Arizona Department of Child Safety

DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES
for Children in Out-of-Home Care

Resource Book

The following is a variation of *Children Learn What They Live* written by Dorothy Law Nolte.

Count how many times the word, *learn* is mentioned and which attitudes are learned.

If a child lives with criticism,
He learns to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility,
She learns to fight.

If a child lives with pity,
He learns to feel sorry for himself.

If a child lives with ridicule,
She learns to be shy.

If a child lives with shame,
He learns to feel guilt.

If a child lives with tolerance,
She learns to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement,
He learns to be confident.

If a child lives with praise,
She learns to appreciate.

If a child lives with acceptance,
He learns to love.

If a child lives with approval,
She learns to like herself.

If a child lives with recognition,
He learns it is good to have a goal.

If a child lives with honesty,
She learns what truth is.

If a child lives with fairness,
He learns justice.

If a child lives with security,
She learns to have faith in herself and those about her.

If a child lives with friendliness,
He learns to find love in the world.

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DCS DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES
FOR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

INTRODUCTION

The skills needed by parents today are vastly different than those needed even twenty years ago. Children are now exposed to drugs, alcohol, sex, stress, etc. in ways that most of us did not have to contend with as children and teens. The children being placed in foster homes today are exhibiting more serious problems than were seen in the past; therefore, greater skills are required on the part of foster parents. Often these children have inappropriate patterns of behavior that have been learned and reinforced for years. Even when appropriate parenting skills are used with them, it may take a very long time to see behavior changes.

1. Think about how you were disciplined as a child.

   a. How did you feel about being disciplined as a child?

   b. Where did you get your own parenting styles?

   c. In what ways do you discipline your children differently than you were disciplined?

BACKGROUND

Most children in the foster care program have experienced patterns of inappropriate punishment, abuse and/or violence in their families. Therefore, issues related to punishment often are confusing for the child. For a child in foster care, punishment is often connected to a wide variety of issues such as attention, power, revenge, control, loss of self-esteem and pain/love.

Many foster parents have had a great deal of experience in raising children, their own and children in foster care. However, when working with children in foster care, there are set policies for disciplinary techniques. DCS has set these policies because the agency is responsible for the well-being of the children and has the right to make rules regarding them. Many children in foster care have experienced cruel and extreme punishments and will overreact to any punishment, while others will not respond to punishment unless it is extreme and abusive. As foster parents, we may not know the entire background of the children placed in our homes; therefore, we must be careful and sensitive.

If you commonly use methods with your own children that differ from the Department's philosophical position as stated in the *Discipline Guidelines*, problems are likely to occur. If you use swats with your three-year-old and this is not an appropriate technique with a child in foster care, this can trigger resentment, anger and competition between the children. The techniques in the *Discipline Guidelines* have proven to be effective in helping all children control their own behaviors and in contributing to a more harmonious family environment. Therefore, you are encouraged to implement these practices for the entire family.

1. Why might it be difficult for children in foster care to trust adults and feel loved?

PUNISHMENT VS. DISCIPLINE

Punishment implies the threat or use of power and/or fear to change inappropriate behavior. Punishment relies on external force.

Discipline is a teaching process through which the child learns to develop and maintain the self-control, self-reliance, self-esteem and orderly conduct necessary to assume responsibilities, make daily living decisions, and live according to accepted levels of social behavior. In other words, our goal is not to control but to encourage self-control.

We want children to be cooperative and self-directed, yet how often do we hear parents say things like, "Don't you ever listen?" "I told you not to do that," "I'm busy, leave me alone," etc. These statements do not make children feel good about themselves or feel like cooperating. Even as adults, our self-esteem is affected when people put us off, put us down, or ignore us.

Put yourself in this next situation as a way to identify how a child might feel.

1. You have been on your new job for three days. You are not sure if you are completing a particular form correctly even though someone had previously gone over it with you. How do you feel if:

   a. You ask your boss and he says, "I'm too busy, leave me alone."

   b. You ask the person at the next desk and she says, "We already told you how to do this, maybe you can't handle this job."

   c. You ask the person next to you and she says, "It took me forever to get this one straight when I was new. Let's review it."

   d. You ask your boss and he says, "How can I help?"

GUIDELINES

Children in foster care are to be disciplined, not punished. Discipline techniques help a child develop and maintain self-control, self-reliance, self-esteem and orderly conduct. The purpose of discipline is to educate. Children are able to learn from their mistakes in a safe environment.

