



Title	Interactions with Children Policy & Procedure
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Owner	General Manager
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VERSION CONTROL

Version No.	Date	Comment	Author
1	07/2004	Developed to ensure clear guidelines in relation to the interactions with children.	Manager
2	11/2014	Reviewed and reformatted by ACS CoM for consistency	ACS CoM
3	04/2015	Added attachment that deals with biting (from previous policy) and updated first aid response to a biting incident	General Manager
4	05/2016	Added paragraph on page 7 about ACS Code of Conduct	General Manager

Policy

Scope

The Policy and Procedure applies to all Alpine Children's Services (ACS) staff, Family Day Care Educators, parents/guardians, children, volunteers, students and contractors involved with the service.

Policy Statement

Objectives/Principals

ACS is committed to maintaining the dignity and rights of each child at the service and encouraging children to express themselves and their opinions, and to undertake experiences that:

- develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- considering the health, safety and wellbeing of each child, and providing a safe, secure and welcoming environment in which they can develop and learn
- maintaining a duty of care towards all children at the service
- considering the diversity of individual children at the service, including family and cultural values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child
- building collaborative relationships with families to improve learning and development outcomes for children
- encouraging positive, respectful and warm relationships between children and educators/staff at the service
- positive communications between staff and families

Procedure

The General Manager is responsible for:

- developing and implementing this policy in consultation with the Team Leader, Educational Leader, educators, staff and parents/guardians, and ensuring that it reflects the philosophy, beliefs and values of the service ensuring all stakeholders comply with its requirements
- ensuring the Educational Leader, educators and all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and interactions when working with children and families
- informing the Department of Education and Training DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a notifiable complaint

The Team Leader is responsible for:

- ensuring the effect on supervision to allow educators to monitor children's play with ease is considered prior to the implantation to any changes to the environment (e.g. outdoor play place)
- ensuring children are adequately supervised and that educator-to-child ratios are maintained at all times
- ensuring the size and composition of groups is considered to ensure all children are provided with the best opportunities for quality interactions and relationships with each other and with adults at the service. Smaller group sizes are considered optimal
- promoting collaborative relationships between children/families and educators, staff and other professionals, to improve the quality of children's education and care experiences
- referring notifiable complaints grievances or complaints that are unable to be resolved appropriately and in a timely manner to the General Manager
- informing DET, in writing, within 24 hours of a serious incident and providing these details to the General Manager
- ensuring that where the service has been notified of a court order prohibiting an adult from contacting an enrolled child, such contact does not occur while the child is on the service premises
- ensuring educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- developing links with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required
- maintaining confidentiality at all times

The Educational Leader is responsible for:

- implementing this policy at the service
- ensuring educators, staff and parents/guardians have access to a copy of this policy and comply with its requirements
- ensuring all staff are aware of the service's expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families
- developing and implementing educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
- ensuring the educational program contributes to the development of children who have a strong sense of wellbeing and identity, and are connected, confident, involved and effective learners and communicators
- ensuring that educators provide education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- ensuring documentation of the assessment and evaluation of each child's:
 - developmental needs, interests, experiences and program participation
 - progress against the outcomes of the educational program
- organising appropriate training for educators/staff to assist with the implementation of this policy
- informing the General Manager of any notifiable complaints / grievances or serious incidents at the service
- ensuring educators and staff use positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- ensuring that individual behaviour guidance plans (refer to Attachment One) are developed for children with challenging behaviour, in consultation with educators, parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies
- co-operating with other services and/or professionals to support children and their families, where required maintaining confidentiality at all times

Educators are responsible for:

