

SUPPORTING SAFE PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAMS

**HOW AND WHEN TO RECORD BEHAVIOUR INCIDENTS IN
POWERSCHOOL**



Land Acknowledgement



Learning Objectives

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Identify root causes of children's behaviour

Determine which incidents to report in PowerSchool

Apply best practices to recording Critical Behavioural Incidents (Serious Incidents)

Agenda

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Guide to Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours

- ▶ Review sections which specifically apply to Pre-primary settings
 - Section 1 – Important Considerations
 - Section 4 – Provincial Pre-primary Program

Lunch

Pre-primary Incident Response Matrix

- ▶ Walkthrough of the matrix structure

Scenarios & Discussions

- ▶ Case studies and small group discussion
- ▶ Group Reflection

PowerSchool

- ▶ Walkthrough recording an incident



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Provincial Pre-primary Program

Overview

This section is based on section 5.1 of the Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy. It addresses the pre-primary program and describes developmentally appropriate practices that pre-primary staff utilize to promote safe working and learning environments in early learning and childcare settings through consistent, inclusive, and evidence-informed practices and proactive strategies.

Why is Pre-primary included in the Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy & Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviours?

Important Considerations

Understanding the root causes of a child's behavior empowers educators to provide more effective, individualized support, that promotes the development of pro-social skills.



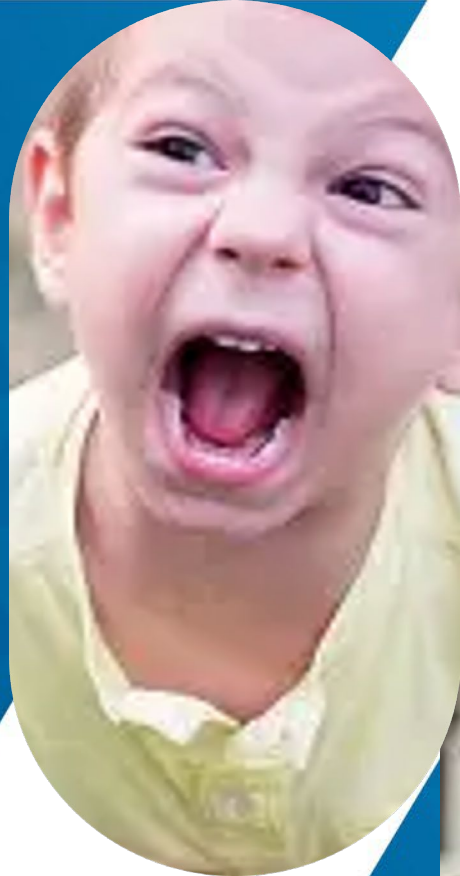
IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION #1: Understanding Trauma



Trauma-informed care means:

- **Recognizing the impact of trauma**
- **Understanding its effects on children's development**
- **Responding in ways that promote safety and connection rather than punishment or judgment.**

Children may appear defiant, aggressive, inattentive, withdrawn, or excited, but may actually be dysregulated or overwhelmed.



Reframe the behavior:

"What happened to this child?"

instead of

"What's wrong with this child?"



Intergenerational or historical trauma

- Some communities carry collective trauma from exclusion, abuse, racism, or harmful relationships with the education system.
- Behaviors or communication styles rooted in cultural identity can be misinterpreted if educators don't understand the context.



What can educators do?

- Assume positive intent before reacting.
- Pause and observe—What is the behavior trying to communicate?
- Create predictability—consistent routines build safety.
- Welcome cultural identity—incorporate diverse stories, languages, and family practices into the program.



Children don't need us to fix them - they need to be understood, supported, and feel safe in our care.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION #2: Using a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Lens

Every child brings a world of culture, language, and identity into our programs. How can we honor that richness as we guide learning, respond to behavior, and build relationships?



What is Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Practice?

It's not about knowing every culture. It's about being curious, respectful, and inclusive.

It means connecting learning to children's identities, nurturing who they are, and adjusting our practices to support their well-being and success.

