

Educational Implications

Students with conduct disorder like to engage in power struggles. They often react badly to direct demands or statements such as: “You need to...” or “You must...” They may consistently challenge class rules, refuse to do assignments, and argue or fight with other students. This behavior can cause significant impairment in both social and academic functioning. They also work best in environments with high staff/student ratios, 1-to-1 situations, or self-contained programs when there is plenty of structure and clearly defined guidelines. Their frequent absences and their refusal to do assignments often leads to academic failure.

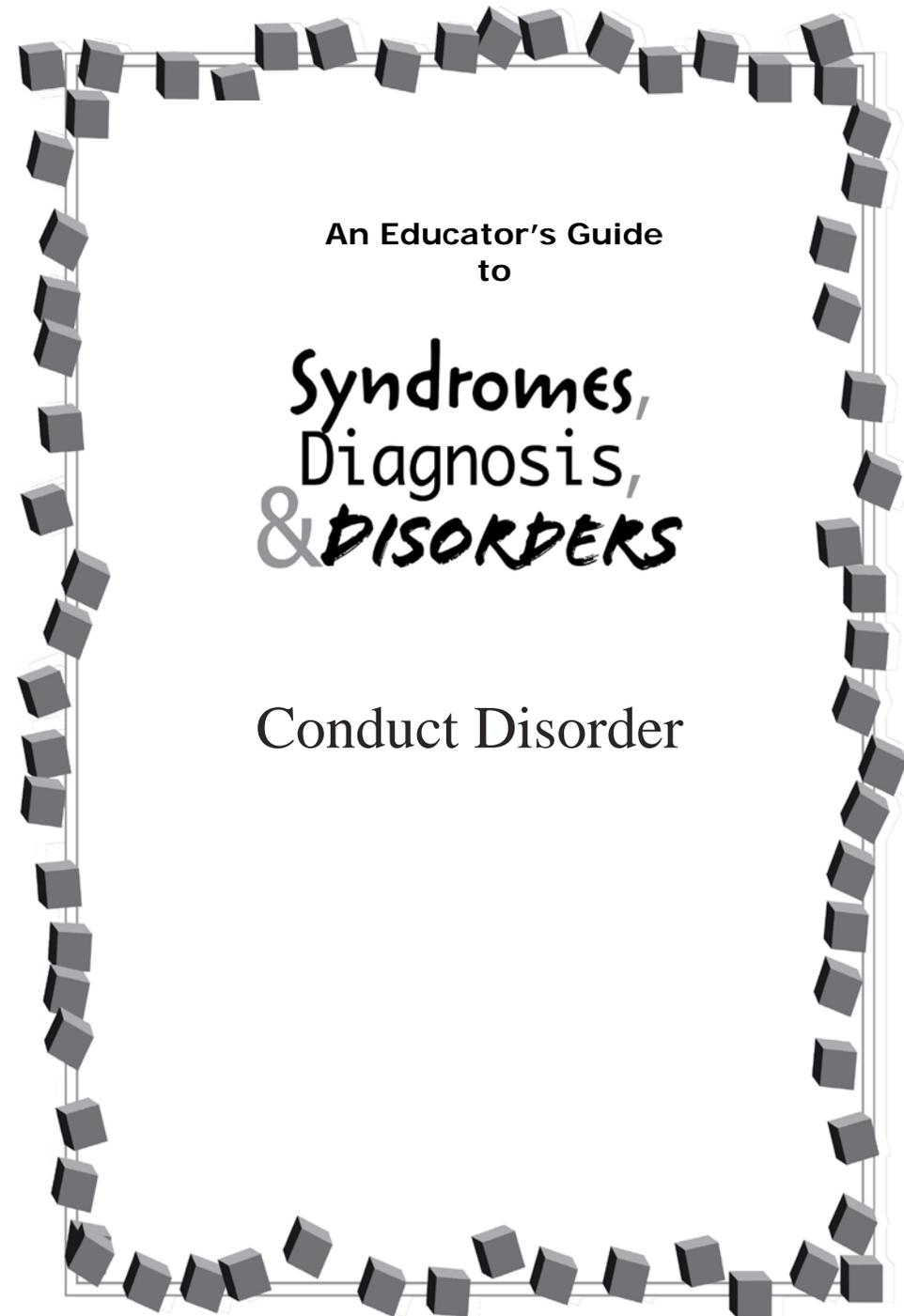
Resources

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
3615 Wisconsin Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20016-3007
800-333-7636
www.aacap.org

American Academy of Family Physicians
PO Box 11210, Shawnee Mission, KS 66207
800-274-2237
www.aafp.org

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)
1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201
703-620-3660
www.cec.sped.org

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
Office of Communications
6001 Executive Boulevard, Room 8184, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892-9663
866-615-6464
www.nimh.nih.gov
Free educational materials for professionals and the public



Symptoms or Behaviors

- Bullying or threatening classmates and other students
- Poor attendance record or chronic truancy
- History of frequent suspension
- Little empathy for others and a lack of appropriate feelings of guilt and remorse
- Low self-esteem masked by bravado
- Lying to peers or teachers
- Stealing from peers or the school
- Frequent physical fights; use of a weapon
- Destruction of property

Instructional Strategies and Classroom Accommodations

- Make sure curriculum is at an appropriate level. When work is too hard, students become frustrated. When it is too easy, they become bored. Both reactions lead to problems in the classroom.
- Avoid “infantile” materials to teach basic skills. Materials should be age-appropriate, positive, and relevant to students’ lives.
- Remember that praise is important but needs to be sincere.
- Consider the use of technology. Students with conduct disorder tend to work well on computers with active programs.
- Students with conduct disorder often do well in programs that allow them to work outside the school setting.

- Be aware that adults can unconsciously form and behaviorally express negative impressions of low-performing, uncooperative students. Try to monitor your impressions, keep them as neutral as possible, communicate a positive regard for the students, and give them the benefit of the doubt whenever possible.
- Remember that children with conduct disorder like to argue. Maintain calm, respect, and detachment. Avoid power struggles and don’t argue.
- Give the student options. Stay away from direct demands or statements such as: “You need to...” or “you must...”
- Avoid escalating prompts such as shouting, touching, nagging, or cornering the student.
- Establish clear classroom rules. Rules should be few, fair, clear, displayed, taught, and consistently enforced. Be clear about what is nonnegotiable.
- Have your students participate in the establishment of rules, routines, schedules, and expectations.
- Systematically teach social skills including anger management, conflict resolution strategies, and how to be assertive in an appropriate manner. For example, discuss strategies that the students may use to calm themselves when they feel their anger escalating. Do this when the students are calm.
- Maximize the performance of low-performing students through the use of individualized instruction, cues, prompting, the breaking down of academic tasks, and debriefing, coaching, and providing positive incentives.
- Structure activities so the student with conduct disorder is not always left out or the last one picked.