- assisting with the development and implementation of this policy
- complying with the requirements of this policy
- being aware of service expectations regarding positive, respectful and appropriate behaviour, and acceptable responses and reactions when working with children and families
- providing adequate supervision of children at all times
- communicating and working collaboratively with families in relation to their
 - child's learning, development, interactions, behaviour and relationships
 - delivering educational programs, in accordance with an approved learning framework, that are based on the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child, and take into account the individual differences of each child
- delivering programs that develop a sense of wellbeing and identity, connection to community, and provide skills for lifelong learning in all children
- providing education and care to children in a way that:
 - encourages children to express themselves and their opinions
 - allows children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
 - maintains the dignity and the rights of each child at all times
 - offers positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
 - has regard to the cultural and family values, age, and the physical and intellectual development and abilities of each child being educated and cared for
- developing warm, responsive and trusting relationships with children that promote a sense of security, confidence and inclusion
- supporting each child to develop responsive relationships, and to work and learn in collaboration with others
- using positive and respectful strategies to assist children to manage their own behaviour, and to respond appropriately to conflict and the behaviour of others
- developing individual behaviour guidance plans for children with challenging behaviour, in consultation with parents/guardians and families, and other professionals and support agencies (refer to Attachment One)
- documenting assessments and evaluations for each child to inform the educational program
- being aware that it is an offence to subject a child to any form of corporal punishment, or any discipline that is unreasonable or excessive in the circumstances
- maintaining confidentiality at all times

- informing the General Manager of any notifiable complaints / grievances or serious incidents the service

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- complying with this policy
- engaging in open communication with educators about their child
- informing educators/staff of events or incidents that may impact on their child's behaviour at the service (e.g. moving house, relationship issues, and a new sibling)
- informing educators/staff of any concerns regarding their child's behaviour or the impact of other children's behaviour
- working collaboratively with educators/staff and other professionals/support agencies to develop or review an individual behaviour guidance plan for their child, where appropriate

ACS has a Code of Conduct that outlines the standards of behaviour expected of all ACS employees, contractors, staff on exchange, volunteers and student placements. Our Code of Conduct aims to ensure that all ACS staff act professionally and reliably when interacting with families and with each other.

To ensure our staff, families and children feel respected and safe at all times, ACS also has expectations of the standards of the behaviour of families when they are within our service; these include acting respectfully and safely. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Aggressive or abusive behaviour such as threatening gestures or actual violence or assault
- Verbal abuse (for example, yelling, screaming, abusive or offensive language)
- Being under the influence of illicit drugs or impaired by alcohol
- Bullying, harassment or intimidation
- If a family member breaches these standards of behaviour they will be asked to leave the premises. If the family member refuses to leave the premises, ACS may contact the Victoria Police for support.

Attachment One: Developing a Behaviour Guidance Plan

A behaviour guidance plan is an example of how a service and its stakeholders observe, plan, implement, evaluate and document strategies that reflect when a child is non-compliant to the established limits of play and interactions. For example, swearing; hitting, smacking, or kicking other children or adults; or potentially causing harm to themselves.

These plans should:

- be based on evidence that the displayed behaviour is inappropriate;
- be observed and documented over a period of time that suggests a pattern is emerging;
- include inappropriate behaviours that occur consistently;
- include inappropriate behaviours that occur with consistent triggers;
- identify that the behaviour could possibly harm another child or adult;
- define the context within which the behaviour occurs; and
- reflect a collaborative approach with the child's family.

Services may decide to define those behaviours that are not acceptable. This may determine when a behaviour guidance plan is required if there are additional factors, such as the frequency of the behaviour and the age of the child.

It is important for services to identify the context of the behaviour. For example, if a child is displaying signs of tiredness at lunch, and then begins to hit other children, it may be that the inappropriate behaviour does not require a behaviour guidance plan. Staff/educators may consider preparing the child's lunch earlier than normally scheduled, which may possibly minimise the risk of the child hitting others.

A caring relationship with an adult, who can provide the learning and emotional support required, is pivotal to dealing with a child's challenging behavior. Challenging behaviour is best managed through a collaborative strategy developed between service staff and parents/guardians.

Excluding a child from the service should only be as a last resort. This decision should be made as part of the collaborative guidance of a child's behaviour, and based on a joint decision by the parents/guardians and family, and the General Manager, Team Leader, Educational Leader, educators and other professionals involved in the education and care of the child.

Step 1 Observe

Observe children exhibiting challenging behaviour, including in the broader context of their environment, the culture of the service, and the interactions of the whole group and other educators working with the child

Identify, based on observations, whether there is a need to develop an individual behaviour guidance plan for the child

Step 2 Discuss

Invite parents/guardians to a meeting to discuss:

- the ongoing behaviour displayed by the child, including highlighting improvements and celebrating successes

- their aspirations, as well as the service's aspirations, for the child
- the child's individual characteristics, including interests, temperament, age and cultural background
- recommended strategies to support the child's development, and how these strategies will be reviewed and evaluated
- resources or changes to the environment/program that may be required for a behaviour guidance plan to be implemented e.g. changes to routines and transitions
- the support already accessed by the family to assist with managing the child's behaviour
- other support available, such as a Preschool Field Officer, referral for specialist assessment and additional adult support (written consent is required from parents/guardians before any intervention/assessment is undertaken)
- any other matter that will assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan

Step 3 Consult

If appropriate, and with the permission of parents/guardians, consult with other support agencies or service providers who are already working with the child, to assist with the development of a behaviour guidance plan.

