
Subject: Discipline

Source: Performance Standards, Licensing Standards

Policy

The Early Head Start program believes the best insurance preventing behavior problems in the classroom is to do a good job of planning the daily activities. However, no matter how well planned a day is, conflict may erupt. Discipline problems are handled in a matter-of-fact way that encourages children to develop inner controls. Early Head Start teaching teams redirect or distract a disruptive child in a **firm, calm, positive** manner. Sometimes sitting down near a child and engaging him or her in conversation helps. When all else fails, and children continue to be disruptive, a short "time-out" or "sit and watch" period may be used. It is helpful, and consistent with developmentally appropriate practice, to include children in the rule-making process. If children have input into the rules, they are more likely to follow and help enforce them. Each classroom has rules, which are developed by teaching staff and the children at the beginning of the year. Too many rules confuse children. They are more likely to respect rules when they understand the reason behind them. Parents are consulted and have input into developing policies/procedures regarding discipline and guidance by serving on the Early Head Start Policy Council, through monthly parent meetings, and during parent conferences.

Procedures

POSITIVE GUIDANCE APPROACHES IMPLEMENTED BY STAFF

- Anticipate and plan ahead so that you can head off problems
- Look for reasons why a child is misbehaving. Discuss the situation with the Site Manager & the child's parent(s)
- Focus on child's behavior, not on the child's value as a person
- Help children understand the consequences of their actions
- Explain the choices available
- Help children use problem-solving skill to develop solutions
- Help children refrain from dwelling on mistakes so they can learn to move on
- Watch for restlessness

ACCEPTABLE CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE METHODS

Judgments concerning acceptable methods of corrective discipline will have to be made daily by Early Head Start staff, and these decisions will be subjective in many cases. Staff persons should select a method of corrective discipline they feel will be effective with a particular child and situation. If a staff person has doubts or concerns about the acceptability of a discipline method, the Center Coordinator/Home-Based Supervisor must be consulted before the method is implemented.

THE CHILD(REN) SHOULD:

1. Be asked to stop the behavior and given an explanation of why.
2. Be given a demonstration of appropriate behavior through modeling and guidance.
3. Be spoken to in an "authority voice," that is, with a firm tone, but non-threatening. The staff should identify for the child the inappropriate behavior and the appropriate way to behave.

4. Be given a diversion. An example of positive diversion: “Johnny, I need you to help me wash the tables.”
5. Be given an option of going to a “soft corner” Gently lead the child by the hand and say, “Let’s go to a place where you can rest and feel better.”
6. Be given the option of water/sand play. Water and sand play is soothing. You can ask the child to “stir up soap bubbles for me,” or to “try coloring the water.”

THE TEACHER(S) SHOULD:

1. **Use teamwork.** If a child continues with the inappropriate behavior, then you may have to remove the child from the group. If you cannot remove the child, then remove the group from the child. Send them outside with the other teacher or at least to another part of the room until you can calm down the child with the inappropriate behavior.
2. **Use Redirection.** As you get to know the children in the classroom, you will recognize their interest and realize that they have various interest in the classroom. Talking to the child and convincing them to move away from the activity that he/she is having a problem with, will allow him/her to get out of the situation, move to another area and continue to have fun.
3. **Use a talking/listening chair.** When two children are having a disagreement, teachers can help facilitate the use of talking/listening by using this method. The children are allowed to take turns explaining the problem while sitting in the chair and the one standing with the teacher will listen. This will promote both verbal and listening skills while giving the children opportunities to learn negotiation skills.
4. **Use “time-out.”** As a last resort, a child may need to be placed in a “time-out” area. This should be implemented as follows:
 - a. Move the child to the fringes of the activities within visual contact
 - b. Explain to the child why they are being placed in “time-out”
 - c. After 30 sec. ask the child if they are ready to rejoin the group
 - d. Child shall only be in “time-out” for 1 (one) min. for every year of age. i.e. max. of 2 min. for a two year old, 3 min. for a three year old.

USE OF ANY INAPPROPRIATE CHILD DISCIPLINE METHODS WILL BE GROUNDS FOR IMMEDIATE DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS.

These behaviors are prohibited at all times in any circumstances:

- a. Corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, and other measures intended to induce pain or fear; “will not be tolerated under any circumstance.” Measures will include disciplinary actions up to termination.
- b. Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest, or use of the bathroom;
- c. Abusive or profane language;
- d. Any form of public or private humiliation, including threats of physical punishment; and
- e. Any form of emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing, or isolating a child.
- f. Latched/locked time out.
- g. Face in lap. (This procedure, or similar positions in which the neck is forced beyond its normal structural limitations, should never be used due to the high risk of neck and spinal injuries. This is especially critical in pupils with Downs Syndrome who may have a congenital abnormality in the neck which predisposes them to becoming more easily injured.)
- h. Bad tastes/smells.
- i. Use of blindfolds.
- j. Ridicule, screaming, sarcasm, or other derogatory remarks.
- k. Physical intimidation or threats given verbally, physically or through body language.

