Behavioral Management Policy

Policy Statement: Helping Hands staff members will utilize a variety of behavioral management techniques which focus on positive behavioral supports and minimize the need to remove a child from an activity.

Purpose: To assure the most appropriate, beneficial and least restrictive management of behavioral issues.

Philosophy:

All children engage in inappropriate behavior from time to time. At Helping Hands, we use a variety of behavior management techniques to help children learn appropriate behavior. The focus is on the positive and we use techniques that do not require the child to be removed from an activity whenever possible. Children with frequent out-of-control behaviors may have a behavior management program listed in the management section of their IEP.

The supportive environment of Helping Hands will be set in a way that children feel a maximum amount of control and security. This allows children to be more focused and purposeful in their play, which ultimately leads to fewer conflicts. Staff members at Helping Hands also maintain limits and expectations for behaviors that are developmentally appropriate. They model respectful ways of interacting with others and using materials. The children learn that they can make choices and that those choices result in specific outcomes. Learning responsibility for their own behavior is an important part of their social and emotional development.

Staff members at Helping Hands always keep children's developmental characteristics in mind when observing interactions and facilitating desired behavior. We listen to and acknowledge the children and encourage them to talk about what each might be feeling and try to encourage active problem solving. Active problem solving helps to involve the child in the process of finding a solution which allows them to feel more in control at a time when they're likely to be feeling less in control. We provide continued follow-up support to help the children use the newly found problem solving skills.

To solve problems encountered in play, the staff members at Helping Hands encourage children to describe the problems they encounter and give them time to develop their own solutions. Children who are too frustrated to participate in this type of routine will be provided a more direct supportive approach to problem solving.

Children are provided with time to do things for themselves in an environment that is supportive of their emotional needs. This allows the children to begin to take care of
their own needs in a way that provides them with a sense of accomplishment and independence.

Children are encouraged to express their feelings in words as well as through other means. We acknowledge and accept children's feelings in a supportive manner so that shame or guilt is never associated with a feeling that is developmentally expected.

To support problem-solving skills, children are involved in consistent group routines. This allows children to learn socially acceptable interactions with peers through active learning. These group interactions focus on children's interests, intentions and strengths. Staff members look for and encourage collaborative play in small groups as well as in large groups.

The following practices violate regulatory standards for appropriate discipline and therefore are prohibited:

• The use of corporal punishment: corporal punishment means punishment inflicted directly on the body including, but not limited to:
  o Shaking, slapping, twisting, squeezing
  o Demanding excessive physical exercise, excessive rest or strenuous or bizarre postures
  o Compelling a child to eat or have in his/her mouth soap, food spices or foreign substances.

• The use of room isolation: no child can be isolated in an adjacent room, hallway, closet, darkened area, play area, or any other area where the child cannot be seen or supervised.

• Food cannot be used or withheld as a punishment.

• Toilet training methods that punish, demean or humiliate a child are prohibited.

• Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise, is absolutely prohibited.

Procedure:

1. Behavioral Management Techniques: the following techniques are utilized by Helping Hands. These are listed below in order of least intrusive to most intrusive. It is essential that the classroom team attempt to utilize the least intrusive strategies and assess their efficacy before the decision is made to use more intrusive strategies.
a. **Environmental Modifications:** Staff members will consider the environment, as well as the environment's impact on behavior, and make modifications that support children in being successful. These include, but are not limited to:

- placement of furniture/classroom items
- placement and availability of toys
- positioning of adults and the provision of facilitation when needed
- providing an option-rich environment
- providing consistent, predictable daily routine which allows and encourages children to make and express choices, plans and decisions
- visual schedules
- clearly defined classroom rules with visual cues
- developmentally appropriate activities and expectations, including timing of activities
- sound level, including the volume of voices, music and other noise
- level of stimulation
- consistent use of verbal and visual presets prior to transitions
- varying size of group
- any modification that decreases opportunities for engaging in problematic behaviors

b. **Phrasing:** Staff members use developmentally appropriate levels of verbiage when addressing, teaching and prompting children. Some children need a direction to be very concise in order to process it and respond appropriately. We phrase things to children in a way that helps them to understand the expectations. For example, if a child is climbing on a table, the prompt might be: "Feet on floor", rather than "Stop climbing on the table." We avoid ambiguous prompts: for example, if a child is hitting, the prompt used would be: "Use gentle touches" instead of "No, thank you." Clear, consistent verbal directions, along with a visual cue if needed, assist children in being successful.

c. **Planned Ignoring:** Staff members may ignore harmless, attention getting behavior to avoid reinforcement of the behavior and at the same time - praise the child for appropriate behavior.

d. **Prompting:** Staff members may signal to a child to either begin a desired behavior or stop an inappropriate behavior. This can be done verbally ("In two minutes, it will be time to put the toys away") or non-verbally (with a glance or a nod that reminds the child what is expected). A visual cue can be helpful when prompting a child.

e. **Affection:** If a child is having a difficult day, staff members may provide additional affection and caring (a hug or special time with a favorite adult) in order to help the child cope with the problem situation.
f. **Social Reinforcement:** Praise, physical interactions, smiles, hugs and other typical positive interactions in response to appropriate behaviors.

