

Practice Guideline



June 2017

Supporting Positive Interactions with Children

Registered early childhood educators make the well-being, learning and care of children their foremost responsibility. They value the rights of children and create learning environments where all children can experience a sense of belonging and inclusion.

Ethic A, Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, 2017

Registered early childhood educators understand that strong, positive relationships contribute to healthy child development and are necessary for children's well-being and learning. Building and maintaining caring and responsive relationships with children, families and colleagues is fundamental to the practice of RECEs.

Standard I: A, Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, 2017

Introduction: Rethinking Behaviour Guidance

Today, a reframing of the definition of behaviour guidance is required—one that views responsive relationships as paramount and one that understands that supporting children's internal capacity to self-regulate and engage in positive interactions is the goal. As co-learners, collaborators, keen observers and intentional communicators, registered early childhood educators (RECEs) support positive interactions with children rather than manage or direct behaviour.

The College of Early Childhood Educators has developed this practice guideline to help RECEs understand their ethical and professional responsibility to support positive interactions with children. This guideline highlights how RECEs can better support positive interactions with children through:

- Nurturing responsive relationships
- Forming positive perspectives
- Promoting the development of self-regulation
- Developing strategies
- Reflecting on professional practice.

This guideline also provides links to research on topics such as brain development and self-regulation, encourages discussion with colleagues and provides a short list of relevant legislation and additional resources.

It is essential that RECEs continue to access current research and incorporate this information into how they engage with children. Standard IV: C.1 of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* highlights this expectation: RECEs review and access current research and transfer this knowledge into evidence-informed practice.

About this Publication

Practice guidelines communicate certain expectations of registered early childhood educators (RECEs) as outlined in the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. Guidelines also highlight how those expectations may be applied in practice. They include recommended practices and provide opportunities for self-reflection and professional learning. The Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, current research and related legislation should be consulted when considering practice guidelines. Practice guidelines support the College's role to promote high standards, continuous professional learning and govern the conduct of RECEs.

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 Visit college-ecce.ca/practiceguideline to access all the resources and videos in this guideline.

Responsive Relationships

“Fostering good relationships with children and their families is the single most important priority for educators in early years programs. A significant body of research indicates that positive, caring and respectful relationships are the foundation for optimal learning, development, health, and well-being.”

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

Developing responsive relationships is a daily focus for RECEs working directly with children and families and it is an essential building block for supporting positive interactions.

Standard I: B.2 of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* confirms this commitment, stating that “early childhood educators are knowledgeable about a range of strategies that support ongoing positive interactions with children and families.”

Building relationships takes time, flexibility and a willingness to stop, listen and be present in the moment. All too often developing responsive and authentic relationships with children takes a backseat to routines, transitions and programming expectations.

Dr. Jean Clinton (2014a) clarifies the value of relationships: “What responsive, nurturing [and] positive relationships mean [is] that you’re focusing, as a *priority*, on the quality of your interactions.”

Reflect on the video *Brain Development: Quality of Interactions* as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s resource *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children*.

In this video, Dr. Clinton requests that educators shift their focus away from activities to be present, available and engage fully with children as the moment may require. She also highlights the importance of attending and responding to children immediately when they are showing they are in need of a supportive adult.

Consider the words of Dr. Chaya Kulkarni, Director of Infant Mental Health Promotion at the *Hospital for Sick Children* in Toronto, ON, who says that:

“RECEs must create responsive relationships, as unresponsive relationships can derail a child’s development.”

(personal communication February 1, 2016)



Positive Perspectives

When RECEs prioritize quality relationships and interactions, it results in a positive view of the child, family and early childhood educator.

Children

“Children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential...”

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

While many RECEs already view children as competent and capable, this positive perspective needs to take center stage. This view contributes to the development of authentic relationships and positive interactions with children and families. It helps RECEs support children’s ability to self-regulate. A positive view of children allows RECEs to plan curriculum based on meaningful interactions, interests and emerging skills rather than designing curriculum and interactions that may narrowly support developmental goals.

If RECEs respect and value children’s abilities, they are more inclined to:

- Create opportunities for children to learn through play, based on their interests and what challenges them.
- Encourage meaningful and positive interactions with other children.
- Support children in developing internally motivated strategies for regulating their emotions and behaviour.

Reflect on the video *Brain Development: Impact of our view of the child* as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s resource *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children*.

In this video, Dr. Clinton (2014b) talks about how we are moving to “a relational-based educational system.” She highlights the importance of the educator mindset—allowing children to take the lead and follow their interests—in order for increased learning and the experiences of joy to take place.

