

	ALPINE CHILDREN'S SERVICES INC	Approved: July 04 Last review: June 08 Review Date: Mar 10
POLICY NAME		BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE
REGULATORY: SOURCES & PROCEDURAL REFERENCES:	Alpine Children's Services Committee of Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational Health and Safety Act 2005 • Children's Services Regulations (Vic) 2009 • Early Childhood Australia Code of Ethics 2006 • Service's Philosophy • ACS Diversity and Equity Policy • ACS Children's Orientation Policy and Procedure • ACS Confidentiality Policy • ACS Privacy Policy • ACS Dealing with Biting Procedure • NCAC Behaviour Guidance Policy Template 2008 	
POLICY		
POLICY STATEMENT: The service's Behaviour Guidance Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emphasises that children have the same rights as adults; and • recognises, values and celebrates the differences and similarities that exist in all persons¹. <p>Families and staff/carers should use appropriate strategies to guide children to recognise, manage and learn from their behaviours and express their emotions in positive, non-threatening and productive ways.</p> COMMITMENT: Alpine Children's Services is committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reflects the values, attitudes and current recommended strategies that promote positive play behaviours and patterns; • respects the importance of interactions and relationships between children, families and staff/carers; • understands why children behave in certain ways in specific circumstances; • promotes realistic play and behaviour limits that guide children's safety and security rather than curb their play experiences, curiosity or creativity; • defines clear and transparent caregiving strategies that communicate how behaviour guidance is implemented by the service; • informs the service's stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans; and • explains the service's commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies. 		

¹ For the purpose of this policy, 'persons' include <children, families, staff, carers, carers' family, management, coordination unit staff, ancillary staff (administrative staff, kitchen staff, cleaners, maintenance personnel), students, volunteers, visitors, local community, school community, licensee, sponsor and/or service owner>.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the service's Behaviour Guidance Policy is to:

- encourage acceptable forms of behaviour by using strategies that build children's confidence and self-esteem;
- provide children with support, guidance and opportunities to manage their own behaviour; and
- promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between the service's stakeholders and/or external agencies.

The service recognises and understands that a child's behaviour may be affected by their:

- age and development;
- general health and wellbeing;
- relationships with their family;
- play and learning environments, which includes the physical indoor/outdoor settings, the weather, the time of year, the time of day;
- staff/carers' caregiving strategies and practices, which includes how those strategies are implemented;
- relationship with other children and stakeholders, such as students, volunteers and visitors; and
- external factors, such as family, home life, school or peer group experiences, or media coverage of traumatic events.

Families and staff/carers display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children.

While staff/carers are aware and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may be necessary to balance the individual needs of stakeholders with staff/carers' knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised authorities.

The *Occupational Health and Safety Act* states that employers have a duty of care to their employees to ensure that the working environment supports emotional and mental wellbeing.

Rationale

Important:

- The use of physical punishment² by staff/carers/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- The use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by staff/carers/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances.
- In meeting the service's duty of care under the Children's Services Regulations (Vic) 1996 there is a shared responsibility between the service and its stakeholders that the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures are adhered to.
- All Alpine Children's Services staff/carers are committed to the Early Childhood Australia's Code of Ethics.
- Please refer to the service's Philosophy Statement.
- Please refer to the service's Diversity and Equity Policy.
- Food is not to be used as a reward, incentive or for comfort. Instead praise or encouragement is to be given.

² For the purpose of this policy, physical punishment includes smacking, hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, pulling, pushing, shoving or the inappropriate manhandling of a child by an adult.

Strategies and practices

Behaviour guidance strategies

The service works with children, families and staff/carers work in unison to establish and maintain behaviour guidance strategies and practises that are age and developmentally appropriate and inappropriate behaviours and their consequences.

BABIES

Babies want to discover and explore. Their natural curiosity will drive them to experiment with objects to see how they work. Even light and gravity are things babies have to figure out. This may involve dropping play dough on the floor. Babies will watch reactions to see if they are doing the right thing. Babies will also do things like pinching, biting or hair pulling just to find out what happens.

