



Positive Guidance Policy

At St. Luke's Early Childhood Program, we believe that all areas of development and learning are supported through play and through strong, positive interactions with adults. Healthy social-emotional development, including the development of self-control and self-esteem, and learning how to appropriately and safely interact with others are important components of early childhood education. The early childhood period is a critical time for children to learn how to control their thoughts, emotions, attention, impulses, and behavior. Social-emotional skills must be taught because children are not born with these skills. When children are given opportunities and support to develop self-control and other social-emotional skills, it builds the foundation needed for academic and life success. The goal of our Positive Guidance Policy is to help children learn and develop these skills while ensuring that all of our classrooms are safe for all children and employees.

Conscious Discipline

We are continuously training our employees in Conscious Discipline, which is a brain-based, trauma informed approach to classroom management that was created by Dr. Becky Bailey, who is internationally renowned for her work in education and developmental psychology. This approach to classroom management is an adult-first approach and comes with the belief that discipline is not something that you do to children, but, rather, something that you help develop within them. Conscious Discipline is intended to help teachers see challenging behavior as an opportunity to teach children missing skills. Conscious Discipline gives adults and children the tools to understand that their emotions are important and deserving of attention, but that they have the power to regulate their emotions. In addition to teaching children how to self-regulate, we also work with the children to use their assertive voices, to make safe choices, to develop empathy for others, and to problem solve. For more information on Conscious Discipline, we encourage you to visit www.consciousdiscipline.com and/or to join one of our book studies when offered.

At St. Luke's Early Childhood Program, we support children's development through:

Our Environment:

- Maintaining small class sizes and small teacher to child ratios
- Arranging classrooms that are safe, comfortable, and child-centered

- Developing schedules and routines to meet children's needs by avoiding long periods of "wait time"
- Keeping the schedule flexible enough to follow the children's interests, as well as to meet their cognitive, physical, and biological needs
- Using visual supports when and where necessary
- Establishing a Safe Place in each classroom to promote children's self-regulation

Our Employees:

- Working to develop relationships with all children and families
- Modeling safe behavior and redirecting unsafe behavior when possible
- Utilizing Conscious Discipline
- Seeing challenging behavior as an opportunity to teach
- Incorporating identifying emotions and breathing/self-regulation techniques into lessons
- Remaining composed and consistent
- Speaking to children in a calm tone on their level
- Stating directions clearly and simply
- Assuming positive intent and promoting a positive sense of self
- Helping children understand logical consequences of their behaviors
- Allowing children to problem solve on their own when possible
- Receiving professional development in developmental milestones and red flags, interventions, Active Supervision, trauma/adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), etc.

Our Families:

- Communicating regularly with employees to ensure consistency in guidance between school and home
- Partnering with us and allowing us time to work with all children, including those children needing higher levels of support
- Learning more about Conscious Discipline and utilizing this at home

It is not acceptable for adults (employees, parents/guardians, etc.) to administer any negative forms of discipline toward children on St. Luke's premises. Negative forms of discipline include, but are not limited to:

- Public or private humiliation, yelling, abusive, or profane language
- Child abandonment or placement in a dark or locked room
- Cruel, harsh, unusual, humiliating, or frightening methods of discipline, including threatening the use of physical punishment
- Any form of physical punishment, including hitting, spanking, beating, shaking, pinching or any other measure that produces physical discomfort

In addition to the above negative forms of discipline, employees shall not:

- Associate disciplinary actions with food
- Use time out for any purpose other than to enable the child to regain control
- Physically restrain children except when necessary to ensure their and/or others' safety

When a child exhibits challenging behavior, employees will:

- Document the behavior, as well as any antecedents (time of day, activity, interactions, etc.) that may have contributed to the behavior and any interventions used. After multiple instances of challenging behavior have been documented, employees will look for patterns in their documentation
- Model and teach appropriate, safe behavior and redirect unsafe behavior when possible
- If necessary, make modifications to the environment, the schedule, and/or teaching practices and incorporate additional visual supports
- Respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a way that ensures everyone's safety. Our response will be composed and respectful, emphasizing safety
- If necessary, facilitate a meeting with the child's family, in which we will work together to develop and implement an individualized behavior support plan that supports the child's inclusion and sets the child up for success. If necessary, we will also make referrals to other agencies, such as the Developmental Enrichment Program, Infancy Onward or other early childhood mental health agencies, Part C early intervention (First Steps), and/or Part B intervention (preschool special education)

Positive Guidance Procedure:

When a child exhibits challenging behavior, employees will:

1. Self-regulate to ensure that they are composed. They will get on the child's level and speak in a calm, yet assertive voice
2. Notice and acknowledge the child's feelings (example: "Your fists are clenched, and you have a frown on your face. You seem angry.")
3. Help the child self-regulate and offer the Safe Place. The Safe Place is a quiet space in the classroom, where the children can relax, practice breathing strategies, and regain control of their bodies
 - a. When a child is in the Safe Place, employees will continue to observe the child to ensure that they are not harming themselves or others. Employees will help children self-regulate and, when they are ready, encourage them to talk about their feelings so that they can return to the classroom activities
 - b. If necessary, employees will offer the child the opportunity to take a sensory break by going on a walk or to another area with an adult or to the Director's office

4. Redirect the child's behavior by offering the child 2 positive choices (example: When we walk down the hallway, you can hold my hand or Mrs. Smith's hand. What do you choose?")
5. If the child is unable to self-regulate and continues to exhibit challenging behavior, employees will notify the Director and/or Assistant Director and ask for additional support for the child
6. If the challenging behavior becomes commonplace, we will facilitate a meeting with the child's family. In this meeting we will:
 - a. Discuss the child's behavior and share documentation
 - b. Invite the family to share interventions that they use at home when challenging behaviors arise and any other pertinent information in helping the child at school
 - c. Work together to develop and implement an individualized behavior support plan that supports the child's inclusion and sets the child up for success
 - d. Set a date for a follow-up meeting
7. Termination of care will be the last resort and will only be utilized when a serious safety threat exists that cannot be addressed with the use of positive guidance and/or reasonable accommodations. If termination of care is deemed necessary, St. Luke's Early Childhood Program will work to help the family find a program that can better support the child and family.

This policy will be reviewed with employees and families on an annual basis before the beginning of the school year and modified as needed.