

E-209, E-210, E-211 Child Guidance Policy

The purpose of support and guidance is to create an environment in which children can experience success. In such an environment, children are encouraged, supported, respected and nurtured. Children gain the skills to control their own behaviors, to resolve conflicts with others, and to understand the impact of their choices. Behavior support is a partnership between program staff and families.

No Expulsion

ESD 105 ECEAP programs do not expel children for behavioral reasons. We follow a policy to address the needs of children with challenging behaviors and prohibit expulsion. The policy includes strategies for supporting classroom teachers, planning to meet individual needs of child, engaging community resources or choosing an alternative schedule or setting.

Transitions to an alternative setting, planned jointly by staff and parents, are not considered expulsion. Short-term suspension is not used as punishment, though receiving temporary services at home may be part of a child's behavioral support plan.

Positive Guidance Strategies

Site staff that are responsible for, or are in contact with children will use positive guidance techniques. These techniques include:

- Forming and maintaining positive relationships with children.
- Adapting the environment, routine, and activities to the needs of enrolled children.
- Establishing consistent, reasonable expectations.
- Supervising children's activities.
- Foreshadowing events and expectations by letting children know what will happen next.
- Modeling and teaching social skills, such as turn-taking, cooperation, waiting, treating others kindly, and conflict resolution.
- Modeling and teaching emotional skills, such as recognizing feelings, expressing them appropriately, accepting others' feelings, and controlling impulses to act out feelings.
- Involving children in defining simple, clear classroom limits.

When guidance situations do arise, positive guidance techniques can include, but are not limited to:

- Coaching appropriate behavior.
- Offering choices.
- Redirecting to an activity that matches the child's energy level.
- Teacher-supported cool down/time-out as a last resort.

If restraint is used, the situation must meet all of the following criteria:

- Staff members have received training in limited restraint procedures.

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- Staff members restrain a child only as a last resort to prevent serious injury to persons, serious property damage, or to obtain possession of a dangerous object.
- Staff members do not restrain a child longer than it takes to achieve the safety goal.
- Staff members do not use restraint as punishment or to force a child to comply.
- Staff members document all instances of restraint.
- Staff members notify the parent of the restrained child following the intervention.

None of the following are allowed:

- Corporal punishment, including any means of inflicting physical pain or causing bodily harm to the child.
- Holding, grabbing, or moving the child in an aggressive manner to cause them to comply.
- Verbal abuse, such as yelling, shouting, name calling, shaming, making derogatory remarks about a child or the child's family, or using language that threatens, humiliates, or frightens a child.
- The use of a physical restraint method injurious to the child or any closed or locked time-out room.
- Using or withholding food or liquids as punishment or reward.

This policy is posted in each classroom. Parents are informed of the policy during orientation and throughout the school year, as needed. Staff members receive ongoing training as needed.

Social Emotional Development

All classrooms have been provided with the Second Step curriculum to promote pro-social behavior through empathy training, emotion management, and problem solving skill development. Second Step should be started early in the program year to teach these concepts and skills, and used throughout the year to give children ongoing guidance and support.

Documenting Behavior and Supports

When providing guidance and support to children with behavior concerns, a first step is to complete focused observations to gain information about the behavior itself. The purpose of systematically observing children's behaviors is to:

- Compile an accurate, factual, detailed picture of the child's behaviors (frequency, intensity, times of day, occurrence over time, interactions with others, etc.);
- Compile factual information about what happens before (antecedent) concerning behaviors occur, in an effort to better understand what might be causing the behaviors;
- Take away preconceived ideas about the child's behaviors and replace those ideas with factual information based upon observations of the child;
- Support children's behavior in a positive, constructive manner based upon actual observation results;

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- Create formal plans to help children be more successful in the classroom;
- Share accurate information with parents in order to help the child be more successful at school.

It is also critical to consider underlying issues and/or unmet needs (e.g., physical, medical, emotional, family-related, etc.) that may be contributing to the concerning behavior. This underscores the need for open dialogue and communication with the family and between all team members, including Family Support.

Additional Supports:

There may come a time when you need additional assistance in the classroom for support and/or to maintain classroom safety. In that situation, a Mental Health Coordinator is available to conduct observations and provide guidance.