Babies are born to experiment. Their behaviour is part of an innocent learning process – he is not purposely testing your patience. The service needs to create a safe environment for a baby's exploration so they don't hurt themselves or break expensive equipment.

Crying is still a baby's main way of communicating. Prompt attention to a baby's needs improves their sense of feeling 'safe' and will therefore cry less.

- Staff should be sensitive to baby's limitations, changing the situations according to their needs.
- Staff should be ready to distract, guide, re-direct attention and interest and remove temptation.
- Staff should give lots of attention when babies are happy, talkative, playful, as well as when they are crying.
- The environment should be structured in such a way so that staff minimise their use of 'no'.
- Staff should signal that a baby has behaved in an unacceptable manner by clearly and firmly stating what they should be doing. Their response should always be framed in a positive manner.

TODDLERS AND PRE-SCHOOLERS

- Staff should encourage children to be aware of the behavioural consequences of their actions. For example, they should be gently guided by comments such as 'if you do ... then.... will occur'.
- Staff should provide choices to help the child be a part of the decision-making process.
- Staff should help children to solve any problems verbally. This verbal skill will empower the child and help the child to cope with difficult situations which require negotiation and problem-solving, both as a child and an adult.
- The child should never be accused of being unacceptable. Rather the behaviour of the child is deemed acceptable or unacceptable. That is, staff should distinguish the action from the child - the child is always respected.
- Staff should acknowledge and accept a child's feelings of anger, frustration or jealousy. The feelings should be distinguished from what the child does about the feelings. The staff should talk about feelings and encourage the child to talk about them too. Staff should encourage children to understand that there is nothing wrong with feeling angry - it is the reaction to the anger, such as hitting, that is not acceptable.
- Children should be encouraged to become aware of their own physiological signs that tell them about their feelings as an indicator of what may be the right action to take in various situations, for example, conflict situations.
- Staff should comfort the child who hurt as well as the child who has been hurt.

Inappropriate language

- In babies and toddlers swearing is ignored as they are experimenting with words and language. Their language is redirected to other things around them.
- With 3-5 aged children, assess the situation first as there is usually a reason why the child is swearing.
- Encourage children to talk through what has happened and develop solutions to work through the problem.
- Children are taught to use appropriate language to express how they feel.
- Staff are encouraged to model appropriate language behaviour.
- If swearing becomes an ongoing problem, staff will talk with the parents in order to devise methods of dealing with swearing that are consistent between home and the Centre.

A note on toy weapons:

Alpine Children's Services aims to teach children that they are personally responsible for their actions and how it affects other people. In our society the use of guns can allow the separation of actions from their consequences. So, guns have no place in dramatic play at Alpine Children's Services. However, superhero/military role play is a common form of play for preschool children and can be useful to teach them their limits and to feel powerful in their world. We believe that this is good, provided that children understand that superheroes must respect other people and the environment.

Policy on weapons: Toys are generally chosen by staff. Toys are purchased that are of interest to the children, are not single use toys, have educational value, and are non-bias. Toy guns are not permitted at Alpine Children's Services. Staff actively discourage the making of guns (and to a lesser extent the making of other weapons such as swords). Staff encourage play that assists children's investigation of their abilities and limits and helps them learn about their impact on other people.

Establishing limits

- Children are involved in establishing play and safety limits in the service, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to.
- Reflective questions are used to engage children to think about their practices and environment. Encouraging children to develop their play and learning limits and consequences, reinforces ownership of the service's practices.
- Defining limits in terms of a 'positive' instead of a 'negative' assists children to remember what to do rather than what not to do. For example, 'children walk inside' is preferable to 'children do not run inside'.
- Establishing limits depends on the developmental level of children. Younger children require safety and guidance limits established for them by adults, while staff/carers can vary their communication style and language with older children to negotiate limit setting.
- For example, staff/carers discuss with children why it is important to wash hands before handling food and the reasons why people sit when eating food. Service should consider the following reflective questions:
 - Why is it important to wash hands before handling food?
 - What could happen if you didn't wash your hands before eating food?
 - If you were running around while eating and tripped, what might happen? Why is this dangerous?
 - What do you think should happen if someone doesn't want to wash their hands before eating?

