

## Discipline Agreement

As foster parents, your role is to meet the physical, developmental and emotional needs of children in your care. Any form of corporal punishment could further harm children, particularly those who have a history of trauma. Discuss any ideas for discipline with the Department of Social Services/ Family Services Specialist and/or team to ensure the disciplinary actions are acceptable techniques that are supportive of the youth expressing themselves in more appropriate and safe ways.

Virginia Department of Social Services' regulation 22 VAC 40-211 prohibits the use of corporal punishment as defined below:

"Corporal punishment" means punishment administered through the intentional infliction of pain or discomfort to the body through actions such as, but not limited to, (i) striking, or hitting with any part of the body or with an implement; (ii) pinching, pulling, or shaking; or (iii) any similar action that normally inflicts pain or discomfort.

This prohibition of corporal punishment is in effect whether it is a spontaneous or deliberate technique for effecting behavioral change or part of a behavior management program.

***Initial each below statement to indicate your acknowledgement and agreement:***

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I understand that behaviors are a form of communication and that undesirable behaviors as communication are common for children with a history of trauma and are usually indications of an unmet need.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ The impact of trauma can equate to atypical development and/ or exhibiting of behaviors for self-preservation and survival. Thus, caregivers utilizing discipline that incorporate violence or other methods of corporal punishment will perpetuate and contribute to trauma rather than assist children and youth in addressing problematic behaviors.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I understand that each child in care is a unique individual who has experienced a multitude of challenging circumstances and who will react and respond in the best way they know how. Thus, I understand that they will need unique care and specific discipline.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I agree to confer with the children's therapist/ team to discuss child specific appropriate and trauma informed discipline techniques that promote long-term behavioral success and well-being.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I agree to seek ongoing support and additional trauma-responsive discipline training, particularly when current practices and techniques are not yielding desired outcomes.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I understand that caring for children and youth, particularly those who have experienced trauma, will likely be challenging and it is necessary for me to create a plan for when I am feeling escalated. (i.e. modeling calm by deep breathing or stepping away for a moment to create space, utilizing a natural support and/or calling upon the support of a partner, neighbor, friend, or professional support.)

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I understand that, as a foster parent, it is my duty to teach and redirect children with kindness and understanding. I will teach each child by using discipline techniques that emphasize praise and encouragement.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I will set clear expectations, limits, and consequences for behavior.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_/ I will not give permission to others to use corporal punishment with children who are placed in my care.

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Additional prohibited discipline and corporal punishment techniques are not limited to those listed below:

- Physical force or threat of physical force inflicted in any manner upon the child including: spanking, pinching, slapping, shaking, biting, striking with inanimate objects, washing mouth out with soap/hot sauce, rough handling, use of cruel, severe or unusual punishment
- Use of humiliation or fear (including verbal abuse and making derogatory remarks about the child or their family)
- Yelling, screaming, or threats of physical punishment
- Verbal abuse, including derogatory or racial remarks about the child or their family
- Denial of necessities (food, water, clothing, shelter, bathroom privileges, etc.)
- Threatening with removal from home or reports to the child's family services specialist
- Denial of contact or visits with family otherwise allowed by DSS
- Disciplining a child for a medical or psychological problem over which they have no control (e.g. bed-wetting, stuttering, etc.)
- Assigning excessive chores which interfere with time for schoolwork, meals and sleep or which physically endanger the child, or assignments of extremely strenuous exercise or work
- Head shaving for the purpose to dehumanize or degrade
- Serving foster children meals which are not as nutritionally adequate as those served to other family members
- Requiring children to be isolated from other family members when eating
- Use of and/or threatened use of chemical and/or mechanical restraining devices
- Delegating or permitting punishment of a child by another child
- Use of a cold shower as punishment

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and understand the above statements. I agree to refrain from using or threatening to use corporal punishment or any other practices deemed inappropriate by \_\_\_\_\_ Department of Social Services as a means of disciplining children who have been placed in my care.

Foster Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Family Services Specialist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_