Foster parents shall develop rules that set the limits of acceptable behavior in the family. These rules will be clearly explained and applied based on the child's past experiences, personality and age as appropriate to each child in the family.

The purpose of a rule is to create a consistent, safe, more comfortable environment. This approach goes beyond mere control of behavior. There are five factors to consider when developing rules. Rules must be:
- specific;
- reasonable;
- enforceable;
- stated positively; and
- necessary.

Specific Rules

Rules are *specific* when they are stated in such a way that they communicate precisely what is expected. In other words, both you and the child will know the moment that the rule is broken. A well-specified rule does not allow any possibility for misinterpretation. Time limits may help to make a rule more specific.

1. Which is the specific rule?

    a. Bedrooms are to be thoroughly cleaned once a week.

    b. Bedrooms cleaned every Saturday morning before 10 o'clock. Checklist:
        ü   beds made
        ü   all dirty clothes put in the laundry basket
        ü   all furniture dusted and polished
        ü   carpet vacuumed
        ü   all toys put in the toy box

2. Write a rule about cleaning the bathroom that is specific.

Reasonable Rules

Good rules are also *reasonable*. Can the youngster comply with the rule? Does the rule concern a behavior which is under the control of the child? The second rule in question 1.b above is very well specified, but is unreasonable for a three-year-old. A more reasonable expectation for this very young child would be "All dirty clothes put in the laundry basket." and/or "All toys put in the toy box."

1. Which rule is more reasonable for a 12-year-old?

   a. You must study for one hour every school night.

   b. You must have all "A's" on your next report card.

2. Write a rule about helping in the kitchen that is reasonable for a six-year-old.

Enforceable Rules

Rules are worthless if they are not enforceable. All rules can be broken. Most rules will be! A good question to ask yourself is, "Will I know when this rule is broken without depending on other people's testimony?" In other words, can the parent monitor this behavior?

1. Which rule is enforceable?

   a. You may never associate with Betty again.

   b. You may not bring Betty to our home.

2. Rewrite the following rules to make them enforceable:

   a. You cannot use the telephone for a week.

   b. You cannot eat chocolate.

Positively Stated Rules

It is very important to emphasize the positive at all times, and we can do this in making rules. When making rules, state the behavior you want to see rather than the behavior you don't want to see.

1. Change the following rules so that they are stated positively.

   a. Dirty clothes should not be on the floor.

   b. Don't leave the door open.

   c. Don't arrive home after midnight.

   d. Never leave the property without letting someone know where you are going.

Necessary Rules

Rules should make life easier for you, not more difficult. If your rules are specific, enforceable, reasonable, positively stated and as few as possible, you will be making it easier on yourself. The rule should leave the choices to the child, rather than putting the parent in the position of constantly monitoring compliance.

Consistency is a very important factor in all adult/child relationships. A few, well-planned rules can help you become more consistent, because it is easier to enforce a few rules rather than many. Too many rules can make everyone's life more complicated. Rules should be related to things that are real priorities to your family, and should put the responsibility on the child, not on the parent. Concentrate on those few vital rules.

1. Indicate whether you feel these behaviors are red (dangerous, destructive or illegal and must be stopped), yellow (have negative consequences under some circumstances), or green (behaviors where the child can learn from the natural consequences or modeling).

    _____ Using foul language

    _____ Taking things that belong to others without permission

    _____ Smoking in the house

    _____ Not letting anyone know where you will be

    _____ Not making your bed

    _____ Not taking out the garbage

    _____ Not doing homework

    The behaviors that you identified as red or yellow will then need rules developed related to them. This is one way to identify which rules are necessary in your family.

Review of the rules

Let's look at some of the rules in your family.

1. Write three of the rules in your home:

    a. _____

    b. _____

    c. _____

2. Develop fair, reasonable, age- or developmentally-appropriate and consistent consequences, related to the offense, for implementing these rules. These consequences will also be communicated to each child.

During the discussion on consequences, we will focus on the age and developmental stage of a child when developing consequences. This aspect needs to be looked at carefully when developing any technique or practice. Some children may function developmentally below their chronological age, and this needs to be taken into consideration when developing consequences.

3. Share with the team members any concerns or difficulties about disciplining a child in foster care, so constructive ideas and/or plans can be agreed upon.

