

The Child Care Providers' Almanac

This handbook is for child care providers. It will increase your understanding of how to use positive guidance practices and reduce the occurrence of child challenging behavior in licensed child care centers and homes. This, in turn, will reduce the occurrence of abuse and neglect in facilities. The Provider's Almanac is a tool that will help you guide children in your care, thus reducing challenging behaviors.

All children will present challenging behaviors from time to time. This is just a fact of life. Children need providers to help them develop the skills they need to manage the feelings that cause them to act out. They need guidance that will teach them how to get along with others, how to express their feelings with words, and how to problem solve in a positive way.

Guiding children to self-control is not something that just happens. It is more than just handling misbehaviors as they occur. The guidance process is a plan of how to interact with children. It builds positive relationships which is essential for developing self-control.

Remember that behavior does not change overnight. With time, providers can help children develop social-emotional skills and make steps toward self-control. These steps are like **SEEDS** . . .



*. . . plant them, water them
with consistency, wait patiently,
and watch self-control bloom.*

SEEDS OF POSITIVE GUIDANCE

Self & Style

The skills and knowledge you bring to your work with children has a great influence of how well you classroom functions. Additionally, your personal style influences how you respond to children. Are you easy-going, sensitive, or feisty? Did you know that your style can either help or prevent positive behavior in children?

Environment

Did you know there that the environment can help guide the children's behavior through the day...and reduce challenging behaviors? Our physical surroundings play an important role in how we respond to people. The organization and the quality of the activities/materials of the classroom can affect a child's ability to develop social and emotional skills.

Emotional and Social Skill Development

When children feel lonely or overlooked they show their unhappiness by acting out. Children need to feel loved and have friends. Providers can reduce acting out by teaching children how to get along with their peers and how to build positive relationships with adults.

Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Strategies

All children will present challenging behaviors at one time or another. Child care providers should prepare a plan to handle these situations rather than resorting to spanking, shouting, or physical restraint. These practices may lead to investigations of abuse/neglect or criminal charges. This can be avoided when providers learn how to use developmentally appropriate guidance practices. These strategies will promote cooperation and turn incidents of misbehavior into teachable moments.

Special Influences on Children's Development

Some children may be at risk for delayed social-emotional development because of special circumstances. These children may have developmental delays, be exposed to many risk factors (such as poverty, single family homes, inadequate health care), or may have been exposed to other events or influences that have impacted their social development. Families are under a lot of stress these days. Many are faced with unemployment, financial problems and/or divorce. Children often do not have the words to describe how they feel so they respond by acting out. Young children may become cranky or return to earlier behaviors such as bedwetting or thumb sucking. Older children may become violent or withdrawn. Each child reacts differently to stress. We can help them cope with open communication and positive relationships.

As we begin our exploration of ways to prevent and address challenging behaviors, let's look at a model being used in classrooms across North Carolina.

The CSEFEL Pyramid Model for Supporting the Social and Emotional Competence of Infants and Young Children



The Pyramid Model was created by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), about 10 years ago. The center was funded by the Child Care Bureau and the Office of Head Start to develop a framework and materials to guide teachers of young children to ensure healthy social-emotional development and prevent challenging behaviors.

The Pyramid Model is dependent on a strong base...an effective workforce. What this means is that the model is only as strong or as effective as the teachers working in classrooms with children. The success of the model in your classroom depends on YOU! You have the ability to make an essential difference in the lives of children as they learn to control their actions and feelings. They need to know that you are a safe, secure base and that you are willing to teach them the skills they need to get along with others.

The first level includes supports that are essential for all children in the promotion of social-emotional health. These practices are based on the *Nurturing and Responsive Relationships and High Quality Supportive Environments* you create in your classroom. Research shows that most children (75-80%) will develop the social-emotional skills they need to succeed in your classroom and in later life if these two levels are in place.

Some children may need prevention supports from the next level, *Targeted Social Emotional Supports*, to learn these skills. The supports at this level are designed to prevent challenging behavior from occurring in children who need a little extra help. We call this the “teach me what to do” level. Some children may need to be taught to understand their own

emotions and read those of others, how to solve problems with other children, how to control their impulses, and how to make and keep friends.

The final level consists of supports for a very small minority of children (5%) who may need *Intensive Individual Intervention*. These children may have developmental delays, be exposed to multiple risk factors (e.g., poverty, single parent homes, inadequate health care), or may have been exposed to other events or influences that have impacted their social development. These children may need a behavior support plan that helps you and their families support them in ways that will help them be successful.