Establishing spaces

- Children are involved in establishing play and learning spaces in the environment which includes areas where children can find solace, peace and relaxation. Environments need active, loud and energetic play spaces balanced with passive, quiet and peaceful areas where children can find solace and peace. It is important that services provide both types of spaces, especially for those children who recognise that they require time apart from their peers. For example, a child who recognises that they are becoming frustrated with other children can retreat to an area that is calming and allows them to refocus.
- Services consider the following reflective questions:
 - How does the service support children to make decisions about their environment?
 - How are quiet spaces utilised for children to encourage solitary play?
 - How do staff/carers actively encourage children to develop their sense of ownership about their play and care space?

Support

- The service provides opportunities for children to seek information that can assist them in dealing with their emotions.
- At times, children need to know where they can enlist adult support and receive information that may not be delivered directly by staff/carers. In long day care services, this may be an ancillary staff member, such as a gardener or cook, who is not someone a child sees every day but who may have developed a relationship that promotes positive behaviours. Family day carers may display posters communicating telephone or website helpline information.
- The Children, Youth and Women's Health website (www.cyh.com.au) provides a wide range of information for children and youth on a variety of topics such as, health, safety, feelings, divorce, child protection, bullying and relationships.

Families

Crucial to the success of behaviour guidance is the role of families play, especially parents. Families are provided with regular opportunities to contribute to the development and review of their child's behaviour guidance strategies and plans, along with the service's overall strategies to promote positive outcomes for the child. This involvement includes the orientation interview, policy review process, chats at drop off and collection and parent/carer interviews.

Enrolling, orientating and settling families into care

- The service informs families about the behaviour guidance policy on enrolment and seeks information from families about the behaviour guidance strategies used at home.
- It is important for the service to understand the expectations of families regarding behaviour guidance strategies used in the service before children begin care. Communicating with families during the enrolment process assists staff/carers in understanding children's behaviour and the limits established at home.
- Please refer to the service's Children Orientation Policy and Procedure.

Establishing lines of open communication and expectations

Families should have the opportunity to express their thoughts, expectations and feelings openly with staff/carers. Staff/carers should extend open lines of communication with families in regards to maintaining behaviour guidance strategies and practices.

- When both the carer and parent are in the carer's home or service, the carer will continue to guide behaviour and reinforce any behaviour guidance strategies.
- When a parent physically disciplines their child in front of other children in the service several actions are taken. These include discussion with the parent regarding the services behaviour guidance policy.
- Staff/carers will continue to communicate a concern to a family who refuses to accept the service's observations. It is quite natural for a parent to be in denial about any additional needs their child may have. It is important for the staff/carers to continue dialogue with the family. A referral to the local Maternal

- It is important to communicate to families about the behaviour guidance strategies established in the service. Families should recognise that some behaviour guidance strategies or practices established in the home cannot be enforced in the service's environment.
- For example, the service's response to a parent who bites their child as a behaviour guidance strategy and the child then bites other children? The staff/carers communicate to families about recommended behaviour guidance strategies and child development expectations by offering such literature as relevant policies and procedures (in this instance the services Dealing with Biting Procedure), books, videos and the Positive Parenting Program.

Staff/Carers

Staff/carers can be involved in establishing and maintaining behaviour guidance strategies and practises through: Behaviour Guidance Policy review process, staff meetings and through discussions with families.

The following is a set of guidelines that can assist/staff carers when recognising and implementing behaviour guidance strategies and practices:

- Staff/carers respond to, and acknowledge children's emotions, such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride.
- Staff/carers acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant. For example, an adult who is not scared of thunder should not trivialise the fear or anxiety expressed by a child.
- Staff/carers understand that children may not have developed the appropriate strategies to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff/carers' attitudes and caregiving strategies demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their development and/or general disposition.
- staff/carers:
 - interact with children, families and peers equitably and respectfully;
 - use language that promotes empathy and understanding;
 - actively monitor children's behaviours;
 - encourage empathy towards others;
 - avoid making comparisons between children and families;
 - are aware of situations, group dynamics and scenarios that may contribute to children's behaviours; and
 - support and encourage children to be fair and respectful of others.
- The service encourages staff to undertake formal courses in early childhood such as the Certificate III in Children's Services and the Diploma in Children's Services. If a traineeship is unavailable, the service will provide a 50% reimbursement of course fees upon successful completion. The Behaviour Guidance Policy will be discussed during the staff orientation process.

