



## AIR FORCE CHILD AND YOUTH PROGRAMS POSITIVE GUIDANCE AND APPROPRIATE TOUCH INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

September 2013

1. **TRAINING OBJECTIVE:** To assist Child and Youth Programs (CYP) personnel (CYP staff and managers, Family Child Care (FCC) providers and coordinators, contract workers and volunteers) in building relationships with children/youth through appropriate adult-to-child interactions.
2. **PURPOSE:** To outline appropriate adult-to-child interactions in CYP.
3. **OVERVIEW:**
  - a. Children/youth need guidance from adults to keep them safe, encourage development of self-control, self-reliance and respect for the rights of others. These skills are crucial to their future success as adults. Guidance of child/youth behavior is ongoing and requires skill and patience.
  - b. For guidance to be most successful, it needs to occur in the context of a caring and supportive relationship. It's important that the CYP personnel get to know and understand the child/youth's typical behavior. Effective guidance takes place when children/youth know and trust adults caring for them and the adults show children/youth their concern for them is unconditional.
  - c. CYP personnel must recognize children/youth as individuals and respect differing abilities, temperaments, activity levels, and developmental characteristics. No one specific guidance technique will work for every situation; therefore approaches will need to be adapted for each child/youth.
  - d. Touch is as necessary as food or water for children/youth to thrive and grow physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Appropriate touch respects the personal privacy and space of children/youth; is nurturing (hugs, giving high-fives, etc.); keeps children/youth safe (separating physically conflicting children/youth, examining cuts/bruises/unusual marks, administering first aid to injuries); and assists with hygiene (face and hand washing, diaper changing, etc.). Remember, the age and individual needs and preferences of the child/youth should always be considered when determining if a touch is appropriate.
  - e. All CYP personnel must receive training on positive guidance techniques and appropriate touch and sign a written statement of understanding during New Employee/Provider Orientation. Annually thereafter, CYP personnel must receive training on positive guidance techniques and appropriate touch. All training is documented on the AF Form 1098, *Special Task Certification and Recurring Training*.

- f. Incidents of inappropriate guidance/touch are reported, using the *AF CYP Reportable Incidents Report Form*, to the Flight Chief, Family Advocacy, Squadron Commander/Director, Major Command Specialist/Installation Support Division, Air Force Personnel Center Directorate of Services Child and Youth Programs, and Headquarters United States Air Force Child and Youth Programs within 24 hours of occurrence.

#### 4. APPROPRIATE GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES:

- a. **Consider Possible Reasons for Behaviors:** Behaviors are a form of communication. Due to the limited language and experiences of a child/youth, sometimes their actions speak louder than words. Avoid blaming the child/youth for the challenging behavior and look to identify the root cause of the behavior.
- b. **Listening:** An important element of communication is the ability to listen to the messages a child/youth is telling us. Adults should not only listen with their ears, but also “listen” with their eyes. Focus on body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, etc. to truly understand what children/youth are trying to communicate.
- c. **Understanding Development:** Knowing what to expect developmentally for children/youth helps to ensure adult expectations are appropriate. Knowing the ages of stages of child/youth growth and development helps adults ensure that they offer children activities and materials that are stimulating rather than frustrating. Children/youth gain competence and confidence in mastering tasks and facing challenges.
- d. **Providing Opportunities for Choices:** When appropriate, provide choices rather than directions to children/youth. Remember the developmental age of the child/youth when offering choices. Older children/youth do better with more open-ended choices (ex: “What would you like to do today?”), while younger children may need limited choices. (Ex: “It’s cold outside. Do you want to wear your sweater or your jacket?”)
- e. **Establishing Limits and Rules:** Create realistic and developmentally appropriate limits and rules which focus on taking care of “self, others and the environment and materials.” Involve children/youth in the development of rules and limits and communicate them clearly. Consider posting rules or scheduling a time to discuss/remind children/youth. Older youth and teens need clear limits with consequences other than expulsion. Youth and families should receive a copy of the program’s written code of conduct to ensure their understanding of expectations.
- f. **Anticipating and Preventing Challenging Behaviors:** Plan environments, activities, and projects based on the foundation of child/youth development. Use visual cues such as a schedule, sign-up sheet, rebus cards or pictures to reinforce expectations. Anticipate how children/youth may respond to certain stimuli or situations. Plan ahead to prevent problems.

- g. **Indirect Guidance:** Indirect guidance allows children/youth to know what the expectations are without a great deal of direction from adults. For example, if children/youth are given the opportunity to work the CD player, is there a way for them to know what an acceptable volume is? By simply marking a red line on the volume control, children/youth have a visual reminder about what is an acceptable volume.
- h. **Reinforcement:** Reinforce positive behavior using encouraging words. Be specific in your reinforcement and explain what the child/youth has done (ex. “You did a good job rearranging all of the art supplies. I really appreciate that you took the time organize the area.”) These words describe the actions the adult is praising instead of simply saying “Good job.”
- i. **Redirection:** Redirection is used to get a child/youth to “redirect” his/her thoughts or actions into a more appropriate activity. “You can run while you are on the playground. Do you want me to put some music on so you can dance?” “The locator board tells us the playground is full. I will keep my eye on the board and let you know when there is an open space. While you are waiting, there is a great cooking activity going on in the cafe.”
- j. **Intentional Environments:** The learning environment is an important and powerful teaching tool. If the environment is set up with the knowledge of how children/youth learn and develop, it can positively support teaching and learning. Staff/providers observing challenging behaviors should consider how the daily schedule, transitions, room arrangement or materials may be contributing factors.
- k. **Logical and Natural Consequences:** Consequences are positive or negative outcomes of an action. Natural consequences occur on their own. They are not controlled or manipulated by anyone, they simply just happen. For example: A child or youth who does not eat lunch is hungry later. Logical consequences are situations engineered by the person in authority and they are logically connected to the wrong. It is logical because it "fits" the offense. For example: If a child spills paint, it is not logical for him or her to have to leave the art area or to be lectured. These responses lack a follow-on connection to the occurrence. Cleaning the floor and refilling the container are both logical and educational. Children/youth that experience natural and logical consequences develop self-discipline and inner strength. They also learn to respect order because they see that following rules leads to better living as opposed to being in fear of punishment.
- l. **Conflict Resolution:** Conflict resolution is a time to find solutions, understand each person’s perspective and share feelings. It is not an opportunity to have one person win and the other lose. Conflict resolution is a very effective guidance tool because it allows children/youth to practice negotiation, compromise, listening skills, empathy, self-calming techniques and assertiveness without aggression.