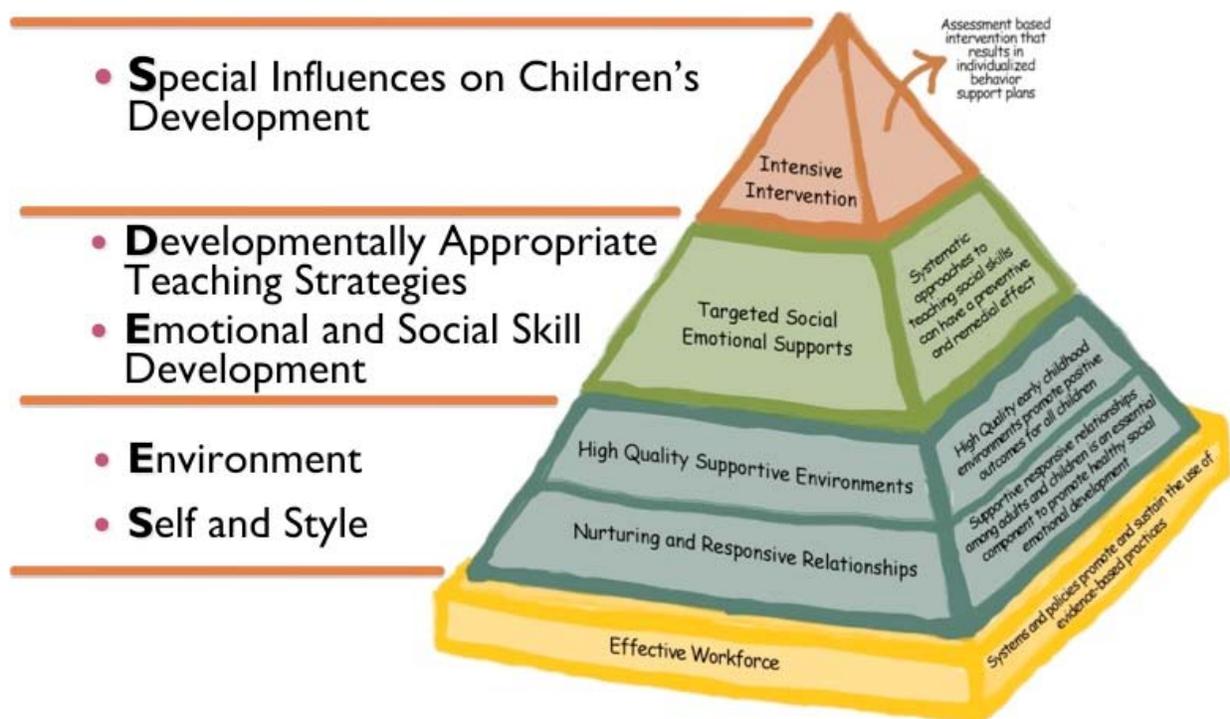
Keep in mind that each level of the Pyramid Model is dependent on the one below it. You won't be successful if you jump to the top and create behavior support plans for every child who misbehaves. You must start at the bottom with relationships and the environment and move up to the teaching strategies for those who need them and finally design strategies and/or seek additional help for the few children who need individual supports.

The Division of Child Development and Early Education funds behavior specialists across the state to help you implement these strategies in your classroom. Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency and ask for a Healthy Social Behaviors Specialist. You can also get more information about the Pyramid Model on the websites:

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>

<http://www.challengingbehavior.org/>

Let's look at each level of the Pyramid Model, from the base up, and learn what you, as gardeners, need to consider so your 'crops' will flourish!



SELF & STYLE



Each teacher brings his/her own unique personal mix to the classroom, which affects the climate of the classroom. Each teacher brings a blend of knowledge and skills to the work with children which has a great influence on how well the classroom functions.

Additionally, your temperament and personal style influences how you naturally respond to children. Our style determines how we react to the world around us. Many of us are easy-going. We can adapt to change easily. Some of us are shy or slow to warm-up to new situations. We feel most secure in a structured and predictable environment. A few of us are feisty. We respond to everything with intensity and zeal. Our unique personality can help or hinder our efforts to develop relationships with children so we can guide their behaviors. Positive, supportive relationships between teachers and children, as well as with families and other professionals, are essential to being able to implementing strategies that support children's social emotional development.

Temperament plays an important role in how we guide children. For example, a provider who likes order may become frustrated with a child who constantly spills his milk during lunch. This frustration could trigger fear in a shy child or rebellion from a feisty one.

What makes you angry? What gets on your nerves? Prevent tension and promote positive behavior by first recognizing your own temperament. Then identify the temperament of the children in your care and develop a plan of action to guide your unique group to self-control.

Does Your Personal Style Promote Positive Behavior?

Do children find you approachable?

More than half of what we say is conveyed through our body language. Body language includes our facial expressions, posture, and the way we hold our hands and arms. Children are more likely to approach an adult whose facial expression is pleasant, welcoming and caring.

Remember that your body language lets children know that you are available and interested in them. Always sit, squat, or kneel at their level when you speak to them. It is difficult to communicate warmth, caring, and concern when you are looking down at a child.

An angry face and folded arms can trigger fear or dislike from a child. Never let your anger cause you to physically abuse a child, such as spanking, dragging, or pushing him. These practices violate child care rules and lead to reports of physical abuse/neglect and even criminal charges. These practices also cause children to fear and distrust adults, which damages your relationships with children and leads to increased challenging behaviors.

Do you provide encouragement?

