



**Rock-Walworth Comprehensive Family Services**  
**Head Start and Early Head Start**

# **POSITIVE GUIDANCE HANDBOOK**

## **POLICY**

RWCFS will ensure staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support children's well-being and prevent and address challenging behavior. RWCFS will work in partnership with primary caregivers, and the community to carry out this goal in healthy, nurturing, and responsive settings with full respect for the uniqueness of each child

## **PURPOSE**

The Positive Guidance Handbook for Head Start and Early Head Start exists to support a program-wide culture that promotes children's mental health, social and emotional well-being, and overall health. The handbook is meant to provide support for:

- effective classroom management and positive learning environments
- supportive teaching practices
- strategies to support all children, including children with challenging behaviors and differing social, emotional, and mental health abilities



***We are committed to making each child's participation as successful, rich, and meaningful as possible, while helping each child develop social-emotional skills and grow in their sense of responsibility for their own behavior.***

# POSITIVE GUIDANCE

The foundation for the prevention, guidance and reinforcement strategies outlined in this handbook are taken from the following tools and approaches:

- Creative Curriculum
- Second Step, developed by Committee for Children
- Baby Doll Circle Time
- Conscious Discipline, created by Dr. Becky A. Bailey

This handbook is not your only resource for Positive Guidance tools. Additional resources not listed above include, but are not limited to Breathe Like a Bear, Yoga Pretzels, and CalmConnect formerly known as MeMoves. Teachers, family service coordinators, home visitors, program managers, and program consultants are also available to help. When schools and caregivers are using the same discipline approach (and language when possible), it supports children's understanding and reduces children's stress and confusion.

## Table of Contents

### Prevent

- Create a Positive Learning Environment Pg.3
  - Physical Environment Pg.3
  - Social Environment Pg.3
  - Temporal Environment Pg.4

### Teach

- Self-Regulation
  - Strategies to Promote Self-Regulation Pg.5
  - Use of a Safe Place Pg.5
- Positive Guidance Strategies Pg.6
- Problem Solving Strategies Pg.7

### Reinforce

- Positive Reinforcement Pg.8
- Consequences Pg.8

When staff do not experience success using positive guidance techniques Pg.10

# **PREVENT**

## ***Create a Positive Learning Environment***

*Positive learning environments contribute to a safe, welcoming community and help children feel safe, valued, and loved (Dodge et al., 2011).*

### **Physical Environment**

*The physical environment includes space, equipment, and materials. Some strategies to set up the physical environment include but are not limited to:*

- Arrange the room so that all children can be seen at all times (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Establish traffic patterns and define pathways (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Locate active, noisier play areas and materials away from relatively quiet areas (Dodge et al., 2011a)
- Design spaces that accommodate children's developmental needs, abilities and interests (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Resources to learn more about setting up the physical environment:
  - Creative Curriculum, Volume 1: The Foundation, Chapter 2
  - Set up a Safe Place, Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms, Pg 113

### **Social Environment**

*The social environment includes interactions with adults and peers. Some strategies to set up the social environment include but are not limited to:*

- Offer children opportunities to make decisions, whenever possible (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Use caring words to let children know they are respected, understood, and valued (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Acknowledge children's positive interactions (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Include equipment and materials that promote interaction and cooperation (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Read books and tell stories about helpfulness and friendship (Dodge et al., 2011a)
- Resources to learn more about setting up the social environment:
  - Creative Curriculum: Volume 1 - The Foundation, Chapter 4
  - CLASS Emotional Support domain and dimensions.
  - Second Step Program

## **Temporal Environment**

*The temporal environment includes the sequence and length of routines and activities. The following strategies will support an intentional and responsive temporal environment:*

- Create a predictable yet flexible and adaptable schedule (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Set an unhurried, child-directed pace for experiences (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Balance quiet and active times (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Incorporate small group learning experiences (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Plan sufficient time for experiences and transitions (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Resources to learn more about setting up the temporal environment:
  - Creative Curriculum: Volume 1 - The Foundation, Chapter 2
  - CLASS Classroom Organization domain and dimensions.

