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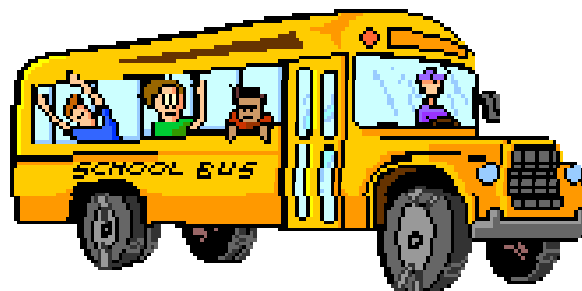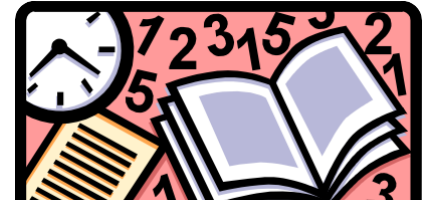**Early Education and Care**
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

School-age Child Guidance Technical Assistance Paper #1

Developing a Child Guidance Policy For School-Age Child Care

Developing a Child Guidance Policy

Key components for a good policy:

Your Child Guidance Policy should include the following:

1) The prohibitions in the EEC licensing standards:
- Spanking or other corporal punishment of children;
- Subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment;
- Depriving children of meals or snacks;
- Force feeding children; and,
- Disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; or forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or forcing a child to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting.
- *Please also note that EEC <u>does not</u> allow licensed child care programs to use discipline techniques that require the use of any physical restraint.*

2) Child guidance goals that help children to:
- Be safe with themselves and with others;
- Feel good about themselves;
- Develop self-control and good coping skills;
- Appropriately express their feelings;
- Become more independent;
- Balance their needs and wants with those of others;
- Learn new problem-solving skills, including non-violent conflict resolution; and,
- Learn about conservation – to use equipment, materials, and other resources in caring, appropriate ways.

3) Positive methods of child guidance that include:
- A plan for appropriate behavior through the environment by arranging furniture and other materials to encourage active learning and independence;
- A plan for daily scheduling that prevents boredom, waiting, hurriedness, with time to relax and enjoy activities, as well as a daily routine with ample opportunity for children to select activities and move between them at their own pace, and that gives children ample notice of transitions ahead of time;
- Providing children with expectations that are clear, age-appropriate and applied in a consistent way.

Developing a Child Guidance Policy

- Allowing children to participate in the establishment of rules, policies and procedures where appropriate and feasible;
- Reinforcing positive behavior by recognizing children's positive actions;
- Modeling appropriate behavior by what the adults say, expect, and do;
- Redirecting children away from negative actions and toward positive activities by interrupting a child's negative behavior and steering the child toward an acceptable substitute activity;
- Teaching children new skills and encouraging them to discuss and resolve their conflicts on their own or with the adult's assistance, when necessary, rather than imposing an adult's solution on them. Encouraging children to express their feelings in words and to resolve problems peacefully;
- Ignoring simple, inappropriate, negative behavior that is unpleasant;
- Working in close partnership with parents to address children's difficulties at home and at the program. Developing shared understanding to foster consistency between home and child care;
- Observing and recording children's behaviors; and,
- Accessing specialized support services if a child's behavior continues to be harmful to himself or others. Referring the family, with written parental permission, for mental health counseling or other specialized services that can help address the child's behavior problems.
- Developing behavioral and safety plans for children that require them. Ensuring that program staff is aware of all safety plans.
- Training staff on what methods of appropriate interventions are allowed in the program. Policies and procedures should be developed to support program staff in the use of any approved interventions.

4) Supports that are available to assist child guidance efforts:
- Learn about and list available community supports as an addendum to your child guidance policy; and,
- Ensure that program staff receive training on positive child guidance and making appropriate referrals for evaluation of children's needs.

Test the policy:
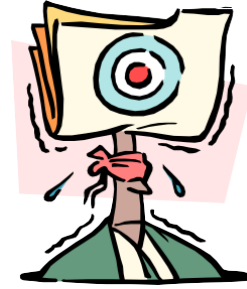
1. Does the policy support its goals? Does it maximize children's growth and development?
2. Is the policy practical? Can staff incorporate the policy and procedures into the daily operations of the program?

3. Is the policy age-appropriate for all the children attending the program?

4. What training do program staff need to implement the policy and procedures?

5. Does the policy identify appropriate community resources for referrals? Check with your local department of special education, mental health center, or a state agency that deals with services to families and children for other sources of help.

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