Take some time out of your day and count how many times you catch children doing good. Do your words of encouragement out-number your scoldings? Each time sincere praise or encouragement is given it increases the chances for appropriate behavior to be repeated. Be descriptive, when using praise and encouragement, so children know what they did well. Comment on their efforts and/or accomplishment instead of just saying, "Good job!" Say things like, "You finished the puzzle by yourself. You must be very proud." or "You worked so hard to clean up the blocks. Way to go! Would you like my help to finish?"

Do you model good behavior for children?

Only say or do things that you would want children to copy. Adults who are unkind to their co-workers teach children that this type of behavior is acceptable. Be sure that you model the kind of behavior you want from the children in your care. Remember, young eyes and ears are watching and listening!

Do you believe that misbehavior can be changed?

All children make mistakes and act out occasionally. Don't take what children say or do personally. Children are in the process of learning how to follow rules and how to express their feelings with words. Plan to start each day with a positive attitude and with the belief that you have the skills to teach children acceptable behavior. When you label children or give up on them you set yourself and the children up for failure. Remember that all learning takes time and practice, practice, practice! Be patient, consistent and encouraging as self-control skills develop.

Do you guide children with simple, clear, statements?

When adults lecture or use too many words, children may become confused. Lectures work help change behavior because children will simply respond by tuning them out. Avoid confusing children. Use simple clear statements such as “Use your walking feet,” “Use your inside voice,” “Use gentle hands.” These statements are easy to understand, positively stated and let children know what is expected of them in the classroom.

Do you set limits for children in a firm, yet kind, tone?

Limit setting is an important part of keeping children safe and guiding them to self-control. Children who understand what is expected of them are more cooperative.

Providers need to set limits in a firm, yet kind, tone of voice. A weak tone of voice sends a message to children that the adult is not sure of his/her authority and obedience is a choice. Children usually ignore weak requests.

When children are spoken to in a harsh tone they learn to comply out of fear. Over time they become used to being spoken to in this manner and begin to avoid the adult. They may even feel the adult is mean and does not like them. Children are more likely to follow rules when they feel cared for, respected, and free to express themselves without being scolded.

A firm tone does not always come naturally. Avoid sounding weak or harsh by practicing using a kind, firm tone. A few simple words in a firm tone let children know what is expected of them. When the tone of voice and words are also kind, the children get the message that you are on their side as they learn new skills. This will decrease power struggles and builds cooperative relationships that guide children to self-control.

Self and Style Checklist

- Recognize your own unique style of relating to children.
- Recognize the unique style of each child in your care.
- Take time to develop relationships with each child, as well as their families and your co-workers
- Identify the triggers that make you angry.
- Plan to handle triggers in an appropriate manner.

ENVIRONMENT



The next level of the Pyramid Model reflects the importance of designing environments that support children's success. Children's success can be encouraged by engaging them in meaningful activities, teaching them about the expectations of the environment, and implementing a

schedule that is predictable and engaging to each child. You can prevent challenging behaviors by designing the environment in ways that support the use of appropriate behavior and social skills, provide developmentally appropriate materials that support the children's interests, teach children about classroom rules and expectations, and use positive attention and encouragement to support appropriate behavior. It is important to note that research indicates that the first two levels of the Pyramid Model, relationships and supportive environments, are absolutely essential for all children.

Your environment can be like an extra teacher in your classroom, if designed with socialization and guidance of children in mind. The environment can influence behavior in either a negative or positive way. Try to look at the environment through a social-emotional lens. What makes children feel safe, calm and fosters engagement in the learning activities you provide? To engage the children, activities and materials need to match the age and skills of the children in the group. When a successful match is made children are more cooperative and confident. Activities that are too hard make children angry and activities that are too easy bore them. Both anger and boredom lead to acting out.

Does Your Environment Promote Positive Guidance?

Room Arrangement

Can you supervise all areas of the classroom?

Children are more cooperative and take fewer risks when they know that they are being supervised. Arrange your classroom so that supervision is not blocked by furniture, doors, or walls. Providers should be able to hear and see children from all areas of the room. Providers should always be on the move, interacting and observing the children.

Is there enough classroom space for freedom of movement and un-interrupted play?

Children need enough space for group play and private time with a special friend. There are more incidents of acting out when children are crowded. They are easily annoyed and more likely to fight, argue, or bite their classmate to get the space that they need.

Is your classroom clean, well organized, and comfortable?

Untidy rooms confuse children because they don't know where to play or how to use the materials. Busy, cluttered, brightly colored rooms can over-stimulate them. A room that is clean, with muted colors, attractive, and well-organized is simply more comfortable. It sends a message to everyone that they are welcome and that people, adults and children alike, care about their surroundings.

Is your room separated into activity centers?

Large rooms are hard to supervise and are overwhelming to children. Long empty spaces send a message that it's OK to run. When a room is organized into centers children play more cooperatively because they feel safe, know where to play, and how to locate materials.

Room Arrangement Checklist

- Carefully plan traffic patterns.
- Minimize large open spaces.
- Organize the room into activity areas that are defined with shelves or furniture.
- Make sure that all children can be visually supervised at all times and from all areas of the room.
- Provide as much classroom space as possible.
- Identify the areas in the room where there is consistent acting out.
- Make a plan to rearrange the areas where consistent acting out takes place.

