



So you want to know more about...

Staff Turnover

When Teachers Leave

Your favorite teacher, the one who helped potty train your child and nursed you through separation anxiety, finicky eating, and countless hectic drop-offs...is leaving. How will you survive? First, take a deep breath. Although it's never pleasant, staff turnover is a fact of life, even in **high quality** early childhood programs for a variety of reasons:

- Most teachers who leave Gretchen's House do so to return to school or move away.
- Many people who devote their lives to young children take a break at some point to start families of their own.
- Early childhood as a profession is notoriously undervalued. Although our compensation package is top-notch, teachers can often find public school or business jobs that pay better.
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It may help to look at the bright side. Your child has benefited from a wonderful and consistent caregiver for a long time. A new teacher can bring fresh energy, insight and ideas to the classroom. Perhaps the teacher who is leaving was not your favorite, but you still aren't happy about the "revolving door" for staff.

While the searching process can be difficult, Gretchen's House remains committed to hiring and keeping only top-quality teachers. Sometimes this means letting go of those staff who do not fit our philosophy or standard of care. Another consequence of our commitment to top-notch staff is that in a tight job market, it can sometimes take longer than we'd like to find a suitable replacement. This is where team teaching and long-term leadership really benefit our families. The other teachers in the program know your child well and will be

an anchor for you and your child as you get to know the new teacher. Our directors are deeply involved in the hiring, training, and acclimation of new staff, though their guidance may not always be visible during the few minutes you are at the center each day.

Did you know that Gretchen's House staff retention far exceeds the national averages? Here are some of the reasons:

- Excellent compensation;
- Selective hiring and intensive, ongoing training;
- High quality programming benefits teachers as well as families. Smaller class sizes, lower ratios, and child-centered caregiving mean more peaceful and productive classrooms for everyone.

We appreciate your patience.

Why So Little Notice?

We ask all teachers to make a one year commitment to our programs and to give us a month's notice when they leave. Unfortunately, some teachers do not extend us this courtesy. When teachers give us ample notice, we may begin to look

for their replacement before we make an announcement. We realize the hardship of quick transitions and always try to avoid them.

Occasionally, we place an existing staff member in a vacant teaching

position temporarily. This allows us to provide stability for the program and children while we ensure that the person we hire will be a good fit.

Easing the Transition to a New Caregiver

- Greet the new teacher and introduce yourself and your child every time you meet.
- With infants and younger children, refresh your Family Profile or “Meet My Child” sheets. The more teachers know about your child, the better they can meet her needs.
- Allow extra time at drop-off and pick up for the first few days or weeks. You should not lower your expectations for your child’s capabilities just because there is a new teacher, but extra time gives you a chance to see the teacher in action. Try not to monopolize the teacher’s time, however.
- Remain upbeat with your child. She will follow your cues. Ask what she likes about the new teacher. Help her welcome him or her with a picture or piece of fruit.
- Arrange for a family group potluck during the teacher’s first month. This will help you get to know each other personally and thus facilitate professional communications.
- Write a quick note recognizing the teacher’s efforts.
- Use familiar teachers as a bridge between your child and the new teacher, but stay confident in the new teacher’s abilities.
- Ask the teacher how they’re doing. It is important for them to feel valued not just as a worker, but as a person.
- If you have concerns during the first few weeks, allow time to adjust but address any serious issues with your director.

Training & Compensation: Keys to Retention

Did you know the majority of your childcare fees go to staff compensation? High quality teachers are the cornerstone of our program. Here is how our teachers are compensated:

Salary: Starting salary for teachers is \$21,500-24,000 in the year 2000.

Benefits: We have a cafeteria plan that includes medical, dental, 401K, childcare, and flexible benefit reimbursement accounts.

Paid Vacation: Up to a total of thirty days including sick time and compensation time.

Evaluation: All staff receive a one-month, then semi-annual evaluations. Teachers are eligible for a performance bonus each year based on these evaluations and other feedback.

Training: All staff are required to attend 3.5 days of in-house training, two outside conferences, bi-monthly staff meetings and weekly room meetings. Many of our teachers present workshops at conferences!

Frequently Asked Questions

Can I give my teacher a going away present or party? A handmade card or letter of thanks is always appreciated. It can be awkward for other teachers if the send-off becomes a huge deal, so we suggest doing this privately. Check with your director if you would like to coordinate something among parents. Keep in mind that overdoing the “sad” goodbye can make the transition more stressful for children, too.

Why won’t you tell me why my teacher is leaving? There are many facets of this job not related to caregiving (e.g., timeliness, paperwork, team teaching) that may be difficult for some people who are great with children. We do not ask teachers to leave without working with them on these types of problems, but personnel issues are always private. Rest assured that if

children’s well-being is an issue, teachers are released immediately. We cannot discuss this with you unless your child was specifically affected. **This is a very rare occurrence**, but unfortunately, it’s often the conclusion that people leap to when they don’t have other information.

Why can’t you assign my child to the family group of the teacher who is staying? We can’t do this for every family. We *do* consider individual needs when we integrate teachers. Some children benefit more from staying with the children in their group, while others may be well-suited to the new teacher’s personality. We hope you will trust our judgment.