

Interactions with Children

National Regulations: Regulation 155-6, 168
National Quality Framework: Standard 5.1, 5.2

Policy Statement

Our interactions with children is serviced on the importance of rights and dignity for the child, acknowledging and accepting children's feelings and encouraging these feelings to be expressed.

The service is committed to quality interactions with children because it

- reflects the values, attitudes and cultural values of families and children being educated and cared for by the service
- promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity
- encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
- informs the service's educators about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans
- explains the service's commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies

The service recognises and understands that a child's interactions with educators and peers may be affected by their

- age and development
- general health and wellbeing
- relationships with their family
- play and learning environments, which may include the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year and the time of day
- educators strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented
- relationships with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors
- external factors such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences or media coverage of traumatic events

Educators display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that interactions are managed, not children. While educators are aware and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with educator knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities. The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing.

Educators who are implementing behaviour guidance strategies and/or plans for children that display inappropriate behaviours, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults) need continued support and assistance. Educators can experience levels of stress or anxiety, which may lead to sickness or apathy in the workplace. Therefore the service has a duty of care to ensure that employees' mental and emotional wellbeing is considered, as well as the child's need for positive behaviour guidance strategies.

Strategies and Practices

Our program promotes a positive approach to managing interactions and behaviour of all children. We believe in encouraging children to resolve problems, defeats and frustrations where appropriate. This can be achieved by exploring possible solutions and helping children understand and deal with their emotions. This will depend on the child's age and level of development. Steps that we take towards establishing good behaviour management include

- Setting and maintaining appropriate limits of behaviour, encouraging children to be involved in this. Write up rules and display them in the room

- Explaining the appropriate uses of materials and equipment, establishing play spaces which include areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation
- Reinforcing positive behaviour with praise
- Explaining why a behaviour is inappropriate or unacceptable and providing acceptable options
- Offering children choices and encouraging decision making
- Setting realistic expectations which are age and stage appropriate
- A calm, controlled tone of voice and attitude should be assumed by the caregiver in all situations. It is not appropriate to use any form of physical punishment with children and it is important not to demean, make fun, belittle or frighten a child as a form of punishment.
- **If a child becomes violent towards staff or children it may be necessary to remove the child from the setting immediately. The Nominated or Certified Supervisor should remove the child to a safe area and stay with the child and attempt to calm them. Parents may be asked to collect the child if they do not calm down. In these situations it is imperative that families and the service work together.**

It is often important to remember that what works for one does not always work for all.

Specific Interaction Techniques

Prevention

A well designed and equipped room, tailored to the needs of the children prevents frustration, interruption and hazards. It offers privacy, independence and easy supervision. The daily routine should provide enough time for play, a sense of security, little waiting and well planned transitions between activities.

Positive Redirection

This could be the basic procedure used in all rooms. Redirecting unacceptable behaviour to an acceptable alternative focuses on the positive rather than the negative. This can be enhanced through praise.

Modelling

When educators demonstrate appropriate behaviour and communication through their everyday actions, children learn what is expected from them i.e. it is not appropriate to sit on tables and benches and then ask children not to do this.

Limit Setting

Educators need to set a few clear, simple rules that are appropriate to the age of the children in their care. It is appropriate to involve older children in the process by creating and discussing the 'rules' together. Limits should be displayed both in pictures and writing for the children, parents and other educators to read. Children should be reminded of what they need to do in a positive tone.

Problem Solving

Educators can appeal to children's growing cognitive reasoning by involving them in solving their own issues. Educators can ask children questions to help them identify their needs, feelings, causes and choices. The following problem solving techniques are to be used for all children within the service

- Tell the child to stop and take a deep breath!
- Collect information about the event and how the child feels "What happened? Why did you? How are you feeling?"
- State the problem clearly back "You want the block but so does Amy. What can we do so you are both happy?" "What would be a better way to sort that out?"
- Generate ideas with the children about what can be done, encourage silly ideas as well as practical ones and avoid criticising ideas.
- Evaluate these ideas "So what will happen if you?" "Will it solve the problem?"
- Go back through the ideas the children generate and ask which one they are going to try. Implement their strategy and congratulate the child on their problem solving.

