

CONNECTICUT BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL EDUCATION



• Working together for children with disabilities • INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS

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Help, what do I do about this behavior? Tips for Teaching Social Skills and Preventing Problem Behavior

Mary Louise Hemmeter Rob Corso University of Illinois



This article is translated into Spanish on page 2. Ver la versión española de este artículo en la página 2, y todos los artículos a www.birth23.org

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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

I just don't know what to do about Jesse!! He hits, doesn't play well with other children, doesn't listen ... it's always something.

If you have ever worked with young children, whether in their homes or in an early childhood setting, this quote probably sounds familiar. The behaviors above are frustrating to parents and professionals working with young children. These behaviors can disrupt family activities and routines and the schedule of a classroom. Professionals are anxious to find ways to "deal with" specific challenging behaviors and parents are seeking support and guidance from professionals to "deal with" their child's behavior.

Many challenging behaviors can be prevented by designing environments that support children's involvement in activities and routines and that teach children new social skills.

The following tips are likely to result in fewer problem behaviors when used consistently (see the pyramid on page 8).

1. Focus on positive interactions with the child. Relationships with adults are very important to children. Unfortunately, children with problem behaviors often have interactions with adults that are focused on their problem behavior. Adults need to engage in positive interactions that focus on teaching children new skills and supporting children's appropriate behavior.

When we do that we build positive relationships. Positive relationships help children feel supported and safe. When that happens, children are willing to try new things, persist at difficult tasks, and ask for help when they need it.

- 2. Build meaningful partner**ships with families.** Effective early childhood education is built on meaningful relationships with families. These relationships are built over time and are based on mutual trust and respect. Parent-professional relationships allow for the sharing of information and strategies with each other about encouraging a child's social skills and emotional development. It is in this relationship that teachers can learn from families about the child's interests, needs, and abilities: and families can learn from professionals about strategies and activities that are effective with the child.
- 3. Structure routines, transitions and activities so children know what to do, how to do it. and when to do it. Children often show problem behavior when they don't know what to do or how to do something. A key way to prevent challenging behavior relates to schedules and routines. Schedules should be implemented consistently in order to help children know what to expect and what to do. Children should be taught these routines and expectations. While some children will learn routines and expectations simply by participating, other children will need to

be taught in more individualized ways. Picture schedules, peer buddies, and adult assistance can be used to teach routines and expectations. Transitions should be structured so that children have something to do while they are waiting; for example, reading a story, singing a song, or playing a game, while they are waiting.

- 4. Create activities that are fun and engaging. A child's 'engagement' means a child's involvement and participation in activities. This is key to preventing challenging behavior. When children are engaged in an activity they enjoy, they are less likely to engage in problem behavior. Remember that not all children enjoy the same activities or participate in the same activity the same way. Activities should be structured so children of differing ability levels can participate.
- 5. **Teach with intention.**Children who are able to communicate their emotions appropriately, who can solve social problems, and who have positive social skills are less likely to engage in problem

behavior. A critical step in preventing problem behavior is teaching these types of skills. That includes teaching the concept, talking about examples, and supporting children's use of new skills in naturally occurring contexts. There are many creative ways to teach social skills including using games, puppets, children's books, and social stories.

6. Focus on modeling and acknowledging appropriate social **behavior.** Adult attention and feedback is an important tool in promoting children's social skills and emotional development. Adult attention and feedback can be used to guide children through difficult social problems, model appropriate ways for children to talk about their emotions, demonstrate strategies for playing with other children, and confirm with children that their behavior is appropriate. When working with children with challenging behavior, it is easy to get caught up in dealing with the problem behavior rather than giving the child time and attention for positive behavior. Adults should attempt to focus on acknowledging

children when they are engaged in appropriate behavior and modeling.

7. Pay attention to the function of the child's behavior. Many children have problem behavior because they do not have needed social skills or language skills. An effective way to address this is to teach the child a new skill they can use in place of the problem behavior. Knowing the purpose of the child's behavior is critical to identifying a way to address it. Children's behavior typically serves the purpose of getting something (e.g., toy, attention) or avoiding something (e.g., an activity they don't like, a child they don't want to play with). Strategies for addressing the problem behavior are more likely to be effective when the strategy is focused on the purpose of the child's behavior.

