



Guidance and Discipline Policy

The primary goal of this policy is to support children as they learn to function in a social setting, and help them to develop a positive self-concept, self-control and how to take responsibility for their behavior. Discipline should not be used as punishment, but instead as a guide to the children as they learn to communicate express their feelings, consider the words and feelings of others, negotiate conflicts, recognize differences, as well as learning appropriate behavior and expectations for a classroom. We also want to provide an environment that is fun, comfortable and safe and that will encourage learning.

Role of Teachers and Staff

Staff members are responsible for the guidance and discipline of the students under their care. Our center's environment, schedules, routines and activities are all designed to foster positive behavior management. Additionally, staff create appropriate expectations based on age, developmental stage and cultural preferences of the individual children in their care.

Toddler Classrooms

- Be calm and consistent
- State directions clearly and simply
- Accept child's feelings and provide outlets for them
- Prepare a play space that is fun, interesting and safe for all children
- Allow children time to adjust to transitions
- Refocus toddlers' attention before inappropriate behavior occurs

Preschool Classrooms

- Establish simple, consistent rules or expectations for classroom community
- Model and teach children strategies for solving interpersonal conflicts (negotiation, compromise, empathy)
- Manage their class and the environment to alleviate problems before they start
- Allow children to resolve their own conflicts when possible
- Help children to express both positive and negative emotions appropriately, both verbally and through movement, art and play
- Help children to verbalize their feelings, frustrations and concerns
- Involve children in cooperative projects
- Prepare a learning environment that is welcoming, comfortable, interesting, safe and encourages children's self-direction
- Guide children as they learn to problem solve (describing problems, considering the perspective of others, verbalizing alternative solutions)

All Classrooms

- Model positive and appropriate behavior and language, including choice of words, subject and tone
- Praise and encourage appropriate behavior, including creativity, kindness, good listening skills, good problem-solving skills, being helpful, etc
- Ensure discipline/guidance is always positive, productive and immediate when behavior is inappropriate
- Communicate with parents and be available for parent's questions and concerns
- Closely observe and supervise children's activities and interactions

Role of Parents and Guardians

Peace ELC encourages open communication between families and staff. This communication can be done through Brightwheel messages or in person during drop-off or pick-up, or during a scheduled meeting. Our center has scheduled parent-teacher conferences in the fall and spring, and other meetings can be scheduled throughout the year when needed. Staff members will also reach out to parents if a child's behavior is concerning or if patterns start to emerge. We welcome parental input as to what works best for their child, so that the most consistent approach can be established to help a child develop the skills needed to be the best version of themselves.

Negative Discipline that is not allowed at Peace:

- Inflicting or threatening any kind of physical pain
- Any form of emotional abuse, including name-calling, shouting/yelling, threatening, ridiculing, shaming/humiliating, rejecting, or any kind of abusive or profane language
- Threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or the bathroom

Steps for Addressing Challenging Behaviors

We define a behavior as "challenging" when a child consistently does not follow directions, repeatedly hurts themselves or others (physically or emotionally), often disrespects people or classroom materials, or requires constant attention from the staff. The following steps will be taken when a child is struggling with a challenging behavior to help that child to continue to be a valuable member of the classroom and to gain skills in self-regulation, self-control and how to be part of a group.

1. The staff will observe and document the child's behavior, strategies tried, and the child's response to those strategies. This step is helpful when seeking to understand what the child is attempting to communicate with their behavior, as well as anything that might be triggering a specific behavior.
2. The staff will use a variety of techniques to resolve the problems one-on-one with the child.
3. The staff may consult with each other and the directors for help with the issue.
4. The staff will discuss the issue with the child's parents.
5. The staff will request a conference with the parents to discuss the issues, possible causes for the behavior, appropriate consequences and a plan for moving forward. This conference may include a director.
6. A mental health consultant will be asked to come and observe the child and the classroom and work with the teacher to give support in the situation. We partner with the Jefferson Center for Mental Health for this support.
7. If all the steps listed above have been implemented and there has not been significant improvement in the challenging behavior, a meeting will be scheduled between the teacher, the parents, a director and the mental health consultant to determine next steps.

A Note on Exclusion and Expulsion

If a child participates in a behavior that endangers or harms others, they will be temporarily supervised away from other children. An adult can help the child move away from the group and allow the child to process the problem verbally. An adult will stay close to any child who is emotionally out of control and needs some private time to regain composure and be ready to rejoin the group.

As a rule, Peace does not normally suspend or expel students. However, if a child's behavior places the child, other children, adults or property at a consistent or extraordinary risk of harm, it may be necessary for the family to withdraw the child from our program. This would only be in an extreme case and after the steps above have been exhausted.

Resources used in creating this policy:

- *Child Guidance Policy* from the State of Illinois, Dept of Human Services: Illinois Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program
- *Guidance and Discipline Policy* from Oakton College Early Childhood Education Center
- *Child Guidance Policy* from Owens Community College Early Learning Center, Perrysburg, OH
- *Addressing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: The Leader's Role* by Barbara Kaiser & Judy Sklar Rasminsky (NAEYC Books)