



Connections



FIRST CONNECTIONS – EARLY INTERVENTION IN ARKANSAS

(800) 643-8258

<http://humanservices.arkansas.gov/ddds/Pages/FirstConnectionsProgram.aspx>

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Arkansas Quality Preschool Programs

The National Institute for Early Education Research at Rutgers University indicates that, "effective preschool programs lay a foundation for children's subsequent school success by imparting the varied knowledge, abilities and dispositions children need to succeed in school such as rich vocabulary and complex sentence structure, an understanding of story structure, self-regulation, cooperative play and abstract thinking" ("The Effects of the Arkansas Better Chance Program on Young Children's School Readiness," 2007, p. 5).



Working in partnership with the South Central

Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma, the Arkansas Department of Education's Early Childhood Commission Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Committee, reviewed and revised the current indicators to develop a common understanding of what it means to be "ready for kindergarten." This committee also revised quality early childhood frameworks that are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the Arkansas Campaign for Grade-Level Reading. The long-term goals are to increase statewide awareness of the need for quality preschool programs that will positively impact school readiness of all students and to establish a fully developed system to assure preschool children will transition to kindergarten successfully prepared to learn

The Arkansas Early Childhood Commission Kindergarten Readiness Indicators Committee has since completed the work on the Readiness Indicators and presented them to the Early Childhood Commission that will begin the development of materials to be distributed to parents of preschoolers in daycare and pre-K programs throughout the state. The committee includes the Arkansas Department of Education, Arkansas Better Chance Program, Arkansas Better Beginnings/University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, Arkansas Department of Health & Human Services (Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education), Arkansas Head Start Collaboration, Center on Enhancing Early Learning Outcomes, and South Central Comprehensive Center at the University of Oklahoma, as well as assistant principals, practicing program directors, representatives from special education and English-language learner programs, teachers, and a parent representative from Arkansas public schools.

First Connections LEA Quarterly Reporting

Sending the LEA Notification in CDS for all children approaching the third birthday is a requirement of all EI service coordinators under IDEA, Part C guidelines.

In CDS, quarterly reporting dates are:

Apr 1 (July, Aug, Sept birthdays)

July 1 (Oct, Nov, Dec birthdays)

Oct 1 (Jan, Feb, Mar birthdays)

Jan 1 (Apr, May, June birthdays)

The LEA notification must be sent (and recorded in CDS) at least ninety days prior to the child's third birthday. Make sure the name and contact information of the service coordinator is on the quarterly report.

When a child is referred "late" to First Connections, the following IDEA regulations apply:

- **Referred 90 days or less prior to 3rd birthday:**

Proceed as usual to determine eligibility. Notify LEA **as soon as eligibility is determined**. Make a note on the LEA Notification of "late referral" and date child referred to FC.

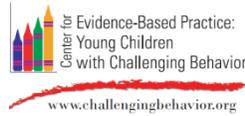
- **Referred 45 days or less prior to 3rd birthday:**

No determination of eligibility – refer to Part B with parental consent. Make a note on the LEA Notification of "late referral" and the date of the child's referral to First Connections.





Intervention Tips for Challenging Behavior



Excerpted from: “*Preventing Challenging Behavior in Young Children: Effective Practices*,” Peter J. Alter & Maureen A. Conroy

Benjamin Franklin suggested that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” and that old saying holds true when dealing with challenging behavior in young children.

The best way to address challenging behaviors in young children is to take steps to make sure that they don’t occur. While there is not a universal magic potion for preventing challenging behaviors, there are several broad-based early intervention strategies that researchers suggest to prevent challenging behaviors. These strategies include: (a) *arranging the environment*, (b) *scheduling*, and (c) *implementing rules, rituals, and routines*.

Arranging the Environment

Whether at home or in a classroom, effective environments are well-organized and engaging with developmentally appropriate practices, activities, and materials. If children are engaged with interesting activities and materials that are appropriate for their developmental levels, they will be less likely to engage in challenging behaviors. Consider the following points when designing a well-organized environment.

