

## **Guiding Children's Behaviour: Biting Guidance and Procedure**

*National Quality Standards 5.1, 5.2*

*National Law sections 166*

*Regulations 74, 155, 156, 162*



Young children are learning to regulate their own behaviour they are egocentric and focus on themselves therefore find it difficult to consider others feelings or needs.

### **Confidentiality**

*In keeping with the Privacy Act 1988, parents will not be told the name of the child who has bitten or who has difficulty regulating their behaviour. It is not appropriate to share confidential information about children with other families; we will protect the privacy and confidentiality of children and their families at all times.*

Kozy Kids is committed to a Behaviour Guidance Policy because it:

- 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 educators;
- 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 services stakeholders about the procedures involved in behaviour guidance management plans; and
- explains the services commitment to professional development and utilisation of external agencies.

### **Aim**

- Is to assist all children to develop socially appropriate behaviours and build on children's confidence and self-esteem
- To provide an environment that is flexible and predictable with supportive empathetic educators to guide and model expressive languages that help children to label feelings and behaviours to the people in their environment
- Promote collaborative approaches to behaviour guidance between the services stakeholders
- To have secure attachments with their primary carers so as they know their needs are being met. Adults who can be "Bigger, stronger, kinder and wise" *Circle of Security Developed by Bert Powell, Kent Hoffman, Glen Cooper, and Bob Marvin*

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

- age and development or characteristics;
- 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;
- educators' 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.

### **Babies and toddlers' characteristics**

Babies and toddlers exhibit several characteristics which influence their interaction with other people. They show:

- *Lack of understanding* – Babies/toddlers may do hurtful things to other children when playing and exploring, without understanding that they hurt. Their primary objective is to explore the world as they are in the process of learning that their actions have a cause and effect. This may mean that they may push a child with the intention of seeing the effect of their action without an understanding of hurt they are causing.
- *Good intentions, bad execution* – Babies/toddlers can do inappropriate things with good intentions e.g. a two-year-old gives a toy to a crying baby by dropping it on his head. Babies/toddlers' first expression of interest in one another is through hands-on experience - poking, jabbing, pulling etc. What toddlers need is not to be stopped from interacting with other children but shown how to do it gently.
- *Lack of self-control* - It is characteristic for under 3's to lack willpower or self-control (they simply can't stop themselves).

### **Three to six-year-old characteristics**

Children who are over three years:

- Know more about appropriate ways of behaving
- Have more self-control and ability to regulate their emotions
- Can share and take turns
- Are fairly skilled in the use of languages
- Can understand language well, label their emotions more and be active listeners
- Can identify a problem and attempt to solve it
- Are less egocentric than younger children
- Can show empathy and negotiate with peers
- Can be involved in establishing play and safety limits, which reflect recommended best practices, and the consequences involved when limits are not adhered to. Encouraging children to develop their play and learning limits and consequences, reinforces ownership of the service's practices

### **Strategies and procedures**

We can guide and facilitate children's control and discipline by being aware of their age and developing suitable strategies for individual children some include but not limited to:

- To respond appropriately to children's behaviour, educators need to have a sound knowledge of children's developmental levels and needs
- Respond to the action not the child whether positive or negative
- Focus on the positive not the negative
- Explain reasons why the behaviour is unacceptable
- Respond to the action not the child and accept the child unconditionally
- Children should be encouraged, not forced, to share, play together and cooperate to teach them the beginnings of cooperative play and peer pro-social skills
- Educators should role model positive behaviour situations to set an example for children
- It is important to remember that hurting another child can be very frightening for the child who has done the hurting. He/she may need comforting as well as the victim
- An appropriate environment that encourages both the sharing of toys as well as individual experiences, which will reduce frustration
- It is important that our reactions are neutral, not angry; remember we are teaching young children the way we would like them to behave
- Response will be genuine, brief and serious
- Verbal response will almost always be followed by an action response

- It is important for the child who bit or was aggressive in their behaviour to see the aftermath of their actions
- Parents will be informed that they are required to collect their child within the hour where the child has shown aggressive behaviour towards others

### **Biting**

We understand that biting is behaviour related to the development of young children and is a behaviour that is unfortunately not unexpected. Young children sometimes bite, and this is often an occurrence when children are together.