Activities and Materials

Are your activities and materials teaching children how to get along with one another, problem solve, and label their feelings?

Learning how to get along with others takes time and can be hard for some children. Help children learn this skill by choosing activities and materials that allow each child to feel successful. These activities and materials should be engaging and match the age and individual abilities of the children in the group. Include activities, materials and book that help children identify emotions, encourage problem-solving, and support friendship skills.

Do young preschoolers in your classroom learning to play together nicely?

Younger preschoolers have limited social and emotional skills. They are simply not mature enough to understand the concept of sharing. One way to prevent tears and conflicts over popular materials is by providing duplicates of popular toys. Avoid overwhelming younger preschoolers with too many toys. Provide toys that are simple and encourage creativity.

Do the older children in your classroom get along with one another?

Children may use challenging behaviors when classroom activities and materials are not engaging and seem boring to them. They may also become restless and irritable when they have nothing to do. To reduce conflict in the classroom plan activities that promote cooperation instead of competition and provide a wide variety of free choice materials.

Activities and Materials Checklist

Activities

- Plan activities that are engaging to the children.
- Activities should be age and developmentally appropriate.
- Limit the number of children in popular activity centers, if necessary
- Add new materials to those centers selected less often
- Provide additional or more challenging activities for children who finish before their peers.
- Choose activities that promote cooperation rather than competition.
- Identify the activities where there is consistent acting out and make a plan to change them.

Materials

- Choose materials for safety and age appropriateness.
- Provide a variety of open-ended materials and cooperative games.
- Avoid boredom by changing and rotating materials on a regular basis.
- Label the materials within each activity center.
- Provide multiples of popular toys.
- Choose materials that promote cooperation rather than competition.
- Identify materials that cause the children to consistently act out and make a plan (with the children) about reducing the conflict.

Daily Schedule

Is your daily schedule consistent?

Children are calmer when their day is predictable; they are also more cooperative when they know what to expect. They feel at ease to work at their own pace because they know there is enough time for routines, transitions, group time and free choice activities. When children feel rushed they are less cooperative and may use challenging behaviors. Make sure your schedule includes at least 30 minutes for outside time and center choice time. Research shows that preschool children need at least 30 minutes of uninterrupted time to get the most learning benefit from an activity of their choosing. Allow children to remain in the center they select until they are no longer actively engaged, instead of forcing a rotation among centers.

Daily Schedule Checklist

- Establish a routine based on the developmental level of the children
- Follow the flow of your schedule consistently, allowing flexibility to extend/reduce activities based on the interest of the children.
- Create a balanced schedule that includes active and quiet times, small/large group times and time to play alone, indoor and outdoor play times, and self-selected and teacher-initiated activities.
- Provide ample time for routines such as arrival and departure, toileting, dressing, washing hands, and clean up.
- Teach children your schedule by reviewing it frequently and by posting a picture schedule for non-readers.
- Identify the blocks of time where there is consistent acting out and plan to make a change.

Transitions

Do you plan for transitions?

Many behavior problems occur during transitions. Children may use challenging behaviors when they are told to stop playing abruptly or when they have to wait between activities. Avoid these issues by signaling transitions with action songs or other types of activities and by being prepared for the next activity. Think about your daily transitions...are there any you could eliminate or shorten?

Transition Checklist

- Plan some type of signal (a song, chant, record, bell or flick of the lights) to announce that an activity is about to end.
- Allow sufficient time (at least five minutes) for the transition to take place.
- Make sure children know what you expect them to do during the transition.
- Give individual transition warnings to children who need more support to be successful during transitions.
- Use the same routine each day so children will learn transition cues or activities.
- Identify a transition time where there is consistent acting out and plan to make a change.

Mealtime

Is your mealtime pleasant?

Mealtime can be a pleasant opportunity for the providers and children to socialize and get to know one another better. It can also be used as a tool to teach table manners and positive attitudes about food. Reduce acting out during meal time by providing tasty meals and proper supervision at the table. Model good mealtime behavior by sitting with the children and encouraging conversations.

Mealtime Checklist

- Remember that each child has his own unique eating pattern.
- Sit down with the children at meal time and model good eating habits.
- Organize all of your meal time supplies beforehand so that you will not need to leave the table.
- Allow enough time in the schedule to set up, eat, and clean up after each meal.
- Make sure children are not rushed to eat.
- Never use food as a reward or punishment.
- Plan menus that the children will enjoy.
- Serve the entire meal. Do not serve the meal in portions as a means of getting the children to eat more.
- Engage children in mealtime responsibilities.
- Make sure that there is enough space at the table for each child.
- Identify a mealtime routine where there is consistent acting out and plan to make a change.

Naptime

Is naptime relaxing?

Sufficient sleep is very essential for health. Children who do not get enough rest are likely to misbehave or have more accidents. They also may present symptoms that could be mistaken for attention-deficit or other types of behavior disorders.

