

# Interactions with Children

## National Law:

166 – Offence to use inappropriate discipline

## National Regulations:

155 – Interactions with children

156 – Relationships in groups

168 – Education and care services must have policies and procedures

## National Quality Framework:

5 – Relationships with children

## Policy Statement

Our interactions with children are 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



## Goals / What are we going to do?

- Ensure that throughout the centre we ALL get on the same page. What are the centre rules?
- Ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing, of children and educators.
- Support educators who are implementing behavioural guidance strategies and/or plans for children, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults).
- Provide time for reflecting upon interactions with children.

## Procedures / How will we do this?

Some General Behaviour Strategies;

1. Clear centre behavioural expectations which are understood and consistently upheld.
2. Modelling appropriate behaviour and language use yourself.
3. Avoiding no's without alternatives - instead providing specific suggestions on what you'd like children to do.
4. Consequences which relate to and reinforce a child's learning.
5. Recruiting 'special helpers'
6. Providing choice points which do not change the desired outcome. Remember to use 'when-then' language rather than bribery (which is often worded as 'if- then').
7. Encouraging a group of children to follow instructions by making sure you have their attention and being fun and creative whenever possible
8. Managing transitions through the use of warnings, choice, and consistency

Our programs promote a positive approach to managing interactions and behaviour of all children. We believe in encouraging children to resolve problems 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.

### **What to say when children are arguing?**

When working with children, before involving yourself in disputes ask yourself, do these children need me? Do I actually need to get involved? Can they sort it themselves?

#### Gather the Data

Now you have decided you are going to help negotiate, avoid blaming anyone (even if you think someone is at fault) Ask:

What happened?  
How did you feel when?  
Why did you?  
What happened then?

#### State the problem back clearly

State the problem in terms of both children's needs. Say:

You want the bike and so does Taylah. What can we do so you are both happy?

#### Generate lots of ideas

Go for quantity of ideas, not quality. Encourage children to have silly ideas as well as practical ones.

*Encourage different ideas:* If a child offers similar ideas tell them how they are similar and ask for something different. For example, "Hitting, punching and kicking are all hurting ideas. What is something different?"

*Avoid criticizing ideas:* If the child offers an idea you don't like think about what would happen if they implemented it.

*Review the problem frequently:* Children will get side tracked, remind them of the problem. For example, "Yes that is a problem too, but right now we are trying to solve how both of you can ride the bikes"

*Focus on children's ideas:* Resist the temptation to add your ideas unless you are asked. If you offer lots of good ideas, children will depend on your skill rather than developing their own.

#### Evaluate the Ideas

Ask the children to think about what will occur when they implement one of their ideas. "What might happen if you \_\_\_\_\_?"

#### Ask for a decision and help children plan

List the alternatives, ask children for a decision, help them plan how to implement the idea. Congratulate children on finding a solution and remind them if their plan does not work out there are other ideas.

And for the children who will not listen or negotiate – it just a matter of saying 'if you won't help me decide I will have to decide for you'

### **The language we use**

Teacher Tom encourages us to make Informational Statements not give commands. Commands such as "pick up the block" "stop playing please" we leave children with only two choices, obey or disobey, while when we simply make statements of fact we greatly increase the odds that any individual child will make their own decision to participate.

Adding a child's name adds an even greater dimension "I see Marcus putting blocks away"

Informative statements are just statements about fact;

"It's clean-up time,"

"I see a block on the floor,"

"The dress up's go on the hooks,"

Teacher Tom writes create a world in which children can think for themselves, where they make their own decisions about how to best engage in the classroom community. He adds further;

Likewise, I strive to avoid questions unless I'm genuinely curious about the answer and I have a reasonable expectation that this particular child can answer it. Too often we use questions to control or test children, to shape them to our agenda: "What colour is that?" "How many marbles am I holding?" "Does that look safe?" Informative statements, in contrast, simply provide potentially useful information that the child may or may not use: "That colour is red." "I'm holding three marbles." "That doesn't look safe to me."

None of us, of course, can ever completely eliminate directive statements or questions, they have their place and are, besides, simply too ingrained in us by now. But we can, with conscious effort begin to replace them with more informative statements, and when we do, even a little, we begin to create a new reality, one in which there is more space for children to do their own thinking.

### **The descriptive cue sequence**

The descriptive cue sequence is a powerful tool developed by Tom Drummond for helping educators get in the habit of speaking informatively.

The sequence gradually increases the amount of "push" with each step. Don't move on to the next step as long as you are getting the results you want.

#### Give cue

Instead of directing a child give a cue, such as, "It's time to go inside."

Some educators may prefer sounding a signal of some kind, like a bell or a song.

#### No help

Wait response for 10 to 15 seconds look for appropriate behaviour and reward it by describing it

or with a non-verbal recognition (e.g., thumbs up, big smile)

### Describe

Describe what needs to be done without telling children what to do. Give facts—what needs doing, where things are – “The lego goes in the box”

### Model

Model the desired behaviour by doing some yourself  
Talk aloud about what you are doing.