Cultural Misunderstandings

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A child avoids eye contact when spoken to - do we assume they don't know their name or they're acting disrespectfully, or do we recognize that in some cultures, looking directly at adults is discouraged?

A child remains silent or doesn't say sorry, is it an act of defiance, or could it reflect a cultural value of humility and speaking only when invited?



Educator Check-in

- **Cultural Misunderstandings**
- **Perceptions of Discipline**
- **Communication Norms**
- **Implicit bias**
- **Disproportionality**





Shifting Practice

What is one thing you'll start doing this year to make your classroom more culturally and linguistically responsive?

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION #3: Age & Stage of Development

Think of a time when a child didn't listen.

Now ask yourself...

*Was that behavior age-appropriate,
even if challenging?*



Children's brains are still under construction—especially the part that helps them pause, think, and act calmly (prefrontal cortex).

- Young children don't yet have full control over impulses.
- Repeated experiences, not just rules, help wire these skills.
- The brain continues to develop well into adulthood, and key skills like decision-making are still forming throughout adolescence and beyond.



Development is shaped by culture, ability, environment, trauma, and family experience.

How might your expectations shift when you consider each child's background, not just their age?

Instead of asking,

'How do I stop this behavior?'

ask

'What is this child trying to tell me?'



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION #4: The Impact of Suspensions on Well-being

Suspensions of any length send the message:
You can't be here when you struggle.

**Suspensions of any kind are prohibited
in Pre-primary.**



Suspensions and early pickups break routines, which are vital for emotional stability.

Removal can unintentionally:

- reinforce the behavior
- increase anxiety or trauma
- break trust and damage relationships

Suspensions of any kind are prohibited in Pre-primary.





Rethinking Early Pick-ups

Is calling home about keeping families informed - or is it a way to end a hard situation quickly?"

Unplanned early pick-ups can feel like suspensions to a child.

Suspensions of any kind are prohibited in Pre-primary.

**Shift the approach from
detailed reporting to meaningful
partnership.**



IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION #5: Mental Health & Well-being

**When we see unacceptable behavior,
we often focus on what happened...**

but what if we also asked:

*What might this child's behaviour
be telling me about their emotional world?*



Early mental health isn't about diagnosis - it's about connection. Every child needs someone who sees their needs, not just their behavior.



A top-down view of a large, colorful vegetable platter. The platter is filled with various fresh vegetables: bright orange carrot sticks, white radishes with red skins sliced into rounds, green snap peas in their pods, and yellow and orange bell pepper strips. Interspersed among the vegetables are several breadsticks, some of which are topped with a white, creamy sauce and black pepper. Two small white bowls are also present: one at the top center containing a smooth, light-colored hummus, and another at the bottom center containing a similar dip. The entire platter is set against a plain white background.

Lunch Break

Pre-primary Behaviour Incident Decision Making Matrix

- Definitions
- Impact of Incidents
- Examples
- Responses

Minimal or No Impact

Definition	Impact	Examples
Episodes of dysregulation	Minimal or No impact: the incident had no impact on the health, safety, or well-being of children or educators(s), and did not interrupt program operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Refusal to comply with lower impact requests (pick up toys)Refusal to participate in play or interact with peersResponse that unintentionally hurts someone (thrown toy)Minor aggression related to a child's impulsivity (light shoving)Inability to problem-solve (biting, hitting, minor damage to materials)

Incidents with Minimal or No Impacts

Educator Responses:

- **No documentation** in PowerSchool is required
- **No formal referral** to school administrator is required
- **Build and maintain positive relationships** with children
- **Provide redirection** as needed
- **Intentionally develop and reinforce** pro-social program expectations
- **Intentionally support social skill development**, including friendship and problem-solving skills
- **Intentionally foster communication skill development**, using visuals, augmentative technology, etc.



