

Exploring

school-age children

Capital District Child Care Council *a tipsheet for parents and caregivers of children ages 5 to 13*



The Goal of Discipline

Children of all ages look to adults for guidance. We strive to provide school-age children with an environment that encourages exploration, interaction, decision-making, and fosters self-control. When adult guidance is needed, it is important to understand individual needs and behaviors of children at various stages. This is also true with discipline. The goal of discipline is not to influence behavior through fear of punishment, but to support the development of self-control and problem-solving skills. There are several ways to guide children and help them learn self-discipline.

Create an environment that helps children make good choices

- Involve children in setting rules and outcomes
- Provide opportunities for children to choose their own activities
- Plan games and activities that encourage cooperation

Use Positive Methods to Guide Individual Children

- Help children learn from their experiences
- Redirect children to acceptable activities
- Offer assistance to children who are out of control
- Use simple, positive reminders to state and re-state rules

Help Children Understand and Express Their Feelings in Acceptable Ways

- Encourage children to talk about their feelings
- Tell children you accept their feelings, but their actions are not acceptable
- Provide creative outlets for expressing feelings
- Teach children conflict resolution techniques

A well-planned after-school program and curriculum that meet the needs of the children is a key to minimizing discipline problems. When teachers model, nurture, provide appropriate choices, and set reasonable expectations, discipline problems are reduced. However, there are times when staff need to guide children's behaviors.

Discipline supports the development of self-control

Some positive guidance approaches are

- **Help children problem-solve.** School-age children are capable of working together to come up with mutually agreeable solutions.
- **Talk with children privately.** When an individual child's behavior needs to be addressed do so away from the rest of the group.
- **Focus on the child's behaviors.** Avoid labeling children as "good" or "bad." Instead, focus on acceptable or unacceptable aspects of the child's behavior.
- **Help children understand the consequences of their actions.** Understanding the consequence of their behavior develops concern for others and a sense of responsibility.
- **Control your own feelings.** Staff have feelings too and may need to ask a co-worker for assistance while they calm down before disciplining a child.
 - **Stop.** Have everyone involved in the conflict stop to regain self-control so they can discuss the situation.
 - **Identify.** Encourage children to talk about why they are upset and ask questions to identify the problem.
 - **Generate.** Give everyone a chance to brainstorm possible solutions. Encourage children to be as creative as they can.
 - **Evaluate.** Consider all the ideas that were generated. Have children think about whether an idea would work, is fair, and what might happen if they tried it.