Children are more likely to misbehave when they are tired. Although every child should be encouraged to go to sleep during the day, adults should prepare for children who squirm, make noise, and socialize before they drift off to sleep. Prevent naptime stress and make a plan to help children who don't fall asleep right away. Providers can create a private sleeping area with dividers or shelves and separate these children from the rest of the class. Allow the squirmers to get their wiggles out before trying to help them go to sleep. Prepare a quiet activity for children who wake up early.

Be patient and remember that sleeping is not something that children can control. There may be both physical and emotional reasons why children cannot sleep. Some children's temperament requires a longer wind-down period.

Naptime Checklist

- Schedule naptime late enough so that most children are tired.
- Plan a quiet activity for the group right before naptime.
- Remind children of naptime rules: “Stay on your own mat. Use your quiet voice.”
- Remind the children that they will only sleep for a few hours and activities will continue after the nap.
- Leave at least 3 feet of space between each cot and place children who are near to each other, head to toe. This prevents the spread of germs and minimizes the ability to disturb others.
- Allow the children to settle down at their own pace.
- Darken the room and play soothing music.
- Provide support to restless children by sitting quietly by their mats or rubbing their backs.
- Never leave the children unattended during naptime.
- Have a planned quiet activity for children who wake up before rest time is over or who can not sleep at all.
- Provide a quite place for school-agers to rest if needed.
- Identify a naptime activity where there is consistent acting out and plan to make a change.

Circle Time

Are the children actively involved in circle time?

Circle time can be a wonderful learning experience if you attend to the interests and developmental level of the children in your group. On the other hand, when circle time is too long, some children will act out in an effort to let providers know that they are tired of sitting or bored. This acting out may frustrate providers and may lead to inappropriate discipline. Circle time should be engaging and used to encouraging developing social skills. Circle time should be a maximum of 10 minutes for young children and 20 minutes for older children.

Circle Time Checklist

- Plan a circle time that is age appropriate and sensitive to the children’s attention span, interests, and abilities.
- Start the school year with the circle time lasting a few minutes and gradually increase the time to 10 minutes for young children and 20 minutes for older.
- Schedule short circle times with small groups rather than long, large group ones.
- Avoid distractions by holding circle time away from toy shelves and busy areas. Assign each child a seat on the rug with tape or a carpet square.
- Assign one staff to lead and another to sit behind the circle of children, to help with supervision and to assist children who are having a hard time.
- A gentle touch on the back may calm a child who has trouble keeping still.
- Be prepared to shorten or alter circle time if children are restless.
- Make sure that each child has enough personal space.
- Have alternate quiet table activities for children who are too restless to remain in circle.

EMOTIONAL & SOCIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT



What is social development and how do adults support it? Social development means learning to form relationships with others. Children with healthy social development will find enjoyment in those relationships and will work to maintain them. Close caring relationships are the base from which

all other development unfolds. Infants are developing social skills when they respond to the familiar voice, smell and touch of the important people in their lives.

Toddlers use their relationships with trusted adults to feel safe enough to explore the world...including the social world with other toddlers. Toddlers are learning to share, cooperate, take turns, compromise and negotiate through relationships.

With adult support, preschool-age and school-age children learn more complex relationship skills including how to express personal views and opinions, how to discuss and resolve conflicts, and how to develop and enjoy friendships.

What is emotional development and how do adults support it? Emotional development is closely related to social development and refers to how a child feels about him/herself, the people in his/her life, and the environments in which he/she plays and lives.

Emotions color the experience of every child can offer a window into the social and emotional development of the young child. Young children's emotions are closely linked to evoked by physical conditions, such as hunger, discomfort, temperature or fatigue. Older children's emotions, on the other hand, are more tied to their psychological condition – how they interpret their own experiences and what they think others are doing or thinking.

Do you prevent challenging behaviors by supporting emotional and social skill development?

Do you have a positive relationship with each child?

Helping children develop social and emotional skills is key to preventing challenging behaviors in your classroom and your relationship with children is your most effective guidance tool. Work to develop a positive relationship with each child beginning the first day they arrive at your child care facility. This will help to reduce acting out behavior. Learn about each child's interests and take time to get to know them and their family members. Children are less likely to misbehave with adults who care about them. When children feel loved and respected by their caregivers they want to please them and challenging behaviors are less likely to occur. When providers take the time to get to know children as unique individuals they are less likely to lose patience with children and resort to punishment in an effort to manage the classroom.

Do you help children get along with others?

Some children appear to develop social skills with ease. They can make friends and find their place in the group without difficulty. They enjoy being with other children and relate well to adults. Other children, however, need more time and help to feel comfortable in a group. Children who are unable to make friends tend to feel alone and rejected a great deal of the time. Both the shy and the aggressive children need support and gentle guidance from adults to help them learn how to make friends. When children are unable to relate positively to others they are more likely to misbehave.

Do the children in your classroom feel free to explore their environment and express themselves freely?

A provider determines the physical environment and sets the tone of the environment. Plan to be calm and confident and make sure your classroom is a relaxed pleasant place for children to feel free to explore their interests and express their feelings. When children feel free to express themselves and make choices, they are happier and more compliant.

Do you guide children to solve problems?

