

Problem Solving Strategies

Open Communication with Parents

It is important to build rapport with parents. As caregivers they trust you with their child. Parents have a wealth of information about their child. Caregivers should allow time to gather information about each child they care for. Seek to learn about feeding and elimination patterns, sleep habits, likes and dislikes, specific challenges, and emotional triggers. The more you know the better prepared you will be to prevent challenging behaviors. Communicate openly and honestly with parents about both successes and challenges.

Collaboration with Providers

In cases where a child has a developmental or social-emotional delay it is important to get a clear picture of the child's level of functioning so appropriate expectation is maintained. When possible, and with parent permission, collaborate with the child's other service providers (ex. Speech, OT, PT, Behavioral Therapist) so you may understand the child's needs, but also aim to create a continuity of care for the child. Inquire about the level of support the family may need to be successful.




Creating an Environment That Promotes Success

- *Structure/ Routine-* Structure and routines are important for the following reasons: routines influence a child's emotional, cognitive, and social development, help children feel secure, help children understand expectations, help reduce behavior problems, and can result in higher rates of child engagement.
- *Visual schedules-* Many young children learn through modeling and visual input. Caregivers should display visual schedules in their classrooms/childcares and review the plan daily with children. This schedule should allow for some flexibility and adequate transition times. Even very young children should be able to repeat back what their daily schedule is once taught and with repetition.
- *Position yourself at the child's level-* Children need to know they are being listened to and heard. Bend or kneel down at the child's level to give directions or commands. Taking the time to intentionally engage with a child can prevent escalation.
- *Clear expectations and commands-* Maintain appropriate expectations for children. All children develop gradually and in logical stages, each child's development is unique, and each child has developmental strengths. Keep your expectations balanced. If you

know a child has a developmental delay, make reasonable accommodations to meet them at their level. Too high of expectation will result in power struggles and an increase in challenging behaviors. Remember, tell them what behaviors you would like to see, not those you don't!

Promote Emotional Regulation

- *Be clear about rules and limits.* Clearly defined rules for your classroom/childcare will reduce challenging behaviors. Rules should be visual and reviewed routinely. Children will feel more secure and emotionally regulated when they know what is expected from them.
- *Give clear and appropriate consequences.* Consequences should be age and developmentally appropriate for all children. Communication of consequences for challenging behaviors should be clear and without fear or threats. A caregiver's ability to stay emotionally regulated when giving consequences is essential.
- *Create a calming space.* Children should be given the opportunity to calm down when emotionally deregulated. Create a calm down space where children can participate in activities that promote emotional regulation (ex. fidget toys, stress balls, calming music)

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Be Part of The Change: Caregivers as Tools for Success!

- *Attunement- Get to know the child.* This will help a caregiver understand a child's personality and temperament so they are able to separate the child from the challenging behavior. Children who have an attuned caregiving will feel more secure. A caregiver who knows the child's difficult times of the day or emotional triggers can learn to prevent and learn to redirect challenging behaviors before they begin.
- *Praise- Praise children often.* Praise reinforces and strengthens positive behaviors and increases the likelihood that they will repeat the behavior in the future. Catch them being good. Focus on the positive and be specific: "I liked it when you shared with your brother" or "You did a great job picking up your toys!"
- *Stop and Think- Be a good role model.* Children learn how to express emotions both positive and negative from their caregivers. Use feeling words to express how you feel. Take time to stop and think before responding. Staying calm helps caregivers respond in a thoughtful way that is sensitive to the child's needs.
- *Encourage use of words.* Encourage children to ask for what they need as well as opportunities to express how they feel. Promote good help seeking skills. Children who are able to ask for help or express their feelings will be more successful in future academic environments. When language is limited, provide pictures or stories to promote expression. Stay attuned! Challenging behaviors are often ways a child expresses an unmet need.
- *Teach scripted social stories.* Help children understand a social situation by describing the situation, what the child needs to do, and how others feel when the child exhibits the inappropriate behavior or desired behavior.



RESOURCES

- Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations of Early Learning <http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/>
- Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php>
- Division for Early Childhood Recommended Practices <http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>
- Early Childhood Inclusion Webpage <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/eci/resource-library>

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- The Registry Training Calendar <https://www.the-registry.org>
- WI Early Care Association (WECA) Training Calendar <http://wisconsinearlychildhood.org/>
- MECA Special Needs Support Program (SNSP) <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/meca/disability>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES REGARDING BEHAVIOR

- <http://www.zerotothree.org/child-development/challenging-behavior/tips-tools-challenging-behaviors.html>
- http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu/do/resources/teaching_tools/ttyc_toc.htm
- <http://penfieldbuildingblocks.org/category/home-and-family/behavior-and-discipline/>
- <http://penfieldbuildingblocks.org/category/positive-parenting/>
- <http://www.kidzoccupationaltherapy.com/2011/10/07/five-practical-sensory-strategies-for-the-classroom/>

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