



## Time Out Alternatives

*Prepared and compiled by Child Care Aware® of North Dakota*

The preschool years are the time when children develop confidence and self-control. Positive discipline techniques that combine caring and direction are part of a healthy child care environment. "Time Out" should not be a first choice, but a last resort technique if a child is harming another child or herself.

### **How to avoid the need for time out:**

- Keep group sizes small. It is easier to help children resolve conflicts in a positive way when child-to-adult ratios are low.
- Have enough toys and materials available for each child.
- Prepare children for transitions. Let them know ahead of time that one activity is coming to a close, what the next activity will be, and what you expect from them.
- Evaluate your environment. Try not to crowd children as they play. Section off areas to protect play projects from younger children. Identify areas for quiet activities.
- Look for problem patterns. When does a child lose their temper? What ignites the inappropriate behavior? Is she tired or hungry? Analyze the situation and you may be able to intervene to avoid the inappropriate behavior.
- Take social conflicts seriously. Listen to children. Empathize equally with all children involved in a conflict.
- Be clear as you explain limits and expectations.
- Be consistent!

Time out is not a punishment. Time out is an opportunity for a child to clear her mind and rejoin the group or activity in a more productive state. Time out is not a place. There should not be a special chair or area assigned for time out – that only reinforces the idea that time out is a punishment.

### **Recommendations: Appropriate use of time out:**

- Avoid time outs for infants or toddlers. Very young children should not be ignored or left without proper stimulation
- Have realistic expectation for a child's behavior. Knowledge of child development will help you identify age appropriate behavior. Children are more apt to cope successfully with stressful situations when adults give them realistic goals.
- Consequences should immediately follow the child's behavior. Adults should offer children positive alternatives to their actions. Ask a child to help rebuild a block structure she has knocked down rather than remove her from the area.
- Use time out sparingly. Do it only when it will help the child calm down, not because you are angry.
- Time out does not last longer than it takes for the child to calm down. After the child is calm, explain clearly what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- Model appropriate behavior. Remember that children imitate adults' behavior. Screaming, hitting, or ridiculing a child for bad behavior is not an effective way to teach self-control