

## Behavior Policy Example

We believe that all domains of learning are supported during play and through strong, positive interactions with adults in inclusive settings that embrace diversity. Promoting healthy social and emotional development, including self-control, should be one of the fundamental responsibilities of a program, ensuring all children feel valued and supported regardless of their abilities or backgrounds.

The early learning period is a critical time for children to learn to control their thoughts, feelings, attention, impulses, and behavior. Children are learning how to get along with others and how to be friends. Children are not born with these skills. Teachers and caregivers must teach social and emotional skills just as they teach washing hands or learning colors and shapes. We know that when children are given the opportunities and support to develop (learn, practice, discuss, etc.), self-control and other social and emotional skills, it gives them the foundation needed for academic and life success.

### Steps to follow when behaviors arise:

- Rather than focus only on eliminating the behavior, teaching staff will focus on teaching the child social, communication, and emotional regulation skills and using developmentally appropriate environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.
- Programs will implement a predictable, intentional, and developmentally appropriate daily schedule designed to meet the diverse needs of all children. The schedule will include a balance of structured and unstructured activities, opportunities for active and quiet play, and sufficient transitions to minimize stress and confusion. The schedule will be posted and referenced regularly. A consistent routine fosters a sense of security, supports self-regulation, and promotes engagement by providing children with clear expectations and a stable environment.
- Teaching staff will respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the safety of the child and the safety of others in the classroom. The responses will be calm, respectful and provide the child with information on what is acceptable behavior and what is not. Consistent and active supervision are important so children can trust their environment and feel confident in their choices. It is always important to teach a child what behavior they SHOULD be choosing, rather than focusing on what they should not.
- Program wide expectations are posted, taught, and consistently referred to. Staff will utilize these rules to positively guide behaviors.
- Observe the children, and then identify events, activities, interactions, cultural influences, and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior. It has been found

*This template is provided by USpireND Inclusion Support as a guide to providers, teachers, and parents. We encourage all users to utilize this guide to assist in supporting behavior policies in the program. This information is only to be used as a guide.*

that behavior concerns often indicate that a child needs more time, support, and culturally relevant practices to develop their social and emotional skills. When these concerns arise, partner with parents, culturally aware professionals, and specialists who support children's social and emotional health within their cultural context.

- Programs will document the challenging behaviors, and the individualized strategies attempted in a behavior tracking log along with any formal screenings or observations.
- Teacher-parent discussions regarding a child's behavior will be held in private and focus on working as a team to develop and implement an inclusive care plan\* that supports the child's inclusion and success. Multiple meetings may be essential to find proper strategies for an individual child.
- Based on developmental screenings (monitoring milestones, ASQ), appropriate intervention will ensure each child has access to professional services, such as referrals to an Inclusion Coach with USpireND, community mental health center and/or a private therapist. These procedures will clearly describe how the success or failure of the policy will be measured through tracking referrals, service engagement, and child progress. Data collected will be used to engage in continuous improvement, ensuring that practices align with the intent of the behavior guidance policy. The evaluation will help pinpoint concerns, track progress, and ensure equitable access to support services for all children, fostering an inclusive and responsive environment.

\*Care plan template can be found on the [www.USpireND.org/inclusion](http://www.USpireND.org/inclusion).

**Other Considerations:**

- *Programs will adhere to policies prohibiting discrimination based on a child's race, sex, gender, disability, or other protected characteristics to ensure equitable access and treatment for all.*
- *Discipline must be constructive or educational in nature and may include diversion, separation from the problem situation, talking with the child about the situation, praising appropriate behavior, or gentle physical restraint, such as holding. A child may not be subjected to physical harm, fear, or humiliation.*
- *The expectation is to consider an additional policy that describes the intent of the program to ensure that staff have a strong understanding of culture, diversity, equity, and inclusion, and are provided opportunities to engage in self-reflection and ongoing professional development that encourage awareness of implicit and explicit biases that may affect their work with children and families.*