

BITING BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT - GUIDE

Biting is a common behaviour among young children. Creating an inclusive environment for children can become complex when there is an issue with biting. Children's biting is stressful and impacts the early childhood community including, children, educators and families.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 5: RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN		
5.1	Relationships between educators and children	Respectful and equitable relationships are maintained with each child
5.1.1	Positive educator to child interactions	Responsive and meaningful interactions build trusting relationships, which engage and support each child to feel secure, confident and included.
5.1.2	Dignity and rights of the child	The dignity and rights of every child are maintained
5.2	Relationships between children	Each child is supported to build and maintain sensitive and responsive relationships
5.2.1	Collaborative learning	Children are supported to collaborate, learn from and help each other
5.2.2	Self-Regulation	Each child is supported to regulate their own behaviour, respond appropriately to the behaviour of others and communicate effectively to resolve conflicts

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS

CHILDREN (EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES) NATIONAL LAW NSW	
155	Interactions with children
156	Relationships in groups

RELATED POLICIES

Behaviour Guidance Policy Incident, Illness, Accident and Trauma Policy Privacy and Confidentiality Policy Family Communication Policy Anti-Bias and Inclusion Policy	Supervision Policy Interaction with Children, Family and Staff Policy Respect for Children Policy Enrolment Policy
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PURPOSE

Biting is often a temporary issue, which concerns parents and educators. Biting is painful and frightening for the child who has been bitten and can also be frightening for the child who is biting too. It is important to understand that while biting is a typical behaviour for young children between the ages of fourteen months to three years, it is not acceptable.

We aim to create a safe environment for children by creating and implementing consistent guidelines to manage episodes of biting which works within our Service philosophy, and procedures for guiding

children's behaviour. We believe that children can be taught more appropriate ways to express their needs and feelings. We feel the best way to deal with biting is to aim to prevent it, although this will not always be possible.

SCOPE

This guide (Policy) applies to children, families, staff and management of the Service.

IMPLEMENTATION

Educators play an important role in minimising the likelihood and opportunity for biting to happen and appropriately managing the incidents that do occur. Biting is like any other aggressive behaviour that hurts or injures a child, requiring preventive measures and early intervention.

Unfortunately biting occurs as a natural part of some children's development and, if handled appropriately, will have no lasting effects. It is often hard to identify a specific reason why a child bites and there are often several reasons. Some common triggers for biting include:

- A child teething will often increase their desire to bite, as applying pressure to the gums can provide comfort
- Oral exploration
- Limited self-regulation or self-control
- Excitement and overstimulation
- Frustration
- Children imitating other children
- A child feeling unwell
- A child being unable to communicate what they want, need or feel
- Boredom

Theorists suggest that a good understanding of early childhood development is an essential tool for responding to biting and other harmful behaviour. For example, educators must understand that young children are not yet able to share or take turns so educators must take this into consideration when planning the routine and activities. Additionally, babies and toddlers are often not developmentally able to feel compassion or empathy for others. While this development is unable to be rushed, educators can support children to develop empathy and pro-social behaviour, by being a good role-model, and providing simple information, such as "biting hurts, we don't bite our friends."

Addressing the matter of biting involves educators and families providing guidance and direction to the child to assist them to take responsibility for their actions. Boundaries and limits are a part of life. Children need boundaries to help keep themselves, others and the environment safe. Clear guidelines provide children with an understanding about what it is you want them to do.

MANAGEMENT/NOMINATED SUPERVISOR/RESPONSIBLE PERSON/EDUCATORS WILL:

- Know the children and dynamics within the group.
- Become familiar with challenging routine times, including: group times, transitions, indoor and outdoor play: Ensure that children have something to do while they are 'waiting'.
- Observe children known to bite very closely. Is there an observable pattern, or a trigger to this behaviour that can be eliminated?
- Position themselves so they can quickly intervene and redirect the child.
- Attend to the child that was bitten, applying appropriate first aid, reassurance and comfort.
- Address the child about their biting, establishing eye contact and being consistent with responding to the incident (and ensuring all educators respond consistently).
- Limit immediate attention to the child who has bitten to minimise encouragement for more biting: Inappropriate attention can often be perceived by the child as condoning the act.

- Document the incident, ensuring to adhere to the Service privacy and confidentiality policy by not disclosing to the parent the identity of the biter.
- Critically reflect on their environment and experiences being provided to reduce risk factors: Is there enough equipment? Is it regularly rotated? Are activities too hard or easy?
- Reflect on the effectiveness of the supervision and educator's engagement and interactions with children.
- Ensure the curriculum responds to the needs and interests of the children.
- Intentionally teach children alternatives to biting.
- Engage and collaborate with families of the child who bites to discuss an approach to reducing biting.
- Educate children how to protect themselves.
- Provide positive attention to the child when they are behaving in ways that are appropriate.
- Be respectful with families with discussing biting concerns, and reassure them that although inappropriate, biting is normal for many young children.
- Seek professional help and guidance from inclusion support agencies if biting incidents do not reduce over time, or if the child is still biting after his/her third birthday.
- Separating young children into smaller, more manageable groups.
- Continue to observe, monitor and record the child's progress, reflecting on the effectiveness of the strategies being implemented.

OBSERVING BITING PATTERNS

It is important to observe the child to attempt to understand why they are biting. Through observations, you may be able to identify patterns, such as what happened before the child bites, is there a certain time of day the biting is occurring, does it happen around certain dynamics of groups of children on certain days, etc. Observations enable you to notice when, where and who the child bites. Does the child bite when crowded in small spaces with other children, when they are hungry or tired, etc.? An effective method to documentation is by using an event sample record, or an ABC anecdote (see templates below).

Once Educators can identify any patterns regarding why and when the child is likely to bite, they can then make changes to the environment or situation to prevent it.

WHEN BITING CONTINUES

If biting endures, it is important to continue observing, and trying to minimise the biting as much as possible. If the above strategies have been unsuccessful and biting continues, further help will be sought from inclusion and support agencies.

If biting persists and becomes uncontrollable, the child's position at the Service may be terminated to ensure the safety of the other children enrolled.

Please note that the Service and Educators will not bite the child back or use harsh punishment when dealing with a child who bites.

SOURCE:

- Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority.
- Guide to the Education and Care Services National Law and the Education and Care Services National Regulations
- ECA Code of Ethics
- Guide to the National Quality Standard.
- <http://raisingchildren.net.au>
- www.kidsmatter.edu.au
- Inclusion – KU Children's Services
- Young Children's Behaviour (Second Edition) Louise Porter
- When children bite
https://viac.com.au/cms_uploads/docs/when-children-bite-a-resource-for-early-childhood-educators.pdf

REVIEW

GUIDE REVIEWED	June 2018	NEXT REVIEW DATE	June 2019
MODIFICATIONS	New guide and related resources created		