# TEACH

## *Promote Self-Regulation*

*Developing self-regulation, the ability to control one's own feelings and emotions, is critical to a child's success in school and in life.*

Use the following strategies to promote self-regulation:

- Establish and follow rituals. Consider using *I Love You Rituals* and sharing *I Love You Rituals* with families
- Do Baby Doll Circle Time routinely and to fidelity (EHS)
- Do CalmConnect, formerly MeMoves, routinely and to fidelity (HS)
- Give children more opportunities to move and be active throughout the day
- Give children alternative ways to express their anger
- Acknowledge children's actions when they display self-control
- Avoid talking with other adults about a child's challenging behavior in front of the child whose behavior is a problem or other children
- Follow the Second Step Program (HS) – it provides teacher-led lessons and activities to foster emotional management (for specific strategies refer to the resources offered by Second Step)
  - Helps children identify and recognize their own strong emotions (Committee et al., 2011).
  - Teaches coping and calming strategies (Committee et al., 2011).
  - Helps children identify emotions in others so they can begin to understand their point of view (Committee et al., 2011)
- Use of a Safe Place
  - A safe place is a tool that helps caregivers, teachers, and home visitors set reasonable limits for children, guide and teach them, and follow through with dignity and respect (Bailey, 2015).
  - A safe place is not a time out. It is a learning center where children are guided through the 5 steps of self-regulation: I am upset, I calm, I feel, I choose, I solve.
  - It assists children and adults in returning to their executive brain state so they can re-enter activities in positive ways (Bailey, 2015).
  - Encouraging the use of a *safe place is not a punishment* – it is provided respectfully as an opportunity for the child to gain self-control and choose appropriate behaviors (Bailey, 2015).
- Resources to learn more about promoting self-regulation:
  - Baby Doll Circle Time-Strengthening Attachment, Attunement and Social Play
  - Creative Curriculum for Infants, Toddlers and Twos, Volume 1: The Foundation, Chapter 4
  - Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms
  - I Love You Rituals
  - Managing Emotional Mayhem: The Five Steps of Regulation

# *Positive Guidance Strategies*

## *Strategies that support children in managing their feelings and behavior*

- Speak with children in particular ways.
  - Use reflective statements. Stating to a child, “I see that you...” lets a child know that you are paying attention to them (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Use “I” statements. Make sure to include what is happening, your feelings, and why you are feeling that way. This helps children learn to identify and express their own feelings. Ex. “I feel worried when you climb on the table. You could fall and get hurt.” (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Use specific language. Instead of saying, “Good job,” explain exactly what a child is doing and why it is needed. Modeling the use of specific language also helps children to know what language to use when handling conflicts. Ex. Giving a child in conflict the words to use such as “please give my toy back” vs. telling a child to “use your words.” (Dodge et al., 2011a)
  
- Other Strategies
  - Offer two acceptable choices. Offering choices provides the child with some control over the situation and fosters independence and decision making (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Redirect a child to an acceptable alternative, e.g. “I see that you are practicing writing skills. We try and keep marker off the table, so the table is easier to clean. Here is some paper.” (Dodge et al., 2011a)
  - Change the environment. Changing the environment can include adding or removing materials, moving a child to a new location, or changing the time of a scheduled activity (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Showing while telling. Use visual clues and gestures while talking to children about what you would like them to do. Visual clues and gestures help convey the message (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Model the skills you want children to learn. Use self-talk with other adults and children to support children’s thinking. Offer ideas about how to approach tasks successfully. This includes noticing when children are using the skills and giving specific feedback on their behavior. It also involves modeling skills, reminding children to use the skills, and coaching children to use them in the moment (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  
- Resources to learn more about positive guidance strategies:
  - The Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation
  - The Creative Curriculum for IT2, Volume 1: The Foundation
  - Conscious Discipline: Building a Resilient Classroom
  - <https://www.secondstep.org/>
  - Conscious Discipline - Social and Emotional Learning

