Children face many challenges throughout their lives. Learning acceptable behaviours and being able to regulate their own behaviours in different social and emotional environments, or when interacting with their peers or adults, are two of those challenges.

Sound knowledge and understanding of children’s social, emotional and cognitive development and recommended appropriate practices assist services in developing a behaviour guidance policy.

Please note: the term discipline is often associated with punishment because it has previously been defined by what adults do to children to control behaviours (Stonehouse, 2004, 47). It is also used as a threat or consequence of inappropriate behaviour. The term behaviour guidance is preferred because it includes all forms of behaviour and not just those behaviours labelled as ‘negative’. Staff/carers should remember that an environment which supports children to learn self-regulation and guide their own behaviour reflects the importance of a behaviour guidance policy.

Policy statement

• The service’s Behaviour Guidance:
  o emphasises that children have the same rights as adults; and
  o recognises, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all persons1.

• Families and staff/carers should use appropriate strategies to guide children to recognise, manage and learn from their behaviours and express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.

• We are committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it:
  o reflects the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns;
  o respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and carers;
  o understands why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances;
  o promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children’s safety and security rather than curbing their play experiences, curiosity or creativity;
  o defines clear and transparent caregiving strategies that communicate how behaviour guidance is implemented by the service;
  o informs the service’s stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans; and
  o explains the service’s commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies.

• The purpose of the service’s Behaviour Guidance Policy is to:
  o encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build children’s confidence and self-esteem;
  o provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and

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1 For the purpose of this policy, ‘persons’ include children, families, staff, carers, carers’ family, management, ancillary staff (administrative staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, maintenance personnel), students, volunteers, visitors, local community, school community, licensee, and service owner.
• promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between the service's stakeholders and external agencies.

• The service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:
  - age and development;
  - general health and wellbeing;
  - relationships with their family;
  - play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
  - carers' caregiving strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
  - relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors; and
  - external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events.

• Families and carers display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children.
  Carers, other children and families should refrain from labelling a child’s inappropriate or negative behaviour as ‘naughty’ or ‘bad’. Similarly, traditional labels such as ‘good boy’ or ‘good girl’ identify the individual but not the positive behaviour. For example, when a child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, staff/carers should identify the behaviour that reinforces the achievement and not label the worth of the individual. Instead of ‘good boy/girl’, the staff/carer can respond with “thank you (child’s name) for washing your hands with soap before lunch” or “thank you for remembering to clean your hands before you eat.”

• While carers are aware and respect individual children’s and families’ backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with carers’ knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities.

• The Occupational Health and Safety Act\(^2\) states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing.
  Carers who are implementing behaviour guidance strategies and/or plans for children that display inappropriate behaviours, (especially if the behaviour is aggressive towards other children or adults) need continued support and assistance. Carers can experience levels of stress or anxiety, which may lead to sickness or apathy in the workplace. Services have a duty of care to ensure that employees’ mental and emotional wellbeing is considered, as well as the child’s need for positive behaviour guidance strategies.

**Rationale**

The rationale represents a statement of reasons that detail why the policy and/or procedures have been developed and are important to the service.

**Important:**

\(^2\) There are legislative Acts and regulations in NSW that address the issue of Occupational Health and Safety.
• The use of physical punishment\textsuperscript{3} by carers as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

• The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by carers as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

• The service may decide to explain in its relevant policy how it will communicate to families why the use of physical punishment is not accepted in the service.

• In meeting the service’s duty of care under the NSW regulations there is a shared responsibility between the service and its stakeholders that the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures are adhered to.
  o We have a code of ethics that can assist in governing our policy and procedures inline with Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics, found in this website.

**Strategies and practices**

**Behaviour guidance strategies**

Jillys aim is to describe how children, families and carers work in unison to establish and maintain behaviour guidance strategies and practises.

• This details the strategies and practices used to guide children’s behaviour.

• The behaviour management will in future further be clarified in relation to:
  o Age and developmentally appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and their consequences. For example, under headings of:
    ▪ Babies
    ▪ Toddlers
    ▪ Pre school
    ▪ School age; or
  o Appropriate behaviours and their consequence strategies. For example, under the headings of:
    ▪ Sharing and taking turns
    ▪ Negotiating with peers
    ▪ Active listening to carers
    ▪ Identifying a problem and attempting to solve it
    ▪ Displaying empathy for others
    ▪ Managing emotions and behaviour appropriately; or
  o Inappropriate behaviours and their consequences. For example, under the headings of:
    ▪ Biting
    ▪ Physically aggressive and bullying

**Children**

Children are active participants in the development, implementation and monitoring of behaviour guidance management plans, and should be consistently communicated with during the process.

Children are encouraged to learn about their own feelings and emotions, how to establish limits and the consequences when limits are not adhered to; and where can they seek support and guidance from peers or adults.

**Establishing limits**

\textsuperscript{3} For the purpose of this policy, physical punishment includes smacking, hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, pulling, pushing, shoving or the inappropriate manhandling of a child by an adult.
• Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits in the service, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
• Reflective questions engage children to think about their practices and environment. Encouraging children to develop their play and learning limits and consequences, reinforces ownership of the service’s practices.
• Defining limits in terms of a ‘positive’ instead of a ‘negative’ assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do. For example, ‘children walk inside’ is preferable to ‘children do not run inside’.
• Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children. Younger children require safety and guidance limits established for them by adults, while staff/carers can vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.
• For example, staff/carers can discuss with children why it is important to wash hands before handling food and the reasons why people sit when eating food. Service should consider the following reflective questions:
  o Why is it important to wash hands before handling food?
  o What could happen if you didn’t wash your hands before eating food?
  o If you were running around while eating and tripped, what might happen? Why is this dangerous?
  o What do you think should happen if someone doesn’t want to wash their hands before eating?

