

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
Chapter 8: Out-of-Home Services Section 18: Discipline in Resource Homes		
	Effective Date: January 1, 2026	Version: 5

POLICY OVERVIEW

The Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS) assists resource parents in developing safe, age-appropriate discipline plans to meet the child's needs.

POLICY STATEMENT

DCS will:

1. Make sure the resource parent is responsible for using appropriate discipline with the child in their care; and
2. Support two-way communication between the child's parent, guardian, or custodian and the resource parent to talk about effective discipline practices (see [Indiana Co-Care](#)).

Discipline must:

1. Not be given by other children or strangers;
2. Be age and developmentally appropriate;
3. Be related and fair based on the child's behavior; and
4. Be handled without prolonged delay.

DCS allows a resource parent to use the following discipline:

1. Verbal or written behavior plans, when age and developmentally appropriate;
2. Behavior management through incentives and rewards; and

Note: The behavior plan should be created with input from the resource parent; parent, guardian, or custodian; Family Case Manager (FCM); Child and Family Team (CFT) members; and other professionals (e.g., child's psychologist), as needed.

3. Corrective action to change behavior (but **never** physical discipline).

Note: DCS encourages using lesser forms of discipline (e.g., plans and behavior management) before using corrective action.

DCS **prohibits** resource parents from using (this is not a full list):

1. Corporal punishment (e.g., spanking);
2. Physical exercise (e.g., push-ups and running);
3. Forcing uncomfortable physical positions;
4. Verbal remarks that ridicule the child or the family;
5. Punishing appropriate emotional responses (e.g., punishing the child for crying after getting hurt);

6. Denying essential services and basic needs (e.g., family visitation/communication, mail, health care, food, shelter, clothing, bedding, and sleep);
7. Threatening removal or denying reunification;
8. Shaking;
9. Locking the child in a room; and/or
10. Using mechanical or chemical restraints.

Physical restraint may only be used if **all** of the following are true:

1. It is approved in writing by DCS in advance and included in the child's Case Plan/Prevention Plan, as part of the child's behavior management plan (see [8.D Tool](#));
2. The resource parent is trained and certified by a DCS-approved provider in prevention and use of physical restraint;
3. A trained adult who is not involved in the restraint watches the child during the restraint;
4. It is an emergency situation, and the child is a clear danger to self or others; and

Note: If a child has a weapon and is threatening others (but not attacking), the resource parent should:

- Give the child space;
- Move others away from the child; and
- Call 911 or local Law Enforcement Agency [LEA] to help disarm the child.

5. Less restrictive interventions have already be tried and did not work.

Note: In an emergency, the child's safety comes first. Action should be taken to make sure the child and others are not harmed. DCS must be **notified immediately** if physical restraint is used.

The resource parent must keep a record of each physical restraint and share it with DCS. The record must include:

1. Date and time of the incident;
2. Child's name;
3. Type of restraint used;
4. How long the restraint lasted;
5. Name and title of the person who used the restraint;
6. Name of the person observing the child during the restraint; and
7. Description of the child's behavior before, during, and after the restraint.

Note: The resource parent or Licensed Child Placing Agency (LCPA) must notify the DCS local office immediately, but no later than one (1) business day after any restraint. if anyone is injured, DCS must be notified immediately.

LEGAL REFERENCES

- [465 IAC 2-1.5-16 Care of children; discipline](#)
- [465 IAC 2-1.5-17 Physical restraint](#)