

Children Biting Policy

POLICY STATEMENT

Our team is committed to preventing biting. We recognise that biting can be common in group settings and we will work with families when biting occurs. We are aware that practitioners play an important role in minimising the opportunity for biting at the centre through supervision and education.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

The purpose of the policy is to protect and inform all team members, families and children in our service about factors that may contribute to a child being bitten and ensuring they are supported positively when a child has been bitten.

POLICY

FamiliBase recognises that young children may bite for several reasons. We acknowledge that practitioners play an important role in minimising the likelihood and opportunity for biting to occur, and managing those that do occur positively and in the best interests of all children involved. Staff is also responsible for dealing with families' reactions and ensuring that they are supported positively when their child is bitten.

PROCEDURE

1 Staff and families need to recognise that at times, some children, for a variety of reasons, attempt to bite other children.

2 Reasons for biting need to be identified, and can include however are not limited to:

- Infants - Experimental, sensory pleasure, teething.
- Toddlers - Frustration, fatigue, attention seeking, confined spaces, hunger, display of emotion, lack of effective language skills.
- Older Children - Aggression, attention seeking, frustration, developmental reasons.

3 Practitioners should be aware of the steps to take when a biting incident occurs and devise a plan to prevent further biting incidents from occurring. This plan may include the following strategies:

- Develop a Behaviour Management Plan for children demonstrating ongoing biting behaviours in conjunction with families and other Health Professionals if required.

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- Use age appropriate behaviour guidance strategies for children who are biting. This includes working with the biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in a more appropriate manner, including using language the child is able to understand, and labelling emotions for children.
- Staff will attempt to keep frustration levels of children low by providing several toys of the same variety, having smaller groups of children, e.g. inside group/outdoor group.
- Staff will change the environment, routines or activities as necessary.
- Staff can implement strategies such as closely observing or shadowing a child demonstrating ongoing biting behaviours in order to identify possible triggers and intervene where possible to minimise incidents.
- Staff will anticipate biting situations and teach other team members responses to biting, reinforcing appropriate behaviour in a potential biting situation. Tracking triggers, environmental changes & other factors can assist to anticipate this behaviour.
- Should the behaviour continue, staff will work in conjunction with families and, if necessary, external agencies, to develop an Individual Behaviour Plan and behaviour guidance management strategies, to assist the child through this stage of their development.
- Staff will look for ways to promote the children's sense of security and stability, through ensuring a 'no surprise' routine. Maintaining a predictable schedule ensures children understand and are able to anticipate the progression of the day.
- All strategies to be based on individual children's needs and stage.
- Families of children biting should be consulted throughout the process so that they can assist in the management of the behaviour.

IF A CHILD HAS BEEN BITTEN IN THE CENTRE STAFF SHOULD FOLLOW THE BELOW PROCEDURE

1 Where a bite does occur, staff will check for broken skin. All bites, broken or unbroken skin will be cleaned. A cold compress is to be applied to the bitten area.

2 Let the child know in your words and with your manner that biting is unacceptable; reserving your sternest manner and words for acts such as biting, in accordance with the Interactions with Children Policy.

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3 Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting, including dramatic negative attention. The biter should be removed from the situation immediately and with no emotion. Use words such as 'STOP', 'Biting is not OK-biting hurts' and focus the caring attention on the bitten child. 'The biter' is communicated with on a level that he/she can understand. Communicate that you understand the child's frustration (or needs for exploration or teething relief) and are willing to help him or her achieve self-control. Staff will acknowledge the child's emotions by naming their emotions.

4 Where appropriate, involve the biter in first aid for the child who has been bitten, and encourage them to empathise with the child.

5 Staff are to complete an incident form for the child who has been bitten, as well as for the biter, and submit to the Manager or Responsible Person for approval. Both families are to be communicated with about the incident.

6 Once the Manager or Responsible Person has signed the incident reports the families should be provided with a copy and the incident explained to them ensuring no confidentiality is breached.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILIES

1 Prepare families for the possibility that any child, including theirs, can be either a biter or be bitten.

2 Make sure families are aware of all the steps that you take to minimise biting and to end a biting crisis. They need to know that our understanding of biting as a natural and common phenomenon takes time to manage.

3 Know how long you will continue to work with a child stuck in a biting pattern, and communicate that to the child's family straight away.

4 Acknowledge that this is a difficult situation for all.

5 Maintain positive relationships with families – there is no blame placed on any party, this is a difficult situation for all.

6 Work as partners with the families of both biting children and children that have been bitten frequently to keep them informed and to develop joint strategies for change.

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WHEN BITING IS REPETITIOUS, PROLONGED OR CREATING SIGNIFICANT RISK OF HARM

- 1 Team members are required to maintain a time line of incidents to attempt to pinpoint triggers for the biting.
- 2 Families of children being bitten should be informed of any preventative measures taken.
- 3 Our staff will work with families to develop a consistent plan between home and the centre
- 4 An action plan will be created by the staff in partnership with the family.
- 5 Staff will be supported by the Manger and any other external bodies to ensure that the environment is not contributing to the child's triggers.
- 6 If the biting continues without improvement further steps may be required including reducing or altering the child's attendance pattern. This step will only be an option after the family and the staff have implemented and tried other options.