

**THROUGH THE YEARS  
EARLY LEARNING CENTRE**

**BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE POLICIES**

February 2021

# **PROHIBITED BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE PRACTICES**

## **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\***

**SECTION 19(1) OF THE NOVA SCOTIA CHILD CARE ACT & REGULATIONS STATES THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF DISCIPLINE SHALL NOT BE USED AND WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. ANY TYPE OF THESE ACTIONS WILL RESULT IN YOUR IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL .**

### **NO EXCUSES WILL BE CONSIDERED OR ACCEPTED!**

1. Corporal punishment including but not limited to the following:
  - \*Striking a child directly or with any physical object;
  - \*Shaking, shoving, spanking or other forms of aggressive physical contact; and
  - \* Requiring or forcing a child to repeat physical movements.
2. Harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional or physical.
3. Confining or isolating a child.
4. Depriving a child of basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing or bedding.
5. Section 11.1 of the Standards for Food and Nutrition in Regulated Child Care Settings states staff and volunteers do not offer food to reinforce positive behaviours. Staff and volunteers do not withhold food as a consequence for inappropriate behaviours. Food is not used as a reward for completing a task or finishing a meal (e.g. dessert will not be withheld if the child does not finish the main meal). The ONLY exception to this policy is when a child's team (which may include the staff, external professionals and the child's parents/guardians) has determined that food is the most appropriate and natural way to reinforce desired behaviours and support the child's development, then a routine-based intervention plan (RBIP) must be developed for the child. The RBIP must include a plan for replacing and/or reducing the use of food as a motivator.

## **BEHAVIOUR POLICIES FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

Many teaching strategies can be implemented to help minimize conflict situations. No educator will completely be able to eliminate conflict: in fact some conflict is needed to teach children coping mechanisms and how to deal effectively with conflict. Conflict situations can be, if handled appropriately, great learning experiences for children in developing social skills and learning how to get along with others. Although an educator may not want to completely eliminate conflict situations, they also do not want to create them or escalate them when they do occur:

The following prevention strategies are followed by our Early Childhood Educators, volunteers and students:

1. Children will be encouraged in an enthusiastic manner to participate in activities, but should not be forced.
2. Establish clear, consistent and simple limits and provide explanations for limits.
  - Limits are statements of what behaviour is expected of the children. When children understand the reasons for limits, they are more likely to comply. Limits should be related to the safety, protection and rights of self, others and the environment.
  - Limits are reasonable and used to protect the children and ensure their safety.
  - Limits are clearly stated within the child's ability to understand.
  - Limits are consistently enforced by all adults, including substitute teachers and volunteers.
  - Limits are explained to the children so they understand why they should follow the limit. For example:  
Say: "When you sit down to drink your juice, it won't spill and make a puddle someone could slip in."  
Rather than: "Sit down".
3. Ignore minor incidents. Adults who work with young children need to have realistic expectations for what a child care environment will be like. They must learn to develop a tolerance for a certain amount of noise, clutter and attention-seeking behavior. As long as children's behaviours are not compromising their safety, the safety and rights of others and the safety of the environment, it may be best not to intervene.

4. At times a child may need to be redirected away from an activity for a “cool down period”. The behavior guidance offered to that child should be developmentally appropriate. Acknowledging children’s feelings is one of the best and most respectful things we can do to help them come to terms with their behavior and figure out ways to handle those feelings and act/react appropriately. Assist children in problem-solving the situation. As a teacher, you are a resource for the children during this challenging period. Once you have acknowledged their feelings, begin to help the children find solutions. Begin by stating what the problem is.

For example:

*“It looks to me like you both want the bike”.*

Ask the children what they think we should do about that. If they don’t have any suggestions, provide some choices for them. Your job is largely to facilitate, clarify information verbally and largely to ensure that no further physical contact occurs. Try to remember that your job is not to solve the problem for the children. The end result of this may be that so much time is spent on social problem-solving, that nobody gets the bike. You can help the children anticipate this outcome by verbally reminding them of the time using matter of fact voice tone. And remember, this is a “teachable moment” where valuable negotiation skills can be learned by the children.

5. The office may need to be used as a “cool down space” in very difficult situations, but every effort should be given to offer behavior guidance within the classroom itself.
6. Have realistic expectations about performance. Again, expectations must be age appropriate. Children can be permanently hurt by both high and low expectations. The expectations for older children should not be the same as for younger children.
7. Use positive language. Try to refrain from NO and DO NOT. Instead of “Do not crash the bikes” try “The bikes are not for crashing”. This turns the negative impression around. Suggest positive actions whenever possible. *“Let us make an obstacle course and try riding the bikes around the obstacles.”* Also catch children displaying positive behaviours and comment with positive reinforcement. Comments like, *“I like how everyone is using their inside voices today”.*

