



Department of Early Education and Care

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Small Group, Large Group and School Age Child Care Licensing

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE : Child Guidance - Frequently Asked Questions

The Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) requires licensed child care programs in Massachusetts to use child guidance practices that foster children's physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. EEC strongly supports building caring, pro-social and positive relationships between the adults and the children enrolled in the programs. Practices that include physical restraints of children may not be used in any child care program licensed by the Department.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions that may help clarify acceptable child guidance practices in licensed child care programs:

- 1) **Question:** Can I pick up a flailing child and hold that child in my lap until the child calms him/herself?

Answer: You may pick the child up to comfort and support the child on your lap. However, you may need to let the child regain some self-control before attempting to pick the child up. Assess the situation. Your goal is to have the child regain self-control in the least restrictive way.

- 2) **Question:** What can I do if a child that I'm holding in my lap does not regain self-control?

Answer: If the child cannot regain composure on your lap, you may move the child to a soft quiet space in your program and stay with the child to comfort him/her. Speak softly to the child in a supporting way. Do not force the child to sit on your lap if the child continues to resist. Remove anything in the physical environment that the child could harm themselves or others with and continue your efforts to calm the child. Once the child is calm, the child may need a few minutes with a favorite book, or to express him/herself with crayons and paper, or to play quietly until he/she has calmed down and is ready to rejoin the rest of the group. Each child is different and the teacher/provider should know each child's temperament and limitations.

- 3) **Question:** Can I leave the child in a high chair, car seat, crib, or porta-crib as a way to separate them from other children because of behaviors?

Answer: No. Children must not be left in a high chair, car seat or crib, porta-crib as a method of controlling a child's behavior. Using equipment to limit the child's movements or the child's program participation is inappropriate.

- 4) **Question:** Is holding a child on my lap considered a restraint?

Answer: Holding a child on one's lap is not considered a physical restraint if it is not limiting the child's range of motion, and is done in a reasonable and predictable manner for the child. Adults should always intervene in a calm nurturing manner.

- 5) **Question:** If child care teacher /provider completes training on passive physical restraint techniques may they then use these techniques to assist children who are "out of control" in their program?

Answer: No. Practices that include physical restraints of children in any child care program licensed by the EEC must not be used.

- 6) **Question:** Can I wrap my arms around a child who is out of control?

Answer: You need to assess and consider the child's safety and the safety of the other children in the group. A supportive hold must only be sustained long enough to remove a child from an unsafe environment. Supportive holding of children should be considered only in the following situations:

- The child's safety is at risk;
- The safety of other children or adults is at risk;
- The child must be moved in order to be safely supervised;
- The child demonstrates a sustained behavior that is highly disruptive and/or upsetting to other children necessitating moving the child.

A supportive hold should not be used unless:

- The safety of the child and others demands immediate intervention or;
- All other possible interventions have been attempted prior to supportive holding; and,
- Supportive holds should only be sustained long enough to remove a child from an unsafe environment or keep him/her from hurting self or others.

- 7) **Question:** Can I pick up a child who is upset and cradle the child in my arms?

Answer: Yes. Teachers/providers may cradle a child in their arms in a calm, nurturing manner.

- 8) **Question:** Can I use physical restraint on children in my child care program, if the children's parents have signed a permission form?

Answer: No. EEC prohibits the use of physical restraint in any licensed family, group, or school-age child care program regardless of any signed permission the program receives.

- 9) **Question:** If a child runs from the child care group and puts him/herself in a dangerous situation, can I run and grab the child to stop the child from getting hurt?

Answer: Yes. If the child is in harm's way and in danger of being injured, EEC expects that the child care provider respond appropriately. The teacher/provider should pick up or move that child to a safer location.

- 10) **Question:** Can I escort a child from one area to another?

Answer: The teacher/provider may direct or escort a child from one area to another by taking the child's hand, or picking the child up. The teacher/provider should always talk calmly or use other familiar ways to acknowledge and affirm the child.

- 11) **Question:** If I am following the Department of Education's restraint regulations, can I use physical restraint in my child care programs?

Answer: No. Practices that include physical restraints of children in any child care program licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care must not be used.

- 12) **Question:** If the child has lost control and is damaging property or is threatening one's self or others, can I hold the child to keep the child and others in the program safe?

Answer: The teacher/provider may hold the child, pick up the child or remove the child to a safer location. Each child is different and the teacher/provider should know the child's temperament and limitations.

- 13) **Question:** Can I use pillows, blankets, nap mats or other objects to restrict a child's freedom of movement as a way to better control the classroom during rest or quiet time?

Answer: No. Teachers/providers must not use any device meant to restrict a child's movement or free will, at any time as a method of controlling a child's behavior, using as punishment, limiting the child's participation, or for the convenience of the program.

- 14) **Question:** Can I rub a child's back if the child is having difficulty napping?

Answer: Teachers/providers may rub a child's back, if the child requests the back rub.

- 15) **Question:** Can I put my knee, leg, or arm across a child who is having difficulty napping?

Answer: No. Teachers/providers must not use any method that is meant to restrict a child's movement or free will, at any time as a method of controlling a child's behavior, using as punishment, limiting the child's participation, or for the convenience of the program.

- 16) **Question:** Can I put myself between two children who are fighting and physically separate them?

Answer: The teacher/provider must assess and consider the safety of him/herself and the safety of the children and group when deciding to intervene in a fight between children. The teacher/provider must immediately call for help to provide safety when trying to intervene and physically separate fighting children. Consider the possibility of having to intervene in this type of situation beforehand and develop a plan and strategy to resolve this type of situation.

- 17) **Question:** Where can I get help for a child that is disrupting daily program activities and is pushing the limits of staff and other children?

Answer: There are many resources available to your program in your community:

- With discussion and written parental permission a program may refer children and families to local community services such as a mental health clinic;
- Call your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRR) for information about training and consultation services offered by the local early intervention program and the local early intervention regional consultation program;
- Call your local CCRR for information about training opportunities;
- Plan ahead, know the children, and have a strategy before the situations occurs.
- Call your EEC Regional Policy and Training Advisor for information about child care subsidy resources such as EEC flexible funding for children with special needs in child care programs that have a voucher agreement with their local CCRR or an EEC contract;
- Call your EEC Regional Policy and Training Advisor for information about local program supports; and,
- Call your EEC licensor for licensing and technical assistance support and check the EEC Website at www.mass.gov/eec