

	INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD SERVICES CHILD WELFARE POLICY	
	Tool: Behavior Management Plans	Effective Date: December 1, 2024
	Reference: 8.D (Policy 8.18 Behavior Management and Discipline in Resource Homes)	Version: 2

General Guidelines for Use of Discipline

When any form of discipline is used, the following guidelines are encouraged:

- Use encouragement and praise whenever possible to reinforce desired behavior.
- Wait until your anger subsides before implementing discipline.
- The use of several discipline options may be needed to deal with a specific behavior or set of behaviors.
- Attempt to de-escalate heightened emotions of the child or self before implementing any discipline techniques.
- Set clear limits, rules, and expectations and communicate these to the children.
- Give guidance in the form of “do” statements as opposed to “don’t” statements.
- If possible, have the children take responsibility for their actions and correct the behavior or situation.
- Give children choices and involve them in decision-making.
- The younger the child (whether calendar or developmental age), the more immediate the consequences should be.
- Discipline should be consistent with and based on the understanding of the child’s developmental age.

Discipline is an ongoing process of teaching children responsible behavior through example as well as through various other activities and techniques. Discipline involves teaching children that their behavior results in certain consequences and encourages children to learn self-control and responsibility. The Department of Child Services (DCS) and service providers may provide support in identifying discipline techniques that work best for a specific child’s needs. The following are examples (not an exhaustive list) of discipline techniques that may be included in discipline plans:

1. Verbal and written plans,
2. Behavior management, and
3. Corrective action.

Verbal and Written Plans

Verbal and written plans are statements, either verbal or written, by which the resource parents and the children (when age and developmentally appropriate) negotiate a mutually acceptable agreement. These may be a simple and convenient method of helping children acquire self-discipline because they:

1. Involve the children in making their own decisions and taking responsibility for their own actions;
2. Are flexible and may be negotiated to meet the requirements of the situation;
3. Are individual and may be tailored to meet the individual needs of the child;
4. Provide opportunities for success, which are visible to children;

5. Are tools that require children to examine themselves in terms of their capacity for self-direction;
6. Provide opportunities for interaction between children and resource parents;
7. Provide practice for adult life; and
8. Represent an investment on the part of both parties.

Behavior Management

Behavior management may be an appropriate discipline technique for children who are not able to handle the responsibility of self-discipline. Behavior management uses a system of incentives or rewards. Children receive rewards for approved behavior and may work up to a level of increased self-responsibility. Any behavior management program is to be reviewed, approved, monitored, and modified by the Child and Family Team (CFT) prior to the implementation and referred to a professional (e.g., child's therapist or psychologist), as necessary, depending upon the recommended behavior management. Any significant changes to the behavior management plan that was initially reviewed and approved by a professional must be reviewed and approved by the same professional, if feasible, prior to implementing the change. The behavior management plan will work best if the rewards are established through mutual agreement of the members of the CFT, including the child. It is important for all members of the CFT to follow the plan consistently.

Example

- Desired Behavior: Brushing teeth before bedtime.
- Behavior Management: Offer children a token (e.g., penny or sticker) each time they brush their teeth before bedtime.
- Reward: After the child has earned 10 tokens, the child will receive the reward (e.g., extra TV time, bonus in allowance, special activity).

Corrective Action

Before deciding to take corrective action, the resource parents must decide whether the behavior in question may be permitted or tolerated for a time or ignored in keeping with the needs and progress of the child, the needs of the resource parents, and the seriousness of the behavior. Children must be given the opportunity to recognize their behavior is inappropriate and to control it themselves. Corrective action includes the following:

1. Clarification- It is necessary to make clear exactly what the offense was, when it occurred, the identity of the person(s) who provoked it, the identity of the offender(s), and under what circumstances it took place.
2. Persuasion- Following clarification, resource parents may attempt to persuade children to correct mistakes by showing them there are other ways of achieving goals and that they have the ability to control their impulses. The resource parents' tone must be supportive and dispassionate, emphasizing the real consequences of the offense and suggesting how it can be corrected.
3. Distraction- Distraction involves drawing a child's attention away to a substitute activity in order to correct a child's behavior. The choice of a substitute activity should be guided by some criteria such as the child's age, intent, and interests as well as the capacity of the substitute activity to diminish the self-defeating aspects of the original activity.
4. Interference- Interference is used when a behavior must be stopped immediately and may be verbal, social, or physical. Physical restraint is only to be used after the resource parents have written permission from DCS to use physical restraint for use as a Behavioral Management Plan. In addition, resource parents must have received appropriate training and certification by a DCS approved provider in the prevention and

use of physical restraints, and they have determined it to be reasonable and necessary in the given situation to:

- a. Stop a child who is threatening physical injury to self, other persons, pets, and/or property; and/or
- b. Remove a weapon from the child as a matter of self-defense or defense of others.

Note: Authorized use of physical restraint must be documented in the child's Case Plan/Prevention Plan (SF 2956). See [465 IAC 2-1.5-17 Physical Restraint](#) for further guidance. It is imperative for resource families to use critical thinking skills when circumstances may warrant the use of interference to ensure the safety of the child.

5. **Time-out-** Time-out involves removal of children from situations until they are able to calm down. Children are isolated by sitting on a chair or staying in parts of occupied rooms or in other unoccupied unlocked rooms under careful supervision. Under no circumstances are closets to be used for time-out. In some situations, it may be more appropriate for resource parents to "take a time-out", removing themselves from situations as long as the children's safety is not in question.
 - a. Time-out is to be used sparingly, after other techniques have failed.
 - b. Time-out is to be short. A rule of thumb for the length of time-out is one minute per year of the child's age.
 - c. Once time-outs are over and the child has calmed down, have a discussion of the reason for the time out as well as a restorative attachment moment (indicating that the behavior, not the child, was unwanted or "wrong/bad"). The child can then return to other activities. It is helpful to bring the child back to something constructive that will redirect the child's energy.
6. **Time-in-** Time-in involves the child and caregiver being together. It allows the caregiver to be with the child as the child is regulating or calming down from the behavior.
7. **Earning privileges-** Privileges are benefits or favors that have been granted/earned by children (e.g., television time or special outings).

Note: Food, shelter, and visits with parents are rights, not privileges; therefore, the child is not to be deprived of these.

8. **Restitution-** Restitution may be used in cases of property damage or theft. In cases of property damage, children may pay for repair of the property within reason in relation to the amount of money they have or receive through such sources as an allowance or a part-time job. In cases of theft, children may either return the stolen goods or pay for them.