Management/Coordination unit staff

Management/coordination unit staff are involved in establishing and maintaining behaviour guidance strategies and practises through the policy review process, staff meetings, professional development opportunities, performance appraisals and parent/carer interviews.

Compliance with legislation and/or regulatory requirements

- The service must comply with the Children's Services Regulations (Vic) 1996.
- Non-compliance of the Behaviour Guidance Policy will be dealt with the non-compliance of policy process. Any forms of physical punishment by a staff/carer will result in a 'First and Final Warning' of expulsion as a staff/carer of Alpine Children's Services.

Confidentiality and privacy

- Please refer to Alpine Children's Services Confidentiality Policy and Procedure and the Privacy Policy and Procedure.
- The right of children and families to be afforded a level of confidentiality and privacy in regards to children's developmental records and any behavioural management plans is paramount.
- Staff/carers, students and volunteers should be aware of Alpine Children's Services commitment to maintaining and respecting an individual's privacy when behaviour management strategies are developed and implemented into the service's play and learning experiences.
- Confidentiality and privacy is paramount in relation to how:
 - the child's primary carer(s) communicates the strategies to their peers;
 - to communicate the need for confidentiality when addressing concerns from other children and/or families about a particular child's behaviour; and
 - to incorporate external agency involvement, if required, into the service's experiences without causing disruption to the service's daily practice.

Selection and recruitment

- The recruitment procedure will include questioning staff/carers about their knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices during the selection and recruitment procedure.
- This is a useful tool in assessing the skills and knowledge of staff/carers and their commitment to ensuring that their caregiving strategies reflect recommended practices.
- Please refer to the service's Children's Orientation Policy.

Staff/Carer professional development opportunities

- Alpine Children's Services aims to maintain and improve the skills and knowledge of staff/carers in relation behaviour guidance, through:
 - informally discussions about the ways to deal with children who display inappropriate behaviours,
 - formal discussion about the ways to deal with children who display inappropriate behaviours for example during staff meetings, and
 - Formal professional development opportunities.

Relief staff/carers

Role and responsibilities

- Alpine Children's Services supports relief staff/carers when assisting permanent staff/carers with behaviour guidance strategies, through: staff orientation procedure, staff meetings, modelling appropriate strategies and on-the-job instruction.
- Relief staff/carers are informed of the service's play and safety limits through guidelines displayed, communication books, staff modelling and on-the job instruction.

Students and volunteers

Role and responsibilities (students and volunteers are never left alone with children)

- The service supports students and volunteers with behaviour guidance strategies, through: the student orientation procedure, modelling appropriate strategies and on-the-job instruction.
- Students and volunteers are informed of the service's play and safety limits through guidelines displayed, communication books, staff modelling and on-the job instruction.

Communication with different stakeholders

Communication with Children, Staff/Carers and Management/Coordination unit staff have been addressed in the 'Strategies and Practices' section of this policy template.

Accessing external support agencies

- The service utilises resource and support agencies that promote positive behaviour guidance strategies and practices, for example Upper Murray Family Care, Noah's Ark and FKA.
- The Inclusion and Professional Support Program developed by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) is accessed as needed by Alpine Children's Services.

Experiences

Alpine Children's Services values and beliefs regarding behaviour guidance are reflected in children's individual and group play and learning experiences.