g. **Hurdle Help:** When a child is not able to begin or complete a task without some assistance, staff members can provide the help to get the child over the first hurdle and on to success.

h. **Non-verbal Interventions:** To assist a child in staying on track, staff members may use techniques such as proximity, touch control or physical prompting.

i. **Tangible Reinforcement:** Objects, such as stars, stickers, stamps and other rewards that the child finds meaningful.

j. **Redirecting:** In order to de-escalate a situation, help a child maintain control, or help the child return to the baseline level of functioning, staff members may redirect the child (or group) to a different activity or change the activity.

k. **Token Reinforcement:** Objects, starts, stickers, stamps, poker chips or other tokens are given to a child contingent upon appropriate behavior and that are exchanged for other rewards that the child finds more meaningful.

l. **Activity Reinforcement:** Activities such as drawing, going outside, or playing in the motor area, that are given to the child contingent upon appropriate behavior. These activities are in addition to the typical routine.

m. **Directive Statement:** If a child’s behavior escalates and his/her ability to make rational choices decreases, staff members may provide direct guidance by telling a child in specific terms what is expected. These statements range from making requests to stating rules, to issuing directives.

n. **Edible Reinforcement:** Food or drink that is given contingent upon appropriate behavior. Meals may never be used as a form of edible reinforcement or withheld for any reason. It is important to consider nutrition when planning the use of edible reinforcement, i.e. a favorite cereal or cracker would be a better choice than candy. Edible reinforcements should be a short-term intervention, to be faded and replaced by other forms of reinforcement.

o. **Calming Break:** If a child is upset or over-stimulated, and the above methods have not helped a child return to a baseline level of functioning, staff members may offer a quiet, neutral area to calm down and regroup. This may be at the side of an activity or in a quiet section of the classroom. It is essential to use all positive behavioral supports before
offering a calming break, as we do not want to encourage escape/avoidance behavior. In the event that a calming break is necessary, it is essential to bring the child back to the activity once calm and reintroduce higher levels of reinforcement as appropriate to facilitate task completion.

p. Escorting: If a child is engaging in behavior that could be harmful to him/herself or to others, then the child will be removed from the group with an adult until he/she can return to the group to safely participate. At times, a child may need physical assistance to comply with an adult’s request. An adult may escort a child to an area of the room by placing hands on the child’s shoulders and assisting him/her in walking to the designated spot. In rare circumstances, we may need to carry a child to an area of the classroom until the child becomes calm. This would be done safely and without hurting the child. Objects are removed and furniture (when possible) moved out of the area to provide a safe location for the upset or tantruming child. The procedures for the calming break are again followed.

The child is supervised at all times and soft barriers may be put in place (fabric room divider) to lessen visual and auditory stimuli in order to assist the child in calming. Staff will stay out of reach of the child if there are hitting and kicking behaviors and acknowledge signs of calming and readiness to return to the group or activity.

If these measures do not result in changes in the child’s behavior, staff members will seek out the team Administrator to arrange for a meeting to request a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) and write a Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). The team will receive training in behavioral management, as needed. The services of a BOCES Behavioral Specialist have been used in these rare circumstances.

2. Guidelines for Developing a Behavioral Intervention Plan: All children with behavioral management goals must have a written behavioral plan. This plan will be developed as a team and communicated in writing to all team members. Parents/Guardians must be included in the development of an intervention plan. Teachers are responsible for gaining district approval for a Functional Behavioral Assessment, coordinating the development of behavioral plans, obtaining written permission from parent/guardians and submitting the plan for district approval. Any behavioral intervention plan must be submitted to the Director for approval prior to implementation of the plan. See below for guidelines on development of behavioral intervention plans.

a. Staff members will meet as a team to assess a child’s problematic behaviors.

b. A Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) will be performed once approved by the district.

c. Input from an agency colleague may be requested when needed.
d. The results of the FBA will be studied by the classroom team and any agency colleagues who are assisting with the process. A draft behavioral intervention plan can be devised. The child’s parents/guardians must be invited in for a meeting to develop the final behavior plan. If the family is unable to attend the meeting, than a copy must be sent home for review and input. Once the family's input has been included in the behavior plan, it must be forwarded to the Director for review. Once approved, it must be sent back to the family for their signature. Copies of the signed plan will be given to all team members, including the family and a copy with the identifying information removed will be posted in the classroom. In addition, a final copy will be sent to the child’s school district for inclusion in the IEP.

e. Behavioral intervention plans will include the following:
   • the target behaviors to be addressed: behaviors must be defined in measurable terms
   • the goal for the child’s behavior, in measurable terms
   • the prevention that will be used
   • the specific interventions to be used when target behaviors occur
   • the reinforcements for positive behaviors that will be used, and the schedule on which they will be provided
   • a statement of when and how staff will review progress with the parent, including immediate notification of any changes. (There should be no surprises to the parent. The parent is a team member and should always be invited to attend the review and follow-up meetings. The parent always has the option not to attend.)
   • the date of review of the plan to assess efficacy and to determine if changes are needed.

f. The team will continue to collect data to determine if the behavioral intervention plan is having the intended affect.

g. This statement must be included at the end of the plan:

I have reviewed the above plan for my child and give consent for its use.

Parent/Guardian Signature_________________ Teacher _______________________

Date __________________