Many adults solve conflicts among children by simply separating them and advising them to forgive and forget. This strategy is a quick fix that only works for a short length of time. Reduce acting out and encourage open communication by teaching children how to solve their problems. This will take time, consistency, and patience, but the results will be well worth the effort. When children learn how to solve problems with words rather than aggression they are able to work through conflicts and maintain friendships. They eventually will learn how to start the problem-solving process on their own in the classroom. Children may have to try more than

one solution before they find one that works for their problem. The teacher's role is to guide them through this process and offer support as needed.

When children have a conflict, teach them these steps to solve the problem:

- What is my problem?
- Think, think, think of a solution.
- What would happen? Would it be safe? Would it be fair? How would everyone feel?
- Give it a try!

Do you express your anger appropriately?

Anger is an emotion that we all feel at one time or another. Regrettably, many adults do not know how to handle their anger properly. Some respond on impulse and yell, hit, or finger point. Others simply ignore their feelings and harbor resentment. Children watch how we respond to anger and copy what they see and hear. Providers can teach children how to calm themselves and talk about their feelings. But in order to do this, they must first identify the behaviors that make them angry and then develop a plan of how they will respond to those triggers. When providers teach children how to recognize, label and appropriately express their feelings they help them make and keep friends. These children are also happier and more cooperative in the classroom.

Emotional and Social Needs Checklist

- Make sure the children in your care feel loved and respected.
- Make sure the children in your care feel like a part of the group.
- Make sure the children in your group feel important and valued.
- Make sure the children feel safe.
- Identify those children in the group who need additional support to make friends and get along with others.
- Provide activities and materials that meet the needs for power, friendship, attention, and security.



DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TEACHING STRATEGIES



The level of the Pyramid Model also addresses the need to use strategies to teach important skills, such as expressing emotions appropriately, solving problems, and building friendships. The level focuses on how to actively teach emotional and social skills.

Many children can benefit for targeted teaching strategies that help them learn social and emotional skills. These strategies should be developmentally appropriate and based on the age, culture, needs, and language of the children served. Try to view misbehavior as mistaken behavior and determine the skills you need to actively teach children so they can be more successful in the classroom. Learning self-control and how to get along with others is a part of growing up, and providers play an important role in teaching children these skills. Successful providers use a variety of social and emotional teaching strategies to ensure children's success.

Do you use developmentally appropriate teaching strategies to promote positive behavior?

Do you use guidance or punishment to change misbehavior?

Punishment is an impulsive reaction to challenging behavior. It is a quick fix that does not require any skill and is used as a way to control the situation in the moment.

Punishment may take the form of a shaming, scolding, or removal of privileges. Most children respond to punishment by continuing the behavior. Some children do not make the connection between the behavior and the punishment. For children who are seeking adult attention, punishment may be seen as a reward for their behavior because it gives them attention.

Punishment triggers feelings of anger, fear, and embarrassment in children. These feelings lead to continued acting out. Punishment also sets the stage for abuse. Providers may feel they can only maintain control of the classroom by continually changing their practices to make them more severe.

On the other hand, positive guidance is a planned age appropriate practice that is used throughout the day to direct children toward acceptable behavior. This guidance process is something you do with the children and not to them. It teaches children to gain control of their own behavior and provides adults with the opportunity to build positive relationships with them.

Do the children understand the classroom rules?

Rules are the best way to set limits in the classroom. They should be age appropriate, clear, positively stated, and few in number. They should be posted, using pictures children who can not read. The posting and review of rules on a daily regular basis can be a consistent and gentle reminder of what is acceptable behavior. Children should know the consequences for breaking the rules. Consequences need to be age appropriate and related to the misbehavior. For example, if a child is throwing blocks the consequence might be removal from the block center for a period of time. Rules should always be stated in a positive manner. For example, if you want children to use quiet voices indoors the rule might be, "Use your quiet voice indoors," instead of "No loud voices indoors." Children need to understand the rules or limits of the classroom because these keep children safe, prevent damage to material and teach children what is acceptable and how to live cooperatively with others. Children are more likely to remember rules that they helped create. Spend some time the first week of school and develop the rules with the children. Some providers call them classroom promises, and each child and adult pledges to follow them. These promises help children feel part of a community that cares for each other and their environment.

Do you know what behaviors to expect from the children in your care?

An important part of positive guidance is being able to identify normal behavior. For example, we know that toddlers have a hard time sharing because they are naturally self-centered. We also know that preschoolers have a short attention span and can not sit for long periods of time. Providers need to be able to predict what children will do and understand what may cause challenging behavior.

Ages and Stages

Infants typically cry because they are wet, hungry, or lonely. Crying is their only way of communicating. Don't be afraid of spoiling a baby. You can pick up a baby who cries without spoiling him or her. Studies show that infants who have their needs met quickly, and who are held and comforted when they cry, develop a strong sense of security and actually cry much less later on in life.