In closing, creating caring, cooperative, and responsive environments does not happen automatically. Adults must have a planful approach and be intentional in the strategies they use with young children.

¡Auxilio! ¿Qué puedo hacer ante esta conducta? Consejos para enseñar aptitud social y evitar conductas problema

Mary Louise Hemmeter Rob Corso Universidad de Illinois

¡No sé qué hacer con Jesse! Me da golpes, no juega con otros niños, no escucha... siempre es algo.

Si alguna vez ha trabajando con niños menores, en su hogar o en un plantel de temprana infancia, esta cita le es familiar. Son conductas frustrantes para los padres y los profesionales que trabajan con niños; conductas que pueden trastornar las actividades y rutinas de la fammilia y el programa del aula. Los profesionales están ansiosos por encontrar la forma de afrontar conductas desafiantes específicas y los padres buscan el apoyo y la guía de los profesionales para corregir la conducta de sus niños.

Muchas conductas desafiantes pueden evitarse diseñando ambientes que faciliten la participación de los niños en actividades y rutinas y que les enseñen nuevas aptitudes sociales. La implementación sistemática y constante de estos consejos tiende a reducir las conductas problema (Véase la pirámide en la página 8).

1. Concentrarse en las interacciones positivas con el niño. Las relaciones con los adultos son muy importantes para los niños. Desafortunadamente, los niños con conducta problema suelen tener interacciones con adultos centradas en su conducta problema. Los adultos necesitan provocar interacciones positivas que se concentren en enseñar a los niños nuevas aptitudes y que apoyen la conducta apropiada de los niños. Cuando hacemos eso creamos relaciones positivas. Las relaciones positivas ayudan a los niños a sentirse apoyados y seguros. Cuando se logra, los niños están más dispuestos a tratar cosas nuevas, a persistir en tareas difíciles y a pedir ayuda cuando la necesitan.

- 2. Crear asociaciones significativas con las familias. La educación eficaz en la temprana infancia se construye basada en relaciones significativas con las familias. Estas relaciones se construyen a través del tiempo basadas en la mutua confianza y respeto. La relación entre los padres y los profesionales les permite compartir información y estrategias para el fomento de las aptitudes sociales y emocionales del niño. Es mediante esta relación que los maestros pueden enterarse de los intereses del niño, de sus necesidades y aptitudes; y las familias pueden aprender de estrategias y actividades eficaces.
- 3. Estructurar rutinas, transiciones y actividades de modo que los niños sepan qué hacer, cómo **hacerlo y cuándo.** Los niños a menudo muestran conducta problema cuando no saben qué hacer y cómo hacer algo. Una manera clave de evitar la conducta desafiante se relaciona con los horarios y rutinas. Los horarios deben implementarse con firmeza para ayudar a los niños a saber qué esperar y qué hacer. Debe enseñárseles a seguir rutinas y tener expectativas. Mientras algunos niños aprenderán simplemente mediante su participación, otros necesitarán que se les enseñe de modo más individualizado. Se pueden utilizar horarios con figuras, y valerse de sus compañeros y de la asistencia de adultos para enseñarles rutinas y expectativas. Las transiciones deben estar estructuradas de manera que los niños tengan algo que hacer, por ejemplo leer un cuento, cantar una canción o jugar un juego mientras esperan.
- 4. **Crear actividades divertidas y cautivantes.** Cautivar al niño significa hacer que participe activa-

mente en las actividades. Esto es clave en la prevención de la conducta desafiante. Cuando los niños se ocupan en una actividad que les da placer, son menos propensos a tener una conducta problema. Recuerde que no todos los niños disfrutan las mismas actividades o participan en la misma actividades deben estar estructuradas de manera que permita la participación de niños con habilidades de diferentes niveles.

