

THE INDIVIDUAL GUIDANCE PLAN

This document is in three Parts:

Part One: Seven Steps of Comprehensive Guidance

Part Two: Notes for Conducting IGP Meetings

Part Three: Individual Guidance Plan Worksheet

PART ONE:

SEVEN STEPS OF COMPREHENSIVE GUIDANCE

1. Observe Pattern of Mistaken Behavior

The teacher notices patterns of behavior that indicate trouble in a child's life. Any child is entitled to an occasional "Level Three day," which includes conflicts. A pattern of atypical, extreme, or inappropriate behavior for more than a few days, however, indicates serious unmet physical or emotional needs.

2. Build the relationships. A child facing life challenges needs a helping relationship with a teacher. Acknowledge the child's efforts, achievements--and frustrations. Find times outside of the conflict to get to know the child. Often "good morning time" (Quality time with the child upon arrival) is a wise investment in preventing conflicts during the day.) Also build the relationship with the family. Start as soon as each child begins the program. Better to have an established relationship with family members before serious conflicts (or accidents) occur.

3. Use Consistent Guidance Intervention Techniques

The teacher responds in firm but friendly ways to the mistaken behavior, using intervention techniques like guidance talks, conflict mediation, and crisis management methods (mainly to calm). In a teaching team classroom, one teacher may be assigned the lead with the child, to ensure predictable limits and consistent interventions.

4. Obtain Additional Information

The teacher seeks to understand the child's behavior and the child more fully. Incidents of mistaken behavior are charted against days of the week, times of the day, and the daily schedule. Strategies for gaining more information include talks

with the child, anecdotal observations, discussions with staff, and contacts with the family.

5. Hold IGP Meeting

If steps 1 to 4 do not result in noticeable reduction in the frequency and severity of conflicts, staff holds an Individual Guidance Plan meeting with family, teaching staff, and other relevant adults. The team uses the problem-solving process outlined in the Individual Guidance Plan. In developing the IGP, the team may use the forms that follow. The team involves the child in the IGP or shares the plan with the child.

6. Implement Guidance Plan

The team works together to put the IGP into operation. One necessary component of most plans is continued building of relationships of staff with the child and the family. A second is adaptation of the educational program to ensure increased opportunities for the child to experience success and decreased need for the child to fall into conflicts. Referral for assessment by special education or other helping professionals may be part of the plan. (If special education services are warranted, an I.E.P. process may supersede the IGP.) Counseling or other services also may be part of the plan.

7. Monitor Guidance Plan

Staff review the plan, communicate with parents, and make modifications as necessary. If necessary, staff holds second IGP meeting.

PART TWO: NOTES FOR CONDUCTING IGP MEETINGS

The formula for successful IGPs is always the same: Staff and parents agree on the problem, agree what needs to be done about the problem, do it, and monitor the results. Collaboration in taking a guidance-oriented, problem-solving approach is key. Sometimes, the IGP process can be handled informally, without a face-to-face meeting. Other times, there is no substitute for getting all parties together in the same room.

IGP meetings follow the same steps as conflict mediation, which the teacher uses with children in the classroom. *Before the meeting*, the staff decides who will be the team leader. The team discusses the meeting dynamics and possible outcomes, which the group together will decide. One staff member agrees to be recorder. It is agreed which staff will attend. The staff discusses the importance of a *compliment sandwich* approach by which each staff member expressing a concern also gives at least two compliments about the child's/family's effort, progress, or attitude. The compliment sandwich strategy helps to keep the IGP positive and on track.

At the meeting, five steps to follow are:

1. The leader makes everyone as comfortable as possible with greetings and assurances; lets folks know that this is a meeting where we all work together for a common goal: the good of the child; emphasizes that agreement on decisions is important; and introduces the recorder who writes down key points and decisions on a chart, which all can see. The leader establishes guidelines for the meeting such as the following:

- a. Everyone has a common purpose that will help to make the meeting positive: the good of the child.
- b. Each member of the group receives respect from all others, even when views differ.
- c. All members work to separate facts from interpretations of facts.
- d. Each member needs to be responsible for what he or she chooses to share.
- e. Each member remains open to new thoughts and ways of thinking.
- f. Decisions made at the meeting are by general agreement.

2. Assist all to agree on what the problem is. The leader provides necessary facts and interpretations and asks the others to contribute. S/he encourages

participants to separate facts from interpretations in their presentations and models this practice throughout the meeting. The recorder may write down only what is agreed to about the problem.

3. Group brainstorms all possible non-punitive responses they can think of. With the recorder's assistance the leader organizes the brainstorming around components such as (some or all) of these:

- a. In-class crisis interventions that use guidance
- b. In-class relationship-building responses
- c. In-class long-term remediation strategies
- d. In-home crisis responses using guidance
- e. In-home togetherness-building responses
- f. In-home long-term remediation strategies
- g. Referral strategies for additional assessment and remedial assistance
- h. Realistic resources needed to implement the plan

4. Group decides on a plan using the most promising strategies for any of the components addressed in #3 above. This is where negotiation, flexibility, and compromise provide the key. If the group is in disagreement about any parts of the plan, its potential for success is endangered. The recorder seeks clarification of major points and gives a written summary of the strategies agreed to.

5. Group decides the role of each member in using the plan; decides a second meeting date to monitor progress. The leader and family decide on a staff member who will be team leader on the plan. This staff person will assist the family with implementing their part of the plan, including any referral process. The team leader will also ensure continuity among staff in accomplishing the classroom goals of the plan. S/he will provide coordination between home and classroom in carrying out the plan. After setting a time and date for the follow-up meeting, the plan leader works to ensure all members can and do attend. The recorder gets a copy of the completed IGP to the plan leader and the family.

The second meeting to review and possibly modify the IGP is often conducted more informally than the main meeting. Follow-up contact after the second meeting is less formal still. A final or exit IGP meeting is sometimes held, to celebrate success or to decide what additional actions may be necessary.

PART THREE
Individual Guidance Plan Worksheet

Child's name: _____ Child's age (years and months): _____
Initial Write-up date: _____

1. Noted Behaviors

Behaviors observed: _____ Thoughts about Behaviors: _____

2. Additional Information

Check procedures used. Then summarize information gained.

- ___ Discussion with child. Date: _____
- ___ Discussion with other staff. Date: _____
- ___ Discussion with parent. Date: _____
- ___ Discussion with other professionals. Date: _____

Summary:

3. Individual Guidance Plan Meeting Date: _____
Persons attending meeting: _____

Summary of strategies to be tried:

4. Follow-up Meeting or Review Date: _____
Effort/progress shown by child: _____

Progress still needed:

Any changes in plan:

5. Summary of Results and any changes in IGP as of (first date):

6. Summary of Results and any changes in IGP as of (second date):

7. Final summary of results, exit meeting (if held), and future actions:

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