## ***Problem-Solving Strategies***

*Using a problem-solving approach to conflict is a powerful way to help children resolve conflicts increasingly on their own*

- Teaching Social Problem-Solving Skills
  - Solving problems among a few children (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Help the children calm down (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Identify the problem (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Help the children generate possible solutions (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Review the solutions and help the children choose one (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Check back (Dodge et al., 2011a).
  - Solving problems with the whole class (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Discuss the situation (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Help the children generate possible solutions (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Encourage everyone to contribute ideas (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Help the children make a plan (Dodge et al., 2011a).
    - Assess the results (Dodge et al., 2011a).
- Follow the Second Step Program – it provides problem-solving weekly teacher-led lessons and activities that help children learn problem-solving skills (for specific strategies refer to the resources offered by Second Step)
  - Teaches children the steps to follow for solving problems (Committee et al., 2011).
  - Teaches children the skills needed to make and keep friends (Committee et al., 2011).
- Resources to learn more about problem-solving strategies:
  - Creative Curriculum for Preschool, Volume 1: The Foundation, Pg. 154-156
  - Conscious Discipline: Building a Resilient Classroom

# **REINFORCE**

## ***Positive Reinforcement***

*Positive reinforcement uses a desirable consequence to increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated*

- Carefully define the desired behavior to be reinforced (Dunlap et al., 2022).
- Identify effective reinforcers for a particular child or group of children (Dunlap et al., 2022).
- Determine how the reinforcers will be provided when the child or children engages the desired behavior (Dunlap et al., 2022).
- Initially, be sure the reinforcer immediately follows the desirable behavior (Dunlap et al., 2022).
- Resource to learn more about positive reinforcement:
  - Prevent Teach Reinforce for Young Children: the early childhood model of individualized positive behavior support

## ***Consequences***

*Effective consequences motivate children to want to do things differently and supports the learning of social skills*

- Consequences are either **natural** or **logical**.
  - **Natural** consequences are those that just happen without any prearranged adult planning. For example, a child refuses to wear shoes and then steps on a toy and hurts his foot or a child throws his toy, and it breaks (Bailey, 2015).
  - **Logical** consequences are used to motivate children to use the skills they already have and are applied by someone else as a result of the person's action. When creating a logical consequence, keep in mind the *three R's* (related, respectful, & reasonable) and the *big E* (empathy). For example, "If you choose to hit your sister with the truck, then you will not be able to play with the truck (temporarily) for the rest of the day." He hits his sister again and the truck is taken away. He seems upset and says sorry. "You seem upset because you were hoping to keep the truck. You can play with it again tomorrow. (Excessive time limits should be avoided and items removed should be given back when stated) (Bailey, 2015).
- Consequences should be communicated with a brief, simple explanation, emphasizing safety and respect for one another and should be appropriate to the child's developmental level. **Infants up to 12 months and sometimes up to 18 months** are developmentally unable to understand consequences. Children's crying and behaviors at this age are their

ways of communicating their needs and learning about their bodies and their environment. They should never receive a consequence for crying, spilling food or drink, or exploring their environment. **Toddlers 12 months to 3 years** will have a growing ability to understand consequences. During these ages it is appropriate to begin to allow natural consequences to occur and apply some logical or imposed consequences. Children this age still need to be protected from natural consequences that threaten safety. For example, touching something hot, running into the road, touching electrical outlets, etc. would or could result in a natural consequence that threatens safety (Dodge et al., 2011b).

