

# Exploring Expectations

*This Tip Sheet is a resource for Program Leaders, Managers and Directors to help your staff explore their age-based expectations for children or youth in their care.*

## First...reflect on your view on behavior



How we interpret and then respond to a child or youth's behavior is shaped by our own upbringing and culture, and our experiences in childcare. We often use the phrase, **"Viewing Drives Doing,"** to explain this.

*Consider how staff would respond to a child's behavior if:*

- Their view was that children are always in control of their response and should be punished if they behave "inappropriately."
- Their view was that children have learned how to use certain behaviors to get what they want and poor parenting is to blame for their actions?



## Then...facilitate a reflection activity with staff

*It's important that staff are on the same page when it comes to expectations for children's behavior.*

- Use the guiding questions on the following page during staff meetings or professional development to encourage staff to consider their age-based expectations.
- Have staff answer the questions on their own first and then gather into small groups for discussion. The small groups can then share out with the entire team.



*At KIT, we view behavior as communication! When we recognize there is a mismatch between an expectation and the child's skill in that moment, we can use supportive responses to help.*



## Guided Questions for Exploring Expectations

### *What should \_\_\_\_ year-olds be able to do?*

This question refers to skills and competencies such as communication skills (both verbal and nonverbal), self-feeding, fine motor skills, etc. Based on your own frame of reference, what is a reasonable expectation for this specific age?

### *How should they behave?*

This question refers to a child's behavior within the program environment: their ability to participate and follow directions, their responses and reactions to a situation or program structure, following rules, interactions with teachers, etc.

### *What should their interactions with others look like?*

This refers to their interactions with their peers; should they be able to share and play together?

### *What do they typically struggle with?*

This answer can include behaviors, skills or competencies, communication, and/or interactions.



## Finally...debrief with staff

### *Gently compare staff responses to evidence-based developmental milestones*

Do staff have developmentally appropriate expectations? Are there opportunities for staff to mentor others about expectations?

### *Ask staff to reflect on where their expectations come from (their own upbringing and culture, their education, and experience)*

Consider the child's culture, too! Could staff adjust expectations to honor other cultures and maintain safety?

### *Ask staff if they have ever had expectations that were too advanced? What was the result?*

Everyone is working at a different developmental pace. Flexibility is the name of the game.

### *Wrap up by asking if there are any expectations staff want to adjust*

Comparisons to the family's expectations might pop up here. Remind staff that families may have different priorities. The goal is collaboration without judgement.

### *Encourage ongoing reflection about expectations during coaching sessions and staff meetings*

## RESOURCES

### Web Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Developmental Milestones Charts
- Ages & Stages (HealthyChildren.org from the American Academy of Pediatrics)
- Zero to Three, Your Child's Development: Age-Based Tips From Birth to 36 Months

### Book

*Yardsticks: Child and Adolescent Development Ages 4-14*, 4th Ed by Chip Wood