    If you get advice which is counter to the guidelines from another professional, call the licensing specialist and discuss it. For instance, if a therapist, psychologist, teacher, case manager, etc. should suggest that you spank the child or lock the child in his/her room, you need to discuss this with the licensing specialist and the Child Safety Specialist or supervisor.

4. What people might you use as a resource if you had concerns or difficulties in disciplining a child in foster care?

5. Which behaviors might you have concerns about? Who might you contact in each case?

    a. for preschoolers?

    b. for school-aged children?

    c. for teenagers?

ACCEPTABLE DISCIPLINE METHODS

Discipline should be communicated in such a way as to help the child develop self-control and assume responsibility for his or her own behavior. Individual children will respond to different methods based on age, personality and life experiences.

Some of the discipline techniques we will review may be new to you. It is normal to feel some awkwardness and discomfort in learning new techniques. As you practice them, they will become more comfortable and part of your routine. The examples used in discussing various techniques are designed as learning tools, and do not necessarily reflect the range or severity of the behaviors which may occur in your home.

When faced with a misbehavior that you feel needs to be changed, first ask yourself these questions:

   a.   Why might the child be behaving this way?

   b.   Why does it bother me?

   c.   What are the long-range consequences?

   d.   What can I do in the short run?

If, after asking yourself these four questions, you decide that something needs to be done, one of the following methods might be helpful, depending on the particular child and the particular misbehavior.

Natural Consequences

Allow the child to experience the results of his or her behavior by not intervening. If Susie forgets her softball glove, she will be unable to try out for the team.

Natural consequences are those that occur without the parent's intervention. Since your intervention is not required, allowing these consequences to influence misbehaviors whenever possible should be considered. However, there are times when we do not want to wait for natural consequences to occur. For example, if the natural consequences are dangerous or harmful to the child (the child playing in the street could be hit by a car), the consequences would take too long (the bike left outside is rusting) or the child does not care (how dirty his/her room is). In these cases, if we want to intervene, we might consider logical consequences.

Logical Consequences

Impose consequences that are as directly related as possible to the inappropriate behavior. If Johnnie broke the window, he can do extra chores to earn the money to pay for the new window. Logical consequences are those that the parent sets and are directly connected to the behavior. To be effective, the logical connection between the behavior and the consequence must be apparent to the child.

Artificial Consequences

Artificial consequences are set by the parent and have no specific connection to the behavior. The issue here is that the parent wants the behavior to change.

Identify the consequences for each behavior:

Behavior	Natural	Logical	Artificial
Leaving bike in front yard			
Forgetting lunch			
Playing in street			
Stealing candy from a store			
Not cleaning room			
Completing chores on time			
Breaking the TV remote control			

Whenever a natural consequence is appropriate, use it! It requires no intervention on the parent's part and is an opportunity for the child to learn. If natural consequences are dangerous or would take too long to be effective and the behavior needs to be changed, use logical consequences for learning. Then, only if natural and logical consequences are not appropriate and it is still important to change the behavior, consider artificial consequences. By using natural, logical and artificial consequences, the child learns what consequences are and how to make decisions in terms of the consequences.

At times, there is a fine line between punishment and logical consequences. Your matter-of-fact tone of voice, positive attitude and willingness to accept the child's decision are essential characteristics of logical consequences. No matter how logical an action may seem to you, if your tone is harsh, your attitude overbearing and your demands absolute, your action is punitive.

CONSEQUENCES TAKE TIME. PATIENCE PLUS PRACTICE EQUAL PROGRESS.

Mistakes should be seen as opportunities to learn. Teach children to learn from their mistakes rather than suffer from them. This can be done by asking the right questions:

a. What did you do?
b. What happened then?
c. What could you have done differently?
d. Are you willing to try that next time?

This sequence of questions helps the youngster focus on the behavior and explore possible alternatives. It is very important that you guide your child's thinking without doing the thinking for him or her.

Encouragement/Praise

Identify specific behaviors and strengths that encourage the child to develop and increase self-esteem. "That model car looks great! I like the color you chose. You did a job you can be proud of!"

Words of praise and encouragement should:

a. Show the child that you value and accept him/her.
b. Love the child for what he/she is, not what he/she does.
c. Point out the positive aspects of his/her behavior.
d. Show faith, trust and confidence in the child's abilities and judgments.
e. Recognize efforts and improvements.
f. Show appreciation for contributions.

You have this method at your disposal at all times and should use it frequently to shape behavior. It takes minimal time and effort compared to other methods and it is very powerful.

