Indiana suspension and expulsion prevention checklist

Background

Behavior concerns in the classroom/child care can be very challenging. The good news is that there is much that we can do promote healthy social and emotional development in all children, prevent challenging behavior problems and intervene successfully when behaviors pose a serious concern. The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social and Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children, created by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu) provides a framework for helping us think about the role of adults in supporting children's social-emotional and behavior development. This model tells us that most challenging behaviors can be addressed by looking at adult behaviors:

- ✓ Building positive relationships.
- ✓ Putting preventive classroom strategies in place.
- ✓ Specifically teaching children social and emotional skills.
- ✓ Increasing positive behavior supports for children who need more help.
- ✓ Indiana suspension and expulsion prevention checklist

About this checklist

Effective workforce: This document is designed to help you, as a teacher, director or support staff, think about how your classroom or program can increase supports for children in your child care setting. Directors, you may ask families to complete this tool based on their observations. You may find there are opportunities you have not thought about!

Nurturing and responsive relationship: Items 1-8 in the checklist below will help you think about the steps you can take to nurture and respond to both children and their parents. Positive, nurturing, trusting relationships set the stage for healthy social-emotional development and good behavior in children!

High-quality supportive environment: Questions 9-14 below will help you think about aspects of your physical classroom environment, activities, daily schedule and routines. Each of these strongly influences child behavior.

- ✓ Question 9 asks you to think about predictable daily schedules.
- ✓ Items 10-11 focus on your room arrangement and classroom materials.
- ✓ Activities and transitions are emphasized in questions 12-14 of the checklist.

Targeted social-emotional supports: Just like we teach children their ABC's, we can teach them the social-emotional skills they need to be successful in school. This portion of the checklist (questions 15-22) will help you think about opportunities to teach children social and emotional skills, such as calming down or problem-solving. These can be useful for all children but are especially needed by children who are having difficulty with their emotions or behavior.

- ✓ Emotional literacy is targeted in items 15-16.
- ✓ Questions 17-18 examine friendship skills and problem solving.
- ✓ Calm-down techniques are addressed in questions 19-20.
- ✓ Items 21-22 emphasize rules and choices.

Intensive intervention: If the base of the pyramid is strong, most children will do well. However, you may encounter a child that needs more support. This final portion of the checklist (items 23-26) gives you suggestions for what to do in this circumstance.

- ✓ Questions 23-24 focus on screening, documenting and tracking.
- ✓ Seeking support is emphasized in items 25-26.

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	RARELY	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALWAYS
1. Do you give most of your attention to positive behaviors, that is, behaviors that you want to see more of? Do you notice and describe appropriate behaviors ("you are building a very tall tower"; "you are sitting so patiently")?			
2. Do you communicate something positive about the child to the parent on a regular basis? Do your communications help the parents have the sense that you care about their child?			
3. Do staff greet children and parents cheerfully and by name?			
4. Are you building good relationships with parents from the first interaction (greeting parent by name, praising child in front of parent, sending positive notes home, responding to parents' concerns)?			
5. Do your communications send the message to parents that you are "in this together" and that you want the very best for their child?			
6. Do you engage in frequent conversation with the children and use active listening skills?			
7. Do you use a caring tone when speaking to the children?			
8. Do you respond quickly to children in distress? Do you offer comfort to children who are upset or crying?			
9. Is there a consistent, predictable daily schedule that is taught daily to the children?			
10. Are there enough age-appropriate materials (toys, art supplies, etc.) to go around? For example, if the blocks center holds four children, are there enough blocks for four children to build structures?			
11. Are there spots in the preschool classroom for large group activities, a place for children to be by themselves, comfortable spots for reading or quiet play? Are there at least five well-defined learning centers (e.g., quiet/individual, dramatic play, art, blocks, library, music/movement, large muscle, manipulative/fine motor, math/science/discovery)?			
12. Do you use play time to intentionally teach social-emotional skills (for example, helping an aggressive child ask another child to play in an appropriate way)?			
13. Is circle time interactive, engaging and short (typically 15 minutes or less of seated activity for preschoolers unless they are highly engaged—shorter and more flexible for toddlers)?			

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	RARELY	SOMETIMES	ALMOST ALWAYS
14. Are children given warnings (five minutes, one minute) when they are about to transition to a new activity and are transitions short to eliminate long waits?			
15. Does classroom contain materials that help children recognize and label feelings (books, posters, games about feelings)?			
16. Do you use feeling words and help children learn to recognize feelings by naming and reflecting feelings ("You look sad. Is there something I can do to help you feel better")?			
17. Do you help children learn friendship skills (such as how to ask to play with a friend)?			
18. Do you actively teach and model problem-solving? Do you step in and assist children in solving their problem rather than punishing them?			
19. Do you actively teach children strategies to handle strong emotions (e.g., deep breathing)?			
20. Is there a calm-down spot children can choose to use when upset?			
21. Does each classroom have a few (three to five) positively stated (use gentle hands; walk inside) rules that are posted (including with visual cue) and taught?			
22. Are children offered genuine choices to avoid power struggles? For example, "We need to hold hands to cross the street. Would you like to hold this hand or this hand?"			
23. Have you utilized milestones checklists, developmental tracking or other tools for tracking child development?			
24. Are you documenting the frequency with which a behavior occurs? Are you looking for patterns related to the behavior (is it happening at the same time of day? During the same activity? What happened right before)?			
25. Has another staff person been asked to observe and provide suggestions? Sometimes a fresh set of eyes focused on the child can be helpful.			
26. Have you sought help from a behavioral consultant with an educational cooperative, resources and referral, or from a mental health consultant specializing in early childhood?			
27. Have you completed a developmental and social-emotional screening? Has the child had a recent health screening, vision or hearing screening? Could a physical condition be contributing to the behaviors?			

Adapted from resources created by the Arkansas Division of Child Care and Early Education