Visit college-ece.ca/practiceguideline to access all the resources and videos in this guideline.

“Families are composed of individuals who are competent and capable, curious and rich in experience. They are the first and most powerful influence on children’s learning, development, health, and well-being...”

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

Families

The first relationship in children’s lives is with their families. Building strong relationships with families takes commitment and reflection. RECEs must consider the ways that families uniquely contribute to the learning environment. Collaborating and co-learning with families supports RECEs in fostering positive interactions with children and allows for meaningful connections to be made between the home and the early learning environment. When families are provided with the opportunity to share information about their children, such as their temperament, interests or the challenges they face, RECEs deepen their relationships with children and strengthen their strategies to support positive interactions and self-regulation.

Reflect on your interactions with families.

- What do you routinely do to involve families in your program?
- How can you strengthen your relationship with families?
- What have you learned from families?
- How does the information you have learned from families support your interactions with children?



Educators

“Educators are competent and capable, curious and rich in experience. They are knowledgeable, caring, reflective, and resourceful professionals...”

How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years

Educators must also reflect on the importance of their own role in a child’s life. RECEs bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience and are ready to support the development of children. RECEs are skilled communicators who model problem-solving strategies and co-regulate alongside children. When RECEs see themselves as competent, capable and resourceful professionals, they feel empowered and confident. With a positive, professional self-image, RECEs are better able to support positive interactions with children.



Reflect on how you view yourself as an RECE.

- What are your strengths as a professional?
- What are your areas for growth?
- What coping strategies do you use for managing personal and professional stress?
- What resources can help you develop and support positive interactions with children?

Responsive relationships and positive perspectives of the child, family and educator directly contribute to healthy brain development in children. Consider the research that links quality relationships with child development.

Dr. Kulkarni says that “relationships drive brain architecture.” Reflect on the research that concludes healthy brain development relies on the quality of relationships in a child’s life.

Review the Resource Library from the Centre on the Developing Child from Harvard University.

Visit college-ecce.ca/practiceguideline to access all the resources and videos in this guideline.

Supporting Self-Regulation

“In simplest terms, self-regulation refers to how efficiently and effectively a child deals with a stressor and then recovers.”

(Shanker, 2013)

Research shows there are many definitions of self-regulation. In this guideline self-regulation refers to stressors, the brain-body responses to stressors and then recovery from stressors. Susan Hopkins, Executive Director of the MEHRIT Centre, describes it as “what lies beneath a child’s capacity to self-manage, self-monitor, sustain and switch attention or delay gratification.” (personal communication January 1, 2016)

RECEs must promote the development of self-regulation in children through positive interactions. Positive interactions are more likely to occur when educators first understand what is happening when a child is under stress and exhibits challenging behaviour. Helping children cope and recover from stress allows them to learn how to manage stress and challenging moments in the future.

Through warm and caring relationships, RECEs can help children cope and recover from stress in a variety of daily situations (Marion, 2015). Standard I: C.4 of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* reminds educators of this expectation, stating that RECEs “support children in developing coping skills, regulating their behaviour and interacting positively with others. They recognize all children’s capacity to self-regulate and their right to be supported to develop these skills.”

Review and reflect on the four videos from the series *Self-Regulation* as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s resource *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children*.

In the videos, Dr. Stuart Shanker (2014) explains self-regulation, domains of stress and the impact of stress on children. The videos also address children’s self-awareness of their stress and the role of supportive environments in reducing stress.



Dr. Shanker and his team at the MEHRIT Centre provide informative and supportive resources for RECEs seeking a better understanding of the science behind self-regulation defined in this guideline.

Review the resource that highlights a five-step method RECEs could use in order to support self-regulation:

1. Read the signs of stress and reframe the behaviour
2. Recognize the stressors
3. Reduce the stress
4. Reflect
5. Respond

(Society for Safe and Caring Schools and Communities and The MEHRIT Centre, 2015)

Supporting children's natural ability and motivation to self-regulate is important when developing strategies to support positive interactions. When RECEs interpret misbehaviour as a child who is struggling, they can recognize and reduce the stressors. They can also help children become self-aware and begin to regulate.

Challenging behaviours give rise to teachable moments for both educators and children. Identifying how to support self-regulation in children is a learning process for RECEs. Developing the skills to cope and recover from stress and build resiliency is an ongoing learning process for children.