Biting often occurs in early childhood and is not usually related to long term behavioural problems. Sometimes behaviours such as biting are a result of a child expressing their feelings. Feelings which may include frustration, anger, excitement, tension and anxiety. Children bite others for many different reasons some developmental such as teething, sensory exploration, learning about cause and effect, learning through imitation, developing autonomy and developing sensory integration. We focus on effective behavioural guidance techniques that address the specific reason for the biting therefore not focusing on punishment for it.

We understand that biting brings up many feelings for families and encourage parents to bring any concerns to our attention. We remind you that we work in partnership with families and conversation should always be conducted in a thoughtful and respectful manner especially in the presence of young children.

### **When a child is bitten**

If a child is bitten, the bitten child will be comforted, and the injury treated by appropriate first aid measures. We will acknowledge that the child has been hurt with a simple statement such as "I am sad you got hurt". We will encourage the child to respond with a short statement such as "You can tell ----- "No don't bite me". This helps the child understand that a response is possible and can give the child the language and the confidence to respond to the biting child.

Educators will pay attention to the child who is bitten and their reaction in order to manage the situation. If the child is scared or worried the children will be separated, if the child is furious and wanting to retaliate the children will be separated to reduce the risk of escalation.

### **Helping the child who bit**

It is important for the child who bit to see the aftermath of their actions. It is important that our reactions are neutral, not angry; remember we are teaching young children the way we would like them to behave. Responses will be genuine, brief and serious.

- Verbal response will almost always be followed by an action response.

Examples of specific language educators will use in their verbal and action responses

- "You bit him with your teeth. He doesn't like it. It is not okay to bite people." (By adding the words "with your teeth" this response clarifies the word "bit" for very young toddlers.)
- You bit her, and it hurt her. That's why she's crying. I don't want you to bite anyone." You could see if she wants a hug.
- You were so mad when the truck wouldn't work! And you bit John. Biting hurts people. I'll help you when you're mad, but you may not bite people."
- "Anna had a toy you wanted, and you bit her and took the toy away. Biting hurts people and you can't have toys when you bite people to get them."

### **Ways you can help your biting child**

- help your child develop language skills;
- model appropriate ways to express feelings;
- model caring, empathetic behaviour; and
- express disapproval for biting if the child bites at home (this does not mean lecturing, going off on a tirade, or punishing the child)

### **Communicating with families**

Biting is always documented on an accident report form. The educators will notify parents over the phone where possible prior to their arrival at the service of the biting occurrence; parents will be asked to sign the accident form acknowledging they have been informed of the bite. When children bite their parents will be notified by the Team Leader or Primary Caregiver in a sensitive and professional manner.

*Current resources about biting are available to parents please ask educators for assistance.*

### **Behaviour guidance management plans**

A behaviour guidance management plan is a way staff can 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:

- Are based on evidence that the displayed behaviour is inappropriate;
- Are 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.

Some behaviours need to be monitored to see if patterns are emerging. 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. Educators may consider preparing the child's lunch earlier than normally scheduled, which may possibly minimise the risk of the child hitting others.

### **Important:**

- The use of physical punishment by educators/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances. (physical punishment includes smacking, hitting, slapping, kicking, pinching, pulling, pushing, shoving or the inappropriate manhandling of a child by an adult)
- Use of isolation, humiliation, intimidation or negative labelling by educators/students/volunteers/visitors as a behaviour guidance strategy is not acceptable under any circumstances
- Educators display respect and empathy towards children when they label behaviour and not the individual child. This means that behaviours are managed, not children
- Educators, other children and families should refrain from labelling a child's inappropriate or negative behaviour as 'naughty' or 'bad'. Similarly, traditional labels such as 'good boy' or 'good girl' identify the individual but not the positive behaviour. For example, when a child completes a task directed by an adult, such as washing their hands before a meal, educators should identify the behaviour that reinforces the achievement and not label the worth of the individual. Instead of 'good boy/girl', the educator can respond with "thank you (child's name)

for washing your hands with soap before lunch” or “thank you for remembering to clean your hands before you eat”

***Policy acknowledgements:***

Parenting SA: Parents Easy Guide Number 31

Kinnell, Gretchen, No Biting policy and practice for Toddler Programs, New South Wales: Redleaf Press 2002 *Privacy Act 1988*

<http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/policy-development.asp>