Step 4 Develop

Develop an individual behaviour guidance plan, based on consultation with the child's parents/guardians and other support agencies, that is:

- appropriate to the needs of the child and accepted/agreed to by parents/guardians and other professionals involved in the education and care of that child
- clear and easy to follow for all educators, staff, parents/guardians and/or volunteers/students working with the child

Step 5 Monitor and review

- Continually review, reflect, evaluate and revise the strategies that have been implemented
- Communicate with the parents/guardians regarding the child's progress and involve them in evaluating and revising the strategies

Roles and responsibilities

The following are the roles and responsibilities of the various individuals working with the child at the service.

The **Team Leader** is responsible for:

- ensuring that there is a behaviour guidance plan developed for a child if educators are concerned that the child's behaviour may put the child themselves, other children, educators/staff and/or others at risk
- ensuring that parents/guardians and other professionals (as appropriate) are consulted if an individual behaviour guidance plan has not resolved the challenging behaviour
- consulting with, and seeking advice from, DET if a suitable and mutually agreeable behaviour guidance plan cannot be developed
- ensuring that they are notified if a complaint is received about a child's interactions or behaviour e.g. when the safety of other children is in question
- ensuring that, if a complaint is received, every attempt is made to resolve the issue by consultation and investigation as soon as possible
- ensuring that additional resources are sourced, if required, to implement a behaviour guidance plan
- ensuring that educators/staff at the service are provided with appropriate training to guide the actions and responses of a child/children with challenging behaviour

The **Educational Leader** is responsible for:

- developing the behaviour guidance plan in consultation with the educators and the parents/guardian of the child, and other professionals and services as appropriate
- consulting educators for their professional evaluation of the situation, and drawing on their expertise in relation to developing strategies and identifying resources required
- meeting with the parents/guardians of the child concerned to develop and implement a behaviour guidance plan
- supporting educators by assessing skills and identifying additional training needs in the area of behaviour guidance
- investigating the availability of extra assistance, financial support or training, by contacting the regional Preschool Field Officer, specialist children's services officers from DET or other agencies working with the child setting clear timelines for review and evaluation of the behaviour guidance plan

Educators are responsible for:

- observing children's challenging behaviour and identifying the need to develop a behaviour guidance plan to support a child in self-managing their own behaviour
- assisting the Educational Leader to develop a behaviour guidance plan in consultation with parents/guardian and other professionals as appropriate
- implementing a behaviour guidance plan and incorporating identified strategies and resources into the service program

- undertaking relevant training that will enable them to guide children who exhibit challenging behaviour maintaining ongoing communication and consultation with parents/guardians
- providing regular progress reports to the General Manager, Team Leader and Educational Leader on the implementation and effectiveness of the agreed strategies contained in an individual behaviour guidance plan
- maintaining the confidentiality of information provided by parents/guardians unless written consent is provided to disclose information to relevant parties
- providing their observations, professional evaluation and expertise in reviewing individual behaviour guidance plans
- providing other information, as relevant, to the General Manager, Team Leader and Educational Leader to assist with the resolution of any issues

Attachment Two: Dealing with Biting Procedure

Educators need to recognise that at times some children, for a variety of reasons, attempt to bite other children. There are four main causes of biting:

1. Experimental biting. Most often infants who are exploring the world and putting everything in their mouth.
 2. Biting from frustration. Occurs when children get into situations they can't handle and have not yet learnt other ways to cope.
 3. Biting because of feeling powerless.
 4. Biting under stress. Most often occurs when a child is under emotional stress that she/he cannot handle.
- Educators recognise that a human bite that breaks the skin brings great risk of infection to the victim. Parents are strongly requested to keep their children's immunisation up to date.
 - Where a bite does occur staff will follow the Biting Flowchart on final page of this document.
 - Staff will inform parents as soon as possible. The parents are then responsible for any follow-up medical attention.
 - If the biter is known to be a carrier of an infectious disease and the victim's skin is broken, the Team Leader will convey this information to the parents and recommend to seek medical advice
 - Educators will develop a behaviour guidance plan in conjunction with parents for "repeat offenders"
 - If necessary, the General Manager reserves the right to exclude the "biter" from attending the centre while the General Manager, parents and staff develop a procedure to prevent further occurrence, consulting outside agencies if needed.