Educators should reflect on the resources provided in this practice guideline as well as the research available in the wider community to inform their decision-making.

Reflect on how you support children's growing ability to self-regulate in your daily interactions.

- How can you move from managing behaviour to supporting positive interactions by encouraging self-regulation?
- In what ways do children respond to the emotional and social demands of the day?
- Have children's responses to stressors changed over time?
- What can you do to reduce the stressors?
- How do you communicate your expectations?
- How could your response to children in distress become more caring, supportive and allow children to recover more quickly from stress?

Visit college-ecce.ca/practiceguideline to access all the resources and videos in this guideline.

Positive Interactions: Reflecting on Strategies

Challenging behaviours inevitably arise when working with children. Nonetheless, the majority of interactions can be positive despite the challenging moments. Responsive relationships are especially important when challenges occur.

RECEs who adopt a “caring dialogue” with children and families are well positioned to support children in their ability to self-regulate and anticipate and respond to challenges and conflicts.

(Blaxall, 2015)

RECEs can consider a variety of strategies for coping with challenging behaviours depending on the context. Standard II: C.4 from the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* reinforces the *expectation of RECEs* to “respond to the uniqueness of individuals and groups of children. They identify appropriate strategies, access the necessary resources and design curriculum to ensure full participation of all children, taking into account ability, cultural and linguistic diversity and Indigenous identity. They provide all children with opportunities for engagement, exploration and expression.”

Consider:

- The resources provided throughout this guideline.
- Current evidence-based research.
- Workplace policies and procedures.
- Your education and training.
- Local or virtual communities of practice on the topic.
- Seeking support from your colleagues, supervisors, pedagogical leaders or community resource persons.

All strategies must be intentionally and thoughtfully developed. They evolve and change based on the context, age or developmental needs of children. RECEs must be ready to approach challenging behaviours consistently and make sure they meet the needs of individual children. Some children may need additional supports and RECEs must anticipate and respond appropriately to all children.

Strategies can be indirect, for example by focusing on how children are grouped together or by creating sensory experiences in the learning environment. Other strategies can be more direct and require educators to ignore certain behaviours, actively listen to children expressing themselves or intervene with words.

You are not alone! Educators require a support system when developing strategies. RECEs need to communicate and collaborate with families, colleagues and community resource persons in order to develop helpful strategies for their professional practice.



The Learning Environment

It is important that RECEs “design and modify indoor and outdoor learning environments to support children’s self-regulation, independence, reasonable risk-taking, meaningful exploration and positive interactions” (Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice, Standard III: C.6).

The following tips and reflection questions highlight strategies to support positive interactions through the learning environment:

- Create a welcoming and inviting environment, keeping in mind that the environment is the “third teacher.”
(*How Does Learning Happen?*, 2014)
- Reflect on the social atmosphere such as individual temperaments, sensitivities and personalities as well as group dynamics.
- Consider stimuli in the learning environment such as sound levels, visuals and the number of adults and children in the space that may or may not contribute to the efforts of children and staff to self-regulate.
- Review the indoor room set-up and how it contributes to children’s well-being and behaviour:
 - What areas draw children in and which ones do not attract children?
 - Is there a quiet place available for children to have their own space?
 - Are there too many large, open spaces? Is there too much furniture?
- Consider how outdoor spaces contribute to children’s well-being and behaviour:
 - What does the outdoor environment offer?
 - What daily opportunities are there to explore the natural world?
 - What daily opportunities are there for children to take reasonable risks?
 - How are the children challenged?
- Reflect on play materials and how they contribute to children’s well-being and behaviour:
 - Is there diversity in materials (e.g. natural, sensory, blocks etc.)?
 - What are the opportunities for choices to be made?
 - How are the materials open-ended?
 - How do the materials support a range of interests, temperaments and group dynamics?
 - How do the materials support problem-solving, inspire curiosity and require turn-taking?
- Reflect on Standard III: C.8 from the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* that reminds you to “consider how the environments affect children through daily care routines and transitions including meal times and snacks, personal care, sleep or rest time.”
 - How can you rethink transitional spaces to reduce challenges?
 - How have you communicated expectations during transitions?
 - What can you do to better support and empower children to help themselves and others to communicate their needs?

Visit college-ece.ca to read the College’s article “Gabaagang gives children a space of their own” for an example of the value of creating a quiet space for children.

“An observant and sensitive educator can often pick up on a child’s nonverbal cues and intervene before behavioural messages are sent. In these situations the goal is to help children communicate intentionally rather than behaviourally what they are feeling and what they need. It will be effective if the educator listens and responds in a helpful way.”