Establishing spaces
• Children are involved in establishing play and learning spaces in the environment which includes areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation. Environments need active, loud and energetic play spaces balanced with passive, quiet and peaceful areas where children can find solace and peace. It is important that services provide both types of spaces, especially for those children who recognise that they require time apart from their peers. For example, a child who recognises that they are becoming frustrated with other children can retreat to an area that is calming and allows them to refocus.
• Services can consider the following reflective questions:
  o How does the service support children to make decisions about their environment?
  o How are quiet spaces utilised for children to encourage solitary play?
  o How do staff/carers actively encourage children to develop their sense of ownership about their play and care space?

Support
• The service provides opportunities for children to seek information that can assist them in dealing with their emotions.
• At times, children need to know where they can enlist adult support and receive information that may not be delivered directly by staff/carers. In long day care services, this may be an ancillary staff member, such as a gardener or cook, who is not someone a child sees every day but who may have developed a relationship that promotes positive behaviours. Outside school hours care services or family day care services may display posters communicating telephone or website helpline information.
• The Children, Youth and Women’s Health website ([www.cyh.com.au](http://www.cyh.com.au)) provides a wide range of information for children and youth on a variety of topics such as, health, safety, feelings, divorce, child protection, bullying and relationships.

Families
Crucial to the success of behaviour guidance is the role of families play, especially parents. Families should be provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the development and review of their child’s behaviour guidance strategies and plans, along with the service’s overall strategies to promote positive outcomes for the child.

Enrolling, orientating and settling families into care

- The service informs families about the behaviour guidance policy on enrolment and seeks information from families about the behaviour guidance strategies used at home.
- It is important for the service to understand the expectations of families regarding behaviour guidance strategies used in the service before children begin care. Communicating with families during the enrolment process assists staff/carers in understanding children’s behaviour and the limits established at home.
- Services can link this section by stating: Please refer to our Enrolment and Orientation Policy.

Establishing lines of open communication and expectations

- Families should have the opportunity to express their thoughts, expectations and feelings openly with staff/carers.
- Staff/carers should extend open lines of communication with families in regards to maintaining behaviour guidance strategies and practices.
- Services can consider the following reflective questions:
  - Who enforces the limits when both the carer and parent are in the carer’s home or service?
  - How do staff/carers reinforce positive guidance practices when a parent physically disciplines their child in front of other children in the service?
  - How do staff/carers communicate a concern to a family who refuses to accept the service’s observations.
- It is important to communicate to families about the behaviour guidance strategies established in the service. Families should recognise that some behaviour guidance strategies or practices established in the home cannot be enforced in the service’s environment.
- For example, what is the service’s response to a parent who bites their child as a behaviour guidance strategy and the child then bites other children? How do staff/carers communicate to families about recommended behaviour guidance strategies and child development expectations?

Staff & Carers

The following is a set of guidelines that can assist carers when recognising and implementing behaviour guidance strategies and practices:

- Staff/carers respond to, and acknowledge children’s emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Staff/carers acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant. For example, an adult who is not scared of thunder should not trivialise the fear or anxiety expressed by a child.
- Staff/carers understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Carers’ attitudes and caregiving strategies demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition.
- Carers need to reflect on their:
  - interact with children, families and peers equitably and respectfully;
  - use language that promotes empathy and understanding;
  - actively monitor children’s behaviours;
- encourage empathy towards others;
- avoid making comparisons between children and families;
- are aware of situations, group dynamics and scenarios that may contribute to children’s behaviours; and
- support and encourage children to be fair and respectful of others.

- Carers need to consider the following reflective questions:
  - What do staff/carers know about child development and how it affects children’s behaviour and their ability to self-regulate.
  - How do carers provide children with opportunities and support to develop self-regulatory skills.
  - How do staff beliefs and attitudes influence the way in which they guide children’s behaviour.
  - How do carers understand and consistently implement the service’s behaviour guidance strategies.

### Protective Behaviours and Practices

**Staff, carers, students and volunteers as role models**

- Children learn through example and modelling is an important way to teach children behaviour guidance practices.
- Carers, students and volunteers must comply with the Behaviour Guidance Policy. Modelling clear and consistent expectations is an important tool in behaviour guidance management strategies. Services can describe how staff/carers maintain positive modelling when caring for children, and how they communicate to colleagues the important of role modelling in the workplace.

### Communication with different stakeholders

Communication with Children, Staff, Carers and Management have been addressed in this document.

### Accessing external support agencies

- The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP) developed by the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA) may be a useful start for services when developing a network of external support agencies.
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.
- Carers are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

### Procedures

**Examples of procedures that we may employ as part of its practices.**

- Communicating with children, families and staff/carers when a behaviour guidance plan is required.
- Communicating with children, families and staff/carers when a behaviour guidance plan is being implemented and monitored.
- Documenting and implementing behaviour guidance caregiving strategies and plans.
- Enrolling new children and families into care.

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4 IPSP can provide telephone advice, online support and resources, training opportunities, resources such as factsheets, training information, and referral to appropriate agencies for further advice and information. Please refer to the ‘Sources and further reading’ list.
• Employee induction procedure.
• Evaluating and monitoring behaviour guidance strategies and plans.
• Excluding a child from care due to inappropriate behaviours.
• Observing children for a behaviour guidance management plan.
• Orientating and induction procedure for external support agency staff.
• Orientating and settling new children and families into care.
• Policy development and review procedure.
• Procedure for non-compliance of the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures by a:
  o child;
  o staff/carer;
  o family member; and
  o student/volunteer.
• Student and volunteer induction procedure.

Sources and further reading


Useful Websites

• Children, Youth and Women’s Health - www.cyh.com.au