# Suspension & Expulsion Prevention

Our commitment to keeping children enrolled and supported

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Country Lane Early Learning is committed to including and supporting every child. We use developmentally appropriate guidance, family partnership, and individualized supports to prevent suspension or expulsion. A child will be excluded because of behavior only as a last resort when a serious safety concern cannot be resolved through reasonable support and accommodation.

## Purpose and Fair Treatment

Behavior is a form of communication. We respond to challenging behavior by considering the child's age, development, abilities, health, language, sensory needs, family context, and the circumstances surrounding the behavior. Expectations will be explained to families at enrollment and taught to children in ways they can understand.

Decisions under this policy will be individualized, consistent, and free from discrimination. Country Lane Early Learning will not suspend or expel a child based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, medical condition, family structure, language, culture, or another protected characteristic.

## Definitions and Behavioral Guidelines

Minor or developmentally expected behavior. Examples include crying, tantrums, refusal, difficulty with transitions, toileting or feeding challenges, impulsive hitting or biting, limited language, or difficulty joining group activities. These behaviors do not, by themselves, justify suspension or expulsion.

Major safety incident. A behavior that causes serious injury or creates an immediate and substantial risk of serious harm, such as severe physical aggression, dangerous use of an object, or leaving the supervised area. The response will focus first on immediate safety.

Suspension. A temporary behavior-related exclusion from care. Sending a child home early or asking the family to keep the child home because of behavior is considered a suspension.

Expulsion. A permanent behavior-related termination of enrollment or a requirement that a family find other care.

## Progressive Support and Intervention

The program will use the following steps before considering exclusion, unless an immediate safety emergency requires a temporary response:

- Ensure immediate safety, help the child regulate, and use positive, non-punitive guidance.
- Observe and document what happens before, during, and after the behavior, including patterns, triggers, frequency, duration, and strategies that help.
- Tell the parent or guardian about significant incidents promptly and discuss recurring concerns as

soon as a pattern develops.

- Meet with the family to identify the child's strengths and needs and create a written, individualized support plan. The plan will list preventive strategies, skills to teach, reasonable accommodations, responsible adults, and a review date.
- With written family consent, seek appropriate screening, evaluation, consultation, or support from early intervention, the local school district, a health professional, a behavior specialist, or another qualified resource.
- Review the plan with the family, document progress, adjust strategies, and consider whether additional accommodations or professional guidance are needed.

## Caregiver Support and Resources

Caregivers may request help from the license holder or program director at any time. Support may include coaching, observation, plan review, additional training, scheduled check-ins, help gathering materials, and temporary coverage or a short break when staffing allows. The program may also request technical assistance from Care About Childcare and, with parent permission, consult early intervention, Child Find, medical, developmental, mental health, or behavioral professionals.

## Communication and Family Partnership

Families will be contacted early, treated respectfully, and invited to help identify triggers, successful strategies, and needed supports. Communication will describe observable behavior rather than label the child. Parents or guardians will receive copies of written plans and review notes and may suggest changes or invite a support professional to participate. Written consent is required before the program shares information with or requests services from an outside professional, unless disclosure is required by law.

## Equitable and Inclusive Practices

The program will apply the same safety standards while considering each child's individual development and needs. Before exclusion is considered, the program will explore reasonable changes to routines, environment, communication, activities, supervision, and teaching strategies. When a disability is known or suspected, the family will be offered information about evaluation and support resources. A disability-related behavior will not be the sole reason for exclusion when reasonable accommodations can allow the child to participate safely.

## Temporary Suspension

Temporary suspension may be used only when a child's behavior creates an immediate and substantial risk of serious harm that cannot be reduced with the supports available at that time, or when a brief absence is necessary to put a safe return plan in place. Any suspension will be as short as possible. The family will receive the reason, the expected length, the steps being taken, and the plan for the child's return. A single major incident will be reviewed individually and does not automatically result in expulsion.

## Expulsion as a Last Resort

Expulsion will be considered only after an individualized review finds that the child continues to present

a significant safety risk, or that the child's essential needs cannot be met within the program's lawful licensed capacity, after documented supports, family partnership, reasonable accommodations, and appropriate outside resources have been tried or carefully considered. The license holder or program director makes the final decision.

The family will receive a written decision that includes:

- The specific reason for the decision and the behavior or safety concern involved.
- The supports, interventions, accommodations, and consultations attempted and their results.
- The alternatives considered and why they would not adequately address the concern.
- The effective date and reasonable advance notice whenever safety permits.
- An opportunity to discuss the decision and provide additional information for reconsideration.
- Referrals and transition assistance to help the family locate appropriate services or care.

When the child leaves, the program will help the family plan a respectful transition. With written consent, relevant support plans and records may be shared with the next provider or professional. The child's privacy and dignity will be protected throughout the process.

## Documentation and Policy Review

The program will keep confidential records of significant incidents, family communications, support plans, accommodations, referrals, reviews, suspensions, and expulsion decisions. At least annually, the license holder will review any exclusions for patterns or unequal impact and will update practices or training when needed. This policy will be shared with families at enrollment and made available upon request.