

Module 5: Child Guidance

Section C: Direct and Indirect Guidance Techniques

Introduction

The goal of positive guidance is to develop children's self-control, encourage children to assume responsibility, and assist children in making thoughtful decisions. This section will provide basic guidance techniques to prevent inappropriate behaviors and correct misbehavior. Taking a look at the reasons children engage in misbehavior/mistaken behavior will provide you with a better understanding of young children. An introduction to basic guidance techniques that include both indirect and direct guidance techniques will provide you with strategies and tools to use in preventing, resolving, and correcting behaviors. Indirect guidance refers to strategies that are used in establishing a positive classroom environment including room arrangement, consistent routines, class rules, and developmental activities. A positive classroom environment meets the needs of the children and provides a foundation for building positive relationships between the child, the teacher, and other children. Direct guidance includes techniques that build on a positive classroom environment by focusing on the individual child, setting realistic expectations, and recognizing appropriate behaviors. Direct guidance techniques include verbal guidance, natural consequences, redirection, and problem solving.

Learning Objectives

After you have completed this section you will be able to:

- Name 3 indirect behavior techniques to use in working with young children.
- Name 3 direct guidance techniques to use in working with young children.
- Describe your philosophy on guidance and young children.

Guiding Your Learning

As you work through this section reflect on the direct and indirect guidance techniques that you have used in working with young children. What are the indirect guidance techniques you can use? What are the new direct guidance strategies you can apply?

NOTE: The information contained in these sections are partial summaries of the DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations, are not intended to replace or provide an official interpretation of the Arizona Administrative Code and Arizona Revised Statutes for Child Care Facilities.

Summary of Key Arizona Child Care Licensing Standards

Article 5 Facility Program and Equipment

R9-5-510 Discipline and Guidance

- A.** Requires that a child care program develops and implements consistent and reasonable behavioral guidelines. Teachers are expected to model and encourage positive conduct and personal control, explain the reasons for behaviors that are not appropriate, and provide an alternative behavior. If a child presents a threat to self or others, staff may hold the child until the child regains composure.
- B.** Regulations do not allow types of discipline that result in harm to the health, safety, or welfare of an enrolled child including any type of physical punishment and abusive language.
- C.** A child may be separated from the rest of the group for unacceptable behavior. The child may not be separated from the group for more than 10 minutes without a teacher talking with the child.

Definition of “guidance” means the ongoing direction, counseling, teaching, or modeling of generally accepted social behavior through which a child learns to develop and maintain the self-control, self-reliance, and self esteem necessary to assume responsibilities, make daily living decisions, and live according to generally accepted social behavior.

Guiding Young Children’s Behavior

Early childhood teachers enjoy working with young children as they learn new things, use their creativity, interact with others, and communicate their stories. Most early childhood teachers do not enjoy the challenges presented by children’s inappropriate behaviors. Unfortunately, misbehavior or mistaken behavior is an unavoidable part of working with children. Remember, all skills need to be practiced before they are mastered.

Early childhood teachers play an important role in guiding the behavior of young children. Positive child guidance and discipline promote children’s self-esteem, help children develop responsibility, and influence children in making thoughtful choices.

Teaching young children appropriate behavior and self-discipline is a difficult task that requires:

- Patience
- Thoughtful attention
- Cooperation
- Knowledge of the child
- A reflective knowledge of one’s personal struggles with discipline issues

Early childhood teachers who effectively guide and foster children's appropriate behavior may spend less time in resolving misbehavior. The ultimate goal is to have children learn to self-regulate and guide their own behavior.

Definitions of Behavior Terms

Guidance teaches children to solve their problems in socially acceptable ways (Gartell) and refers to all methods that are used to encourage children's positive behavior.

Positive guidance methods are based on the children's development and are focused on maintaining the child's self-esteem and dignity.

Discipline methods help children learn to control their behavior and act according to their ideas of what is right and wrong. People often mistake discipline for punishment.

Punishment is used to penalize the child for making a wrong choice and is detrimental to building self-esteem. It fosters resentment and retaliation. It may make the child stop the inappropriate behavior for the moment but it will not be a learning experience.

Misbehavior or Mistaken Behavior

The concept of mistaken behavior provides a different perspective of children's behavior. Children are at the beginning of a lifelong learning process making mistakes is part of the process. Taking the perspective of mistaken behavior requires recognizing that children are learning how to interact and adapt to the world. Part of the early childhood teacher's responsibility is to guide children's learning and behavior. Just as children make mistakes in learning activities, they will make mistakes in interacting with other children, following rules, or making decisions; it is the teacher's role is to guide the child in learning to choose acceptable behaviors and make thoughtful decisions. The concept of mistaken behavior is compatible with the emphasis of positive guidance methods that include problem solving, natural and logical consequences, and redirection. (Gartell)

What is your opinion of mistaken behavior? How would you explain it to a colleague?

