

## Themba CLC Discipline & Positive Guidance Procedures

Professionals who work with young children expect to be met with challenging behavior from time to time. During the first five years of life, children are just beginning to learn how to handle their intense emotions and conform to the behavioral expectations of society. As parents know, this is a lengthy process. It is also a central aspect of children's social and emotional development that can be guided using strategies based on research into early brain development.

All staff working at Themba will receive training before working with children. The training will continue every two years. If an employee is suspected of violating this discipline policy, the person will be suspended/terminated. Child Protective Services (CPS) and the Office of Childcare will independently investigate the allegations.

In early care and education setting, we define challenging behavior as any behavior that:

- interferes with children's learning, development, and success at play;
- is harmful to the child, other children, or adults;
- puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure.

The behavior can be direct (e.g., hitting, pushing, biting, kicking) or indirect (e.g., teasing, ignoring rules or instructions, excluding others, name-calling, destroying objects, or having temper tantrums).

Themba's staff sees working with children's challenging behavior as integral to our job. The root meaning of the word *discipline* is "instruction" or "training." This meaning, rather than punishment, is the foundation for our approach to guiding children's behavior. We accept that young children will sometimes display their emotions or try to achieve their goals in unproductive or immature ways. That is simply part of being very young. Much of children's most valuable learning, especially in a group setting, occurs in the course of behavioral problem-solving. The approaches we use vary by age group but have the following elements in common:

- **Adults model positive behavior** -- We show that we can accept, control and express feelings in direct and non-aggressive ways. We let children know we are not afraid of their intense emotions and will not punish, threaten or withdraw from them.
- **Teachers design the physical environment to minimize conflict** -- We provide multiple of toys and materials for groups of children, define classroom and outdoor areas clearly to allow for both active and quiet play, and strive to maintain an appropriately calm level of stimulation.
- **Teachers maintain age-appropriate expectations for children's behavior** -- We attempt to minimize unreasonable waiting and transition times. We limit the length of a large group and teacher-directed activity times according to children's developmental

levels. We give children large blocks of uninterrupted time to make their own activity choices.

- **Teachers establish simple rules, or expectations, for the classroom community --** Older preschool children participate in this process early in the school year. When issues arise, adults and children can reference the “Be safe, Be kind, Be respectful” guidelines as reminders about what kinds of behavior facilitate life in a group setting.
- **Adults closely observe and supervise children's activities and social interactions --** With our high ratios of adults to children and our emphasis on attentive observation, we can often intervene to guide children before situations escalate.
- **Adults help children verbalize their feelings, frustrations, and concerns --** The staff will help children describe problems, generate possible solutions, and think through logical consequences of their actions. Babies will hear their caregivers describe actions, problems, solutions, and logical consequences. The adult role is to be a helper in positive problem-solving. We want children to value cooperation and teamwork. We help them to learn peaceful, productive approaches to interacting with peers.
- **Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children --** This is not the same as the practice of using a "time out" (the traditional chair in the corner) for a child. An adult will help the child move away from a group situation. The child will then verbally process the problem with the staff member and other concerned parties. An adult will stay close to any emotionally out-of-control child who needs private time to regain composure.
- **Discipline, i.e., guidance, will always be positive, productive, and immediate when behavior is inappropriate --** *No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, or subjected to physical punishment or verbal or physical abuse by any staff member working at Themba.* Every Teacher understands and follows our disciplinary approach and the standards on guidance and management in our Office of Child Care Licensing Regulations. We work with our families so that they also understand and employ this guidance approach.
- **If an employee suspects a teacher is violating this disciplinary policy.** The employee must immediately notify the center’s director or the Office of Childcare.
- When a pattern of behavior persists that endangers self, others or property or significantly disrupts the program; we will work with a child's family to find solutions, up to and including referral for outside services.

Parent Signature : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_