

Principles for the Appropriate Use of Punishment

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- **Punishers inhibit or reduce the future occurrence of a behavior.**
- **A functional assessment of the target behavior is critical to the development of a behavior intervention plan.**
- **No use of punishment is appropriate in the absence of a plan for teaching and reinforcing desired behavior.**
- **Three principles govern the appropriate use of punishers:**
 - 1. Demonstrated ineffectiveness of graduated reinforcement interventions**
 - 2. Hierarchical application for less to more intrusive punishment procedures**
 - 3. Priority level of the target behavior**

Priority Levels of Problem Behaviors

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Low Priority: intermittent or annoying but not harmful to self nor disruptive to others and may be ignored
e.g. off-task, talk-outs, personal habits

Mild Priority: frequently interfere with achievement and/or affect others and requires adult intervention
e.g. pushing/poking/provoking, disruption, minor property damage

Moderate Priority: repeatedly and significantly interfere with achievement and/or affect others and requires involvement of multiple adults
e.g. fighting, throwing objects, staff abuse, theft

High Priority: generalized alienation or agitation with excessive disruption to self and others that persists despite intervention by multiple adults
e.g. assault, self-abuse, major property damage

Urgent Priority: extreme risk to self and/or others requiring immediate and expert intervention
e.g. life-threatening, potentially injurious