- l. Fluid squirting of any kind.
- m. Isolation time out with doors.

TERMINATION POLICY DUE TO DISCIPLINARY ISSUES:

Prior to the decision to terminate a child from Early Head Start, a conference will be held with the parent(s) to discuss the issue(s) and develop a behavior modification plan. Designated staff will be responsible for implementing positive, appropriate discipline methods on a consistent basis, evaluating outcomes, making modifications, & communicating with parents on a daily basis. If there is no improvement within set timelines then a staffing will be held which will include both Early Head Start center & central office staff. A recommendation will be made & presented to the Early Head Start Executive Director. **Only** the Early Head Start Executive Director can make the decision to terminate an Early Head Start child due to disciplinary issues.

Techniques for the Prevention of Inappropriate Behavior

1. Act as a role model.
2. Greet the children with a smile.
3. Speak to the children at eye level.
4. Be aware of how you are feeling, and that this will affect what and how you teach the children.
5. Provide a comfortable/nurturing atmosphere.
6. Make sure that the children know that they can have some effect and "say-so" over their environment. Encourage independence. Give choices.
7. Be aware of the expectations you are placing on the children and that they will strongly affect what the children expect of themselves. Acknowledge each child as a unique individual.
8. Be aware of **what and how** the children learn. Do careful planning; have activities and schedules appropriate for the children, where they can experience success.
9. Set clear, reasonable limits. Give children the reasons for the limits. Let them participate in rule-making.
10. Enforce limits consistently and fairly.
11. Have a few rules. Make sure that all children know the rules and why they exist. The rules should be constantly reviewed and re-enforced.
12. Emphasize the "can do," or positive reinforcement in the classroom, rather than the "can't do," or negative reinforcement.
13. Supervise effectively. Use the "eyes in the back of your head" approach.
14. Warn and prepare children of upcoming activities and transition times.

Positive Approaches - Acceptable Methods of Discipline

Children who receive continual personal praise learn to direct their own behavior at a faster rate than children who are spoken to only when they misbehave. Discipline, therefore, is not simply a method used when a child responds positively to directions or show progress in self-direction. If a problem behavior arises because staff are not responding to the needs of the children, it is unfair to punish the child. It is the staffs' behavior that should change.

Early Head Start staff must consider the following items before using any type of corrective discipline with children:

- (i.) The rules established in a center or group socialization situation must be right for the children in attendance. Young children are active, busy, curious, and always moving. Move the children in small groups, **not** straight lines. Plan activities that include movement, because sitting is not natural for young children. Young children are noisy. They learn by talking and working actively together. Being quiet is not natural for them.
- (ii.) Children must have a clear understanding of what the rules are, why they must have them, what the logic behind them is, and what good they serve. In other words, the rules should make sense to the children. Rules established for young children must respect their individuality and freedom of choice. Children must be encouraged and not forced to participate in activities. Children should feel safe and not guilty, tense, or unaccepted when they do not participate.

- (iii.) Children should not be placed in or confronted with situations with which they can't cope. Staff persons must be aware of each child's needs and developmental level. If a child breaks a rule, staff should investigate the reasons. Maybe hunger, fatigue, or physical difficulties are the cause.
- (iv.) Appropriate behavior should be modeled for the children by staff at all times.
- (v.) Classroom rules should be reviewed throughout the year.

Criteria for Acceptable Corrective Discipline

When a child's behavior warrants the use of corrective discipline, the method used must contain all of the following elements:

- (i.) The method is appropriate to the child's age and developmental level.
- (ii.) The method is not more severe than the behavior warrants. For example, if a child were running, you would not make him or her sit in time-out.
- (iii.) The discipline does not humiliate or frighten the child.
- (iv.) The discipline is not potentially dangerous; either physically, mentally, or emotionally. (See definitions of abuse/neglect.)
- (v.) The method is likely to cause the problem behavior to stop, and also serves the function of developing self-direction in the child. In other words, if a discipline method is used and the child's behavior does not improve in a reasonable amount of time, the method is not appropriate.
- (vi.) The discipline immediately follows the occurrence of inappropriate behavior.
- (vii.) The discipline is not used as a substitute for adequate and/or appropriate staff supervision and/or organization. For example, you don't place a child in "time-out" because you don't "feel like" showing them the appropriate way to do an activity.

Physical Restraint Procedure

Physical restraint of a child is **forbidden except** in the case when the child, other children, or others working in the classroom could be harmed or injured. Physical restraint method must be consistent with "therapeutic holding" and only individuals trained in this method will be allowed to use it.