

Guidance and Discipline

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) describes the purpose of discipline for young children as the need to teach coping skills and discourage inappropriate behavior. The early years are a time for children to develop confidence and self-control. When adults create environments that respect each individual child, they set forth a message that the world is a warm, friendly learning place. Positive discipline techniques that combine caring and direction are a part of this healthy environment.

Guidance techniques used by staff include the following. All staff are required to review, understand, and comply with the discipline and behavior management policy. Families are also given the Guidance and Discipline Policy and are required to review and understand it.

- Setting clear, consistent, and fair limits for children’s behavior.
- Redirecting children to more acceptable behavior or activity.
- Using behavior as a learning experience.
- Using natural and logical consequences so children learn that their behaviors have repercussions.
- Children may be given an opportunity or time away from the group to calm down and cool off after a frustrating situation.

Age-Appropriate Behavior Management and Discipline Techniques for Children

(Adapted from The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, “Caring For Our Children”)

Caregivers/teachers should guide children to develop self-control and appropriate behaviors in the context of relationships with peers and adults. Caregivers/teachers should care for children without ever resorting to physical punishment or abusive language. When a child needs assistance to resolve a conflict, manage a transition, engage in a challenging situation, or express feelings, needs, and wants, the adult should help the child learn strategies for dealing with the situation. Discipline should be an ongoing process to help children learn to manage their own behavior in a socially acceptable manner, and should not just occur in response to a problem behavior. Rather, the adult’s guidance helps children respond to difficult situations using socially appropriate strategies. To develop self-control, children should receive adult support that is individual to the child and adapts as the child develops internal controls.

This process should include:

- A. Forming a positive relationship with the child. When children have a positive relationship with the adult, they are more likely to follow that person’s directions.

This positive relationship occurs when the adult spends time talking to the child, listening to the child, following the child's lead, playing with the child, and responding to the child's needs;

- B. Basing expectations on children's developmental level;
- C. Establishing simple rules children can understand (e.g., you can't hurt others, our things, or yourself) and being proactive in teaching and supporting children in learning the rules;
- D. Adapting the physical indoor and outdoor learning/play environment or family child care home to encourage positive behavior and self-regulation by providing engaging materials based on children's interests and ensuring that the learning environment promotes active participation of each child. Well-designed child care environments are ones that are supportive of appropriate behavior in children, and are designed to help children learn about what to expect in that environment and to promote positive interactions and engagement with others;
- E. Modifying the learning/play environment (e.g., schedule, routine, activities, transitions) to support the child's appropriate behavior;
- F. Creating a predictable daily routine and schedule. When a routine is predictable, children are more likely to know what to do and what is expected of them. This may decrease anxiety in the child. When there is less anxiety, there may be less acting out. Reminders need to be given to the children so they can anticipate and prepare themselves for transitions within the schedule. Reminders should be individualized such that each child understands and anticipates the transition;
- G. Using encouragement and descriptive praise. When clear encouragement and descriptive praise are used to give attention to appropriate behaviors, those behaviors are likely to be repeated. Encouragement and praise should be stated positively and descriptively. Encouragement and praise should provide information that the behavior the child engaged in was appropriate. Examples: "I can tell you are ready for circle time because you are sitting on your name and looking at me." "Your friend looked so happy when you helped him clean up his toys." "You must be so proud of yourself for putting on your coat all by yourself." Encouragement and praise should label the behaviors, not the child (e.g., good listening, good eating, instead of good boy);
- H. Using clear, direct, and simple commands. When clear commands are used with children, they are more likely to follow them. The caregiver/teacher should tell the child what to do rather than what NOT to do. The caregiver/teacher should limit the number of commands. The caregiver/teacher should use if/then and when/then statements with logical and natural consequences. These practices help children understand they can make choices and that choices have consequences;
- I. Showing children positive alternatives rather than just telling children "no";
- J. Modeling desired behavior;
- K. Using planned ignoring and redirection. Certain behaviors can be ignored while at the same time the adult is able to redirect the children to another activity. If the behavior cannot be ignored, the adult should prompt the child to use a more

appropriate behavior and provide positive feedback when the child engages in the behavior;

- L. Individualizing discipline based on the individual needs of children. For example, if a child has a hard time transitioning, the caregiver/teacher can identify strategies to help the child with the transition (individualized warning, job during transition, individual schedule, peer buddy to help, etc.) If a child has a difficult time during a large group activity, the child might be taught to ask for a break;
- M. Using time-out for behaviors that are persistent and unacceptable. Time-out should only be used in combination with instructional approaches that teach children what to do in place of the behavior problem. (See guidance for time-outs below.)