Incidents with Minimal or No Impacts

Educator Response:

- **Intentionally support emotional literacy development**, including empathy, cooperation, co-regulation, self-regulation, and emotional awareness
- **Use predictable schedules** to support student success
- **Establish predictable and engaging routines**, including routines within routines
- **Model positive behavior**
- **Offer positive attention**, 5:1 ratio
- **Use proactive child guidance strategies** to respond effectively
- **Consult with pedagogical leaders** for additional guidance and support

Minor Impact

Definition	Impact	Examples
Behaviours that cause minor or moderate impact on the health, safety, and well-being of children and educators	Minor harm, damage, and/or interruption; and may involve one child or educator No medical attention required	Throwing an object, breaking a window Need to move children to another area of the school Can be unintentional or involve some level of intention, but is related to lack of impulse control or self-regulation skills

Minor Incidents

Educator Responses:

- **No documentation** in PowerSchool is required
- **No formal referral** to school administrator is required
- **Build and maintain positive relationships** with child
- **Provide redirection** as needed
- **Intentionally develop and reinforce** pro-social program expectations
- **Support social skill development**, including friendship and problem-solving skills
- **Foster communication skill development**, using visuals, augmentative technology, etc.
- **Support emotional literacy development**, including empathy, cooperation, co-regulation, self-regulation, and emotional awareness
- **Use predictable schedules** to support child's success
- **Establish predictable and engaging routines**, including routines within routines
- **Model positive behavior**
- **Offer positive attention** - 5:1 ratio
- **Use proactive child guidance strategies** to respond effectively
- **Consult with pedagogical leaders** for additional guidance and support

Educators will also:

- **Document incidents**

Challenging Behaviour

Definition

Are REPEATED, PERSISTENT patterns of behaviour that are unresponsive to normative behaviour guidance strategies and interfere with optimal learning and engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and educators

Impact

Moderate harm with possible need for assistance and may impact more than one person

Examples

Persistent crying during transitions

Repeatedly taking toys from other children

Repeatedly ignoring the educators' requests i.e. clean up, dress for outside, safety expectations (climbing on furniture)

Repeatedly leaving the group inside/outside

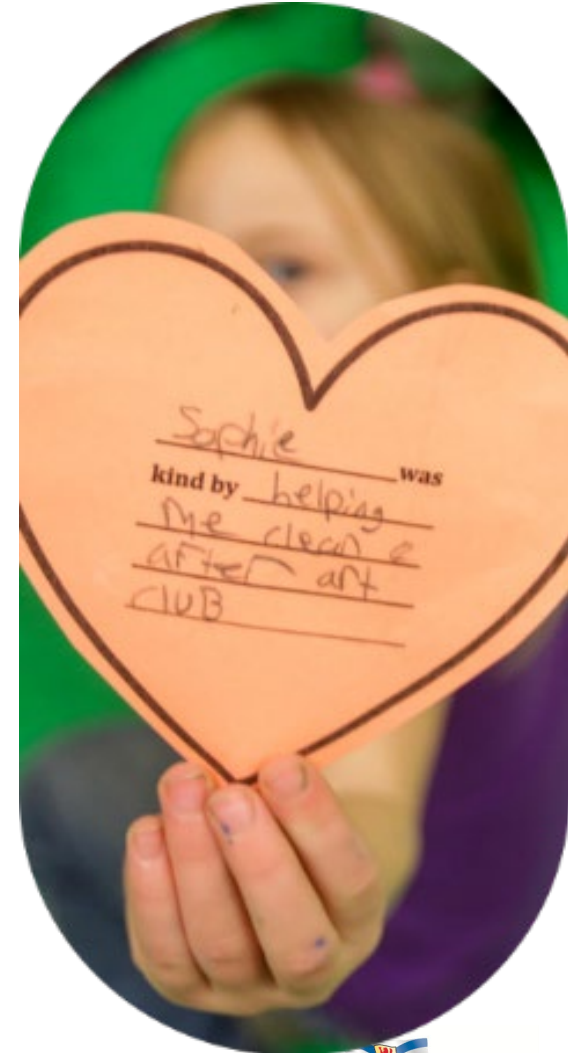
Repeatedly hitting children

Challenging Behaviours

Educator Response:

- **No documentation** in PowerSchool is required
- **No formal referral** to school administrator is required
- **Build and maintain positive relationships** with children
- **Provide redirection** as needed
- **Intentionally develop and reinforce** pro-social program expectations
- **Support social skill development**, including friendship and problem-solving skills
- **Foster communication skill development**, using visuals, augmentative technology, etc.
- **Support emotional literacy development**, including empathy, cooperation, co-regulation, self-regulation, and emotional awareness
- **Use predictable schedules** to support children's success
- **Establish predictable and engaging routines**, including routines within routines
- **Model positive behavior**
- **Offer positive attention** 5:1 ratio
- **Use proactive child guidance strategies** to respond effectively
- **Consult with pedagogical leaders** for additional guidance and support
- **Document** recurring incidents

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Challenging Behaviours

Educator Response con't:

- Complete a strengths and areas for growth analysis
- Conduct a Functional Behaviour Assessment (FBA)
- **Collaborate with the child's planning team including the family** to develop a response plan for challenging behaviours (e.g., PTR-YC)
- **Develop a Positive Behaviour Support Plan (PBSP) and/or Routine Based Plan**
- **Consult with pedagogical leaders** for additional guidance and support

Critical Behavioural Incident (Serious Incident)

Definition

Incident pose a severe risk to health and safety of children and/or educators , and/or the environment that requires medical attention.

This may be a one-time event, may be a result of challenging behaviours that are non-responsive to interventions and may impact on the whole group

Impact

Program operations are disrupted and/or causes serious harm and may impact multiple individuals.

Examples

Group is consistently relocated to another part of the school due to safety concerns

Significant destruction of property

Physical violence

Chronic running away

Serious injury requiring medical attention

Child experiencing discrimination based upon race, gender, sexuality, religion, or ability

Critical Behavioural Incidents (Serious Incidents)

Educator Response:

- **Take immediate action** to ensure the safety of all children
- **Submit a formal referral** to the school administrator
- **Document the incident** in PowerSchool
- **Maintain positive relationships** with children and families throughout the process
- **Collaborate with the child's planning team, including the family**, to develop a Positive Behaviour Support Plan, if needed.
- **Review and ensure that the principles of inclusive learning environments (ELCF)** are embedded in practice
- **Review and implement the ELCF principles**, with a focus on Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Accessibility, and Anti-racism

Using the Pre-primary Behaviour Incident Decision-making Matrix Scenarios & Discussions

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Using the Pre-primary Behaviour Incident Decision-making Matrix

Scenarios & Discussions

Activity Instructions

In your group, choose a recorder and a reporter.

Take out your group's scenario and recording template.

Read your assigned scenario and discuss in your small group.

Using the provided template:

- determine the type of incident based on the four categories
- discuss and record appropriate educator responses
- determine if there is a formal referral made to the school administrator & PP Lead
- determine if the incident is entered into PowerSchool.

Please remember to be mindful of the Important Considerations.

Scenario #1

Joseph is a spirited boy who enjoys exploring art materials and getting messy. During free play he was painting at the art easel, attempting to recreate a memory from the weekend spent with his grandparents. As he worked, he became visibly frustrated and let out a growl. He ripped his painting off the easel and crumpled it into a ball. In his rush, he accidentally knocked over several paint pots, spilling paint on the floor and onto a nearby child. The impact also caused the easel to fall over and break.



Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
Scenario #1 Minimal or No impact: incident had minimal or no impact on health, safety, or well-being of children or educators.	Trauma Cultural & Linguistic Impact Age & Stage of Development Suspension & Well-being Mental Health & Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No referral to school administrator • Build and maintain a positive relationship with children • Develop and reinforce pro-social program expectations. • Positive role modeling • Emotional literacy skill development (understanding feelings, handling disappointment, etc.) • Social skill development (friendship skills, problem-solving skills etc.) • Intentionally/Directly teach behavioural expectations • Use a 5:1 Ratio of Positive Attention 	No – it does not meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident).