(Blaxall, 2015)

Anticipate and Prevent Challenges

The following tips and questions encourage educators to reflect on their role in anticipating and preventing challenges, an important strategy to support positive interactions.

- Reflect on how observant you are of children during play (e.g. non-verbal cues, group dynamics.)
- How physically and emotionally available are you to the children?
- How well do you actively listen to children by giving them time and space to express themselves?
- When you engage in play with children, how do you ensure you have face-to-face interactions:
 - Are you a play partner?
 - Do you know when to intentionally remove yourself from play or an interaction?
 - What do you do or say to steer a challenging moment into a more positive interaction between children?
- Consider the ways in which you help prepare children for the next activity and reflect on how you can individualize your expectations.
- Reflect on children’s interactions, emerging friendships and how they problem-solve and seek adult support. What can you do to encourage their hard work?



Direct Intervention

The following tips and reflection questions encourage educators to consider on how to directly intervene when challenges arise.

- Be consistent and use clear, developmentally appropriate language when setting limits and boundaries.
- Be flexible and prepared to change your strategies, interventions and problem-solving approaches in order to meet the needs of individuals and group dynamics.
- Are there behaviours and situations worth ignoring? Reflect on strategies for re-directing and distracting children when appropriate.
- Model positive emotional expression by acknowledging and labelling your own emotions
- Always maintain a positive view of each child when deciding your response:
 - What is the child showing you they need in order to return to a state of calm? Do they need a hug, a quiet space or natural and logical consequences?
 - How can you support children to cope, solve problems and return to a state of calm? Show children you believe in them.
 - Reflect on whether you use the words “good,” “bad” or “nice” throughout your day? What do these words communicate to children? What words are useful?
- Model problem-solving strategies.
- Look beyond challenging behaviour, observe potential causes and stressors and react warmly and supportively to a child who is in a state of dysregulation.
- Acknowledge and positively reinforce children’s hard work in a meaningful way and be specific when describing actions and reactions.
- Seek support and advice from colleagues, supervisors or community resource persons.

Reflect on the video *Brain Development: Connecting vs. Directing* as part of the Ontario Ministry of Education’s resource *Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from research about young children*.

In this video, Dr. Clinton (2014c) reinforces the idea that challenges with behaviour are reduced when educators connect with children first, rather than direct behaviour.

* Visit college-ece.ca/practiceguideline to access all the videos in this guideline.

Scenarios for Reflection

RECEs must reflect on the many internal and external factors that contribute to how they respond to children's behaviour. Strategies for intervening and supporting children's ability to self-regulate are often informed by many competing interests. RECEs make decisions on how to respond to children's behaviour based on factors including:

- **Professional experiences and education**
- **Employer policies**
- **Family requests**
- **Workplace cultures and conditions**
- **Personal and cultural beliefs or practices**
- **Personal coping strategies.**

The following scenarios present common, challenging moments for educators working directly with children. Consider how the RECEs respond to the children and think about the reasons why they may have decided on particular strategies. Reflect on what you would do or perhaps have done in similar situations.

Snack Time

Miya, an RECE working with infants, arrives to work frazzled and pre-occupied. Her personal life is affecting her mood despite her efforts to switch gears and take a moment alone in the staff room. After taking a few deep breaths, Miya enters the child care room and smiles warmly at the children and families arriving for the day.

She is immediately pulled aside by a parent who tells her that their child, Arianna (16 months old), has not eaten anything that morning and must have a full snack before starting the day. Miya assures the parent that she intends to offer a snack to Arianna right away.

Soon after the parent leaves, Miya begins snack time for three of the older infants including Arianna. “Snack time Arianna! Come find your seat!” says Miya in a warm voice. Arianna smiles at Miya and joins the small table with two other children. Miya places several bite-sized pieces of banana in front of the children while she prepares their cereal. Arianna happily eats her banana slices but refuses the cereal bowl and spoon and pushes them aside.

“Eat up Arianna. Your mama wants you to eat your snack,” says Miya. Arianna says, “All done! All done!” as she pushes the cereal away and points and signs for more bananas. Miya responds, “No Arianna. No bananas until you eat your cereal.” Arianna repeats that she is all done and pushes her chair away from the table.

Miya stops the chair and tells Arianna that she must eat and that she will help her with her spoon. Arianna continues to refuse by using her words and body to communicate. Miya firmly says, “Eat your cereal Arianna!” The exchange between Miya and Arianna continues for several minutes as Arianna becomes increasingly upset.

