

# BEHAVIOR SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT PHILOSOPHY & PROCEDURES



Youth Advocate Services encourages a culture that promotes respect, healing, and positive behavior, and provides individuals with the support they need to manage their own behaviors – all of which can help prevent emergency situations. Youth Advocate Services also prohibits the use of restrictive behavior management interventions of any kind. As a client, it is important to understand Youth Advocate Services' approach to behavior support and management. Please review carefully.

## POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

At YAS, we have a positive approach to discipline. We believe that for optimum learning, a child needs nurturance, security and emotional stability, including sound parental discipline. Discipline aids in the development of self-control, attention and cooperation, all of which are essential for family reunification or emancipation as an independent adult. Although some behavior deviations are organically based, most are functionally based. An established routine with firm, but kind, discipline can help children with both types of problems considerably. Much confusion exists because people tend to equate discipline with punishment. Discipline is a process of training and learning which fosters growth and development, and leads to replacing self-defeating behavior with useful behavior. Punishment is a penalty inflicted upon an offender as retribution, and only incidentally for reformation prevention and teaching.

Positive approaches to discipline include:

- a) *Setting limits before situations occur;*
- b) *Being reasonable;*
- c) *Taking time to listen;*
- d) *Giving the youth time to cool off and consider the issues being presented;*
- e) *Insisting on a response, if not now then later;*
- f) *Being consistent and following through;*
- g) *Giving praise, praise and more praise for things well done;*
- h) *Not demanding perfection;*
- i) *Showing trust and confidence;*
- j) *Letting a youth know she/he is liked regardless of behavior they are exhibiting;*
- k) *Setting an example.*

Children and youth are striving toward independence. If the child or youth understands what is expected, s/he can be more independent within those limits. It is important to use language the child understands and to always use a positive approach. A polite, positive request encourages a youth to be cooperative.

In many instances, we tend to devote more time to the behavior problem than to the child or youth when s/he is behaving well. This encourages children to seek attention by misbehaving. If most of the attention is focused on the child or youth when s/he is doing well, discipline problems will be drastically reduced.

When a child or youth does misbehave, accountability through logical consequences is an effective method of discipline. Children and youth need to be accountable for their behavior in the home and in the community. A restitution or restriction program in those instances can be an effective method of discipline, if the program includes restoration of privileges or celebration of debts paid. The clinician and/or support groups are excellent resources in assuring that such programs are positive and likely to be productive.

Repeated misbehaving can be symptomatic of a deeper problem. Referral to an agency consultant or community professional in such instances should always be considered.

## BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION / SAFETY TRAINING

YAS recognizes that incidents or problems arise that require us to help children and/or youth regain emotional control. We are trained to help the child or youth regain emotional control without the use of restraint.

Our training at YAS has taught us that when the child or youth is becoming anxious, excited, agitated, or angry, it is imperative that we talk with and listen during the initial or early phase of the escalation to intervene early, to prevent the situation from escalating further, and to help them learn and experience increased management of their affect. Listening to the youth and encouraging them to talk about the situation is important. It is important to know the child or youth's triggers, warning signs, and preferred responses as well.

We have been trained to be supportive and listen utilizing empathetic listening skills. This includes being non-judgmental and communicating in a manner that is respectful, nurturing, and directive. Encourage them to talk about what is bothering him/her. Restate and clarify, or ask for clarification. You may ask questions, but realize that sometimes the young person may not know what specifically triggered the emotion or the event. Realize too that sometimes some do not respond positively to too many questions being posed.

We have been trained to give the youth our full individualized attention. Discussions should take place in private whenever possible. Respond in a calm, clear voice which connotes empathy and understanding. It is important to avoid power struggles. Do not take the agitated or anxious state personally. Do not become defensive.

Our training at YAS has taught us that if the child or youth becomes increasingly more agitated, provide clear simple directions setting limits and giving choices. Set limits which are reasonable to the situation and to their ability. Use a soothing voice and give them time to respond and to process. Remove the child if others are present, or remove others from the situation. Be respectful. Do not lose control of yourself. We must never humiliate or embarrass the youth, demand eye contact, threaten or coerce. Do not become impatient or rushed.

We have been trained that positive relationships are the key to behavioral change, including behavioral de-escalation. We learn that we should be fully aware of ourselves (our triggers, our warning signs, our preferred methods of de-escalation); of the child or youth (his/her triggers, warning signs, and preferred methods of de-escalation); and the situation (physical environment, audience potential, and triggering events such as a missed visit or peer problem).

It is YAS policy that we all are trained in non-violent crisis intervention. We may also call law enforcement or 911 if the incident is out of our control.

We have been trained so that all of the above behavior interventions will be modified and consistent with each child or youth and their needs. Children with disabilities will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis regarding the necessary steps of behavior intervention.

## USE OF RESTRAINT

It is the policy of Youth Advocate Services that no form of physical restraint may be used at any time. YAS recognizes the liability and risk involved when we restrain a youth and it is our belief that it is in everyone's best interest not to perform restraints at all.

It is YAS policy that we are not to utilize physical, mechanical, or chemical restraint techniques, isolation, or locked seclusion. Any use of physical, mechanical, or chemical restraint, isolation, or locked seclusion is prohibited and shall be reported immediately as described in Youth Advocate Services Client Rights, Responsibilities & Grievance Procedures.

It is YAS policy that prone restraints are prohibited. Prone restraint is defined as all items or measures used to limit or control the movement or normal functioning of any portion, or all, of an individual's body while the individual is in a face-down position for an extended period of time. Prone restraint includes physical or mechanical restraint.

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**If you have questions about our Behavior Support and Management Philosophy & Procedures, please contact the YAS Client Rights Officer at 614.258.9927**

*This poster has been adapted from the YAS Behavior Support & Management Philosophy & Procedures document, which is given at intake and available upon request.*