Events

Child displays behavior that is concerning because it is unsafe or challenging.

Questions

Is there an immediate danger to the child or others?

YES

 implement De-escalation Strategies. Keep the child and others safe, providing calm, nurturing support to the child, and remove others from potential harm. Refer to behavior policy and/or safety plan. Activate internal resources. If the behavior poses a significant risk, call the Mobile Crisis Unit. With their support, plan next steps. Contact the child’s family.

NO

Is there a concern that the child might have a disability impacting their behavior? (You can check the CDC’s Check the Signs, Act Early to consider if common behaviors might be expected at this age.)

YES

- Discuss concerns with family.
- Develop a safety plan and a behavior plan.
- Consider a developmental screening, such as the ASQ (available in the Sparkler app).
- Activate internal supports, such as a behavior or student support team.
- Consider evaluation by Birth to Three or the school district (*districts have an obligation under IDEA to engage in Child Find efforts).
- Implement Key Strategies while referral is in progress.

NO

Have you used Key Strategies to structure the environment and strengthen relationships?

YES

Call ECCP for classroom and/or child level services. Continue to use Key Strategies to prevent the behavior(s) of concern, and to promote social and emotional competence.

NO

Implement Key Strategies to structure the environment and strengthen relationships.

Call ECCP for classroom and/or child level services if you need support to implement the key OR if you are not seeing any changes after implementing the strategies.

Key Strategies to Structure the Environment and Strengthen Relationships

1. Strengthen your relationship with the child
2. Create consistent routines
3. Support children through transitions
4. Set positive behavior expectations
5. Teach social and emotional skills
6. Promote positive peer interactions
7. Build positive, culturally responsive relationships with families

Questions

Is there a concern that the child might have a disability impacting their behavior? (You can check the CDC’s Check the Signs, Act Early to consider if common behaviors might be expected at this age.)

YES

Implement De-escalation Strategies. Provide calm, nurturing support to the child and remove others from potential harm. Develop a plan for how to handle the situation if it arises again. Continue with steps in the Decision Tree.

NO

Have you used Key Strategies to structure the environment and strengthen relationships?

YES

Call ECCP for classroom and/or child level services.

NO

Implement Key Strategies to structure the environment and strengthen relationships.

Data

Document the details of what occurred. Capture details such as those on this sample form. Gather information from the family.

Document developmental concerns, as well as strategies you have put in place to support learning and development, including areas of concern and social-emotional supports.

Document frequency of behaviors; what occurs before and after behavior(s) of concern; and times when the child shows social and emotional competence.

AT ALL POINTS DURING THIS PROCESS, SEEK TO UNDERSTAND THE CHILD’S BEHAVIOR. USE THIS TIP SHEET FOR QUESTIONS AND ACTIONS TO UNDERSTAND THE CHILD’S BEHAVIOR.
This Decision Tree is designed to support preschool to grade 2 educators in taking appropriate and timely action when children are exhibiting unsafe or challenging behaviors. It includes both internal, immediate actions, and resources for outside referral and support. This Decision Tree should be used in conjunction with existing:

- School discipline policies
- Behavior policies in place in licensed child care settings
- Internal teams or support systems

One size does not fit all – students will vary in their experiences, coping strategies, social skills, and developmental understanding of expectations. Build a team, or access existing teams and systems (e.g., student support team, SRBI process), and connect to community resources (e.g., the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership-ECCP) to build program- or school-wide supports.

Decisions regarding the appropriate responses to challenging behavior are multifaceted and must take into account:

- the context in which the challenging behavior occurs;
- existing supports and policies;
- the many individual, cultural, social, developmental, and environmental factors; and
- the potential loss of instructional/classroom time for students.

In order to improve student emotional wellness, it is vital to develop a trusting relationship between families, children, and educators. Use the Key Strategies to Structure the Environment and Strengthen Relationships, and the Tips to Understand Child Behavior in conjunction with the Decision Tree. Video resources to support efforts to promote social and emotional competence and address challenging behavior can be found on the OEC webpage on Supporting Young Children with Challenging Behavior.

While this guide focuses on children from preschool through grade 2, many of the strategies are appropriate for younger children. For more tips on supporting infants and toddlers with challenging behaviors, see this Recommended Practices Guide from the Center for Evidence-Based Practice: Young Child with Challenging Behavior.
KEY TERMS

BEHAVIOR PLAN
The action plan developed by the behavior supporting team, which outlines the specific steps to be used to promote the child’s success, and participation in daily activities and routines.
From: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/pbs/process.html

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT
The strategies used to promote positive behavior. Per CT Child Care Licensing Regulations, providers must use behavior management methods such as positive guidance, redirection, and setting clear limits that encourage children to develop self-control, self-discipline, and positive self-esteem, while also protecting them from harm to themselves or others.

BEHAVIOR POLICY
A policy required in regulation for licensed child care programs. Behavior policies typically include information about developmentally appropriate behavior management strategies used by the program, and the process used to respond to challenging or unsafe behavior.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT TEAM
A team of the key stakeholders or individuals who are most involved in the child’s life. This team should include the family and early educator, but also may include friends, other family members, therapists, and other instructional or administrative personnel. Team members collaborate in multiple ways in order to develop, implement, and monitor a child’s support plan.
From: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Pyramid/pbs/process.html

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR
A behavior that is unsafe, destructive, or which poses a significant disruption for the other people in an environment or situation. Adults may find additional behaviors to be challenging for them based on their own cultural or personal perspective; therefore, it is important to reflect on personal bias and “hot buttons” when deciding if a behavior fits this definition.

CHILD FIND
A continuous process of public awareness activities, screening, and evaluation designed to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities.

POSITIVE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
School discipline addresses schoolwide, classroom, and individual student needs through broad prevention, targeted intervention, and social-emotional and behavioral development. Schools address challenging behaviors through a comprehensive systems approach (Multi-tiered System Supports, e.g., comprehensive and targeted supports), school-based diversion models, and restorative practices.

SAFETY PLAN
A Safety Plan is designed to provide special supervision to individual students. The plan should include specific interventions which target unsafe or potentially unsafe behavior. The goal is to minimize the risk of harm to the student or others.

SCREENING TOOL
A brief, simple procedure used to identify children who may be at risk for potential health, developmental, or social-emotional problems. It identifies children who may need additional evaluation in any of these areas.

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM
Staff may decide to refer the student to a school-based team, often known as the Child Study Team (CST), Student Assistance Team (SAT), or Multi-tiered System Supports (MTSS). These teams are made up of a school administrator, teachers, and support services staff to help students with issues that are interfering with learning. This may be anything from difficulties in reading or math, emotional and/or behavioral challenges, etc. The team discusses the problem and works together to find a solution that will help students.