Katherine Isolated Children's Service Incorporated
(K.I.C.S)

Behaviour Guidance Policy

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 some of those challenges.

The service's policy and practices reflects the commitment to ensure that children are treated with the same respect and empathy as an adult would expect.

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 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 Number **4**

Linked to Documents

Occupational Health and Safety Policy
Guidelines for Parents/Carers
Confidentiality and Privacy Policy
Grievance and Complaints Policy

Policy Statement

- This Behaviour Guidance Policy:
  - emphasises that children have the same rights as adults; and
  - recognises, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all people.
- Families and staff use appropriate strategies to guide and enable children to recognise, manage and learn from their behaviours and express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.
- 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 Playgroup settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
  - staff's attitude and demeanour;
  - relationship with other children and staff
  - external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events.
- Families and staff display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and do not label the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children.
- The service has 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. Staff have a right to a safe working environment.
- The use of physical punishment by staff as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by staff as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Rationale

- K.I.C.S is committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it:
    - reflects the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns;
    - respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff;
    - understands why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances;
    - promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity;
    - informs the service's stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans;
    - explains the service's commitment to professional development;
    - encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem;
    - provides children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and
    - promotes collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between service staff, families and children.
- In meeting the service's duty of care under the
    - 'United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child' http://www.childrensweek.org.au/UN%20poster%20Jan%202008.pdf and
    - *Early Childhood Australia (ECA) Code of Ethics* (2005). http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/pdf/code_of_ethics/code_of_ethics_%20brochure_screenweb_2010.pdf ,

  the service is a responsible to ensure that the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures are adhered to.

Strategies and practices

General

- The following are deemed to be behaviours that are either inappropriate and/or unacceptable and will not be tolerated at a K.I.C.S Playgroup (this is not an exhaustive list).
    - Physical harm to another child, parent/carer, staff or other person attending a Playgroup.
    - Verbal abuse or swearing
- Staff and parents/carers will model and encourage appropriate behaviours (this is not an exhaustive list)
    - Sharing, taking turns
    - Negotiating
    - Listening
    - Problem solving
    - Displaying empathy
- K.I.C.S staff reserve the right to use behaviour guidance techniques (redirecting, discussion, modelling etc) to encourage (a) child/ren to use appropriate behaviours.
- K.I.C.S staff reserve the right to ask a parent/carer to remove a child from a Playgroup if their behaviour has been deemed inappropriate and continues despite staff efforts to rectify the behaviour.
- K.I.C.S and its staff expect parents/carers to assist children to behave appropriately.
- Staff will provide feedback, support and direction in terms of the behaviour being positive or negative, not labelling the child as being positive or negative.
- While staff are aware and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with staff's knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities.

Children

- Children are active participants in the development, implementation and monitoring of behaviour guidance strategies 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;
    - who they can seek support and guidance from (peers or adults).

Procedure -Establishing Limits

- 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 are used to engage children to think about their behaviours and environment, e.g. 'what could happen if you run with those scissors?', 'how do you think you should move whilst carrying scissors?';
- Children are encouraged to develop their own play, learning limits and associated behavioural consequences, thus reinforcing ownership of behaviours and consequences.
- Defining limits in terms of a 'positive' instead of a 'negative' assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do e.g. 'keep your hands to yourself' is preferable to 'kids don't hit!'.
- Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of the children. Younger children require safety and guidance limits to be established for them by adults, while staff can vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.

Parents/Carers

- The support of the parent/carer is crucial to the success of behaviour guidance at K.I.C.S Playgroups.
- Parents/carers are encouraged to discuss any concerns about their child/ren's behaviour with staff.
- The service aims to have open communication between staff, child/ren and parents/carers at all times.

Procedure

- The service will inform families about the behaviour guidance policy when registering with K.I.C.S.
- Parents/carers will at all times:
    - interact with all children, families and K.I.C.S staff equitably and respectfully;
    - use language that promotes empathy and understanding;
    - actively monitor their child/ren's behaviours and be the first to provide of intervention when necessary;
    - encourage empathy towards others;
    - be aware of situations, group dynamics and scenarios that may contribute to their child/ren's behaviours; and
    - support and encourage their child/ren to be fair and respectful of others.
- Families should recognise that some behaviour guidance strategies or practices established in the home cannot be enforced in the service's environment.
- Parents/carers acknowledge and accept that K.I.C.S staff will direct and guide the behaviour of their child/ren.
- If the parent/carer feels the K.I.C.S staff direction of their child/ren is inappropriate they should first discuss this with the staff member in question. If concerns still arise it should then be discussed with the Program Coordinator;
- A formal complaint may be lodged to the K.I.C.S Board of Management if the parent/carer feels their concern has not been adequately addressed by the Program Coordinator.
- If a parent/carer's discipline is deemed completely inappropriate K.I.C.S staff may ask the parent/carer and child/ren to leave the Playgroup.