- 5. Enseñar con deliberación. Los niños capaces de expresar sus emociones propiamente, que pueden resolver problemas sociales y que tienen aptitudes sociales positivas son menos propensos a presentar una conducta problema. Un paso crítico en la prevención de la conducta problema es enseñarles estos tipos de aptitud. Eso incluye enseñarles el concepto, hablar de ejemplos y apoyar el uso por los niños de nuevas aptitudes en contextos de ocurrencia natural. Hay muchos modos creativos de enseñar aptitudes sociales, como mediante juegos, marionetas, libros infantiles y cuentos sociales.
- 6. Concentrarse en modelar y reconocer la conducta social apropiada. La atención del adulto y su reacción son un instrumento importante en el fomento de aptitudes sociales y el desarrollo emocional de los niños. La atención del adulto y su reacción pueden usarse para guiarlos cuando atraviesan situaciones sociales difíciles, modelar modos apropiados para que los niños hablen de sus emociones, enseñarles estrategias para jugar con otros niños, y confirmarles que su conducta es apropiada. Cuando se trabaja con niños de conducta desafiante es fácil enredarse en combatir la conducta problema en lugar de darle al niño tiempo y atención para una conducta positiva. Los adultos

deben intentar concentrarse en reconocérselo a los niños cuando su conducta es apropiada.

7. Prestar atención a la función de la conducta del niño. Muchos niños tienen conducta problema porque carecen de las necesarias aptitudes sociales o de lenguaje. Un modo eficaz de confrontar esto es enseñarle al niño una nueva aptitud que puede utilizar en lugar de la conducta problema. Saber el propósito de la conducta del niño es crítico para identificar el modo de tratarla. Típicamente la conducta del niño tiene el propósito de conseguir algo (v.gr: un juguete, atención) o evitar algo (v.gr: una actividad que le disgusta, un niño con el que no quiere jugar). Las estrategias para tratar la conducta problema tienden a ser más eficaces cuando se centran en el propósito de la conducta.

Para terminar, la creación de entornos de cuidado, cooperación y sensibilidad no ocurre automáticamente. Los adultos deben tener un enfoque planificado en las estrategias que usan con niños, y deliberación en su implantación.



Help Me Grow and The Early Childhood Consultation Partnership

By Anne Marie Davidson, M.S., ECCP Early Childhood Consultant and Joanna Bogin, Program Supervisor, Children's Trust Fund

Challenging behaviors are one of the top ten concerns identified by parents and providers. There are two programs that work hand in hand to provide a seamless system of support for children who have challenging behaviors: Help Me Grow and the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP).

Help Me Grow is a program of the Connecticut Children's Trust Fund working in collaboration with a number of partners including the United Way of Connecticut, Infoline, (the state's telephone information and referral service), the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Department of Education's preschool special education program, and the Children with Special Health Care Needs Division at the Department of Public Health. Through these collaborations a statewide network has been designed to help families and providers access appropriate services for young children from birth to age five who are at risk for developmental, health, or behavioral problems. The program includes a statewide toll free telephone number for accessing needed services and partnerships with communitybased agencies.

The ECCP offers behavioral consultation to licensed childcare centers. This service represents a relationship-based model that focuses on a working collaboration between the childcare center director, teacher, parent, and the Early Childhood Consultant (ECC).

Services are provided on site with the goal of supporting the social and emotional development of children through either individual child or classroom-based services and supports.

The Early Childhood Consultants offer:

- Connecticut Charts-A-Course TAB trainings and workshops for caregivers, families, and other community providers
- Pre- and post- classroom assessments and individual child behavioral screening
- Classroom and Child Action Plans that are strength based and individualized to meet the specific needs of the child and/or classroom; the Action Plans are developed in collaboration with directors, early childhood educators and families
- Phone consultation services to early childhood centers, community based providers, and families
- Information and referrals to other community resources as needed

In summary, Help Me Grow is a unique program that assists families and providers in identifying developmental and behavioral concerns, finding appropriate resources and helping families connect with programs and services. The partnership with the ECCP is one example of the many links to services and resources that Help Me Grow provides to meet the needs of young children and families.

To access this service and other early childhood programs and services, call the Child Development Infoline at 800-505-7000. For questions regarding the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership, contact the ECCP Program Manager, Liz Bicio, LCSW, at 860-704-6198.



Information for Families and Professionals

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Birth to Three System Update



By Linda Goodman, Director CT Birth to Three System

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. the state agency responsible for administering the Birth to Three System has an obligation to provide sufficient "general supervision" of early intervention services to ensure that they are delivered in compliance with the law and to monitor and, when necessary, improve their quality. Over the past three years, we have had a schedule of visiting each program once to review records, talk to staff, talk to families, and observe one or more home visits. Now we're ready to do something a little different.

Program Profiles

Using information from our data system, we will post information on the Birth to Three website (www.birth23.org) about each of the programs. The information will be updated twice a year. The profiles give some information about the program and also report on some performance measures. Each program's performance is compared to other programs of the same size as well as all programs across the state.