Logical Consequences

Through the use of an "if...then..." statement, children can be helped to see the logical outcomes of their actions. For example "If you run inside then you could trip over".

Biting

Biting is not uncommon in young children. Children who bite usually do so because they are frustrated or angry. They often act impulsively and quickly, and are too young and immature to think of other choices or consequences. Children usually bite because their language skills are not yet developed to express themselves clearly. Teething may also be a cause of biting. Biting is most frequent in the 13 to 30 month old age bracket. When biting occurs, it is often VERY distressing for both the parents of the child who has been bitten, and the parents of the child who has bitten. Please remember that this is a natural phase of development for some children and will be dealt with in an appropriate manner by the Certified or Nominated Supervisor.

Some things to consider when biting occurs

- The frequency of the biting incidents.
- The times the incidents are happening.
- The environmental conditions at the time of the incident.
- The child being bitten.
- The child who is biting.
- Circumstances prior to the incident.

Educators and families are encouraged to work together and discuss strategies to use at home and at the centre in order to minimise the risk of biting.

Educators Communication

Educators and parents can provide an individual behavioural management plan which all educators within the group are aware of and implement. Strategies may include

- Specific teaching of problem solving techniques
- Specific teaching of feelings, both of our own and of others
- Use a communication book to record when behaviour has been inappropriate
- Praise any behaviours and reward with verbal and non-verbal gestures
- Ignore behaviour where reasonable and appropriate
- Offer choice where possible
- Remember children learn slowly and forget quickly
- Use Makaton for non-verbal children
- Consider a change of group, within the childcare setting
- Consult with Inclusion Support Team and together ascertain whether a further referral is to be made. Follow up with educators workshops and educational material the Inclusion Support Team has to offer

Educator Professional Development

The service has a huge range of behavioural guidance material for reading and referring to for educators, students and volunteers. The service encourages each educator to attend professional development in this area every two to three years or as set out in the educators work plan.

Management Responsibilities in Behavioural Referral

Managing children's behaviour can be a complex task and at times it may be necessary for educators to discuss with the Educational Leader and Nominated Supervisor elements of a child's behaviour that they may find challenging. The Nominated Supervisor will take the following steps

1. Continue to document with educators the behaviour, looking for patterns, causes and triggers. Plan developmentally consistent strategies and share these with all educators allowing feedback and consistency.
2. Educators will liaise with parents asking them for background information regarding the behaviour. The service will ask parents to support the work that the service is trying to achieve, reinforcing at home the appropriate behaviours. Feedback to families may occur informally or formally in a meeting situation. Families are encouraged to have both parents involved in these meetings.
3. Meetings held with parents will include key educators.

4. Educators will contact the Inclusion Support Team for external assistance in helping with the behaviour. A referral may be made.
5. Educators will continue to monitor the child's behaviour, daily observations will be reviewed. If a child's behaviour begins to affect the other children within the group, parents may be required to collect their child. Continuing behaviour that puts educators and children at risk needs full investigation. The service is happy to work with families during this time however it may be decided that shorter monitored inclusion is the best for all concerned. The service will constantly liaise with families sharing information, offering support and assistance where possible. Families who do not support the service or follow up with service or Inclusion support recommendations and their child continues to put educators and children at risk may have their care suspended.

Inclusion Support Team

Inclusion Support Team is a SUPS service that assists childcare services to provide inclusive care for children with additional needs. They do this through support, training and resources. Emphasis is given to increasing the confidence, skills and knowledge of service educators to provide inclusive practice.

Educators having difficulties or ongoing concerns about a child's behaviour should consult with management. Educators should have a clear understanding of behaviour management techniques used at the service and why they are used, to enable communication with parents.

Sources and Further Readings



Belonging, Being, Becoming: *The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia 2009* Retrieved: August 2010. **Service copy**

Child and Youth Health - www.cyh.com.au

Crary.E. (1984). *Kids can Co-operate*. USA. Parenting Press

Dr Margaret Carter - www.macarterconsultancy.com.au

Dr Margaret Carter (2002) *Harassment Violence and Bullying Behaviours in Educational settings*. QLD.

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