

Dear Parents,

At First Methodist Children's Center, the safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority. As part of our commitment to providing a safe, nurturing environment, we will be implementing a **new Biting Policy**, effective immediately.

We understand that biting can be upsetting for everyone involved. However, it is important to know that **biting is a common developmental behavior in infants and toddlers, especially children under the age of two**. While it is never acceptable behavior, it is often **not an act of aggression**.

Young children may bite for many reasons, including:

- They are teething or experiencing discomfort.
- They are frustrated and do not yet have the language skills to express their feelings.
- They become overwhelmed or overstimulated.
- They are seeking attention or reacting to a situation.
- They are exploring cause and effect or simply acting impulsively.

Children under the age of two are still learning how to communicate, regulate their emotions, and interact appropriately with others. Because of this, they often do not understand the consequences of biting or have the self-control to prevent it.

When a biting incident occurs, our staff will:

- Immediately care for the child who was bitten.
- Comfort and redirect the child who bit.
- Identify possible triggers and work to prevent future incidents.
- Increase supervision and implement individualized strategies to reduce biting.
- Communicate with the families of both children while maintaining confidentiality.

A Partnership with Families

We ask for patience, understanding, and cooperation from **all families** as we work through this developmental stage together. Biting can be frustrating for the family of the child who was bitten, but it can also be difficult and emotional for the family of the child who bit. Please know that our goal is never to shame or label a child. Instead, we focus on teaching appropriate behaviors and helping children develop healthy ways to communicate.

Parents of children who bite should understand that there may be times when we must enforce our Biting Policy for the safety of all children in our care. This may include increased supervision, classroom adjustments, behavior intervention plans, temporary exclusions after repeated incidents in certain circumstances, or other measures designed to protect every child while supporting the child who is biting. We ask that families remain patient, understanding, and work alongside our staff during this process. Consistency between home and school gives children the greatest opportunity for success.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we work through these situations together. Just as children need time to learn to walk, talk, and share, they also need time to develop appropriate ways to communicate their feelings.

Please know that **all reasonable interventions and considerations will be explored before a child under the age of two would ever be dismissed from our program due to biting**. We recognize that children under two are still developing emotionally and socially, and they often do not fully understand the impact of their actions. **Our goal is to teach, guide, and support children**

through this developmental stage—not to punish them for behavior they may not yet fully understand. Dismissal is never our first response and would only be considered after every reasonable effort has been made to support the child, work in partnership with the family, and ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care.

Age and Developmental Considerations

A child's **age and developmental level will always be taken into consideration** when addressing biting incidents. While biting is considered a common developmental behavior for many infants and toddlers under the age of two, expectations naturally change as children grow and develop.

Older children generally have stronger language, social, and emotional skills and are better able to understand that biting hurts others and is not an appropriate way to express their feelings. As children mature, they are expected to use the communication and problem-solving skills they have learned instead of resorting to biting.

If an older child repeatedly bites, or if biting appears to be intentional or used as a form of aggression, different measures may be taken. These may include parent conferences, behavior intervention plans, increased supervision, referrals for additional support when appropriate, temporary suspension, or dismissal from the program if all reasonable interventions have been exhausted.

Every biting incident will be evaluated individually. Staff will consider the child's age, developmental level, communication abilities, possible medical or developmental concerns, the circumstances surrounding the incident, and the safety of the other children before determining the most appropriate course of action. Our goal is always to respond fairly, consistently, and in a developmentally appropriate manner while maintaining a safe environment for every child in our care.

We appreciate your partnership and trust as we work together to help every child learn safe and appropriate ways to express themselves. Thank you for supporting our staff as they remain committed to providing a loving, patient, and developmentally appropriate environment for all children.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Jessica Smith
Director
First Methodist Children's Center

A Partnership with Families

Introduction

We ask for patience, understanding, and cooperation from all families as we work through this developmental stage together. Biting can be frustrating for the family of the child who was bitten, but it can also be difficult and emotional for the family of the child who bit. Please know that our goal is never to shame or label a child. Instead, we focus on teaching appropriate behaviors and helping children develop healthy ways to communicate.

