

**Cuyahoga County  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Division of Children and Family Services  
Policy Statement**

**Policy Chapter:** Substitute Care  
**Policy Number:** 6.01.06  
**Policy Name:** Discipline of Children in Substitute Care

**Original Effective Date:** 07/10/1998  
**Revision Date(s):** 09/01/2014, 02/01/2013, 08/31/2009  
**Current Revision Date:** 10/01/2017  
**Approved By:** Cynthia G. Weiskittel  
**Approved By:** Thomas D. Pristow

**PURPOSE:** To ensure that all children in substitute care receive consistent, positive discipline by providing specific guidelines for substitute caregivers.

**SCOPE:** This policy applies to all **agency** licensed foster caregivers and substitute caregivers providing out-of-home care for children in the custody of the Cuyahoga County Division of Children and Family Services (CCDCFS). All CCDCFS staff involved in providing direct services must be knowledgeable about this policy. This policy does not apply to network foster homes, residential facilities, medical institutions or psychiatric treatment facilities.

**POLICY**

- A. All discipline of foster children must be positive and consistent in order to stimulate and enhance the child's growth, development, nurturance, adjustment and well-being.
- B. It is the responsibility of the child's assigned Worker of Record (WOR) and the foster family's Resource Manager (RM), whichever is appropriate, to ensure that every foster family or other substitute care provider understands and practices this policy.

**PROCEDURES**

- A. A substitute caregiver shall treat each child in substitute care with kindness, consistency and respect.
- B. A substitute caregiver shall not discriminate in providing care and supervision to a child in care on the basis of the child's race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, color or national origin.

C. A substitute caregiver shall provide humane instructive discipline appropriate to the age and functioning level of a child in substitute care. **Corporal punishment is not permitted.**

1. Disciplinary methods shall stress praise and encouragement for desired behavior rather than punishment.
2. All rules and expectations made by a substitute caregiver shall be explained to a child in their care in a manner appropriate to the child's age and understanding during the child's initial orientation and PRIOR to any disciplinary action for violating such rules or expectations.
3. A child in substitute care shall not be punished or disciplined for actions over which the child has no control.
4. A child in substitute care shall not be punished or disciplined for bedwetting, accidental wetting or soiling, or in the course of toilet training activities.

D. A substitute caregiver shall not subject a child to verbal abuse or swearing or derogatory remarks about foster children, the child's family, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, religion, color or national origin or the child's physical, social, cognitive and/or academic needs.

In addition:

1. A substitute caregiver shall not subject a child to threats of physical violence or removal from the substitute caregiver's home/placement.
2. A substitute caregiver shall not subject a child to threats of harm by supernatural forces.

E. A substitute caregiver shall never subject a child in substitute care to any of the following practices:

1. Corporal punishment including physical hitting or any type of physical punishment inflicted in any manner upon the child's body, such as spanking, paddling, pinching, punching, shaking, biting, hair-pulling, twisting of limbs, burning, washing out the child's mouth or rough handling of the child.
2. Physically strenuous work or exercise, when used as a means of punishment.
3. Requiring or forcing a child to take an uncomfortable position, such as squatting, kneeling or bending for long periods of time or; requiring a child to repeat physical movements or exercises, when used as a means of punishment.
4. Denial of social or recreational activities for excessive or prolonged periods of time which in no case is to exceed a period of seven (7) days without the written permission of the Worker of Record (WOR).

5. Denial of social or casework services, medical treatment, educational services.
  6. Denial of meals or deprivation of food.
  7. Denial of family visits or of the right of the child to communicate with his family, when used as a means of punishment.
  8. Denial of sleep.
  9. Denial of shelter, clothing, bedding or restroom facilities.
  10. Denial of, or improper use of, prescribed medication.
- F. A substitute caregiver shall not subject a child to humiliation or other cruel practices such as isolation, "silent treatment," group punishments, public humiliation, derogatory nicknames or being forced to wear soiled or dirty clothing.
- G. A substitute caregiver shall not use any form of chemical or mechanical restraint on a foster child or any device to prevent or restrict movement for reasons of punishment or for convenience.
- H. Physical restraint of a child in substitute care is **STRICTLY PROHIBITED** by agency licensed foster caregivers as a means of punishment. Physical restraint includes, but is not limited to:
1. Taping a child's mouth shut.
  2. Tying a child's arms or legs with ropes, string, bands, tape, etc.; to furniture, to another child, or to any other object.
  3. Locking a child in a room, closet, basement, stairwell, pet cage, box, or any enclosed area.
  4. Sitting on a child or confining or immobilizing a child using furniture, wood, gates, cages, etc as a means of punishment.
  5. Wrapping a child in blankets or any other material in such a way as to restrict the child's movement.
- I. Any act of omission or commission by a substitute caregiver or any other member of the substitute caregiver's household which results in the death, injury, illness, abuse, neglect or exploitation of a child in substitute care, shall be grounds for the denial or revocation of a foster home certificate. This may be a recommendation made by CCDCFS or by any other appropriate entity or ODJFS.
- J. A caregiver shall ensure that each foster child placed in the home who is not capable of meeting their own personal hygiene needs is clean and groomed daily. Clothing and footwear shall be clean, well-fitting, seasonal and appropriate to the child's age and sex.

- K. Foster children capable of meeting their own personal hygiene needs shall be provided with adequate toiletry supplies appropriate to the child's age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race and national origin.
- L. A caregiver shall provide each foster child instruction on good habits of personal care, hygiene, and grooming appropriate to the child's age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, race, national origin and need for training.
- M. All foster parents are required to take ongoing continuing training in order to maintain their foster care license. Training in the competency areas of discipline and behavior management techniques is available to all foster parents. These training opportunities are designed to assist foster parents in learning and developing effective discipline and behavior management strategies.

**SEE ALSO:**

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-07-09

Residential Facilities

Ohio Administrative Code Section 5101:2-9-21