

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency
Family Licensing Division



Agency Policy on Discipline and Corporal (Physical) Punishment

Child and Family Services Agency is mandated by law (D.C. Law 2-22- Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act of 1977) to report child abuse and neglect. According to this law, an abused child is “a child under eighteen (18) years of age whose parent, guardian or custodian inflicts or fails to make reasonable efforts to prevent the infliction of physical, mental, and/or sexual abuse or molestation.” Corporal punishment means the inflicting of pain or discomfort. Prohibited actions include, but are not limited to, hitting with any part of the body or with an instrument, pinching, pulling, shaking, binding a child, forcing him/her to assume an uncomfortable position, or locking him/her in a room or closet. “Emotional neglect is a significant impairment of the child’s emotional ability to function adequately and which is caused by action or inaction of person(s) responsible for his/her care.”

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

In addition to being mandated by law, Child and Family Services Agency believes that children who have been abused (physically and sexually) and neglected, must not be subjected to corporal (physical) punishment or emotional neglect in foster or adoptive homes. Therefore, the following policy is in effect:

1. Foster parents, adoptive parents, members of their families, volunteers and other substitute caretakers (who are approved by the foster or adoptive parents and agency) **may not** use corporal (physical) punishment as a disciplinary method.
2. Foster parents, adoptive parents (and others as noted above) **may not** use emotional neglect or verbal abuse as a disciplinary method.
3. Foster and adoptive parents **may not** give others permission to use corporal punishment toward any child under the supervision of the agency’s care or responsibility.
4. All instances of corporal punishment or emotional neglect must be reported to Child and Family Services Agency and the Local Social Services agency/Police department where the foster family resides.
5. Child and Family Services Agency staff is prepared to partner with foster/adoptive parents in developing appropriate methods for discipline of the foster children in their care.

6. The Child and Family Services Agency supports the judicious use of alternatives to corporal (physical) punishment such as:
- a. Be a Role Model
 - b. Provide the Child with Time Out
 - c. Provide Positive Reinforcers and Privileges
 - d. Take away Privileges
 - e. Ignore the Behavior
 - f. Provide Natural and Logical Consequences
 - g. Ensure that Restitution Occurs
 - h. Hold Family Meetings
 - i. Develop Behavioral Charts
 - j. Use Grandma's Rule or This for That
 - k. Help the Child Understand Feelings
 - l. Replace Negative Time with Positive Time
 - m. Provide Alternatives for Destructive Acting-Out Behaviors
 - n. Make a Plan for Change with the Child
 - o. Make a Plan for Change with the Child and a Professional

The Child and Family Services Agency Social Worker will provide additional guidance on the important role of disciplining foster/adoptive children upon request.

I have read and understand the above policy and agree to abide by it.

_____ Signature	_____ Title	_____ Date
_____ Signature	_____ Title	_____ Date