### **DON'T**

- Feel guilty – you are leaving your child in good hands you should not feel badly about the care he is receiving. Children are sensitive to their parents' emotions. Your feelings of guilt can intensify the anxiety around separation.
- Sneak out, though it is tempting, because it can make your child more guarded and less trusting in the long run.
- Let yourself be controlled by your child's crying as you leave. It is important to follow through with the plan to teach separation.
- Threaten your child that you will leave if he/she does not behave. Do not say things like, "Sit down and listen or I'm leaving." This instills fear rather than trust and security.

It's normal for children to cry for a short period of time after you leave. However, prolonged crying and stress behaviors (e.g. trembling, resistance to entering the clinic) indicate the approach needs to be modified or delayed until the child is ready. Remember, children do learn to separate without a fuss and become independent and confident!