Scenario #2

Muhammed and Abraham were playing on the playground. Both children were using construction vehicles and were pushing them around on the ground while running in a bent-over position. Abraham ran his dump truck into the back of Muhammed's heels, causing Muhammed to fall and land on the tractor he was pushing. In the fall, Muhammed struck his face on the tractor, resulting in a cut to his chin and caused his tooth to go through his lip. This required medical attention, including a trip to the doctor for stitches.



Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
<p>Scenario #2 Incident is an accident and not related to unacceptable behavior, therefore the Provincial School Code of Conduct Policy and Guide for Responding to Unacceptable Behaviour are not relevant in this situation.</p> <p>No documentation in PowerSchool.</p> <p>Incident is to be reported to DEECD as a Critical Behavioural Incident (Serious Incident) as it required medical attention.</p>			<p>No – it does not meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident).</p>

Scenario #3



Bradley is a child who enjoys outdoor play and likes to take a leadership role in group play. He can become easily frustrated, especially in crowded spaces and when he perceives the loss of control in play. When things don't go his way, he may express his frustration by yelling at the educators and running away. He also frequently reacts physically toward peers by pushing them, knocking over their work, or grabbing toys from them, particularly if he feels overwhelmed or provoked. Recently, during outdoor play, Bradley was waiting to use one of only two "diggers". When it was his turn, a peer who was also waiting for a turn began to cry. At the time, the classroom educator was on lunch break, and the lunch monitor, noticing the crying child, took the digger away from Bradley and gave it to them. Bradley became upset, yelled at the lunch monitor, and pushed the child to the ground. He then wrestled the digger away from his peer, pinching their fingers in the handle, and ran away from the educator and peer, holding the digger.

Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
Scenario #3 Challenging Behaviour: repeated, persistent patterns of behaviour that are unresponsive to normative behaviour guidance strategies and interfere with optimal learning and engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and educators. Lack of impulse control or self-regulation skills.	Trauma Cultural & Linguistic Impact Age & Stage of Development Suspension & Well-being Mental Health & Well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No referral to school administrator • Build and maintain a positive relationship with children • Embed principles of inclusive learning environments (ELCF) • Develop and reinforce pro-social program expectations • Redirection • Positive role modeling • Social skill development (friendship skills, problem-solving skills etc.) • Communication skill development (visuals, augmentative technology, etc.) • Compile program and child observations and documentation to support development of behaviour intervention tools • Complete a Strengths and Areas for Growth Analysis • Complete a Functional Behaviour Assessment • Meet with Child's Planning Team to establish a plan for responding to Challenging Behaviour including follow up • Create and Implement a Routine-based plan and/or a positive behaviour support plan indicating replacement behaviours and strategies for success • Monitor and track Behaviour Incidents and progress • Intentionally/Directly teach behavioural expectations • Use a 5:1 Ratio of Positive Attention 	No – it does not meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident).

Scenario #4

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Abbigail is a natural leader who enjoys playing in dramatic play. She can often be observed directing group activities and assigning roles during play. Blessing is a young child whose family has recently immigrated to Nova Scotia from Africa. She is adjusting to her new environment and has just welcomed a new baby brother into her family. During free play, Blessing asked an educator to help wrap a doll onto her back using a scarf, mimicking a baby-wearing practice from her cultural background. As Blessing began to play, Abbigail noticed her and started to laugh, pointing at Blessing. She tells her friends that Blessing is “dumb” because she doesn’t know how to carry a baby properly. Blessing became sad and asked the educator to take the doll off her back.



Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
<p>Scenario #4</p> <p>Minimal or No impact: incident had minimal or no impact on health, safety, or well-being of children or educators.</p>	<p>Trauma</p> <p>Cultural & Linguistic Impact</p> <p>Age & Stage of Development</p> <p>Suspension & Well-being</p> <p>Mental Health & Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No referral to school administrator • Build and maintain a positive relationship with children • Embed principles of inclusive learning environments (ELCF) • Develop and reinforce pro-social program expectations • Positive role modeling • Intentional social skill development (friendship skills, problem-solving skills etc.) 	<p>No – it does not meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident).</p>

Scenario #5



Scotty is an expressive child who engages enthusiastically in outdoor sensory play. She has a well-established support plan in place to assist with emotional regulation and to promote the use of safe, alternative behaviours during periods of distress. Despite ongoing implementation of this plan, Scotty continues to experience moments of significant dysregulation, some of which have involved unsafe behaviours toward peers.

During outdoor play, Scotty was in the sandpit constructing a large sandcastle with various tools and natural items. She became visibly upset when another child, who was playing nearby, accidentally splashed water near her structure. Scotty shouted at the child and, after a brief pause, picked up a plastic shovel, walked directly over, and intentionally struck the child in the face with it.

The child falls backward, crying in pain, and is immediately found to have been struck in the eye area. Educators responded quickly by removing the injured child from the sandpit and administering first aid while contacting their family for urgent medical follow-up.

Scotty remained agitated following the incident, throwing buckets and scattering sand around the play area. Educators approached using the strategies outlined in her regulation plan, offering calm verbal support and a clear, safe space for de-escalation. Initially, Scotty resisted redirection, yelling and attempting to leave the play area. With the support of two educators, she was eventually guided to a quiet space and began to settle.

Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
<p>Scenario #5</p> <p>Critical Behavioural Incident (Serious Incident): pose a severe risk to the health or safety of children and educator(s) or the environment requiring medical attention.</p>	<p>Trauma</p> <p>Cultural & Linguistic Impact</p> <p>Age & Stage of Development</p> <p>Suspension & Well-being</p> <p>Mental Health & Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to administrator • Referral to pedagogical lead • Continue to implement support plan • Team meeting to review support plan (including family) • On-going documentation • Implement PTR-YC (including family) 	<p>YES – it does meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident).</p>

Scenario #6

Kenji was engaged in focused play in the block area, working diligently to build a tall structure using unit blocks. He chose to build near the window where the carpet underneath was uneven, making the surface unstable. As a result, his block structure collapsed repeatedly despite his careful efforts. Each time the blocks fell, Kenji's frustration visibly increased. He began speaking to himself in a louder tone, furrowing his brow and gripping the blocks more tightly. He attempted to adjust the blocks several times but was unable to stabilize the structure. After several collapses, Kenji cried out in anger and forcefully flung one of the unit blocks in the air. The block struck the window, resulting in a vertical crack down the center of the glass.



Impact of Incident	Important Considerations	Suggested Responses	Formal Referral to School Administrator and Enter into PowerSchool – Y/N
<p>Scenario #6</p> <p>Minor Incidents: behaviours that cause minor or moderate impact on the health, safety and well-being of children and educators.</p>	<p>Trauma</p> <p>Cultural & Linguistic Impact</p> <p>Age & Stage of Development</p> <p>Suspension & Well-being</p> <p>Mental Health & Well-being</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No referral to school administrator • Build and maintain a positive relationship with children • Develop and reinforce pro-social program expectations • Positive role modeling • Intentional social skill development (friendship skills, problem-solving skills etc.) • Intentionally support emotional literacy development (co-regulation, self-regulation, and emotional awareness) 	<p>No – it does not meet the criteria of a critical behavioural incident (serious incident.t)</p>

How to Record an Incident in PowerSchool

[Recording Behavioural Incidents in PowerSchool Admin | Rise 360](#)

Documenting Behaviour in PowerSchool

Write with care, clarity, and professionalism. The goal is to describe what happened (the observable actions) in a factual, respectful, and objective way.

Avoid language that labels, guesses a child's intentions, or feels judgmental. These kinds of words can affect how others view the child and may get in the way of building strong, supportive relationships and restorative practices.

Describe the support or guidance that was provided



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