



Guidance and Discipline: Birth to 1.5 years, 1.5 to 2 years, and 2 to 5 years Tip Sheet

For Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS); Refugee Resettlement; Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS); Early Care and Education Providers

All providers can work alongside families to explore guidance and discipline strategies. This Guidance and Discipline Tip Sheet corresponds to pages 15, 16, and 17 of the [Raising Young Children in a New Country: Supporting Early Learning and Healthy Development Handbook](#).

Conversation Starters: (or staff, families, and partners can design program-specific questions)

- What ways do you show your child that you love him/her?
- Share a few ways your child shows you how he/she feels.
- How do you model positive behavior for your child (e.g., expressing feelings and interacting with others)?
- What helps you to keep calm when you are frustrated by your child's behavior?
- Share how parenting your child/children is similar to or different from when you were a child.

Cultural Considerations:

- Displacement and refugee camp life may have disrupted normal family life and stable parenting role models.
- Generally parents guide and discipline their children the way they were raised. Most cultures mix positive and negative discipline methods.
- Discipline practices occur within the larger context of a refugee family's culture.
- In cultures that use more indirect communication methods, parents may not directly praise children; instead, approval may be given indirectly by relatives. More hierarchical cultures may have different expectations about appropriate behavior for children (e.g., that children will obey their elders; that children will be seen but not heard; that children will not question or challenge adults; etc.). American child-rearing practices may seem relaxed by comparison.
- Discipline may have gender-based elements (e.g., mothers disciplining girls and fathers disciplining boys; or mothers providing one type of guidance and fathers providing another).

- Positive discipline approaches require consistency — using similar strategies over time. Some parents may be unfamiliar with this approach and may feel it is less effective in gaining immediate results.
- Refugee parents may welcome discussion and suggestions about discipline methods used in the U.S.



Remember to Mention:

- Understanding the typical child development stages can help adults make sound decisions regarding children's behavior.
- Infants instinctively respond to feelings of hunger, tiredness, wetness, etc., by alerting adults that they have a need. Babies are incapable of "bad" or "good" behavior. Ignoring infants cues teaches them that there is no one available to care for them.

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Remember to Mention:

- Infants who are teething impulsively bite on everything. This is not misbehavior, but rather a soothing strategy. If an infant bites others, move him away and give him something appropriate to chew on. If an infant bites while breastfeeding, gently slide your finger into the baby's mouth between her jaws and remove her from the breast and try again. In time, young children learn not to bite while they nurse.
- During increased independent movement, children need a safe environment that allows them to move and explore without risk of injury. Remove from reach any household objects that are unsafe.
- Grabbing at objects is a form of exploration, not misbehavior. Harsh reactions may discourage children from exploring and learning.
- Toddlers have strong feelings but lack the language to express themselves effectively. Toddlers also lack control of their emotions so they may act aggressively or tantrum to get their needs met. When adults stay calm during these times, it can help the toddler calm down more quickly.

- Separation anxiety occurs when a child becomes upset or clingy when separated from his or her parent. Consistent and predictable routines may help ease the separation. Saying good-bye establishes trust and is important so the child won't worry about the parent disappearing at any time.
- Watching to see what could be causing an unwanted behavior (being frustrated, tired, hungry, or fighting over a toy) and offering alternatives or different choices before the behavior occurs, may help reduce undesirable behavior.
- A child's developing sense of autonomy — ability to make choices — may help him develop curiosity and feel secure and confident.
- Young children have difficulty thinking about two different perspectives at the same time, e.g., their own and someone else's. So, sharing toys is often a challenge. Explaining the feelings of others and helping children practice turn taking can support their developing social skills.



Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspss/1304>

- 45 CFR 1304.21 Education and early childhood development (b)(1)(i-iii) and (b)(2)(i-ii)
- 45 CFR 1304.24 Child mental health (a)(1)(i-vi)
- 45 CFR 1304.40 Family partnerships (e)(3) and (f)(4)(i-iii)



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Resources on ECKLC:

Early Head Start National Resource Center

- **Digging Deeper: Looking Beyond Behavior to Discover Meaning**
http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/mental-health/digging-deeper/Digging_Deeper_intro.html
- **Strategies for Understanding and Managing Challenging Behavior in Young Children**
http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/resources/ECLKC_Bookstore/PDFs/TA10%5B1%5D.pdf



National Center of Health

- **Responding Positively to Your Child's Behavior – Nurture Them, Nurture Yourself**
<https://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/docs/low-literacy-nurture-english.pdf>
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/docs/low-literacy-nurture-spanish.pdf>

National Center on Quality Teaching and Learning

- **Activities with Families: Stating Behavioral Expectations** Families and behavioral expectations: Ideas for partnering
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/state-activities-families.pdf>
- **Tips for Families: Being Aware of Children's Needs** Look at me!
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/childrens-needs-family-tips.pdf>
- **Tips for Families: Creating Classroom Rules** Family Rules
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/classroom-rules-family-tips.pdf>
- **Tips for Families: Problem Solving in the Moment** Conflicts and Your Child
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/problem-solving-family-tips.pdf>
- **Tips for Families: Redirecting Behavior** Turning "No" into "Yes."
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/redirecting-behavior-family-tips.pdf>
- **Tips for Families: Stating Behavioral Expectations** Your child's best behavior
<http://ecklc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/teaching/docs/behavioral-expectations-family-tips.pdf>