Causes of Behavioral Issues in Child Care

The following is a list of factors that may cause behavioral issues in a child care program. As you review the list reflect on possible changes to the classroom environment, schedule, and teacher behaviors that may prevent behavior issues from occurring.

- Teacher has unrealistic high expectations for the age and/or developmental level of the children.
- Classroom has too little space or too much open space.
- The amount of learning materials and/or equipment is not adequate for the number of children in the classroom.
- Classroom learning materials and equipment are too challenging or too simple for the age/developmental level of the children.

- Children are required to spend too much time waiting that includes: time between activities, the teacher gathering supplies, sitting at the table waiting for lunch to be served, waiting for everyone to wash their hands or use the bathroom, or standing in line waiting to go outdoors.
- Extremely structured and inflexible routines, classroom spaces, daily schedules and people.
- There is little organization in the classroom.
- The daily schedule, routines, staffing, expectations and activities are inconsistent.
- The classroom environment is loud, distracting or over-stimulating.
- Learning activities require too much looking or listening and lack concrete/hands-on involvement with learning materials or equipment.

(Adapted from Factors that Create Discipline Problems: Developed by Brenda Jones-Hardin. © WestEd, The Program for Infant/Toddler Care)

Indirect Guidance Techniques: Prevention

As you read the list of issues that cause behavior issues in child care centers, you may have thought of some ways to prevent the issues creating the problems. It is possible that your solutions involve indirect guidance techniques. Indirect guidance methods are used to prevent behavior issues when developing the physical environment, class rules, and program content.

Young children are influenced by their environment, the people in it and the physical surroundings. In an early learning and care center, children's behavior is shaped by the physical space, the curriculum and program activities, expectations of the early childhood teachers, and teacher responses to the child's behavior. Indirect guidance methods can be divided into the same four areas.

1. Physical Space

The physical environment of a classroom provides both cues for appropriate behavior and temptations for inappropriate behavior. A wide open space in a classroom will encourage children to run. A small space with pillows and interesting toys will encourage one or two children to sit down and play with the toys. Other suggested indirect guidance strategies for the classroom environment include:

- Create a classroom environment that provides clearly defined areas and learning centers. Allow enough space in the classroom for children to move freely from area to area.
- Learning centers should have adequate space for a limited number of children. Label areas with the number of children allowed in one area and monitor the number of children.
- Label areas and provide children with expectations and instructions on use of learning center materials.
- Provide adequate toys and equipment in each learning area so children are not expected to share.

- Equipment and learning materials should provide a challenge to children. Learning activities that are too difficult can create frustration and cause inappropriate behavior. Activities that are too simple, lead to boredom and encourage the children to find inappropriate ways to use the materials.
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2. Curriculum and Program Schedule

Children with a consistent daily schedule that offers a variety of interesting and fun activities are less likely to misbehave. Consistency is especially important for younger children who form attachments based on developing trusting relationships with teachers.

- Consistent daily schedules and routines help children transition between activities and routines.
- A curriculum that offers a variety of meaningful activities that appeal to children's interests and abilities minimize the occurrence of misbehavior by allowing the children to self-select activities. Offer activities that are age appropriate.
- Provide children with the opportunities during the day to choose activities. Meaningful choices encourage self-control.
- Plan and prepare for activities by having materials ready, enough materials and equipment to prevent wait times. Have additional activities planned for children who finish early.

3. Expectations

- Set clear and reasonable expectations for acceptable behavior. Provide children with specific boundaries and limits on behavior.
- Establish class rules stated in positive terms that tell children what to do rather than what not to do. For example: Instead of "No running." Say "Walk in the classroom. Running is for the playground."
- Explain the reasons for rules and limits. Example: "After you finish playing with blocks, put the blocks back on the shelf so someone does not stumble and fall down. "
- Older children can be included in developing and posting classroom rules. Involving the children in developing rules creates ownership and encourages the children to regulate their own behavior. Posting the rules is a visual reminder. Remember to refer to the classroom rules when talking about behavior and expectations.

4. Recognize and Respond to Children's Positive Behavior

- Recognition of children's positive behavior can be the most effective method for children to learn positive behaviors. Children need teacher's support, recognition, and acknowledgement for making the decision to act in an appropriate manner. When teachers use praise the child learns there are positive consequences for appropriate behaviors.
- Use effective encouragement that is specific and positive to provide meaningful feedback and help children develop self-esteem. Effective encouragement is sincere,

selective, specific, focused on an individual child or small group of children, and used to acknowledge a specific appropriate behavior.