For Families of Children Who Have Been Bitten

We understand that receiving a phone call or incident report informing you that your child has been bitten can be upsetting. As parents ourselves, we know that no one wants to see their child hurt, and we want to reassure you that we take every biting incident very seriously.

Our first priority is always to provide immediate care and comfort to the child who has been bitten. We clean the bite, comfort your child, monitor the area, and document the incident according to our policies. We also immediately begin evaluating what led to the bite and implement strategies to help prevent it from happening again.

We understand that it can be frustrating if your child is bitten more than once. Please know that our staff shares your concerns. Biting incidents are stressful not only for the children and their families, but also for our teachers. Our staff works diligently to supervise children, identify patterns, anticipate situations that may lead to biting, and intervene whenever possible. Despite close supervision, biting can happen very quickly and often without warning.

We also respectfully ask that all interactions with our staff remain courteous and respectful. Our teachers genuinely care about every child in our center and work hard each day to provide a safe, loving, and nurturing environment. They do not want children to be bitten any more than parents do, and they are committed to doing everything reasonably possible to reduce biting incidents. We understand emotions can run high when your child is hurt, but we ask that concerns be expressed respectfully so we can continue working together as partners.

We also ask that families refrain from making negative remarks or placing blame on the other child involved in a biting incident. It is important to remember that the child who bit is also a young child who is still learning and developing. Challenging behaviors do not define a child's character, and our goal is always to teach and guide rather than label or shame. Negative comments about another child can be deeply upsetting to our teachers and staff, who care for and build relationships with every child in our program. Our staff works hard to support both the child who was bitten and the child who bit with compassion, patience, and developmentally appropriate guidance. We ask that all conversations remain respectful and focused on working together to help every child learn, grow, and succeed in a safe and nurturing environment.

Please remember that, for confidentiality reasons, we cannot disclose the identity of the child who bit your child or discuss any disciplinary actions, interventions, behavior plans, or conversations involving another child or family. Just as we are committed to protecting your child's privacy, we are equally committed to protecting the privacy of every child and family in our care. We appreciate your understanding and respect for the confidentiality of all children enrolled in our program.

For Families of Children Who Bite

Parents of children who bite should understand that there may be times when we must enforce our Biting Policy for the safety of all children in our care.

We understand that it can be difficult and emotional to learn that your child has bitten another child.

Please know that our approach is always to teach, guide, and support children as they learn appropriate ways to communicate their needs and emotions.

At the same time, we have a responsibility to protect every child in our care. While we are committed to supporting children who bite, we must also consider the physical safety and emotional well-being of the children who are bitten. Every child deserves to feel safe in our program, and it is our responsibility to balance the developmental needs of the child who bites with the safety of the other children in the classroom.

When biting becomes a repeated concern, our staff and leadership team will implement our Biting Policy. Depending on the child's age, developmental level, frequency of biting, and the circumstances surrounding each incident, interventions will be determined on an individual basis and may include increased supervision, classroom adjustments, behavior intervention strategies, parent conferences, recommendations for additional evaluations or services when appropriate, temporary exclusions, shortened days, early pick-up following repeated biting incidents within the same day, or other interventions designed to keep all children safe while helping your child succeed. These measures are intended to provide time for the child to regroup, reduce the likelihood of additional incidents, and help maintain a safe environment for all children.

We ask for your patience, cooperation, and partnership throughout this process. Please understand that when our Biting Policy is implemented, it is done with careful consideration after evaluating each situation individually. Once the policy is implemented, families are expected to cooperate with the interventions determined by the center. These decisions are made with the best interests of all children in mind and are never intended to punish, embarrass, or single out a child or family.

We respectfully ask that families cooperate with all reasonable measures outlined in our Biting Policy. Refusal to cooperate with staff or administration, repeated failure to follow the requirements of this policy, or refusal to participate in reasonable interventions designed to maintain a safe environment for all children may result in dismissal from the program. This expectation is not meant to be punitive, but rather to ensure that we can continue providing a safe, consistent, supportive, and developmentally appropriate environment for every child entrusted to our care.