What to do when biting occurs

1. Respond Immediately

Infants may not yet understand the difference between biting a toy and biting a person, so a repeated message in an honest tone of voice that conveys pain (saying "Ouch, that hurt me, Joey!") can help teach infants aged 4 months and older not to bite others.

Literature strongly suggests that educators and parents not bite the child back as a punishment or to show the child how it feels to be bitten. Biting back communicates to the child that violence is acceptable. Experts recommend focussing attention on the victim, shielding the victim from the biter, initiating first aid measures as necessary, and consoling the victim. Biters who are older than two may benefit from assisting in the first aid process. The biter can assist the victim by demonstrating "gentle touching", having the biter rub the victim's arm, and generally assisting with taking care of the victim to teach nurturing behaviour.

Other experts recommend that biters should be removed from the situation without dramatic movements, attention or an emotional response that could provide negative reinforcement to the biter. Educators can tell the biter that "biting is not OK," "I can't let you hurt your friends," etc. Toddlers may not understand time-out, but educators need to make sure that

the biter is not near other children until he or she has calmed down and can be redirected to other activities.

2. Stress communication skills

Emphasis should be placed on teaching biters to develop and use their expressive communication skills instead of biting, so they can learn to “use words” to express their feelings. Good educators consistently promote the child’s use of language to enhance cognitive development, and some experts believe that promoting children’s language development is also helpful to reduce biting behaviours. For example, if another child is taking a toy away from a child who has a history of biting, educators can teach the potential biter to say “stop,” “mine,” etc., and tell the child “We don’t bite people, we bite food” or “It hurts when you bite”.

It is also suggested that using positive language to tell the child to “touch gently” rather than “don’t hit/bite” can be helpful. They also suggest that educators can help children verbalize their feelings by saying “You look angry, Peter. Tell Amy to stop pulling, you don’t like that.” Educators and parents should try to be specific with their language. Instead of saying “Stop being mean to Peter,” for example, they can say “Peter is angry because you are taking his truck.” Experts also recommend consistently teaching the child to say “no” to other children rather than biting.

Examine context

Experts recommend that efforts be made to examine the pattern of biting incidents to determine if factors such as crowding, over-stimulation, lack of toys, lack of attention or supervision, or other factors seem to precede biting episodes. Educators need to be adept at observing the child’s physical state and noticing whether factors such as new teeth or other kinds of pain on a given day seem to be associated with increased biting episodes. Educators might think about whether children bite when their bowels are irregular, when they are hungry, or when they are sleepy. Some experts believe that emotions and stress inducers such as a new baby in the house may also be associated with an increase in biting episodes for individual children.

Create positive physical and learning environments

If caregivers determine that a child is biting more than once a day for more than a week, experts suggest that it is probably time to develop a plan to decrease the biting. They recommend attempting to break the cycle by varying activities and the child’s schedule. It may help to break up the density of the toddlers in the room to enhance program quality (one group goes outside, another stays in the room, etc.). Experts suggest tracking these changes so that there is a written record that can help to determine the context of the biting incidents and to show the results of interventions.

Attempting to maintain a consistent routine, developing and maintaining rituals, and finding effective ways of calming children after energetic activity or during transition times (using calming music, relaxed/calming physical contact, etc.) may serve to relieve the conditions that lead to biting episodes. Experts also recommend avoiding grouping biters and previous victims together to the extent possible.

Educators need to examine the centre environment and try to minimize congestion and confusion, competition for toys and adult attention, frustration, and boredom. Young children do better in small groups, according to these experts, so spreading out activities and staff may help reduce undesirable behaviours.

