

Takoma Park Child Development Center

GUIDING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIOR (DISCIPLINE)

TPCDC strives to use a positive discipline approach that uses encouragement to help children develop self-control, independence, self-awareness, and respect for other children and teachers in a way that is appropriate to their ages and stages of development. Discipline means helping children learn to control their own behavior and solve their own problems. It does not mean punishment. TPCDC firmly believes discipline includes guidance, modeling and redirection.

The primary goal of discipline is to help children learn how to control their bodies, emotions and to develop appropriate social behaviors. TPCDC's approach to guiding children's behavior is both preventative and positive. This method helps children develop respect for themselves and others. Because we care deeply about children, children are provided many opportunities to develop self-regulation. Discipline is built on mutual respect and trust between adult and child. The process of helping children learn to solve their own problems is time-consuming, but is the goal of guidance. It is important to remember that discipline is not punishment, but rather a process of resolving conflicts.

In each classroom, discipline is geared to the developmental level of the children. For young children, redirection is the most frequently used technique. Teachers use redirection to guide children's energy and attention from a negative behavior or situation to a positive one. Teachers also help the child problem-solve while avoiding conflict and possible aggression. For example, a teacher who notices two children tugging on the same toy might offer one child another toy or change the focus of both children by singing or starting a new activity.

Children pass through several learning and developmental stages as they mature. Discipline problems are a normal part of child development. Children may misbehave for one of these basic reasons:

Attention-seeking: Adults can respond by giving positive attention at other times, ignoring inappropriate behavior, setting up routines, encouraging, redirecting, or setting up special activities.

Power: Adults can respond with kind but firm respect, giving limited choices, setting reasonable limits, encouraging, and redirecting the child to a more acceptable activity. When children test limits and use a public display to assert themselves, adults can continue to stick to the basic rules letting them know their behavior is unacceptable, or leave the situation if possible and talk later when things are calmer.

Revenge or hurting others: Adults can respond by avoiding harsh punishment and criticism, building trust, listening, reflecting feelings, practicing sharing of feelings, encouraging strengths and acting with care. If this is a new pattern of acting out, children and adults should talk about how they are feeling.

Inadequacy or Whining: Adults can respond by encouraging children to try things, focusing on the child's strengths, not criticizing or giving in to pity, offering opportunities for success and teaching skills in small steps. Some children believe they belong when they convince others that they are helpless or unable.

The following methods are used by staff to prevent and minimize behavioral problems:

- Activities and expectations are age-appropriate ;
- Establish clear classroom rules and limits. Children should be engaged in determining the class rules;
- Anticipate problems before they happen;
- Redirect a child's behavior by suggesting a positive alternative;
- Reinforce or praise positive behavior;
- Ignore attention-seeking negative behaviors that are not harmful/dangerous;
- Create environments responsive to children's needs and interests;
- Set clear and consistent behavior expectations;
- Use logical consequences related to the action. Children over the age of three typically begin to develop an understanding of "cause and effect" and the use of reasonable consequences for inappropriate behavior;
- With older children, language is used more often to guide children's behavior. Teachers help children label feelings and teach use of language instead of inappropriate physical actions;
- Create predictable routines that help children to feel secure;
- If a situation warrants the removal of a child from an activity, provide a "cooling off" period. Remain with the child and use verbal guidance to explain why the child had to be removed from an area;
- Use space, time and materials creatively;
- Engage children in positive social interaction;
- Design classroom set-up and traffic patterns which enable children to successfully interact without over-crowding;
- Provide a variety of materials, toys and activities to engross children;
- Allow sufficient time to complete activities in a relaxed way and experience them fully, but not too much time so that the children are bored or have to wait, which can also cause behavior difficulties.

The following methods are NOT ALLOWED TO BE USED BY STAFF:

- physical, emotional or verbal abuse;
- neglect or leaving a child unsupervised;
- use of corporal punishment. An employee who uses corporal punishment is subject to termination;
- use of food, toileting or naps as a reward or punishment;
- use of "Time-out", or sitting a child by himself/herself to reflect on behavior, due to a lack of correlation to the incident;
- humiliation of a child, such as facing the corner performing a task as a model for other children;
- or
- group punishment.

Behavioral issues should be documented thoroughly and kept confidentially in a classroom journal in case a pattern develops. Behavior that is normal for the child's age (e.g. grabbing the biggest tricycle,

climbing on the table and jumping off pretending to be Superman) can simply be managed as above. Staff should notify parents, however, about marked changes in behavior or activity level and behaviors that endanger the child or other children. An Incident Form should be completed and a few minutes set aside to explain and answer any questions for parents when they pick up the child. State the facts and show concern for the child. Listen to the parent and stress a joint problem-solving approach. Setting a positive tone, using effective communication techniques, and involving parents in the process is key to resolving unusual behaviors.

Discipline for the School Age Program focuses on preventing inappropriate conduct and behavior. Staff clearly state expectations and basic rules for conduct and behavior. However, children also participate in generating rules, as well as the consequences that will follow. School age children will be given as many choices as possible in their daily routine and are helped to refocus their attention or behavior. If the children do not correct their behavior or conduct, adults will either make a new choice for the child or enforce the consequences. Consequences can include, but are not limited to finding a new activity, walking away and having a "cool down" period or writing a letter of apology. Unlike a "time-out", a cool down period involves redirecting the child to a new activity, perhaps one that is quieter, away from the cause of the conflict. The goal for discipline with school age children is to help them understand that they have choices and responsibilities. Respect is the overall objective in social situations.

Consistent and Serious Behavioral Concerns

Serious behavioral difficulties are discussed through parent conferences or as they become an issue. Children who are excessively disruptive in the classroom and/or harmful to themselves, the staff or the other children, will be brought to the office. If a child's behavior threatens his/her own safety or the safety of other children or staff, a teacher may securely and gently hold that child until he or she is able to feel calm and in control again.

If a child's behavior is consistently challenging, the teachers, Center Director and parent(s)/guardian(s) will work together to identify possible causes for the negative behavior and to establish a behavior management plan. All effort will be made to work with families. If it is determined that the Center is unable to meet a child's needs, the Center reserves the right to end the enrollment of the child in the Center as a last resort.

Please remember that employees must follow this policy when disciplining all children, including their own, enrolled in the program. By signing below, you agree that you have read and understood this policy, and that you will abide by this discipline policy.

Employee Signature

Date

Center Director Signature

Date