- The environment can anticipate certain behaviours by using reflective questions:
 - The indoor space is designed to encourage children to initiate their own play and learning with opportunities such as open-ended experiences and role-play settings provided.
 - The service accommodates adverse weather conditions such as cold or heat, by accessing shaded/covered outdoor areas and requesting that families provide appropriate clothing and footwear in winter (parkas, beanies, mittens etc).
 - Indoor spaces can incorporate traditional outdoor experiences, such as sand and water play, using tubs either placed inside or on covered verandas/decks.
 - Multiple resources are available for younger children, such as toddlers, who become easily frustrated when there are limited toys?
 - The care environment is set up to encourage positive behaviours and minimise inappropriate behaviours by removing any objects that children should not access or putting these objects out of reach (e.g. CD players).

Excursions

- Clear limits of behaviour and consequences are to be established prior to each excursion that is communicated to children, families, staff/carers.
- Services will investigate the excursion venue, time of day, its interest to children and any unforeseen situations.
- For example, if pre-school children are suddenly required to line up for 20 minutes before entering an excursion venue, how does this affect their behaviour? If children become impatient or frustrated, what are the strategies that staff/carers can implement?

Behaviour guidance management plans

A behaviour guidance management plan is an example of how a service and its stakeholders observe, plan, implement, evaluate and document strategies that reflect when a child is non-compliant to the established limits of play and interactions. For example, swearing; hitting, smacking, or kicking other children or adults; or potentially causing harm to themselves.

These plans should:

- be based on evidence that the displayed behaviour is inappropriate;
- be observed and documented over a period of time that suggests a pattern is emerging;
- include inappropriate behaviours that occur consistently;
- include inappropriate behaviours that occur with consistent triggers;
- identify that the behaviour could possibly harm another child or adult;
- define the context within which the behaviour occurs; and
- reflect a collaborative approach with the child's family.

The service must identify the context of the behaviour. For example, if a child is displaying signs of tiredness at lunch, and then begins to hit other children, it may be that the inappropriate behaviour does not require a behaviour guidance management plan. Staff/carers may consider preparing the child's lunch earlier than normally scheduled, which may possibly minimise the risk of the child hitting others.

Procedures

Staff/carers need to have a meeting with families when a behaviour guidance plan is required. This meeting will include:

- presentation of the children's file,
- a clear explanation of why a guidance plan is required (encourage the parents to paraphrase the reason for the plan) i.e. what is the targeted behaviour and why it is inappropriate. For example, potential to cause harm to other children.
- a display of respect and empathy towards children when the staff/carers label behaviour and not the individual child (i.e. reinforce that the behaviour is to be managed, not the child),
- consultation with the families create specific strategies to guide the inappropriate behaviour including such actions as consequences,
- consultation with the families to create specific strategies to reinforce positive behaviour,
- reinforcing to the parent that consistency is crucial to the success of the plan (i.e. the parents need to reinforce the plan at home),

Staff/carers need to communicate details about the behaviour guidance plan (including start time of implementation and methods of monitoring behaviour) to any other staff that will care for the child (including relief staff).

The service needs to evaluate and monitor behaviour guidance strategies and plans. This process may involve observations such as a running record or recording the number of incidences of the behaviour in a given period. A communication book may need to be established so families and staff/carers can monitor the behaviour guidance plan. After a period of time (for example two weeks) a second meeting should be held with the families and staff/carers.

If the behaviour guidance plan is unsuccessful the **service may consider excluding the child** from care due to inappropriate behaviour (for example, if the child's behaviour is harming other children in the service).

Procedure for non-compliance of the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures by a:

- child: if consistent non-compliance is established a behaviour management plan is to be developed. If further non-compliance continues the service may consider excluding the child from care.
- staff/carer: a 'first and final warning' will be issued to any staff member that uses physical punishment (such as smacking). Any other non-compliance will be dealt with through the non-compliance of a service policy procedure.
- family member: a meeting will be held to ensure the family member understands the Behaviour Guidance Policy, further non-compliance of the Behaviour Guidance Policy and procedures may result in the service excluding the family member's child from care.
- student/volunteer: a 'first and final warning' will be issued to any student/volunteer that uses physical punishment (such as smacking). Any other non-compliance will be dealt with through the non-compliance of a service policy procedure.