8. Encourage the children to handle their own situations. If you must intervene reminding the children of the rules is an effective intervention strategy, especially when the rules being broken are not putting anyone in danger. When behavior is putting someone in danger, you will want to both remind and redirect. A child throwing sand at other children needs to be reminded that sand stays in the sandbox, because throwing it will hurt other children and needs to be directed to doing other things with the sand. This re-direction can include choices as the child is encouraged to think of other ways to use the sand, or if the child is having trouble coming up with alternatives, the educator can provide several to choose from. Try not to immediately make one of these the removal of being in the sand box.
9. Prepare children for all transitions. Moving from one activity to another is difficult for most children. Make sure you give plenty of warning prior to the end of one activity and start of another. Try to punctuate the end of an activity with concrete measures of time. For example: “When the timer buzzes, it will be time for lunch”. Help the children feel excited about the next activity by talking about it. For example: “After snack time, we will sing and dance together in circle time”.
10. Work on developing within the children a sense of being responsible within their own environment. Work with them on tidying up, giving appropriate warning when tidy up time is approaching. During the tidy up it is important that teachers should not be busy right behind the children who are tidying up. This makes them feel rushed and pushed to do things.
11. Give the children choices but be sure that in offering a choice you are going to allow the children to really make the choice. Decision making is not only a valuable skill to learn, it also reinforces child control and minimizes frustration. Learn to phrase your words in order to support choice for children, but still accomplish the tasks of the program.  
Say: *Would you like to cleanup in the block area or the housekeeping area?*  
Rather than: *“Would you like to clean up?”*
12. Do not force the children to share but teach them about sharing through discussions and by setting an example.

13. Respect all children equally without showing favoritism. Help children respect each other's differences by setting a good example.
14. Set positive examples. Children learn through imitation. If you want children to exhibit pro-social behavior, you must model it in the classroom. If you want children to use their inside voices, make sure that you are using an indoor voice. When children do exhibit behaviours which are appropriate, encourage them by telling them how their positive behaviours affect others around them.
15. Do not force the children to say "sorry" or "please" and "thank you". If they do not feel that way then you are teaching them to be insincere. But always be a good model for these behaviours. By modeling these behaviours children will pick up on the importance of these prosocial behaviours.
16. Do not try to change behavior by methods which may lead to loss of self-respect or labeling. Focus on the behavior, not the child. In a behaviour guidance situation, focusing on the child's character tends to produce feelings of guilt and shame for the child and ultimately lowers self-esteem. On the other hand, focusing on the behaviour, preserves the child's dignity as well as provides information for correcting the behavior.  
Say: "When you grab the crayon, it makes Jamal angry"  
Rather than: "You should be ashamed of yourself for grabbing".
17. There should be a variety of activities available every day. Painting, water, sand, clay, creative shelf where children can help themselves to glue, scissors, pencils, crayons, beautiful and creative junk, etc. Building with blocks, lego, foam bricks, logs, etc. Pretending with costumes, "real" props, dolls, kitchen items, etc. Reading books and sharing magazines, posters, pictures, etc. Sharing music through C.Ds, songs, playing an instrument, fingerplays, etc. Table top activities with puzzles, vehicles, building and sorting activities, etc. There should be a balanced mix of structured and unstructured activities.  
Interacting with children during their day, especially during free play time, both indoors and outdoors, is a very effective proactive behavior guidance strategy. By being available through non-threatening play situations, you can both model appropriate behavior as well as diffuse

potentially difficult conflict situations. Not many behavior problems escalate immediately. There is a build-up period which occurs and of which the teacher should be aware.

- educators should face the children, not turn their backs on them
- visually scan the room, as you are interacting with children
- place tall shelves against walls so they do not block the view of the whole room
- move through the room by visiting various centres
- be available to help children clarify their meaning to others.

Free play is a time for the educator to interact and observe. Observing means not just glancing but really studying children in action. You can learn a lot about the child's personality and interests by being a silent observer, and it will make you a better educator.

18. In the event that a child exhibits behaviours such as hitting, harming self or others, throwing objects, etc., which may impact the health and safety of the child, his/her peers or staff, interventions beyond those typically practiced at Through the Years may be implemented. Such practices may include, but are not limited to: gently physical guidance or holding. To determine if such practices are necessary and more clearly defined, the child's team, including parents and/or guardians will meet and collaborate to create a Behaviour Guidance Plan. The plan will define how to support the child through difficult situations where the typical behavior strategies are not effective. All parties on the team will be given the opportunity for input and agree to the plan. The plan will be submitted to the Early Childhood Development Consultant for approval. The approved plan will be kept on the child's file until such time as it requires revision and/or the child leaves Through the Years.

**ABOVE ALL, KEEP YOUR EMOTIONS UNDER CONTROL.  
IF YOU FEEL YOUR OWN LEVEL OF FRUSTRATION  
RISING, TALK TO YOUR COWORKERS OR DIRECTOR  
TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION.**

**A number of resources are available on the resource shelf in our staff room on behaviour guidance. Training is also available to staff and volunteers on an ongoing basis. You are encouraged to speak to the Director if you wish to be enrolled in workshops around the topic of behaviour guidance.**

*This Behaviour Policies and Guidance Suggestions document is reviewed with staff and volunteers prior to employment or volunteering. It is thereafter reviewed annually. This document is also reviewed during the orientation process with new families registering their children*