Why Are Some Children Bitten More Often Than Others?

Parents often wonder why certain children seem to be bitten more frequently than others. While it can be upsetting, it is important to understand that this does **not** mean a child is doing anything wrong or that they are being targeted. Young children are still learning how to interact with others, and many factors can influence why a particular child is involved in biting incidents more often.

Some reasons include:

- **They are highly social.** Children who enjoy being around their peers and frequently engage in group play naturally have more interactions with other children, increasing the chances of conflicts that can sometimes result in biting.
- **They are assertive with toys or materials.** A child who frequently reaches for toys, takes turns before another child is ready, or gets close to another child's personal space may unintentionally trigger a bite from a child who has not yet developed appropriate communication skills.
- **They are close friends with a child who bites.** It is very common for children who spend the most time together—best friends, frequent playmates, or classmates who naturally gravitate toward one another—to be involved in repeated biting incidents simply because they interact more often.
- **They react strongly.** Some children cry loudly, become visibly upset, or have a big emotional response after being bitten. While the child who bites is not usually trying to cause harm, they may repeat the behavior because they are still learning about cause and effect or because they notice the reaction.
- **They are naturally curious and active.** Children who enjoy exploring, moving throughout the classroom, and interacting with many different peers often have more opportunities for conflicts to occur than children who prefer quieter, independent play.

It is also important to remember that **being bitten is not a reflection of a child's behavior, personality, or the quality of supervision they receive.** Biting is a developmental behavior that often occurs quickly and with little warning, even in well-supervised classrooms.

Another important perspective is that, in many cases, **biting incidents are far more upsetting to parents and teachers than they are to the child who was bitten.** While every bite is taken seriously and children are immediately cared for, comforted, and monitored, young children are

often remarkably resilient. After receiving comfort and reassurance, many children return to playing within just a few minutes—sometimes right alongside the very child who bit them. To young children, the incident is often forgotten almost as quickly as it happened, and they continue playing as if nothing occurred. Parents and teachers, however, naturally carry the emotional impact much longer because they want to protect the children they love and care for. This does not minimize the seriousness of biting, but it does help illustrate how young children often view these situations differently than adults.

Our staff carefully monitors patterns, supervises children closely, and implements proactive strategies to reduce biting whenever possible. We continually evaluate classroom routines, transitions, peer interactions, and environmental factors to help prevent future incidents while supporting both the child who was bitten and the child who bit.

Biting Incident Response & Threshold Chart

Single Incident (Level 1)

What happens:

- First bite of the day
- Staff respond immediately (care, redirection, documentation)
- Parents of both children notified

Action:

- Monitor closely for patterns
- No further action unless repeated

Repeated in One Day (Level 2)

Trigger:

- 2 bites in one day

Action:

- Continued close supervision
- Staff begin tracking triggers more closely
- Parent notified of repeated behavior at pickup (or sooner if needed)

Excessive in One Day (Level 3)

Trigger:

- 3 bites in one day

Action:

- Immediate parent notification for early pickup
- Child may return the next day
- Incident reviewed by staff to identify triggers

Chronic Pattern (Level 4)

Trigger:

- 3 or more bites in a week OR reaching Level 3 more than once in a 2-week period

Action:

- Parent conference scheduled
- Written Behavior Support Plan created
- Increased supervision (shadowing when possible)
- Begin 2–4 week improvement period

Ongoing Safety Concern (Level 5)

Trigger:

- No improvement after support plan
- Continued frequent biting despite interventions

Action:

- Possible reduced schedule or shorter days
- Possible temporary suspension (1–3 days) to reset
- Continued documentation and reassessment

Final Step (Level 6 – Disenrollment Consideration)

Trigger:

- Behavior does not improve after all interventions
- Safety of other children cannot be maintained

Action:

- Disenrollment may be considered as a last resort
- Parents are given notice and documentation of prior steps

Important Notes

- All steps are handled with age-appropriate expectations (especially for children under 2).
- Teething and developmental stages are always considered.
- The goal is correction and support—not punishment.
- Safety of all children remains the top priority.