

Kinder House Day Care Staff-Child Interactions Policy and Procedures

At Kinder House Day Care, **interaction** refers to the ways in which Staff (adults who are in the classroom and work with the children daily, for a substantial portion of the day) relates to the children. These interactions will be expressed in a positive and warm manner through physical contact and other non-verbal communication, such as gestures, the kinds of touch Staff use when holding or meeting the children's needs, the focus of attention, or facial expressions. Positive interactions will also be expressed through verbal communication that occurs between Staff and children.

Kinder House has neither a directive nor an "anything-goes" atmosphere. Instead, Kinder House promotes a **supportive climate** in which adults and children are partners throughout the day. This is important as it carries the message of being happy, content, relaxed, patient, respectful, and interested, helping the children feel more valuable, competent, appreciated and loved.

Research on the importance of adult-child interaction. Research indicates that the way adults interact with children plays a very important role in children's learning and development. These studies demonstrate that in classrooms where teachers are responsive, guiding, and nurturing, children take more initiative and are more likely to be actively involved and persistent in their work (*HighScope Educational Research Foundation, 2011*).

Interaction strategies that promote active learning. Some of the most important adult-child interaction strategies practiced in the Kinder House Day Care Program are listed in detail below.

- ❖ **Adults are responsive to and involved with the children.** This means that Staff pay attention to the children's interests, activities, needs, concerns, or requests and provide them with what is needed. Children need adults to interact with them for many

reasons - for example, they may need someone to help them, to share in what they are doing, or to provide affection, comfort, or information. Staff can meet the children's needs for interaction either verbally or non-verbally using active listening skills (at the child's level), warm gestures and affection. Responding in a **warm, supportive manner** means that the Staff answers the children's needs in a way that is satisfying to the child. Such response, as mentioned in the Policy above, helps children to have good feelings about themselves - they feel safe, competent and valuable. A warm, supportive response shows that the Staff share the children's interests, consider the children's needs to be important, and act to meet them. For example:

- Answering a child's question
- Listening to a child when she/he wants to say something
- Comforting a child who is hurt or crying
- Paying attention when a child shows what he/she has created
- Showing concern and following through when a child says he/she is feeling sick
- Ending a group activity when it is clear that children are not interested
- Intervening when children fight and cooperating with them to solve the problem
- Providing what children need when they are tired, hungry, or need to use the toilet
- Helping a child deal with fears, anger, or disappointment
- Comforting a child who is upset or embarrassed
- Giving a child physical affection when needed

❖ **Adults offer children comfort and contact.** Staff pay close attention for children who may need reassurance or support and are quick to offer a hand to hold, a lap to curl up in or just their calm presence nearby. Appropriate physical contact is always pleasant and not intrusive to the child. Such contact can be identified by watching the child's response - if the contact is perceived as being positive, the child will not pull away or show a facial expression of dislike or discomfort. Some examples of

warm, appropriate contact is when a teacher enthusiastically hugs or cuddles with a child, or less obvious actions such as smoothing hair, touching a hand or shoulder, sitting close enough to touch, holding hands, or gently touching while guiding or controlling a child. Such touches let children know the teacher is present and supportive. It is important for Staff to ensure that the amount of positive attention they provide is **evenly** divided among **all** children, with no one child receiving more or less attention than another.

❖ **Adults show respect for children.** Staff will interact with all the children in a way that lets them know they are valuable human beings. Staff will treat children with no less politeness and concern than they would give to their own friends. Staff will also treat children as they themselves would prefer to be treated by others. For example:

- Respond to children's feelings in a way that shows acceptance
- Consider children's ideas
- Use polite words and actions with children
- Guide, rather than "boss" children
- Share with the children
- Show patience and support
- Appreciate each child for who he/she is, without comparing to others or emphasizing the negative

It is very important that Staff model respect for the children by treating all people, both adults and children, as if they were good friends. They are polite and acceptant, solve disagreements without anger, do not discriminate or show prejudice in any way, and always make an attempt to give attention and consideration to the point of view of others.

❖ **Adults will respond sympathetically to children.** Staff will pay attention to and validate a child's feelings, even if the child is showing emotions that are often considered unacceptable, such as anger or whining. Often, when a child's feelings are validated through a sympathetic response by Staff, the problem a child is

having is vastly reduced, and the problem can be solved more easily than if the staff responded with anger or impatience. A negative response by Staff only lets the child know that he/she is not understood and that no one cares.

- ❖ **Adults participate in children's play.** Staff will look for natural openings in children's play and then join the child or children at their physical level. Once near a child who is playing, adults often imitate what the child is doing. This shows the child that his/her activities are valued and supported by the adult. At children's invitation, adults often play as partners with children. Adults may suggest new ideas to challenge children within an ongoing play situation, but in so doing adults continue to follow children's cues and stay within the play theme the children have chosen.
- ❖ **Adults converse as partners with children.** Staff will look for opportunities for open-ended conversations with children about the activities children are engaged in. Open-ended questions asked sparingly and responsively, out of genuine interest for what the children are doing, give children the opportunity to take the lead in these conversations. It is important to make comments that allow the conversation to continue without pressuring the child for a response. Avoid quizzing on facts or concepts, and avoid making judgmental comments. Make only objective, specific comments that encourage children to expand their descriptive language and think about what they are doing.
- ❖ **Adults encourage children's problem solving.** Whenever possible, Staff encourages problem solving skills by demonstrating active listening, asking questions and offering choices, if needed. Problem solving strategies help to reduce conflicts and also help to develop self-control and a sense of responsibility and recognition of the needs of other children.