- Examples of effective praise:
 - Compares each child's progress with their past performance not on the accomplishments of others. "Jack, you participated in the group game today."
 - Focuses on improvement of process rather than an evaluation of a finished product. "Brian, you really focused on finding the right pieces to make the lego truck."
 - Connects children's behavior to their feelings of enjoyment or satisfaction or how their behavior affects another person. "Lea, you and Ky had a great time learning to play the new game."
- Ineffective praise is non-specific, the same statement or acknowledgement is given to all the children. Ineffective praise is discounted by children and may lower a child's self-confidence, hinder achievement, and make children dependent on external praise.

Examples of ineffective praise:

- All of the children receive a sticker for good behavior at the end of the day regardless of behaviors that occurred.
 - The teacher uses the same word to acknowledge behavior for example: Awesome or Good Job.
 - Use of evaluative statements such as "You are the best helper in the classroom."
- In the rush of daily activities remembering to recognize children for appropriate behavior may be forgotten as you deal with negative behaviors that impact other children. It is important to keep in mind that over time regular recognition of children engaged in positive behavior has the potential to change the tone and atmosphere of a classroom.

Information for this section was adapted from: Positive Guidance Techniques by S.K. Adams and J. Baronberg and School Age Connections (2004).

Talk with your Center Director about how indirect guidance and acknowledgement of positive behaviors can be used in your new classroom.

What happens when mistaken/misbehavior occurs?

Even in the best classrooms with experienced teachers, behavior problems are going to happen. Some inappropriate behavior is normal in an early childhood program. Children do not follow class rules, a new child has a tantrum, a toddler bites another child, and one child hits another child on the playground. What are the steps to take to determine the reasons for the misbehavior? What positive guidance techniques are most effective?

Children will make mistakes and engage in inappropriate behaviors as they are part of the learning process. Teachers have the opportunity to teach children the appropriate behaviors and pro-social skills. The following sequence of steps provides a process for understanding misbehavior and guiding children in developing appropriate behavior.

1. **Determine why the child is misbehaving and what he/she is trying to accomplish.** Children engage in inappropriate behavior for a variety of reasons. Understanding the reason for the child's mistaken behavior is the first step in teaching the child appropriate behavior. Observe when the problem occurs, who is involved, and what the child gains from the behavior. The following are some of the reasons for inappropriate behavior:
 - The child does not recognize the behavior as inappropriate.
 - The child is engaged in a power struggle with an adult.
 - The child wants attention and may engage in inappropriate behavior to gain attention.
 - The child is frustrated by the inability to accomplish, participate, or complete a task and does not have the skills or requires adult support.
 - The child wants to control a situation.
 - The child is not feeling well, is tired, or hungry.
 - The child may be doing what is developmentally appropriate (ex. Toddlers continually dumping toys.)
 - The child is upset, anxious, or disappointed and does not have the communication skills to explain his/her feelings.
2. **Respond to the situation.** Once you understand the problem determine the guidance strategy for the specific situation and the child. In cases of safety or health, you may need to respond immediately to the behavior by removing the child or taking other appropriate actions. Help the child determine a better way to meet his/her goals.
3. **Establish the consequences.** This technique is most effective with children over the age of 3 who have the cognitive abilities to understand consequences. When young children react it is typically a reflex and not thought process. Engage preschool and school age children in problem solving and creating a plan to avoid the behavior in the future. In some cases you may want to talk with the child about the behavior. The following steps provide some suggestions on conducting the discussion:
 - The child should have time to calm down before talking about the problem.
 - Talk to the child in a quiet and private place.
 - Discuss the problem in a respectful, calm, and problem-solving manner.
 - Outline the problem by asking the child to describe what occurred.
 - Older children can identify the problem and possible solutions.
 - Point out the reactions of others involved in the situation and help the child to recognize the way their behavior affected others.
 - Remind the child of the behavior expectation or rule that was violated.
 - Reinforce the consequences of the behavior and the plan to change the behavior going forward.

Direct Guidance Techniques

Direct guidance techniques are used to respond to children's mistaken behavior as it occurs. Behavior methods that are effective with one child may not be effective with all children.

Each situation and each child is unique and behavior methods need to be based on the specific circumstances of the inappropriate behavior.

Basic Guidelines

- Communicate with children in a respectful manner that validates the child's feelings.
- Provide children with the acceptable behavior and explain the reasons why the behavior needs to change
- Assist the child in learning an appropriate behavior. For example ask the child what they might do if they were angry at another child. An acceptable alternative behavior may be to walk away from the situation.
- Clarify the classroom rules and expectations providing reasons for the limits.
- Model the behaviors you want children to follow by explaining and showing children the appropriate behavior. Example: "Put the books back on the shelf one at a time."