Finally, Miya stands up and says loudly, “Fine!” and allows Arianna to leave the snack table, crying and seeking comfort from another educator, Gustave, who just walked into the room.

Reflection Questions

- What were the external factors that led Miya to use this strategy to ensure Arianna ate her snack?
- What role did Miya’s ability to regulate her own emotions/behaviour play?
- What role did the desire to fulfill the parent’s request play?
- How could this interaction affect Arianna’s development and well-being?
- How could Miya’s decision-making be guided by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*?
- What could she have done differently?
- What resources could support Miya in developing strategies in the future?

Biting Incident

Hannah, a recent graduate and RECE, just secured a permanent position in a toddler room at a child care centre. Hannah is relieved to find out that she will be working with an experienced RECE, Cathy, and she is hoping she will learn from Cathy and the other staff at the centre. Hannah is also eager to work with toddlers and begin putting into practice what she learned as a student.

After a supportive and welcoming first week, Hannah notices that one child in her group is attempting to bite several of the children during indoor play. Hannah works hard to observe the child, notice the triggers and redirect the child to another activity before a biting incident takes place. Despite her hard work, Hannah misses an opportunity to intervene and the child bites another child. Hannah is devastated and feels that she has failed.

Cathy discusses the incident with the supervisor and is concerned that Hannah is not up to the task of supporting a group of busy toddlers. They decide to tell Hannah to ensure that the child who bites does not, in any way, come close to the child who was bitten. Hannah struggles with this request. First, she finds it impractical and impossible to ensure a wide space between the children at all times. Second, she feels that this is not the best strategy for preventing further incidents. Nevertheless, Hannah does what she is told, worried about her job and what Cathy and the supervisor think.

Hannah begins to feel nervous every time the children play remotely close to one another and begins to raise her voice and rush to the scene every time the biting child nears any other child. After several weeks of this, one afternoon the child bites another child just as Hannah begins to raise her voice and wave her arms.

Hannah is at a loss. This is not what she learned to do in school. She tries to explain to Cathy and the supervisor that she had done her best all week to keep the children apart and that yelling and maintaining large distances between the children isn't working. Cathy tells her, "No, Hannah, you didn't do it properly. You were not firm enough and now that child is a biter. My nephew was a biter and it took months to stop him. Yelling, separating him and taking his toys away in the end was the only thing that worked."

Reflection Questions

- What role does Hannah's limited experience play?
- How do Cathy and the supervisor affect Hannah's decision-making?
- Cathy and the supervisor's strategy did not work to stop the biting. Do you think Hannah wasn't firm enough? How would you have approached this situation?
- How would you have handled Cathy's personal life example of how to support a child who is biting?
- How could this interaction affect the children's development and well-being? What supportive strategies are being ignored in this example?
- How could Hannah or Cathy's decision-making be guided by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*?
- What resources could support Hannah in developing strategies in the future? How could she collaborate with her room partner and supervisor?

Cubby Time

Leah is an RECE working in a kindergarten classroom. Leah and her teaching partner, Ms. Ho, have 25 children in their classroom.

During large group circle time on Thursday morning, Carson, a four-year-old child, speaks loudly to his friend next to him. Carson ignores Ms. Ho's requests to wait for his turn to speak and continues to talk to his friend. He turns his back to the teacher and begins to pull out some Lego blocks that are tucked away at the edge of the carpet. Carson begins building with the blocks and continues to tell his friend about his weekend in a loud voice, disrupting the group time and interrupting Ms. Ho.

After several verbal instructions to stop talking, Ms. Ho signals to Leah that she would like help addressing the challenge. Leah moves close to Carson and says, "Up!" while pointing her finger to the hall. The children in the group all look up. Carson looks up at the group with a confused expression on his face. He follows Leah, with his head turned down, out of the room.

Leah says, "Sit in your cubby, Carson, and think about your behaviour. This is the third time this week." Carson sits in his coat cubby just outside the classroom while the class continues with group time. Leah returns to the circle.

Several minutes later the group circle is finished. Leah tells Carson he can come back to the classroom after he apologizes to Ms. Ho. As he approaches Ms. Ho, he sees Leah writing his name on the chalk board for the third time this week. Carson begins to cry. Leah walks over to Carson and gives him a hug and says, "This is the rule Carson, stop talking during circle."

