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School Policy on Biting

Biting is a natural developmental stage that many children go through. It is most common between thirteen and twenty-four months of age. Biting often occurs for a variety of reasons: frustration, teething, being overly tired, a lack of impulse control, a lack of ability to communicate effectively, and sometimes for no reason at all.

At Lakewood United Methodist Preschool, the safety of all children is our primary concern. All teachers will encourage students to “use their words” if they become angry or frustrated. All teachers will maintain close and constant supervision of the children at all times. A record of all biting incidences will be kept for the purpose of tracking, identifying possible causes, and planning a positive intervention. The intervention will never shame the child but teach the child how to get his needs met in an acceptable way.

In order to best determine causes, preventions, and involvement we will consider the following areas in each case:

- What play materials are available for the children to play with?
- Are the play materials developmentally appropriate for the children?
- Is there more than one of each kind of play material available?
- What activity is in progress?
- What is the group size?
- What is the adult to child ratio?
- Who are the adults involved when the biting occurred?
- Are the adults attentive and involved with the children?
- Where did the biting incident occur?
- Who is the biter?
- Who is being bitten?
- What is the time of day?
- Is the biter hungry or tired?
- Is the biter under stress at home?

We strongly disapprove of biting. Our teachers’ jobs are to keep children safe and help a child that bites learn different, appropriate behaviors. We do not use techniques to alarm, hurt, or frighten a child such as biting back. If a biting incident occurs at LUMP, the following steps will be taken.

- The biting will be immediately interrupted.
- Teachers will stay calm and not overreact.

- The child that was bitten will be comforted and tended to, while the biter is immediately removed from the situation.
- The wound shall be assessed and treated with proper first aid procedures.
- The parents of both children will be notified of the incident. An incident report will be completed. **The confidentiality of all children involved shall be maintained.**
- The bitten area should continue to be observed by parents and staff for signs of infection.

When biting continues:

- Closely observe and supervise children who indicate a tendency to bite:
 - Divert biting situations before they occur.
 - Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.
- Closely observe children who have a tendency to be bitten:
 - Divert biting situations.
 - Teach responses to potential biting situations: "No" or "Don't hurt me!"
- The child that is biting will be given positive attention and approval for positive behavior.
- The child that is biting will be observed by teachers and administration to determine possible causes of the biting.
- Teachers will meet with the director on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning.
- Teachers will chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, adults present, and circumstances.
- After the first incident (in a one month period), our general biting procedures will be followed including the incident report and parent conversation.
- After the second incident (in a one month period), the same procedures will be followed and teachers will meet with director to discuss what strategies are being used to prevent biting. Parents will be notified.
- After the third incident (in a one month period), parents will be asked to have a conference with director to discuss strategies being used at home. Parents will be asked to come spend a day at school to observe behavior.
- For the protection of other children, after the fourth incident in a one month period and all strategies have been used to prevent biting, the director, parents, and teachers will have a conference to discuss what steps need to occur to prevent further biting. This could include asking the parents to keep child at home for a period of time.

Our mission at Lakewood is to provide a safe, loving environment for all of our children. We recognize that all children deserve the best care we can provide, and we realize that every child's needs are different and may require us to take different steps depending on the situation. We understand that biting is incredibly painful for the child that is bitten and the family of the child that is biting. We will do our best to serve and love both families.