- ✿ arrange the room to ensure visual monitoring of children
- ✿ arrange activity centers to limit number of children in an area attend to details, such as the lighting, temperature, and noise levels, to reduce the probability of children engaging in problem behaviors due to a sensitivity to these environmental factors
- ✿ organize location of materials on shelves to increase accessibility, appropriateness, and availability of toys and materials to facilitate children’s independence, thus, decreasing the likelihood of challenging behaviors

When adults attend to children’s appropriate behaviors and provide assistance as they need help, children are less likely to engage in challenging behaviors. Creating an effective environment also includes developing interpersonal climate. Developing positive interpersonal climate begins with implementing engaging activities that are developmentally and individually appropriate for each child. Adults who “catch them being good,” and acknowledge children for it are using positive attention/positive feedback with children who are appropriately behaving. Active supervision to redirect potential problem behavior before it escalates into challenging behavior is another positive strategy.

Scheduling

Children like predictability! Schedules communicate to a child what to expect, and a predictable daily schedule helps prevent the occurrence of challenging behavior. Therefore, effective environments have fairly consistent daily schedules. When creating a daily schedule, consider the following points:

- ✿ picture schedules provide concrete, visual cues of scheduled activities and routines. In fact, children who are just beginning to learn language may actually need to have real objects pictured in their schedules
- ✿ rotate large and small group activities, varying active and quiet activities
- ✿ structure transition time into activities
- ✿ place the most difficult activity at a time when children are most alert and attentive
- ✿ include a schedule within an activity if the activity has several components so children will learn and know what will come first, next, and so forth by providing a sequence of visual cues (e.g., photographs, line drawings) that represent the different parts of the activity
- ✿ embed choices in the schedule so children have an opportunity to decide between one activity and another (blocks center or dress up center) also will increase the rate of child engagement and decrease the likelihood of challenging behaviors

Rules, Rituals, and Routines

Providing rules, rituals, and routines helps provide structure for everyone, including the adults and the use of these components in a well-organized environment decreases the likelihood of challenging behaviors.



Rituals and routines are best for young children because they give verbal and non-verbal cues and prompts to help children learn appropriate behaviors. For example, a bell at the end of play time provides children with a cue about a schedule change and allows the child to initiate the change without verbal prompting from an adult. Get creative! A ritual may be a song, a rhyme, a game, movement or any other activity that is used in a predictable and repeated pattern over time to communicate values, foster community, or remind children of behavioral expectations.

Rituals can be used to ease transitions, reducing the occurrence of challenging behavior that can happen when children transition from one activity to another. An example of a ritual that may help ease transitions and serve as a rule reminder when children are going to a place or beginning an activity in which they need to be quiet, is to say, “*Zip it, lock it, and put it in your pocket.*” The actions that accompany each step is for the children to zip an imaginary zipper over their lips (*zip it*); act as though they are turning a key at the end of the zipper (*lock it*), and put the imaginary key in their pocket (*put it in your pocket*).

Rules are more appropriate for preschool aged children and provide preschoolers with the structure to teach them which behaviors are appropriate and which behaviors are not appropriate. When implementing rules, rituals, and routines, consider the following points:

-  adults will typically need to teach the ritual, routine, or rule to the children using small steps paired with positive, specific feedback and repeated over time until children understand and are able to engage in the appropriate behavior
-  activities taught over time and embedded as part of typical activities in the daily schedule serve as reminders to children about appropriate behaviors in different contexts
-  rituals and routines provide consistency and can communicate values such as friendship, caring, or responsibility. For instance, a teacher may teach a set of songs about these values that children sing at the end of circle time. A parent may have a song or a saying to always review the expectations when going from the car to the store

Preventing challenging behaviors before they occur is part of effective early childhood intervention (whether parenting at home or managing a well-designed classroom). Putting thought and time to create an effective environment minimizes chances that challenging behaviors will erupt. Even better, a well-designed environment that is engaging and developmentally appropriate *with schedules, rules, rituals, and routines teaches* children how to act appropriately. When children understand what is expected and have opportunities and support to engage in appropriate behaviors, they are more likely to choose this behavior, reducing the likelihood of using challenging behaviors. Remember, “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

- **6 free online modules for behavior intervention**
<http://pbs.fsu.edu/return.html>
- **Learn ABC analysis to determine functions of behaviors** <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/iin005-Conduct-an-ABC-Analysis.pdf>
- **Problem Behavior Fact Sheet**
http://www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/documents/facts_about_sheet.pdf

BEHAVIOR 101:

