

**Section:** Family and Children's  
**Subject:** Foster Care – Discipline  
**Title: Discipline of Foster Children**

- I. **PURPOSE:** Discipline of a child must be thought of as a method for teaching and educating the child as well as a method of helping the child to learn self control. Discipline is less effective when it is the result of parental frustration or issued as punishment for bad behavior. There are several aspects of discipline which are crucial to it's effectiveness:
- 1.) The **timing** of the discipline in relation to the action(s) of the child.
  - 2.) Consequences should be for a defined **period of time**.
  - 3.) **Consistency** with which discipline is applied.
  - 4.) **Logical consequences**, discipline and inappropriate behavior are linked when possible.
  - 5.) An **explanation** is given to the child for the discipline.
  - 6.) If possible **involve** the child in setting the consequences.

Since the agency cannot know the entire background of every child or the discipline methods used by birth parents, with every child, special caution must be exercised in the choice of discipline and methods used by foster parents. Many children in foster care have experienced cruel or extreme punishments. The use of an inappropriate method of discipline can be emotionally damaging to a child.

- II. **APPLICABILITY:** This policy applies to all La Crosse County foster homes and La Crosse County respite/foster care homes.
- III. **DEFINITIONS:** Corporal punishment: any method of punishment which involves physical contact and the infliction of pain upon another.
- IV. **POLICY/PROCEDURE:** The following guidelines are per Wisconsin Administrative Code, HFS 56.09(5) (a – i) and La Crosse County agency policy:
- 1.) Disciplinary action taken by a foster parent or other person serving as a substitute care provider, in the absence of a foster parent, shall be aimed at encouraging foster children to understand appropriate social behavior.
  - 2.) The type of discipline imposed shall be appropriate to the child's age and comprehension.
  - 3.) Corporal punishment of foster children is prohibited, and includes but is not limited to hitting, slapping, spanking, pinching, shaking, kicking, biting and hair pulling.
  - 4.) A foster child shall not be forced to ingest unpleasant items or have things put in their mouth as part of a punishment.
  - 5.) A foster child shall not be subject to verbal abuse, profanity, derogatory remarks about the child or his/her family or to threats to expel the child from the foster home.
  - 6.) A licensee may not permit another child or any other person not responsible for providing care to discipline a foster child.
  - 7.) A foster child shall not be punished by being deprived of meals, mail, or family visits.

- 8.) A foster child shall not be punished or ridiculed for bed-wetting or lapses in toilet training.
- 9.) A foster child shall not be punished by being confined in a closet or locked room.
- 10.) If a child is restricted to an unlocked room or area of the home the following guidelines shall be followed:
  - a.) The foster child shall be within hearing distance of the responsible caretaker.
  - b.) The foster child shall be allowed use of the toilet if necessary.
  - c.) Foster children under the age of 6 may only be restricted for 10 minutes for any episode of misbehavior.
  - d.) Foster children ages 6 to 10 may only be restricted for 30 minutes for any episode of misbehavior.
  - e.) Foster children over the age of 10 may be restricted for up to 60 minutes for any episode of misbehavior.
- 11) No foster child may be mechanically restrained or locked in any enclosure, room, closet or other part of the house or elsewhere on the premises for any reason.

**V. METHOD OF REVIEW:** This policy shall be reviewed annually in August.

EFFECTIVE: 2/1/01

REVISED: 8/31/2007

APPROVED: KEITH KELLER 8/31/2007

REVISED APRIL 2008