The following strategies are suggested for educators:

- Be aware of the children's favourite toys and educational materials and duplicate these (because sharing is not always in the toddler's behavioural repertoire!).
- Provide a variety of options and motor/sensory choices (e.g., make the toys and climbing structures challenging but not so frustrating that the children become angry or bored). Adjust the schedule so that the children eat and nap when they are beginning to get hungry and tired rather than when these conditions become extreme.
- Find ways to strengthen the sense of security/stability in the environment.
- Maintain a consistent routine that minimises surprises for children.
- Ensure prime times with the child's favourite primary caregiver.
- Create warm/cosy places to be.
- Avoid unnecessary staffing changes.
- Develop/maintain group rituals.

Other environmental factors need to be considered, such as creating a balance of open and closed spaces so that the children may move about freely but also feel protected and not feel overwhelmed. They suggest that counters and shelves be low so that the children are always kept in sight. Colours should be chosen carefully so that the overall colour environment is not too stimulating. Noise-absorbing materials should be used so that the environment offers a sense of warmth and security. Materials can be open-ended so they may be used in many different ways to accommodate differing abilities (choosing blocks that can be stacked, sorted, classified, etc.)

Educate teachers and caregivers

Educators need to understand why children bite and the range of developmental issues that arise when toddlers are in group care. They should understand that very young children really are not developmentally ready to share, and that toddlers communicate physically before they are ready to use language. Because their social conscience and expressive communication skills are limited, toddlers may tend to shove, push, and bite.

Educators need to engage in positive guidance to show the children in their care how to play safely and to be considerate of others. Educators also must become adept at mediating disputes. They should anticipate problem situations and stay alert. If a particular child has difficulty in transitions, for example, the caregiver should stay close to the child and praise positive behaviour, especially for children who bite.

Educators can teach children age-appropriate ways to control themselves, which will encourage confidence and serve to guide children who bite toward self-control and away from biting. Understanding is the key to successful management of biting, for children and adults alike. Educators need to recognize that biting is as normal and natural as toileting and tantrums, yet accept their responsibility to provide and maintain a safe environment.

Plan for biting epidemics

When a rash of biting incidents occurs in a centre, the following steps are to be taken:

- The General Manager is to meet with the Team Leader, Educational Leader and Room Leader.
- Chart every occurrence and indicate location, time, participant behaviours, etc.
- Evaluate the immediate staff response to insure appropriateness (comforting bitten child and treating injury, providing a cool, firm disapproving response to the biter that does not inadvertently reinforce the behaviour).
- Determine the context of the biting incidents: analyse, chart, and profile.
- Shadow children who have a biting tendency; anticipate biting situations and teach non-biting responses, adapting the program as necessary. Staff might shadow a severe biter for 2 weeks to prevent the behaviour, because there is some evidence that if staff can prevent biting during this time period, the behaviour will dissipate.
- If necessary, briefly place young children who bite in a crib or playpen to contain the child who is engaging frequent biting, if the shadowing educator has to do something else.
- Shadow children who tend to be bitten and anticipate potential biting situations; teach children who get bitten responses that will minimize the chance of their becoming victims.
- Consider early transition to another room for children who bite frequently, because the older children are better able to defend themselves.
- Extreme biting epidemics may require extra help from a consultant, parent educator, or counsellor, especially if the behaviour occurs daily or persists.

Parent communication

Much of the literature that is focused on issues related to biting also addresses communicating with and involving parents. Most experts stress confidentiality; they recommend that teachers or directors NOT reveal the identity of the child who is biting to parents of other children. Instead, experts suggest that child caregivers assure the parents that they are aware of the problem and are working toward solutions, but that all children are capable of having problems with biting. Parents should know that biting is a normal occurrence for many children in group care situations, particularly when they are in the toddler stage. It is also recommended that parents be apprised of the possibility of biting incidents occurring in child care facilities during the initial intake process, or when infants are making the transition into the toddler room.