Infant Guidance Techniques

- Set up a safe environment. Prevent problems by covering electrical outlets, locking up dangerous chemicals and storing breakable objects out of reach. Often you can see an accident waiting to happen. Fix, repair, toss, or lock up anything that might be a danger to children. A safe place to play can save you from saying "No" so often.
- Encourage an infant when they do something you like. A smile, a hug and soft words tell the infant that you like them.

Infant Behavior Checklist

- Consistently meet the infant's needs so that he can feel secure and develop trust.
- Routines should be performed calmly and in a caring manner.
- Infants respond to the tone of the adult's voice.
- Infants should be redirected, distracted or removed from a problem situation.
- Don't be afraid of spoiling an infant.
- Constantly reward the infant with hugs, kisses, and kind words.

Toddlers like to be held and talked to. Their limited language can make it very hard to understand their needs. They are clumsy and possessive. Toddlers spend as much time carrying around and protecting toys as they do playing with them. Toddlers are always on the go and often play until they run out of gas. They don't know how to pace themselves and can be happy one minute and cranky the next. Much of this behavior depends on the new skills they are developing. Sometimes they will scream for a toy that can't be reached, but at other times they may lead or drag you to the shelf and point. Learning how to do things in a socially acceptable way is a big step for a toddler. You can help them begin to learn by encouraging them and describing their acceptable behaviors.

Toddler Guidance Techniques

- **Distraction:** This practice works well with very young children. When a child is doing something he shouldn't, try to interest him in another activity. For example, if a toddler wants to climb on tables, simply guide him to another area. Since young children's attention spans are short, this practice is often successful.
- **Redirection:** Sometimes the problem with behavior is not what the child is doing as much as how she is doing it. When this happens, you may need to redirect or teach the child to do it in a different way. If a child is drawing on books, remove the books and say, "Books are not for drawing on." Substitute an appropriate material, saying, "If you want to draw on something, draw on this paper." If the child is throwing blocks, you can remove the blocks and give him a ball to throw.
- **Encouragement:** It is more useful to encourage good behavior than to punish challenging behavior. Encourage a toddler by noticing and commenting on good behavior, giving pats on the back, or hugs for behavior you'd like to see repeated.
- **Relationship Building:** Expect toddlers to test limits. This is how children try their independence. Allow toddlers to make as many choices as possible. Saying "No!" should be limited to situations that relate to safety or emotional well-being. Keep an eye on activities and encourage the child to motivate him to accomplish his task. Allow the toddler to do what he can. However, if the child becomes upset, help him to the point where he can continue on his own.

Toddler Behavior Checklist

- Reinforce acceptable behavior with praise and hugs.
- Distract or redirect toddlers when they misbehave.
- Monitor behavior to find out the triggers that cause misbehavior.
- Be sympathetic and understanding.
- Model kind behavior so that it can be copied.

Preschoolers are learning about the world around them. They ask lots of questions and they love to imitate adults. They are learning to share and take turns (but don't always want to). Sometimes they want to play with others and sometimes they want to be alone. Preschoolers are also quite independent. They like to try new things and often take risks. They also may try to shock you by using forbidden words. Getting attention is fun; being ignored is not. Preschoolers test their providers to see what will happen. Preschoolers like to make their own decisions. It makes them feel important.

Preschoolers can get carried away and become rather bossy, too. They have lots of energy. They play hard, fast, and furious. Sometimes they get tired rather suddenly and become cranky and irritable.

Preschoolers spend a lot of time learning how to get along with others. “Best friends” are very important, but such friendships are brief and may last only a few minutes. Hurt feelings from friends are a part of the learning process.

Preschool Guidance Techniques

- Ignore bothersome behavior: Bothersome behavior that does not hurt anyone can be ignored. Most of the time this type of behavior will stop if the provider does not pay attention to it. When adults ignore bothersome behavior it teaches the class how to ignore the behavior as well.
- Encouragement: Encouragement works well to increase the behavior we want to see more of. Catch children doing good and let them know when they are behaving in a way that pleases you. Smiles and hugs make a preschool child feel special and encourage good behavior.
- Time Out. A cooling-off period allows the provider and the child to calm down. Providers should follow up the time-out by talking briefly about the misbehavior and what behavior is expected in the future. “It’s not ok to hit your friends. Next time use your words and tell her you need more space.” Use time out carefully. When you use it, keep time out to one minute for each year of the child’s age. Remember to bring the child back to the group so that he can show you that he has calmed down and is ready to play in the group.
- Set a good example: Young children love to copy what adults say and do. If you want children to treat their friends kindly, demonstrate kindness to them and to your co-workers.
- Use active listening and problem solving: Preschoolers have a limited vocabulary. Therefore, they tend to physically act out their emotions. Teachers can help preschool children learn how to match emotions with words by asking questions and labeling what they say. Teachers can also help them problem solve by offering them options and allowing them to make choices. This helps them think for themselves and practice appropriate behavior.
- Give children tasks: Preschoolers can do simple classroom tasks like setting the table, putting away toys, and watering plants. Helping makes children feel important and good about themselves. Show preschool children how to do simple classroom tasks and offer encouragement for trying even when jobs are not done perfectly.
- Build relationships: Providers can help children make friends by doing group activities such as group paintings or making cards for a sick classmate. These activities teach kindness, create team spirit, and build self-esteem.