- Complete Pre-observation Questionnaire and submit to center supervisor or ECEAP coordinator.
- Complete focused observations on the child/children and use them to develop a Behavior Support Plan.

Developing Pro-Social Behaviors

Often times behavior in children can be a symptom of something an adult is doing intentionally or unintentionally. When working with young children consider the following reflection questions:

“Am I...”

- Validating feelings?
- Asking open ended questions?
- Encouraging problem solving?
- Respecting children’s choices?
- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Talking with children – not at them?
- Circulating throughout the classroom?
- At the child’s eye level?

Reasons for Misbehavior

If caregivers understand why children misbehave, they can be more successful at reducing behavior problems. Listed here are some of the possible reasons why children misbehave.

- Children want to test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
- They experience different sets of expectations between school and home.
- A child does not understand the rules, or are held to expectations that are beyond their developmental levels.

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- They want to assert themselves and their independence.
- They feel ill, bored, hungry or sleepy.
- They lack accurate information and prior experience.
- They have been previously "rewarded" for their misbehavior with adult attention.

Preventing Misbehavior

Child misbehavior is impossible to prevent completely. Children, usually curious and endlessly creative, are likely to do things parents and other caregivers have not expected. However, there are many positive steps caregivers can take to help prevent misbehavior.

- Set clear, consistent rules. (e.g., walking feet; gentle touches)
- Make certain the environment is safe and worry-free.
- Show interest in the child's activities. (e.g., participating in activities with the children so they stay interested for longer periods)
- Encourage self-control and independence by providing meaningful choices. (e.g., "You may pick up the blocks or art center.")
- Focus on the desired behavior, rather than the one to be avoided. (e.g., "Ashley, please use gentle touches with your friends.")
- Build children's images of themselves as trustworthy, responsible and cooperative.
- Give clear directions, one at a time.
- Say "Yes" whenever possible.
- Notice and pay attention to children when they do things right. (e.g., "Joey is playing so nicely. I like it when you keep the blocks on the table.")
- Encourage children often and generously.
- Set a good example. (e.g., using a quiet voice when children should be quiet)
- Help children see how their actions affect others.

Responding to Misbehavior

Below are strategies Blossoms staff will use to respond to misbehavior. Remember, however, that it's always a good idea if rules are explained fully and clearly understood before misbehavior occurs. Whenever possible, involve children in making the rules for the classroom.

- **Redirection**

This strategy should be used most frequently when working with young children. If a child is not following the rules or being uncooperative, quickly get the child's attention and introduce another activity. For example, "Kate, I need your help watering the flowers now. You've been riding the bike for a long time and it's now Logan's turn."

- **Logical consequences**

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These are structured consequences that follow specific misbehaviors. The child should be able to see how the behavior and the consequence are directly related. For example, Andrew is standing on his chair at lunch. His teacher should remind him that if he stands on his chair, he could fall and get hurt; this will make him sad.

- **Participate in the solution**

If a child damages something, he/she needs to help in fixing it or in cleaning up. If a child causes someone distress, he/she should help in relieving that. For example, "It made Brandon very sad when you told him he wasn't your friend anymore. Please come apologize and help me make him feel better."

- **Natural consequences**

Allowing children to experience the consequences of their behavior is also called learning the hard way. For example, Laura does not put her books back in her school bag after she finishes reading. One day she loses a book, and therefore must find a way to replace it. Only use natural consequences when they will not endanger the child's health or safety.

- **"Take a break" or "Calm down" opportunity**

In some instances, a child may need to be removed from a particular situation in which he/she has become overwhelmed or physically aggressive. The child should be directed to "take a break". This strategy gives the child a chance to calm down, regain control, and reflect quietly on her or his behavior away from others. Once the child has calmed down, staff should talk with the child about the actions that led up to and resulted in needing a break.

If these actions do not help in reducing or changing behavior the following will take place:

1. Staff will report behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Center Manager.
2. The Center Manager or classroom coach will observe the child and meet with the Lead Teacher to develop a behavior management plan.
3. The behavior management plan will be discussed with the parent and then put into practice.
4. The Center Manager, Classroom Coach, Lead Teacher and Assistant Teachers, and parents will evaluate the behavior management plan. If needed, adjustments will be made.