The following are common direct guidance methods:

- **Offer children manageable choices.** Help children learn to make appropriate choices. Provide choices that are acceptable by offering two acceptable alternatives. Example: "Do you want to go to the book nook or block center?" Avoid offering choices when there is no choice and avoid asking closed questions where children are not allowed to answer such as "Do you want to take a nap?"
- **Change the situation.** Some inappropriate behaviors can be resolved by changes to the physical environment, adding materials, removing equipment, splitting children into smaller or different groups.
- **Redirect children** and offer acceptable substitutes: Provide children with an alternative behavior. "Alex, books are for reading. Let's go to the book nook and find a place to look at books." "Lizzie, the water needs to stay in the water table. You need to move to another area. There is playdough in the art area, let's go over there."
- **Redirect older children** by teaching the child how to complete an activity in a safer or more acceptable way. "Donovan, you are really working hard on building the block city. How can you make the block structures safer and more stable?"
- **Logical consequences** should only be used with children over the age of three, provide a connection between the behaviors and the corrective action. Using logical consequences includes a reminder and the reason for the rule. Example: "Harry, the paint needs to be on the paper. You have painted the table and I cannot let you continue to paint. We cannot keep the paint on the table. Let's get the water and a sponge so you can help clean the table. "

- **Facilitate problem solving** by teaching children the following process to resolve conflicts with other children:
 - Ask the children to identify and explain the problem. Listen to all parties involved in the conflict. “What is the problem?”
 - Ask the children to develop possible solutions to the resolve the conflict. “What can you do?”
 - Ask the children to consider possible solutions. “What might happen if.....”
 - Ask the children to select a solution and use it.
 - Ask the children if the solution is working.

Time-Out is a frequently used guidance strategy used in child care centers; however it is rarely used correctly. Time-out can be an effective strategy for addressing problem behaviors when used as a **limited** and planned guidance method. ***It should NEVER be used on children under the age of three as children of that age are simply reacting and their behavior is not a conscious thought process.*** Time-out provides children with the opportunity to “try again”. Often time-out is misused as a punishment and creates anger and resentment in a child which rarely leads to a teachable moment. Time-out should be uses as a ***last resort*** and after other guidance techniques have been tried. Steps to using time-out correctly:

1. Do not show anger and respectfully guide the child to a quiet area to help him/her calm down and gain self-control. This should not be a specific spot where child is humiliated and isolated from the group such as a “time-out” chair or corner.
2. Explain why the behavior is inappropriate as simply as possible. Example: “I can’t let you throw blocks as you could hurt someone.”
3. Sit with the child at eye level and discuss more appropriate options or better choices to help the child meet his/her goal. Make sure to help the child identify his/her feelings and acceptable ways to express them.
4. Time-out should never last more than 3-4 minutes. *Remember it can only be used on children over the age of 3.*
5. Help reintroduce the child back into the group.

Signs that time-out is not working and being used as PUNISHMENT:

- Teachers are threatening to “put the children in time-out” if they do not behave.
- Some children are in time-out on a frequent basis and for long periods of time.
- Teachers use time-out when they want a break from a child.
- Children are teasing other children when they are in time-out.
- Time-out is the only guidance strategy used.
- Teacher and the child engage in a physical struggle during the time-out process.
- The teacher scolds and provides negative feedback to the child during time-out.

As a new teacher you will work with your Center Director on the guidance policies and procedures for your center. Being aware of the various types of guidance strategies will help you in creating a positive classroom environment.

Applying Your Knowledge

How does this information affect your work with young children?

Young children respond to a nurturing, warm, and structured environment that provides consistent expectations and follow through by early childhood teachers. Learning how to effectively work with young children requires an understanding of indirect and direct guidance strategies to use in creating a structured and consistent environment for young children. An essential element in developing the environment is setting the expectations for children's behavior and providing guidance on appropriate classroom behavior. The information in this section provides methods and techniques to assist in developing respectful and positive relationships with the children in your classroom.

Check Your Understanding

- ✓ Explain 3 indirect guidance methods you will use.
- ✓ List 2 direct guidance methods you think will be use.
- ✓ Explain your beliefs about positive guidance? Why is positive guidance important in a child care program?

Resources

Printable Resources

Prevention: To Promote Optimal Social Development of All Children Lally, J.R. (Ed.). (1990). *Infant/toddler caregiving: A guide to social-emotional growth and socialization*

http://www.pitc.org/cs/pitclib/download/pitc_res/317/Prevention.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d

West Ed, Factors That Create Discipline Problems: Brenda Jones – Hardin

http://www.pitc.org/cs/pitclib/download/pitc_res/314/Factors%20That%20Create%20Discipline%20Problems.pdf?x-r=pcfile_d

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Module 5-Section C Worksheet

Explain 3 indirect guidance methods you will use.

1.

2.

3.

List 2 direct guidance methods you think will be use.

1.

2.

Explain your beliefs about positive guidance? Why is positive guidance important in a child care program?