Performance Reports

Each program will be required to submit a performance report every other year with more information about whether their program is in compliance with the law and how well it's meeting the needs of infants and toddlers and their families. If any items are found to be out of compliance with the law or in need of significant improvement, the program will develop an improvement plan. Compliance issues must be corrected within one year, but the program may take up to two years to improve in areas that are not part of the law. Any compliance specific to a child or family must be corrected within 45 days.

Focused Monitoring

Each year, the state Interagency Coordinating Council(ICC), made up of parents, providers, physicians, legislators, and state agency representatives, selects important indicators that they would like the state to focus on for the coming year. Rather than visiting programs on a set schedule, this approach says that you figure out which programs seem to need the most help in any particular important area and then only visit those programs. The ICC has selected "quality services" and "smooth transitions" as the areas of focus for this year. Programs were then grouped by size and ranked according to some data indicators in both of those areas. We will be visiting those programs whose ranking was the lowest to see if, together, we can figure out what the problem might be and how to fix it. Our focused monitoring team consists of our quality assurance manager and five parents whose children received Birth to Three services in the past. Again, we will be reviewing records as well as talking with staff and families. The results of focused monitoring visits will also be posted on the website at www.birth23.org.

Preschool Special Education Update

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator, Preschool Special Education

In the last few weeks the Department of Education's Special Education Bureau has received a number of inquiries about Child Find. This update will clarify questions folks may have.

As many of you know, the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), has two important parts. The IDEA Part C governs early intervention for children from birth until their third

birthday. The IDEA Part B governs special education for children from age three until age 21 or graduation from high school (whichever occurs first). Both IDEA Part C and Part B include requirements that describe obligations for Child Find. Child Find is defined in IDEA as identification, location, and evaluation activities that would determine under Part C whether a child is eligible for early intervention, and would determine whether under Part B a child was eligible for special education.

The Connecticut Birth to Three System and the Department of Education's Special Education Bureau have an interagency agreement that addresses Child Find activities for the birth through age two population. There is a state agreement because under the IDEA the Connecticut Birth to Three System and special education are both responsible for Child Find activities for children from the age of birth through age two, and thus have overlapping responsibilities.

School districts can meet their IDEA Part B Child Find responsibilities by referring a child to the Connecticut Birth to Three System. The ultimate benefit for the child and family is that under the early intervention system, identification, location, and evaluation activities (a.k.a. Child Find) would be followed by early intervention services for those children determined eligi-

(Continued on page 6...)

State Council Urges Parents: Make Your Voice Heard!

By Lolli Ross, Chair, Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council

It is the time of the year when our state legislature meets to engage in the process of public decision making on a wide range of issues that affect every citizen in Connecticut. The legislative session runs from January 5 through June 8 this year and the Governor's budget was released on February 9, 2005. There are many important issues that the Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council will watch closely to assure that our youngest citizens and their families receive the best possible services.

Like many public programs in Connecticut, we are concerned that the Connecticut Birth to Three System receives adequate funding to meet the needs of our families. Our elected representatives have the difficult task of determining how to allocate resources and determine what kinds of laws and policies will best serve the interests of all citizens. To perform their job, legislators rely on input from a variety of sources. While they receive technical information from their staff and state agency personnel, much of what they decide depends on the views and preferences of the citizens who elect them. That means you.

The legislative process may seem very distant to parents who are struggling with the day-to-day responsibilities of parenting a child with special needs. However, parents have a powerful voice that can influence their child's health, education, and quality of life. How can a busy parent be involved?

1. Get to know the issues or main talking points by:

- Talking with your Birth to Three Provider
- Networking with other families
- Attend the state or your local interagency coordinating council meeting

2. Share your Family's Story

■ Let your legislator know what the Birth to Three System has meant for your family. Share how a proposed policy may affect your child and family. Personal stories are very important and help to bring the issues to life for our legislators.

The Connecticut Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council is focusing on the following key issues this legislative session:

- Restoring eligibility for preemies with birth weights of 750g-1000g and those born at less than 30 weeks gestation
- Restoring eligibility for children with delays in speech only
- Ensuring adequate funding for the next fiscal year to cover children we expect to begin serving this year

For more information about the State Interagency Coordinating Council, their Legislative Committee, or your local Interagency Coordinating Council, contact Eileen McMurrer at 860-418-6134 or

eileen.mcmurrer@po.state.ct.us. For more information about the legislative process and making sure your voice is heard, contact the League of Women Voters at www.lwvct.org.