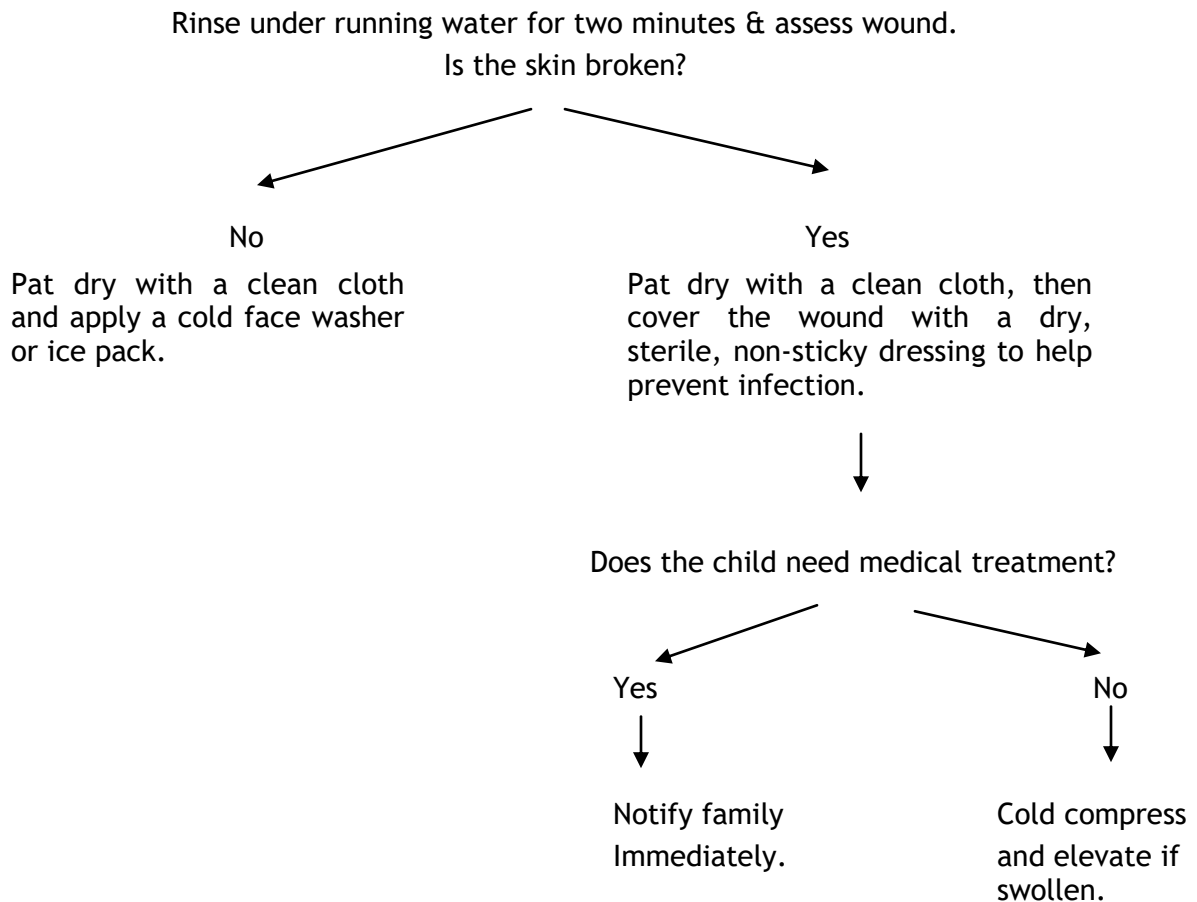
Apologising to family members is not an effective strategy, because an apology implies that there is a foolproof way to prevent the incidents. Instead, relate to the parents what is being done to insure the safety of all of the children. Focus on what first aid treatments are used when incidents occur and what else is being done for children who are bitten.

In extreme cases, termination or suspension of the biting child from a centre may become necessary. In many cases enrolment may only need to be temporarily suspended until the child improves his or her communication skills.

Educators need to try to determine whether biting is occurring at home. Breaking the biting pattern will be difficult in an early childhood centre if biting is allowed to occur at home without the same formal interventions being applied at the centre. Experts advocate teaching

parents to offer choices so that the child is given power and control at least a few times a day. Educators can keep parents informed about their child's favourite toy, what happened in the school day, etc. Overall, experts note that it is essential to maintain positive relationships with parents during biting outbreaks, to keep parents informed of the strategies being employed, to empathize with parents of both biters and victims regarding their feelings of helplessness related to the safety of their children, and to communicate to parents the staff training and intervention efforts that are occurring to remedy the problem.

Biting Flowchart



- Illness, Injury, Trauma and Accident Form signed by parents
- Behaviour Guidance Plan for repeat offenders