- Keep in mind that learning from consequences requires children to do two things:
  - Reflect on their outcomes in relation to a goal (Bailey, 2015).
  - Take ownership of their choices and the feelings they generate (Bailey, 2015).
- For additional information about consequences refer to:
  - Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms, Chapter 10

**Note:**

- **Our agency will not use time outs as a behavior management strategy**
- **Program policy, in accordance with the Federal and State Childcare Licensing Regulations, prohibits punishment which is humiliating or frightening to a child**
  - Examples of prohibited punishments include:
    - Spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment
    - Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family
    - Binding or tying to restrict movement or enclosing in a confined space such as a closet, locked room, box or similar cubicle
    - Withholding or forcing meals, snacks or naps
    - punishment for lapses in toilet training

# **When staff do not experience success using positive guidance techniques with individual children's challenging or unsafe behavior:**

## **1. Reflect and Adapt**

Reflect on the needs of the child and class and adapt the environment and/or strategies based on your reflection.

## **2. Seek appropriate professional help when needed to take the next step to find the right resources to assist the child**

Examples of professional help include:

- Co-workers
- Site Team Leaders
- Content Area Managers
- Consultants
- Community Resources

## **3. Screen for possible social/emotional concerns**

The mental health consultant or other collaborating partners may use one or more of the following screening tools:

- Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social/Emotional
- Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment
- Sensory Integration screening
- Functional Behavioral Analysis

## **4. Follow the screening, assessment and referral process as needed**

## **5. Refer to the Challenging Behavior Flow Chart for next steps**

## References

- Bailey, B. A. (2021). *Baby Doll Circle Time: Strengthening Attachment, Attunement and Social Play*. Loving Guidance.
- Bailey, B. A. (2015). *Conscious discipline: Building resilient classrooms*. (Rev. Ed.). Loving Guidance.
- Bailey, B. A. (2000). *I Love You Rituals*. Loving Guidance.
- Bailey, B. A. (2011). *Managing emotional mayhem: The five steps for self-regulation*. Loving Guidance.
- Committee for Children. (2011). *Early learning second step teaching materials: Social-Emotional Skills for Early Learning*. Committee for Children.
- Dodge, D. T., Heroman, C., Colker, L. J., & Bickart, T. S. (2011a). *The creative curriculum for infants, toddlers, and Twos* (Vol. 1). Teaching Strategies.
- Dodge, D. T., Heroman, C., Colker, L. J., & Bickart, T. S. (2011b). *The creative curriculum for Preschool: The foundation* (Vol. 1). Teaching Strategies.
- Dunlap, G., Wilson, K., Strain, P. S., & Lee, J. K. (2022). *Prevent, teach, reinforce, for young children: The early childhood model of individualized positive behavior support*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Brooks Publishing

## Positive Guidance Handbook Activity

**Directions:** Review the Positive Guidance Handbook and answer the questions below. Bring this completed worksheet to your first check-in with your supervisor.

### PREVENT

1. Positive learning environments contribute to a safe, welcoming community and help children feel safe, valued, and loved.
  - a. What are a couple of strategies to use when creating your learning environment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Were there any strategies listed in the positive guidance handbook or in the additional resources that you would like to try?

### TEACH

2. Developing self-regulation, the ability to control one's own feelings and emotions, is critical to a child's success in school and in life. Of the strategies listed to promote self-regulation,
  - a. What technique are you the most comfortable with using?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. What strategy would you like to learn more about?

3. Positive guidance strategies support children in managing their feelings and behavior. Review the strategies listed in the Positive Guidance Handbook and list two of them here:
  
4. A problem-solving approach to conflict is a powerful way to help children learn to resolve conflicts on their own. How can you encouraged and support a child to solve a problem.

### **REINFORCE**

5. Positive reinforcement uses a desirable consequence to increase the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. Share an example of a reinforcer you use to reinforce positive behavior.
  
6. Effective consequences motivate children to want to do things differently and supports the learning of social skills. Read the “Myths and Realities of Consequences” section in *Conscious Discipline: Building Resilient Classrooms* (pages 299-301).