Preschool Behavior Checklist

- Give children your attention so that they will not have to misbehave to get it.
- Set a good example.
- Catch children doing something good and let them know you noticed.
- Use time out carefully.
- Keep children involved by assigning simple classroom responsibilities.
- Do not allow the children to hurt other people, themselves, or destroy property.
- Talk about misbehavior so those children will understand and will not repeat it.

School-Agers sometimes seem to be very mature, but their social skills are not yet well developed. It is not uncommon for school-agers to argue and fight with their peers. School-agers need help learning social skills like how to make friends, trust others, work in a team, and resolve conflicts. They also need to be taught how to use good manners, ask for help and how to problem solve.

School-agers often set goals for themselves that are either too high or too low. They need adults to provide experiences that are challenging yet achievable. School-age children should help make classroom rules and determine appropriate consequences.

School-Age Guidance Techniques

- Logical consequences: If you make a mess, help clean it up. When you are rude to a friend don't forget to apologize. Show the child the behavior you expect. Follow through with consequences and be careful to be firm, but not mean.
- Expression of feelings: Show the child how to appropriately express feelings, even anger. Help children understand their feelings by saying "That seems frustrating," or "You appear to be angry." Help him or her develop ways to deal with that problem in the future by asking, "What are some ways you could handle that?"
- When-then option: "When you hang up your coat then you can join us at the table." Tie what you want to what the child wants.
- Take away privileges: Match the removal of privileges to the behavior. For example, fighting can lead to taking away the privilege of being the line leader. You simply can't be a leader and a fighter at the same time. Remember to establish the rules for taking away privileges. Always take away the privilege quickly and set up situations where the child can regain the privilege. Taking away privileges for too long builds anger and the child will soon forget the lesson.
- Help plan better behavior: Tell the child why the behavior upset you. Ask, "What can you do next time?" Make a plan together. Set a time to check how the plan is working.
- Watch your language. Use your words carefully when guiding school-age children. Focus on what to do rather than what not to do. For example, try saying, "Use your quiet voice inside" instead of "Stop screaming and shouting."

School-Age Behavior Checklist

- Let them establish their own classroom rules with consequences and a plan to improve behaviors.
- Keep children learning, active, and interested.
- Teach children how to express feelings.
- Implement the When-Then option.
- Assign classroom responsibilities.

SPECIAL INFLUENCES ON CHILDREN'S SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Many aspects of society affect adults' ability to support healthy social-emotional development in children. Family stress such as parental separation, divorce, domestic violence, unemployment, and deployment affect children. It is important to maintain frequent and open communication with parents to understand what is happening at home to anticipate children's needs and reactions.

Providers care for children from many different cultures and the family's culture shapes how they raise their children. The care and guidance children receive should be consistent between the child care facility and home.

The final level of the model is designed for those children who continue to use challenging behaviors when the lower level supports are in place. This small number of children may include those that have developmental delays, be exposed to multiple risk factors (e.g., poverty, single parent homes, inadequate health care), or may have been exposed to other events or influences that have impacted their social-emotional development. These children may be best supported through individualized approaches that identify the factors that are related to their challenging behavior, the use of strategies to support the child in engaging in appropriate behavior, and teaching new skills to replace challenging behavior.

Do you promote and encourage positive societal influences?

Do you understand the culture of the children in your classroom?

There are many different cultures in our society. There are cultures of race, blended family or single parent cultures, and cultures based on the language spoken or differing economic situations.

It is very important for providers to learn how culture affects a child's behavior, communication patterns, and expectations. Pay special attention to each child so that he or she feels included and accepted in the classroom.

Do you help children who are experiencing family discord express their feelings in an appropriate manner?

Children experiencing some type of family stress such as deployment, divorce, financial hardship, or drug abuse may exhibit behavior changes such as withdrawal, negativity, short-temperedness, and anger. In order to prevent misbehavior, provide opportunities for children to express their feelings through creative activities like drawing, painting, sand play, water play, play dough, creative movement, and story telling. You can be a support and source of stability for a child who is going through a rough time in his life.

During stressful family times children may arrive at school tired, hungry or not feeling well. Provide opportunities for children to rest or eat if needed. Complete a daily health check when you greet each child and parent upon arrival. It usually takes less than a minute. Remember to observe children closely for changes in mood, energy and appearance.

Special Influences Checklist

- Be familiar with the customs and beliefs of the families in your program.
- Be familiar with the effects of family discord on the behavior of children.
- Identify the stressors in the lives of the children that may cause them to act out.
- Train staff to recognize signs and symptoms of illness and injury.
- Conduct a health check of each child on arrival
- Make sure that the children in your care are well-fed and rested while at school.



*“Don’t judge each day by the harvest you reap
but by the seeds that you plant.”*

~ Robert Louis Stevenson

The mission of the SUPERvision Series is to protect children by reducing the occurrence of child abuse and neglect in regulated child care facilities. When the procedures and practices cited in these training modules are used proactively, they will prevent program violations and create safe nurturing environments for our children.