Reflection Questions

- Consider the teaching partnership and the classroom environment. What were the factors impacting Leah and her responses to Carson?
- Do you think these strategies work in preventing and avoid challenging behaviour in the future? Why or why not?
- How could Leah have supported Carson in his ability to regulate his behaviour during group time?
- How could this interaction affect Carson's development and well-being?
- How could Leah's decision-making be guided by the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*?
- What resources could support Leah in developing strategies in the future?

Related Legislation

RECEs must be aware of the legislation that communicates both positive and unacceptable practices when they are interacting with children. Standard IV: B.1 of the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice* states that RECEs “are knowledgeable about current legislation, policies and procedures that are relevant to their professional practice and to the care and education of children.”

Requirements for all RECEs

All RECEs have a duty to report to a Children’s Aid Society suspicions of harm and the risk of harm to a child under the *Child and Family Services Act, 1990**. This requirement includes reporting child abuse perpetrated by colleagues or other professionals. The College’s *Professional Advisory: Duty to Report* highlights all of the responsibilities of RECEs under this legislation.

RECEs should be aware that certain unacceptable practices are outlined in the *Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice*. Standard V: C.2 states “RECEs do not use their professional position to coerce, improperly influence, harass, abuse or exploit a child who is under their professional supervision, the child’s family or a supervisee.” The unacceptable practices reflected in this standard are also included in Section 2(3) of the Ontario Regulation 223/08: Professional Misconduct under the *Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007*.

Consider and discuss with colleagues the following examples of interactions that violate the standards of the profession or may be considered to be acts of professional misconduct by the College.

- Intimidating or threatening a child with the intention of redirecting behaviour.
- Forcefully grabbing, moving, picking up or dropping a child in order to ensure a child moves or assumes a seated position.
- Refusing to attend to a child who has soiled themselves with the goal to develop self-help skills.
- Restraining a child with clothing or tape in order to transition from one activity to the next (i.e. during nap time, meal times, indoor-outdoor play, etc.).
- Singling out, isolating or shaming a child in front of others in order to ensure a child’s challenging or inappropriate behaviour is visible to all.

* and any amended or successor legislation.

Licensed Child Care Settings

This section highlights areas of related legislation that RECEs who work in licensed child care settings must follow.

Under Section 46 of the General Regulation 137/15 of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, RECEs employed in licensed child care programs must follow a program statement that is consistent with the Ministry of Education’s policy statement on programming and pedagogy (*How Does Learning Happen?*) and reflects “a view of children as being competent, capable, curious and rich in potential.” The program statement must also “have goals and approaches to support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff” as well as “encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate.”

Supervisors of licensed child care centres and home child care agencies must adhere to Section 48* of the General Regulation 137/15 of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and ensure the following prohibited practices do not occur:

- “corporal punishment of the child;
- physical restraint of the child such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;
- locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee’s emergency management policies and procedures;
- depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding; or
- inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.”

All legislative and regulatory requirements are subject to change. RECEs are expected to know and follow all current requirements.

Moving Forward in Practice

While working with children is a meaningful and fulfilling profession, it can also be very challenging. Little about the work remains the same day-in and day-out, year-in and year-out. Research evolves, recommended practices shift, groups of children change, working conditions alter and personal and professional experiences continue to inform practice.

What does remain constant is the commitment from RECEs to place the well-being of children first. RECEs continue to make children a priority by supporting positive interactions. Fostering responsive relationships, encouraging self-regulation in children and developing strategies are the building blocks to supporting these positive interactions.

As reflective professionals committed to ongoing learning, RECEs take the time to think about their practice and their interactions with children.

Moving forward, RECEs should ask themselves the following questions and talk with colleagues:

- In what ways are your relationships with children and families warm and caring?
- What do you know about child development and self-regulation?
- How do you interact with children and support them during challenging moments?
- How can you work toward anticipating and preventing challenging moments?
- How can you strive to make your direct interventions meaningful and supportive of children's ability to self-regulate?
- If you need help supporting positive interactions, where can you look and who can you turn to? ■



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Resources

- Canadian Self-Regulation Initiative.
<http://www.self-regulation.ca/>
- Centre on the Developing Child (Harvard). Resource Library.
<http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources>
- Child and Family Services Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. C.11. <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90c11?search=child+family+services+act>
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- The Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development.
<http://child-encyclopedia.com/>
- The Psychology Foundation of Canada.
<https://psychologyfoundation.org/Public/Programs/Public/Programs/Programs.aspx?hkey=9170d3b5-74af-4444-8248-de054170ded0>



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