- m. **Providing Language to Identify Expressions of Emotions:** One of the most important social/emotional development skills we can teach is helping a child/youth move from physical reactions to verbal responses that communicate their feelings/needs. They must be able to connect and communicate with others in order to be successful in current and future relationships. Younger children might have difficulty identifying a feeling and may benefit from prompting or exploring feelings. (Ex. Does that make you feel sad?)
- n. **Modeling Prosocial Behaviors:** CYP personnel promote prosocial behavior by interacting in a respectful manner with children/youth, families, and co-workers. Examples include: discussing behavioral challenges privately, ensuring each child/youth has the opportunity to contribute to the group, building a classroom/home community, assisting children/youth in conflict and countering bullying behaviors.
- o. **Be in Control without Being Overly Controlling:** Consistency is very important; however, it is equally important to have flexibility. Once in a while, it is OK to give in about the small stuff, provided that it is not something dangerous. For example, teens passionately expressing their opinion about procedures in the program, even when they are not the opinions of the adults, could result in a life skill regarding compromise and respecting differences. Drug and alcohol use, on the other hand, are non-negotiable. Know that sometimes the best response is to ignore a behavior.
- p. **Restraint:** As a last resort, restraint is used ONLY when children/youth are endangering themselves and/or others. Restraining a child/youth requires careful action by CYP personnel and should only be used when a child is unresponsive to all other guidance techniques. The intent of restraining is to keep a child/youth safe and to assist with calming the behaviors. It is critical for the CYP personnel to remain calm, use a soothing tone of voice, know when to call for assistance and ensure the child is not hurt.

## 5. INAPPROPRIATE GUIDANCE TECHNIQUES:

- a. CYP personnel never use threats or derogatory remarks about children/youth or their families.
- b. At all times, children/youth should be free from criticism, repression and punishment. Therefore, the following techniques are unacceptable for use by any adult (including parents) in CYP. NOTE: This list is not all-inclusive. Remember, any act that risks harming a child/youth physically or psychologically is not permitted in CYP.
  - Spanking, slapping, biting, hitting, pinching, yanking, shoving, shaking, pulling hair or any other form of physical abuse
  - Threats, name-calling, sarcasm, belittling, teasing or any other form of verbal abuse
  - Isolation away from adult contact/sight
  - Confinement in closets, boxes or similar places
  - Binding to restrain movement of mouth or limbs
  - Withholding or forcing meals, snacks, toileting, outdoor play experiences or rest time
  - Allowing children/youth to remain in soiled or wet clothing



- Intimidating a child with facial expression, tone of voice or a physical presence (ex. standing over them, finger pointing)
- Touching children/youth in uncomfortable or inappropriate ways, such as: tickling, kissing, forced goodbye hugs/kisses, fondling or touching genitals (except when necessary to clean a child who has soiled himself/herself)
- Coercion or other forms of exploitation of a child's lack of knowledge

**6. BEHAVIOR SUPPORT PLANS:**

- a. It might be time to consider a behavior support plan when children/youth display behaviors that are consistent, intense and/or put themselves or others at risk. The plan should include a mix of strategies which build relationships between the child/youth, staff and family, reduces the need for conflict, and teaches them to be successful in their relationships with others.
- b. A behavior support plan should be developed with the understanding that adults (including parents/guardians) in the life of the child/youth recognize the individual needs and challenges of the child/youth and are going to provide support and understanding to assist in their development of social and emotional skills. There will need to be changes and compromises in order for a plan to be effective. In addition, everyone will have to be accountable for trying new things. A good plan outlines everyone's responsibilities and provides the time for change to occur.
- c. CYP Managers and Training & Curriculum (T&C) Specialists support staff/providers, parents and children/youth by increasing observations, debriefs, and parent conferences to facilitate successful implementation of the plan, processes and strategies. Managers and T&Cs also play an essential role in obtaining outside resources to provide additional support such as the Military Family Life Consultant (MFLC), Kids Included Together (KIT), School Liaison Officers (SLO), Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) Coordinators and installation CYP Medical Advisor.

I have received training and understand I must follow the requirements outlined in the Air Force Child and Youth Programs Positive Guidance and Appropriate Touch Instructional Guide. I will receive annual training on positive guidance and appropriate touch. All training will be documented on the AF Form 1098, *Special Task Certification and Recurring Training*.

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Printed Name

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Date

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Signature