Parent Tips

By Cindy Springer

- Be consistent.
- Follow through—don't threaten without following through with the consequence.
- Provide rewards for good behavior, not just punishments when the child is misbehaving.
- For a child with a short attention span, limit the number of toys that the child has access to at one time so that s/he can focus longer on a single activity.
- Model behavior that you want your child to follow.

(Continued from page 5...)

ble by the Connecticut Birth to Three System. The Connecticut Birth to Three System then works with the child's school district and family as the child's third birthday approaches to support the school district's process of determining whether a child may be eligible for special education at age three.

There may be parents who opt not to be referred to the Connecticut Birth to Three System and who request an evaluation from their school district to determine if their child will require special education at age three. In such cases the school district will need to pursue identification, location, and evaluation activities for children under age three for the purpose of determining whether a child will be eligible for special education at age three. Since special education should be available and provided to eligible children by their third birthday, evaluation activities should be taking place in anticipation of that IDEA expectation before the child's third birthday.

The ultimate goal is to ensure that eligible children are located, identified, evaluated, and if eligible, receiving their individualized special education and related services by age three.

References and Resources

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Selected Internet Resources

The following websites may provide you with information, ideas and resources. The websites listed here are not endorsed or warranted in any way by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System, Birth to Three or the State Department of Education. Websites should be used with caution as there is no control over the posting of incorrect material on the Internet.

- http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.
 usf.edu/index.html. The Center
 for Evidence-Based Practice:
 Young Children with
 Challenging Behavior is a center
 funded by the U.S. Department
 of Education, Office of Special
 Education Programs to raise the
 awareness and implementation of
 positive, evidence-based practices
 and to build an enhanced and
 more accessible database to support those practices. Interesting
 case studies are found on this
 website.
- http://www.challengingbehavior. com/. This site includes many different resources including excerpts from the book Challenging Behavior in Young Children, and information about upcoming workshops.
- http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/ gateway/cativa.htm. Gateway to World Resources for Enhancing Mental Health in Schools. This site includes information on asso-

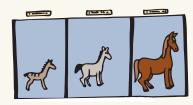
- ciations and government agencies, and links to electronic newsletters.
- http://csefel.uiuc.edu/. The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning is a national center focused on strengthening the capacity of child care and Head Start programs to improve the social and emotional outcomes of young children. See 'what works briefs' and 'practical ideas.' This site is easy to navigate and has articles in Spanish and English.
- http://gucchd.georgetown.edu/ topics/mental_health/index.html. The Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development site addresses the mental health needs of children, youth and their families at the policy, research, training/consultation, and direct service levels.

Conference:

Addressing Challenging Behavior sponsored by National Training **Institute on Effective Practices Supporting Young Children's Social Emotional Development** May 4-7, 2005, at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort, Clearwater, Florida. The conference will have the latest information on addressing challenging behavior and is designed for teachers, administrators, childcare providers, parents, behavior specialists and early intervention specialists. For more information please see the website: http://www.addressingchallenging behavior.org.



Training Calendar



Contact the Special Education Resource Center (SERC) at www.ctserc.org or at 860-632-1485 for information on this event:

LRE and Due Process: Implications of IDEA as Related to Preschool Age Children, Birth to Five

Rutheford Turnbull, J.D., LL.M. May 6, 2005

Radisson, Cromwell

Contact the Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC) at 800-445-2722 or *cpac@cpacinc.org* for more information on the following conference:

Moving Through Life Changes June 3 & 4, 2005 Farmington Marriott Hotel

UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM 1376 Storrs Road, Unit 4036 Storrs, CT 06269-4036

Tips for Teaching Social Skills and Preventing Problem Behavior

By Mary Louise Hemmeter and Rob Corso, University of Illinois

Intensive Individualized Interventions Intervención

Intervención individualizada intensiva

Social and Emotional Teaching Strategies

Estrategias de instrucción sociales y emocionales

Creating Supportive EnvironmentsCreación de entornos de apoyo

Positive Relationships with Children, Families, and Colleagues Relaciones positivas con los niños, las familias y los colegas

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