



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Vol. II, No. 3

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ **Provide positive guidance**
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ Individualize care and learning activities
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Provide Positive Guidance

Addressing Challenging Child Behaviors

Child care providers are often at a loss about what to do when an individual child in their care displays inappropriate, defiant, angry, or aggressive behaviors. Persistent, challenging patterns of misbehavior occur when one or many of the child's needs are not being met. All humans, beginning in early childhood, need a reliable source of food and housing, a sense of safety and security, a feeling of belonging and being loved, to feel valued and self-sufficient, and to have opportunities to learn and understand the world. Very young children will do whatever it takes to get their physical and emotional needs met. They are not capable of being calm, cooperative, and curious learners if they are hungry, tired, neglected, or made to feel that they are bad, deficient, or unworthy of love. They may be acting out to get attention from others, gain a sense of control, get revenge for perceived hurts, or to remove themselves from a stressful or frightening situation. When behaviors such as these occur, it is a situation which needs to be addressed by providers and parents working together.

In this newsletter, we will discuss an approach that helps you engage the family to jointly address the child's behavior by:

- Documenting occurrences over a period of time,
- Scheduling a conference to have a non-judgmental discussion with the family,
- Agreeing to a shared behavior modification plan, and
- Continuing to discuss the child's progress.

The goal is to work together to understand the underlying issues, without providers or family members pointing fingers at one another, and to join forces to respond in a consistent and positive way that redirects the child to more appropriate behaviors. The foundation for this type of shared effort is the existence of a strong positive relationship between you and the families, which had been developed over time.



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Documentation

Before one can take action to resolve the issue of challenging behaviors, it is first necessary to write down the occurrences over a period of time—at least a week or two. Try to objectively observe and descriptively document the following:

- What the child did,
- When the incident occurred,
- Who the child was with,
- What led to the incident, and
- How you handled the occurrence.

Once you have completed a factual documentation over a period of time, you can study it for hints about what is going on with this child. Look for patterns such as if the incidents happen with a particular person, at certain times of the day, or in the same areas. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Is your approach consistent? Did you try different approaches?
- Have you communicated to the child that even though you don't like the behavior, you still love him or her?
- Is there anything that you can change in your environment, your schedule, or your interactions that might temper the child's behavior?

If you feel that you have done your best to support the child, prepare to have a conference with the family.



Conference

Many providers establish a policy in advance of having regular conferences with families. That way, the family may not feel defensive when you need to call them for a meeting to discuss a problem.

- Arrange a convenient time when you and the family member can have an uninterrupted discussion.
- Start the discussion by pointing out the good qualities of this child and what the child does well.
- Ask the family member what they like best about their child. (Their answers may give you some insights into their relationship with the child). Spend a few minutes with them sharing about the child's best qualities.
- Follow up by asking if they have any concerns. It's possible that they will have a concern that is similar to yours.
- If they do mention any behavior issues, you might ask them how they have been handling it at home. This is your opportunity to elaborate on how important it is to work together to address the problem and to share what you know about positive child guidance.
- If the family doesn't share any concerns, describe one of the behaviors that you have observed and ask them if they have seen the same behavior at home. Tread lightly—it's really hard for parents to hear that their child isn't perfect.

Implement a Shared Response

As much as possible, involve the family in planning how to address the problem. How you both respond to the behavior should depend on the developmental age of the child, and the underlying cause of the behaviors (if it can be identified). It's important to develop a consistent approach that all can agree on. Focus on guidance, not punishment. Punishment is negative and is intended to hurt or humiliate a child. Even "Time-Outs" can be counter-productive if the child is made to feel isolated and unwanted. The purpose of guidance is to help children learn from their mistakes and help them learn how to solve their problems rather than punish them for having problems that overwhelm them. Some possible strategies, might be:

- Remove the child from a problem situation in a matter-of-fact manner with a calm but authoritative tone of voice;
- Redirect the child to a more positive substitute behavior, i.e., if the child is throwing toys, provide a ball for throwing. Give a very active and boisterous child more time for running and active play outdoors.



- Assist the child in recognizing the benefits of positive behaviors by paying attention to and acknowledging the child when he or she is doing something that is not disruptive such as playing quietly with Legos or being helpful to a friend.
- Teach your ground rules and clarify expectations. For example: "Sit down, please, when you eat. Make sure your bottom is in the chair and your feet are on the floor." Use natural consequences when the child refuses to cooperate. In the above example, the food should not be served until the child is sitting.



Change Takes Time

Families, like the misbehaving child, may need encouragement to keep trying if they have given up or reverted to their former unproductive ways of responding to the child. You too may get frustrated and feel like giving up. Remember that it takes time for children to absorb new skills and habits. In fact, things may get worse before they get better because the child may try very hard to reestablish control over the situation. Look for small steps that the child is making toward progress. Changes in behavior usually start small. In addition, perhaps the plan that you both came up with isn't a good fit for the child and needs to be fine-tuned. If so, continue your documentation efforts, look for patterns of behaviors, and together with the family, think of ways to positively guide the child's behavior.

When Your Best Efforts Don't Work

The best laid plans will probably not work unless you and the family members who have the most contact with the child are on the same page. Continue to dialogue with the family on a daily basis. This does not have to be a formal conference, but can be in the form of a log that is sent home with the family daily. Share news of any progress the child has made as well as areas that still need improvement. Similarly, invite the family to share strategies that are working for them and things that are not.

Keep reminding yourself and the family that your partnership to intervene is in the best interest of their child. Be persistent and consistent. Continue to show the child that he is loved despite the way he behaves. And when all else fails, consider whether a consultation with an early intervention specialist or a children's mental health provider might be needed.

Reflection Sheet and Award Book

- To receive the award book for this month, fill out your caregiver's reflection sheet and return it to the Learning to Grow Program in the postage paid envelope by the deadline posted.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.
- Update your address or contact information if any changes have taken place.

Citations:

Ferris Miller, D. (2004). *Positive Child Guidance*, 4th Edition. Pp. 94 -207. Thomson Delmar Learning, Canada.

Gartrell, D and Gallo, M. (2015). Guidance with Children who Show Challenging Behaviors. *Exchange*, Vol. 37, Issue 5, No. 225. September-October 2015. Pp. 18-22.



REMINDER: Registered QCC Participants can use their participation in the program to fulfill the relicensing requirement of “increased knowledge.” Ask your DHS Licensing Social Worker about the requirements today.

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