6 Things You Should Know About Behavior:

-  **IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU:** Children don't misbehave to test or to annoy you, they act out their feelings and frustrations when they are unable to communicate what is really wrong and you just happen to be there. When adults don't take bad behavior personally, they are able to remain calm and stay in control when a child isn't able to.
-  **ALL BEHAVIOR IS COMMUNICATION:** An infant cries when hungry or wet. An adult yawns when bored or tired. Humans communicate something through their behavior during every moment of every day. Inappropriate behavior is a sign that something is not right.
-  **ALL BEHAVIOR IS MOTIVATED (THERE IS A REASON FOR IT):** Children may not know the words to describe how they are feeling. Children may act out their feelings, engaging in challenging behavior to get attention, stop an activity they don't like, or gain sensory pleasure — but there is always a reason behind an inappropriate behavior.
-  **THERE CAN BE MANY REASONS BEHIND A SPECIFIC BEHAVIOR:** -- being hungry, scared, tired, bored, sad or angry. A child who tried to communicate his needs to adults but whose needs remain unmet will use problem behavior as a way of sending a very loud message or to create a situation that will end the internal stress the child is feeling. When children feel unsafe or out of control, they take action over the things they CAN control, like throwing toys or hitting a sibling.
-  **YOU CAN LEARN TO INTERPRET THE MESSAGE:** Figuring out the meaning behind a child's behavior lets adults help the child learn more appropriate ways to get that need met. It's important for adults to be aware of the meaning in their own behaviors, too. Children learn a lot through the messages that adults send every day. [article: Teach Children About Respect: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/inclusivecommunities/differences.html>]
-  **CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR GENERALLY DOES NOT IMPROVE WITH PUNISHMENT:** Yelling at or punishing a child for inappropriate behavior may stop the behavior for the moment, but it sends the message that anger is an OK way to solve problems and *fails to teach the child how to appropriately get his needs met in the future* (so the behavior will continue). When children feel respected and have their needs met, there is no longer a reason to use challenging behavior to communicate. Teaching children positive ways to communicate their needs arms them with social skills that will help them throughout their life.



Spring is a Great Time to Head Outdoors!



For families who enjoy outdoor fun in the natural state (or in other National Parks), help them save on trips and visits with **FREE National Parks Access Passes** for individuals with disabilities. These passes gain free access for the individual with a disability and up to three other adults in the same vehicle. Children under 15 are always free. Access passes may provide a 50% discount (varies by recreation site) on some amenity fees charged for facilities and services such as camping, swimming, boat launching, and specialized interpretive services.

A FREE Access Pass is:

-  For U.S. citizens (or permanent residents) with permanent disabilities
-  Available in person at a federal recreation site
-  Available through the mail using the application form found at: <http://www.nps.gov/findapark/passes.htm> The cost of obtaining an Access Pass through the mail is ten dollars (for processing the application -- the pass is free). Must provide documentation of permanent disability and US residency

Did YOU Know?

Capturing a child's early intervention experience and progress through data on the CDS system is necessary, required documentation.

- ✓ **Quarterly Reviews** and re-targeting objectives must be done on the CDS system. Each IFSP has a different quarterly review date and must be captured individually on the CDS system.
- ✓ **Delivery of Services** must be documented on CDS.

NOTE: if an objective is not re-targeted every 3 months, then the delivery of services or service sessions cannot be entered in the CDS system.

Consider holding transition conferences during the spring months for children who have birthdays during the summer months when school is out and many LEAs are closed or working with reduced staff. Remember to list all planning steps in CDS on the child's transition plan in the system and actually schedule and hold the transition conference while completing exit outcomes (COS) as a team at this conference.

Targeted Case Management Scheduled for August: Register in CDS Training Calendar for All Four Days

The four-day Targeted Case Management Training is part of the alternative certification route for individuals interested in Service Coordination certification who do not have a degree but have experience working with children with developmental delay or disability. This is also a good training for new service coordinators who have no prior experience in social work or case management.

The four-day training is scheduled for August 12, 13, and 19, 20 in Hot Springs at the Garland County Library. All four days must be completed in order to receive TCM certification. Interested individuals can register for all four days of the training in CDS Training Calendar.

NEW PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING: Family Engagement

You asked for it, and here it is. . . the newly developed professional development on engaging families in the EI process to develop the parent/professional partnership. June 10 / Little Rock. Register in CDS Training Calendar.

