**Discipline and Guidance Policy**

At International Montessori House of Children we believe working with children's challenging behavior as an integral aspect of our job. The word *discipline* has, as its root meaning, "instruction" or "training." This meaning, rather than punishment, is the foundation for our approach to guiding children's behavior. We accept that young children will sometimes display their emotions or try to achieve their goals in unproductive or immature ways. That is simply part of being very young. Much of children's most valuable learning, especially in a group setting, occurs in the course of behavioral problem solving. The approaches we use vary by age group, but have the following elements in common:

* **Teachers model positive behavior.** We show that we can accept, control and express feelings in direct and non-aggressive ways; we let children know that we are not afraid of their intense emotions and will not punish, threaten or withdraw from them.
* **Teachers design the physical environment to minimize conflict.** We provide multiples of toys and materials for groups of children, define classroom and outdoor areas clearly to allow for both active and quiet play, and strive to maintain an appropriately calm level of stimulation.
* **Teachers maintain age-appropriate expectations for children's behavior.** We attempt to minimize unreasonable waiting and transition times, and limit the length of large group and teacher-directed activity times according to children's developmental levels. We give children large blocks of uninterrupted time during which to make their own activity choices.
* **Teachers closely observe and supervise children's activities and interactions.** With our high ratios of adults to children and our emphasis on attentive observation, we can often intervene to guide children before situations escalate.
* **Teachers help children verbalize their feelings, frustrations and concerns.** The staff will help children describe problems, generate possible solutions, and think through logical consequences of their actions. Even toddler enrollees will hear their caregivers describing actions, problems, solutions and logical consequences. The adult role is to be a helper in positive problem solving.  *We want children to value cooperation and teamwork. We help them to learn peaceful approaches to interacting.*
* **Children whose behavior endangers others will be supervised away from other children.** This is not the same as the practice of using a "time out" (the traditional chair in the corner) for a child. An adult will help the child move away from a group situation. The child will then process the problem verbally with the staff member and any other concerned parties. An adult will stay close to any child who is emotionally out of control and needs private time to regain composure.
* **Discipline, i.e., guidance, will always be positive, productive and immediate when behavior is inappropriate.** *No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, or subjected to physical punishment or verbal or physical abuse by any staff member, student, or volunteer.* Every member of IMHoC staff understands and follows our disciplinary approach as well as the standards on guidance and management in our Texas State Licensing Regulations. We work intensively with our student caregivers so that they also understand and employ this guidance approach.
* **When a pattern of behavior persists that endangers self, others or property, or significantly disrupts the program, we will work with a child's family to find solutions, up to and including referral for outside services or exclusion from school program.**

**My signature verifies I have read and received a copy of this discipline and guidance policy**

Parent Name

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Child / Children’s name(s)

Parent Signature and Date