### Direct

If, inaction is still a problem, give a simple, clear direction (e.g., “Please put on your socks.”)

### Set a contingency

Make the next activity dependent on completion of the task e.g., “When you put on your socks, you can choose the cars you want to take outside.”



## **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 Director or responsible person in charge.

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.

When a child has bitten another child, it is important that educators understand why the child is biting, adopt an educational approach with the child to teach them the appropriate way to manage their feelings or enter a social situation and appropriately document the incident.

## **Toileting**

Children's toileting independence should be encouraged when using the bathrooms. Children are to be offered frequent opportunities for toileting particularly after meal times and sleep periods.

No child will be spoken to harshly, yelled at or belittled because they have had an accident. This will be seen as an opportunity for learning. Some children will become very emotional over their accidents and frustrated with toilet training. It may help to say things like “That tricky poo! It wouldn't wait until we made it to the toilet. See if we can catch it next time.” Children must be handled with dignity as they are cleaned up and their clothing changed. Toileting should become part of the routine and should be a positive experience. When toileting is fun and relaxed, children are more likely to learn more quickly and be proud of their achievements. Under no circumstance should a child be made to sit on the toilet against their will.

Correct use of the bathroom should be shown to children as just like other areas of the service the bathroom has rules and guidelines for children. The service will teach these rules, displaying photos of children following the steps of using the bathroom appropriately. Other rules to follow will be

- Use an appropriate voice in the bathroom.
- Use appropriate body movements - no running.
- Boys should be shown how to lift the seat and how to replace it after use.
- Explain what happens if a child has had an accident.
- Encourage children to flush.
- Encourage them to check supplies and let a teacher know.
- Explain the importance of turning off the taps.
- Explain how to wash and dry our hands.
- Praise positive efforts made by individuals for any successful attempt.

## **Toilet Training**

Toilet training is an area where many parents can feel unsure. The service educators will have regular chats with particular families to provide continuity for the child. Keeping daily nappy charts of both nappy changing and toileting will allow parents to know of the child's toileting habits through the day at the service. Lots of reassurance and positive reinforcement for the child and showing parent's an

understanding of the children's needs will help all concerned during this process.

Some signs that a child may be ready for toilet training:

- Can sit still for longer than 2 minutes.
- Is of an age where it is reasonable to expect that they may have some control- e.g. over the age of two for bladder control.
- Can understand simple instructions or simple words or signs.
- Stays dry for 1-2 hours at a time.
- Does a reasonable sized wee each time.
- Appears to dislike being wet.
- Indicates to you that they are or needs to do a wee.

### **Identifying Developmental Delays**

For inclusion to be successful it must be a collaborative process; a partnership between the family and professionals that reflects and identifies the concerns and priorities of the family and ensures that the child can participate in all aspects of the program at a level that is suitable for their individual needs. Families must firstly admit that there is a problem. Denying your child has additional needs is highly detrimental to the child getting early intervention. The longer the problems go unattended the wider the gap becomes in the child's ability to meet their developmental milestones.

Children may need extra support if they:

- Have not met the developmental milestones for the age –an educator will be able to assist.
- Are unable to sit for short periods for a song or story.
- Are violent towards themselves, their peers or educators.
- Their language skills are not developmentally appropriate.
- They are compulsive or impulsive
- Are unable to follow directions that are age appropriate.
- Are anxious or are suffering severe separation anxiety.

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

- Document when, where, what happened before, what happened next, date and time
- 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
- Remember children learn slowly and forget quickly
- Use Makaton for non-verbal children
- Consider a change of group, a small holiday from childcare.

### **Inclusion Support Referrals**

Should children's behaviour become dangerous to themselves, other children or educators at the service we will be left with no alternative than to suspend or limit care until such time as the child can safely come back to group care. Management has to ensure that everyone is safe.

**Step 1** Conduct a meeting with family and key educators. Parents will be encouraged to seek a referral from their family doctor to relevant support services

**Step 2** The service may make a referral for support from Inclusion Support through KU Children's Services on 1800 811 039.

An ISF (Inclusion Support Facilitator) will visit the service to assist with service support and meet the child. A permission form will be required to be signed by the child's parents.

The ISF will assist in developing a Service Support Plan (SSP). The SSP is a tool to help identify the service's strengths, resources, needs and future actions to enable you to create a quality, inclusive environment. The SSP is your working document to be shared with families so that we can work together to achieve the goals identified.

**Step 3** An Inclusion Support Facilitator will support the service to identify and access Inclusion resources for which you may be eligible. This could include: the Bicultural Support Program, the Indigenous Professional Support Unit, Professional Development, Specialised and General Equipment Pools, Immediate Time limited Funding and Inclusion Support Subsidy (ISS).

Where an SSP has indicated that additional support may be required, your Inclusion Support Facilitator will initiate the application process for funding. Immediate Time limited Funding is a short term, time-limited response that is processed by the Inclusion Support Agency and paid to ECEC services to enable them to be more responsive to families and children with additional needs.