Acceptable & Unacceptable Techniques Used to Handle Children to Prevent Injuries

(Adapted from The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education, "Caring For Our Children")

Caregivers/teachers should intervene immediately when a child's behavior is aggressive and endangers the safety of themselves or others. It is important that the child be clearly told verbally, "no hitting" or "no biting." The caregiver/teacher should use age-appropriate interventions. For example, a toddler can be picked up and moved to another location in the room if s/he bites other children. A preschool child can be invited to walk with you first but, if not compliant, taken by the hand and walked to another location in the room. The caregiver/teacher should remain calm and make eye contact with the child telling him/her the behavior is unacceptable. If the behavior persists, a team of people- including families, caregivers, administrators, and possibly outside agencies- will be involved to create a plan targeting this behavior. For example, a plan may be developed to recognize non-aggressive behavior. Children who might not have the social skills or language to communicate appropriately may use physical aggression to express themselves and the reason for and antecedents of the behavior must be considered when developing a plan for addressing the behavior.

To prevent injuries, staff members should always exercise safety when picking up or moving a child. Using both hands, picking up children under the arms or by the upper torso, holding children by the hand, and safely positioning children in a soft area are appropriate ways to handle children. If a child resists holding a teacher's hand, teachers will gently guide a child to the floor and allow them to move freely. It is also important for staff members to use verbal cues to help children understand why the movement is occurring, and for staff members to exercise patience when interacting with children. Picking up children by one arm, jerking them, grabbing them, or pulling their arms or legs are inappropriate ways to handle children and could cause physical injuries such as nursemaid's elbow, spinal fractures, etc., in addition to causing the child emotional harm.

Refer to the chart below for acceptable and unacceptable discipline techniques. This can also be found as an appendix in the back of this Staff Handbook.

WE:

1. *DO praise, reward, and encourage the children.*
2. *DO reason with and set limits for the children.*
3. *DO model appropriate behavior for the children.*
4. *DO modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.*
5. *DO listen to the children.*
6. *DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior to the children.*
7. *DO provide the children with natural and logical consequences of their behaviors.*
8. *DO treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.*
9. *DO ignore minor misbehaviors.*
10. *DO explain things to children on their levels.*
11. *DO stay consistent in our behavior management program.*
12. *DO use effective guidance and behavior management techniques that focus on a child's development.*
13. *DO use short, supervised periods of time for a child to move to a quiet area to calm down, take a break, or regroup if they are upset.*

WE:

1. *DO NOT handle children roughly in any way, including shaking, pushing, shoving, pinching, slapping, biting, kicking, or spanking.*
2. *DO NOT place children in a locked room, closet, or box or leave children alone in a room separated from staff.*
3. *DO NOT delegate discipline to another child.*
4. *DO NOT withhold food as a punishment or give food as a mean of reward.*
5. *DO NOT discipline for toileting accidents.*
6. *DO NOT discipline for not sleeping during a rest period.*
7. *DO NOT discipline children by assigning chores that require contact with or use of hazardous materials, such as cleaning bathrooms, floors, or emptying diaper trash.*
8. *DO NOT withhold or require physical activity such as running laps and doing push-ups, as punishment.*
9. *DO NOT yell at, shame, humiliate, frighten, threaten, or bully children.*
10. *DO NOT restrain children as a form of discipline unless the child's safety or the safety of others is at risk.*

Administrator's Role

Administrators will ensure proper discipline and behavior management techniques are being implemented by staff in the following ways:

- *Sharing information about ECC's behavior management techniques and policies upon employment and ensuring that those techniques and policies are understood before they assume any child care responsibilities.*
- *Talking with staff members to ensure they understand ECC's behavior management techniques and policies.*
- *Keeping records of staff signatures of acknowledgement, understanding of, and agreement to follow all behavior management techniques and policies.*
- *Visiting classrooms frequently, and at least monthly, to ensure staff are following guidance and discipline techniques and behavior policies. Administrators will document classroom observations at least monthly and further will document instances of non-compliance with ECC's Guidance and Discipline Policy. A copy of the form used can be found in the appendix.*
- *Providing staff with additional training based on classroom assignments such as biting, how to communicate with parents, guidance and discipline techniques for two-year-olds, etc. And one-one-one coaching, including use of outside agencies for training as appropriate based on hours needed, classroom assignments, and individual needs. All staff will also be required to review the guidance and discipline policy annually.*
- *Ensuring breaks are available for staff members who may need to step out of the classroom for a short period of time. Teachers can use the 2-way radios to let administrators know they need time to step out of the classroom.*

ECC's administrators and staff will document and respond to all reports of inappropriate discipline, care, or treatment of children immediately. This response will include, but is not limited to, notifying DCDEE immediately and following up with any additional agencies, if needed. Child maltreatment can include, but is not limited to, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect.

The Director will annually review all policies related to discipline and mandatory reporting and will keep records of such annual review. If changes are made to any policies, staff and families will be notified in a timely and appropriate manner, in line with licensing requirements. The center will not interfere in investigations conducted by authorized investigating agencies.

Procedures for reporting suspicions of inappropriate discipline, care, or treatment of children

Suspicions of inappropriate discipline, care, or treatment of children includes, but is not limited to, handling children in a rough manner, isolating or restraining children, delegating punishment to other children, withholding necessities or routine parts of the day, punishment for toileting accidents, punishment for not sleeping during rest time, assigning chores that require physical contact with hazardous materials, and yelling, shaming, humiliating, frightening, threatening, or bullying children. Further descriptions of child

maltreatment are found in the appendices. Every employee must carefully review the appendix on child maltreatment.

Any employee who believes he/she may have witnessed inappropriate discipline, care, or treatment of children must immediately report the incident to the Director. If the Director is unavailable (whether off premises or otherwise) or is believed to be a participant in the wrongful conduct, or if the employee is uncomfortable reporting the conduct to the Director, the report should be made to the Assistant Director. If the Assistant Director is unavailable (whether off premises or otherwise) or is believed to be a participant in the wrongful conduct, or if the employee is uncomfortable reporting the conduct to the Assistant Director, the report should be made to the Staff Coordinator. If the Staff Coordinator is unavailable (whether off premises or otherwise) or is believed to be a participant in the wrongful conduct, or if the employee is uncomfortable reporting the conduct to the Staff Coordinator, the report should be made to the Director of Children and Family Ministries, at (336) 275-4587. As discussed below, child maltreatment must be directly reported to DCDEE and such reports can be made confidentially.

The ECC takes reports of suspicions of inappropriate discipline, care or treatment of children seriously and any such allegations will be documented as well as promptly and thoroughly investigated, and ECC will report all allegations of child maltreatment to DCDEE as required by law (and as described elsewhere in this handbook). Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with a thorough investigation and appropriate corrective actions.

Procedures for reporting suspicions of child maltreatment with the Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE)

The Division of Child Development and Early Education is responsible for monitoring all licensed child care programs to ensure compliance with child care requirements. The main purpose of DCDEE regulation is to ensure healthy and safe environments for children while they are away from their home. Any staff member is required to report suspicions of child maltreatment to DCDEE immediately. Call the Division at (800) 859-0829 (In-State only) or (919) 814-6300. Ask to speak to someone in the Intake Unit (calls can be made anonymously). Fax Information to the Intake Unit at (919) 715-1013. Email information to the Intake Unit at webmasterdcd@dhhs.nc.gov.

Reporting without fear of reprisal

There will be no retaliation against any person who makes a report about inappropriate discipline, care, or treatment of children. This prohibition on retaliation applies to all ECC employees and staff. Any retaliatory behavior will be considered a violation of employee expectations.

Confidentiality

Employees are prohibited from discussing these issues with any other employee of the ECC (except the Director) or persons not employed by the ECC. This includes parents of the ECC. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary, up to and including termination.