When communicating with children, we need to be careful to distinguish between the deed and the doer. The following suggestions may be helpful:

A Way with Words

a. **Descriptive praise:**
   You do a good job of ...
   I like the way you ...

b. **Phrases that show confidence:**
   I'm sure you can straighten this out by yourself, but if you need help, you know where to find me.
   Knowing you, I'm sure you'll do fine.
   I think you can do it.
   If you keep working, you'll get it.

c. **Phrases that show appreciation:**
   Thanks, that helped a lot.
   It was thoughtful of you to ...
   You can help us by...

d. **Phrases that point out strengths and improvements:**
   It looks like you worked hard at ...
   You have really improved in ...
   Look at the progress you have made in...

e. **Corrective comments:**
   We love you, but we don't like what you did.
   So you made a mistake *(got in trouble);* now what can you do about it?
   If you are not satisfied, what could you do differently?

f. **Words about feelings:**
   It sounds like you feel ...
   I can understand how you feel, but I'm sure you can handle it.
   How do you feel about it?

g. **Freedom phrases:**
   If you want to.
   If that's really what you like.
   You can decide that for yourself.
   It's entirely your choice.
   Your decision will be fine with me.

h. **Door openers:**
   I'd be interested in your opinion about ...Would you like to talk about it?
   This seems important to you.
   You have a right to express your ideas *(feelings)*

Notice and acknowledge children when they're being cooperative, helpful, etc.

List three positive adjectives that describe you:

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

Positive Communication

Use language in positive terms to describe what you want, rather than what you don't want. "Walk around the pool," rather than "Stop that running!"

1. Change the following statements from negative to positive:

    a. You can't play with your friends until you take out the trash.

    _____

    b. All your chores have to be done this week or you can't go to the movies with the family.

    _____

Active Listening

Listen with understanding, then clarify the statement and respond to the feelings. "It sounds like your teacher really scolded you in class and you must have felt really embarrassed by that."

Examples of active listening:

Child: *(crying)* Jimmy took my truck away from me.

Parent: You sure feel bad about that. You don't like it when he does that.

Child: That's right!

Child: Dad, when you were a boy what did you like in a girl? What made you really like a girl?

Parent: Sounds like you're wondering how to get boys to like you, is that right?

Child: Yeah. For some reason they don't seem to like me and I don't know why.

Respond with active listening to the following statements:

Child: I hate school and I'm not going anymore!

Parent: _____

Child: You're not my mom; I don't have to do what you say!

Parent: _____

If, when using active listening, you find the child has a problem and is willing to talk about it, use the following steps of problem-solving to encourage the child to develop a plan of action:

1. Use active listening to clarify the problem.

2. Explore alternatives through brainstorming. Identify as many possible solutions as you and the child can think of. *Shall we look at some things you could do about this?*

    a. Assist the child in choosing a solution. *Which idea do you think is the best one?*

    b. Discuss probable results of the decision. *What do you think will happen if you do that?*

    c. Obtain a commitment. *What have you decided to do?*

3. Allow a time for evaluation or plan a time for evaluation if the particular problem requires such. *Anytime you want to talk about this again, I'd be glad to listen.*

Recognize that an upset person is experiencing internal conflict. An upset person is not a good listener. It sometimes pays to wait a while before talking.

'I' Messages

Communicate by phrasing in the first person. "I feel worried and upset when I don't know where my children are."

'I' Messages include the following steps:

1. Describe the behavior (don't blame) — *When you fight with your brother...*

    a. State your feeling — *I get angry*

    b. State the consequences — *because someone might get hurt.*

2. This includes the following pattern:

    c. Behavior — *When you...*

    d. Feeling — *I feel...*

    e. Consequence — *because...*

What "I" Message could you use in the following situation?

1. You have just washed your car. Your child makes a design on it with muddy hand prints.

2. Your child forgets to feed the dog.

3. Your child comes home from a friend's house an hour later than agreed upon.

Incentives/Rewards/Motivators

These include providing short-term incentives that help the child focus on desired behavior. If the child completes all the chores on his or her "job list" this week, he/she can go out for an ice cream cone on Saturday. (The younger the child, the shorter the period of time should be.)

This is an entry-level tool and should not continue for long periods of time. To be effective, incentives need to change often. The parent needs to monitor the incentives and diminish or eliminate them as the appropriate behavior becomes a habit. A lot of positive verbal communication about the appropriate behavior should accompany the incentives. Eventually, those verbal reinforcers and then the child's internal verbal reinforcers will sustain the behavior. It is important to seek the child's input regarding what is an incentive for him/her.