Staff

- Are to implement a range of strategies, practices and techniques to guide the behaviour of children at Playgroups.
- Understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Attitudes demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition.
- Respond to and acknowledge children's emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant, regardless of staff's personal experience and feelings. For example, an adult who is not scared of thunder should not trivialise the fear or anxiety expressed by a child.

Procedure

- Staff will at all times:
    - 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;
    - avoid making judgements about children and families;
    - be 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.
- If a parent/carer physically disciplines a child at a Playgroup K.I.C.S staff may ask the parent/carer to refrain from doing so during Playgroup hours.

Non-Compliance with policy

- In the case of non-compliance of the Behaviour Guidance Policy, especially when an adult or child uses physical punishment, or in the case of a formal complaint from a parent/carer regarding the actions of staff, the Program Coordinator will notify the Board of Management.
- The Board of Management will then implement 'Grievance and Complaints' procedure, please refer to 'Grievance and Complaints Policy'.

Confidentiality and privacy

- Children and families have an inherent right to be afforded a level of confidentiality and privacy in regard to any behavioural management issues.
- K.I.C.S Board of Management, Program Coordinator and Staff are committed to maintaining and respecting an individual's and family's privacy.
- Please refer to the service's 'Confidentiality and Privacy Policy'.

Staff professional development opportunities

- The service aims to maintain and improve the skills and knowledge of staff in relation to professional knowledge and behaviour guidance. For example:
- Staff will informally discuss scenarios and actions to deal with children who display inappropriate behaviours
- Staff are encouraged to attend Professional Development courses/conferences when and where possible.

Protective Behaviours and Practices

- Children learn through example, and modelling is an important way to teach children behaviour guidance practices.
- Staff will use anatomically correct words when describing body parts.
- Staff will not explicitly teach or discuss protective behaviours or body parts, unless a parent/carer or child/ren opens a conversation on the subject.
- Staff may discuss appropriate and inappropriate touching.
- If staff have any conversations with (a) child/ren about body parts, protective behaviours or in/appropriate touching, staff are to inform parents/carers of this in the first instance.

- Staff must also note such circumstances in the ‘Daily Playgroup Summary’.

Accessing external support agencies

- At times staff may feel it is necessary to access support and/or information from; refer or direct families to other support services/agencies. These services may include (this is not an exhaustive list):
    - Early Childhood Australia
    - Department of Children and Families
    - Isolated Children's Parents Association
    - The Inclusion and Professional Support Program (IPSP).
    - Professional Support Coordination Northern Territory (PSC NT)
    - NAPCAN
    - Good Beginnings Australia

Learning Experiences

- The type of Learning Experience has an enormous influence on the type of behaviours children will display at a Playgroup.
- K.I.C.S values Learning Experiences that are open ended, interesting and intrinsically meaningful to the child, as these will cause children's behaviour to lean towards the positive.
- K.I.C.S staff will at all times offer Learning Experiences that provide opportunities for children to play and learn individually and/or as part of a group, thus allowing children to choose the Learning Experiences that will suit their behaviour.

Policy review

- The service will review the Behaviour Guidance Policy and guidelines every 12 months
- Families are encouraged to collaborate with the service to review the policy and procedures.
- Staff are essential stakeholders in the policy review process and will be encouraged to be actively involved.

Sources and further reading

- Early Childhood Australia Inc. (2007). *The code of ethics*. Retrieved May 2, 2007, from http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/code_of_ethics/early_childhood_australias_code_of_ethics.html
- Porter, L. (2003). *Young children's behaviour: Practical approaches for caregivers and teachers* (2nd ed). NSW: MacLennan & Petty.
- Porter, L. (2006). *Children are people too: A parent's guide to young children's behaviour*. Adelaide: East Street Publications.
- Stonehouse, A., & Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2004). *Making links: A collaborative approach to planning and practice in early childhood services*. NSW: Pademelon Press.
- UNICEF (n.d.). *Fact sheet: A summary of the rights under the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. Retrieved April 4, 2007, from http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Rights_overview.pdf

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Signatures Name_____ Position _____

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