Inclusion Support Subsidy is a funding subsidy paid to eligible ECEC services to enable them to include children with ongoing

high support needs. (Children with ongoing high support needs include those with a diagnosed disability, children undergoing continuing assessment for a disability, and humanitarian refugee children.)

**Step 4** Continue liaising with the family and key educators. All information should be shared openly and honestly.

**Families who are unwilling to support the service or follow up with service or the Inclusion support recommendations and their child continues to put educators and children at risk will have their care suspended.**

### Links to Theory

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards founded on respect for the dignity and worth of each child, regardless of race, colour, language, religion, opinions, origins, wealth, birth status or ability.

By agreeing to undertake the obligations of the Convention of the Rights of the Child, Australia has committed to protecting and ensuring children's rights. This includes Article 19 of the convention, which states that children have the right from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally.

In ensuring the dignity and rights of children our service will consider:

- Spaces, resources and routines to minimise children's frustration.
- Encourage children to make positive choices about their day and activities.
- Encourage independence and increased autonomy.
- Ensure that we use positive language, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice when redirecting or discussing behaviour choices.
- Responding to children's disruptive behaviour calmly and acknowledging their feelings and problem solve other ways to respond.
- Talking to children about how others feel, how we celebrate differences.
- Respectfully using the information from families and other professionals to respond to and support children.

### Erik Erikson

When we apply Erikson's theory in our interactions with children we;

- Form attachments with children.
- Respond warmly and consistently to babies' needs.
- Talk gently to babies if we can't pick them up or deal with their needs right away.

- Tune in to children's interests and skill levels and offer just enough support to help them do things for themselves.
- Provide a variety of play experiences so children can explore and choose what to do.
- Never pressure a child into toileting before they are ready.
- Provide play spaces with lots of movable parts so children can organize and develop their own play.
- Invite children to contribute to the program, what they want to do.
- Respect their play and give them time.

### Jean Piaget

When we apply Piaget's theory in our interactions with children we;

- Educator's nurturance (comfort, teaching, and play) should be suitable for the individual child's stage of thinking.
- Develop an understanding of what children can and cannot do based on their age and intellectual ability.
- Offer tasks that enable a child to achieve and to challenge their skills. If they are given tasks that are too difficult for them, they will not be able to succeed, which may affect them negatively, psychologically and emotionally.
- See children as active learners, listen to their ideas.
- Help children find their own answers.
- Know that babies will use materials in a different way to toddlers; toddlers differently to prep children.
- Look for children's interest and plan to build on them.
- Let children repeat an activity, sometimes many times, when we can see that it is still interesting to them.

Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics

In relation to children, I will:

"Ensure childhood is a time for being in the here and now and not solely about preparation for the future"

"Respect children as capable learners by including their perspectives in teaching, learning and assessment"

**National Quality Framework – Relationships with children**

5.1. Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child.

5.2. Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships.

### **Belonging, Being and Becoming – Principles**

1. Secure respectful and reciprocal relationships.

### **Belonging, Being and Becoming – Practices**

2. Responsiveness to children.

### **Belonging, Being and Becoming – Children have a strong sense of identity**

- 1.1. Children feel safe, secure and supported.
- 1.4. Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect.

### **Belonging, Being and Becoming – Children are connected with and contribute to their world**

- 2.3. Children become aware of fairness.

### **Culturally Valued Perspectives**

Australia's rich cultural diversity is one of our greatest strengths. We're home to the oldest continuing living culture in the world – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 2.8% of the Australian population, represented by hundreds of different traditional groups. The beliefs, practices, ceremonies and customs within these groups can be quite diverse.

Over a quarter of resident Australians were born overseas. Migration has also contributed to the richness in diversity of cultures, ethnicities and races in Australia. Nearly half were either born overseas or had one or both parents born overseas, and there are over 300 separately identified languages spoken in Australian homes. More than one-fifth of Australians speak a language other than English at home.

So you'll have contact with families from different cultural backgrounds. Children and young people in your care will form friendships, learn with and interact with people from many cultures different to their own. When children and young people grow up to understand, appreciate and respect the cultural, racial and ethnic diversity around them, we gain a positive and accepting community, which benefits everyone.

This benefits individuals because when people feel accepted, respected and included, they have better mental health. Children and young people develop the skills and attitudes that will assist them in their relationships and working life, which contribute to their social and emotional wellbeing.

It also benefits communities, as environments where people enjoy positive mental health are more pro-social and more productive.

Child Australia has a wonderful booklet named [Cultural Connections](#) with many strategies on

interactions with children and thinking about these interactions from a cultural and social perspective.

### **Reflective questions about this policy.**

How do educators own beliefs and attitudes influence the way in which we interact with children?

Does your approach allow for culture of respect, equity and fairness?

Do educators consistently apply this policy across the service? In each room with all children?

How do we embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander practices into the service?

### **When answering the reflective questions did you have areas identified for improvement:**

If change is required:

- Discuss any proposed changes to how we interact with children
- Obtain agreement with others about how issues might be addressed.

To implement the changes effectively:

- Trial the changes
- Seek feedback and consult.

Review of change is an important step:

- Evaluate and document in your Quality Improvement Plan.