Contracting

Negotiate with the child to create a written mutual agreement that provides incentives that help the child focus on a desired behavior. This is particularly appropriate with older children. If Tom passes all his subjects with at least a C grade, then he will have more time for recreation next semester.

Behavioral contracts help young people develop concrete goals which they can be expected to attain. They help to motivate and also serve as a reference point for measuring progress. It may be helpful to involve the Child Safety Specialist as the mediator in developing a contract between the foster parents and the young person.

When formulating a contract for behavioral change, it is essential to go through the following steps:

1. Select one or two behaviors that you want to work on first.
2. Describe those behaviors so that they may be observed and counted.
3. Identify incentives that will help provide motivation to do well.
4. Locate people who can help you keep track of the behaviors being performed and who can perhaps give out the incentives.
5. Write the contract so that everyone can understand it.
6. Collect data.
7. Troubleshoot the system if the data does not show improvement.
8. Rewrite the contract (whether or not the data show improvement).
9. Continue to monitor, troubleshoot, and rewrite until there is improvement in the behavior that was troublesome.
10. Select another behavior to work on.

When the contract is put on paper, it should include the following items:

1. Date the agreement begins, ends, or is renegotiated.
2. Behavior(s) targeted for change.
3. Amount and kind of reinforcers to be used.
4. Schedule of reinforcer's delivery.

5. Signatures of all those involved.

6. Schedule for review of progress.

And these optional, but strongly suggested topics:

7. Bonus clause for sustained or exceptional performance.

8. Statement of the penalties that will be imposed if the specified behavior is not performed.

Redirecting

Substitute an acceptable behavior for an unacceptable one. "Carol, you can't play with Bob's stereo, but let's go find your crayons and some paper, so that you can make a picture."

Many children in foster care have feelings of anger. If the way they are acting out those feelings is not appropriate, you need to redirect them to a behavior that is an appropriate way to express that feeling.

1. How is it okay for children to express angry feelings in your family?

2. Complete the following statements to redirect a child:

   a. In this family, it is not okay to hit people, but you can:

   b. It is not acceptable to throw things in the house, but you can:

Role-modeling

Show by example the behavior you want from the child. If one shows respect for the child's property and privacy, the child will learn to respect the property and privacy of others.

Answer the following questions:

1. How can you as a parent role-model sharing?

2. How can you role-model speaking kindly to others?

3. How can you role-model being truthful?

Time-out

Remove the child from the situation (usually 1 or 2 minutes for each year of the child's age). A specific chair or place in the room should be identified for the child as the time-out place.

This method can be punishing if your attitude is punitive. Remain calm and firm when using time-out. Timeouts do not work with all kids and should be used with caution, not overused.

Using time-outs alone will not work for very long. Other methods need to be used at the same time, such as observing what brings about the behavior that requires a time-out and developing a plan related to that, acknowledging when the child is behaving appropriately, etc.

Removing Privileges

Remove a privilege that is related to the unacceptable behavior. The loss should be of short-term duration. Losing the use of the phone, time with friends, TV time, etc., could be used, depending on what is important to the particular child.

Your attitude here is also important. **The intent is to teach, not to punish**. If the child feels trapped by the removal of privileges, the effect is lost. Also, if the parent is trapped by supervising the loss of privileges, as in grounding, the effect is lost.

Respond to the following situations:

1. The child has broken a rule in your home where the consequence is losing some TV time.
   a. How long might be appropriate for a five-year-old?
   b. How long for a ten-year-old?

2. The child's consequence is losing time with her friends.
   a. How long might be appropriate for a six-year-old?
   b. How long for a ten-year-old?
   c. How long for a 15-year-old?

REVIEW

Decide which discipline methods might be useful in each of the following situations:

1. Tommy, age nine, dumps all the shampoo down the drain when taking a shower.
   Possible methods:

2. Four-year-old Billy hits or bites other children, both younger and older, when he wants his own way.
   Possible methods:

3. You walk in your five-year-old daughter's bedroom and find your ten-year-old foster son with his hand in her panties.
   Possible methods:

4. Twelve-year-old Kim repeatedly lies about having completed her homework and you are getting regular calls from the teachers.
   Possible methods:

5. Fifteen-year-old Chris throws things and kicks when angry. So far, a door has a hole in it and a window has been broken.
   Possible methods:

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