

SUPERVISION TECHNIQUES TO PREVENT AND CONTROL ACTING OUT BEHAVIOR

- AUTHORITY:** California Code of Regulations, Title 15, Sections 1356, 1357, 1390
Administrative Directive
- RESCINDS:** Procedure Manual Item 3-1-052, dated 04/20/15
- FORMS:** None
- PURPOSE:** To set forth basic philosophy for maintaining order and safety in a treatment setting and some techniques and methods for prevention and control of violent behavior.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

Staff will be guided by the following general principles:

- A. Emergency situations rarely occur; they develop. Youth should be dealt with in a manner that gives them an experience of supportive control. Often, the problem is that we are dealing with control-deprived adolescents. Violent behavior from youth in a setting such as ours is minimized by establishing helping relationships and meeting his/her needs, whether physical, social, emotional, medical, religious, recreational, and/or educational. This is accomplished by consistently setting reasonable, understanding, and clear behavior limits.
- B. There are some basic mechanics that remain constant for effective programming and attaining constructive results in maintaining order and safety. The Deputy Juvenile Correctional Officer (DJCO) and his/her attitude, approach, understanding, and management techniques ultimately determine the program. The treatment goal is a corrective emotional experience for the youth where the DJCO sets the attitudinal climate. DJCOs need to recognize their own feelings about themselves and about other staff. These feelings directly influence their effectiveness.
- C. A positive, role-modeling relationship between staff and youth, who are basically relationship starved, is the basis of a productive treatment climate. In order to accomplish this there are two primary goals of interaction between staff and youth. Both of these goals are equally important and necessary tools in guiding and teaching delinquent adolescent youth pro-social values, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs.

The first goal of staff in establishing and maintaining a positive relationship is to provide each youth with a higher percentage of positive reinforcements when they exhibit pro-social behaviors, attitudes and beliefs than they provide them with negative feedback or discipline for their antisocial behaviors, attitudes and beliefs. Research has shown that adolescents need a ratio of as much as four positive interactions with parents/guardians/other authority figures to every negative interaction. This type of positive reinforcement may be carried out

when staff give youth meaningful verbal praise and recognition, individually or in front of the group for pro-social behavior. Positive reinforcement may also be given through daily points, earned program phase privileges and other creative methods. Providing a greater percentage of positive reinforcements to negative interactions with the youth can indeed be challenging due to each youth's behavioral issues. However, providing this type of feedback will send the message to each youth that staff are not just "looking at the negative", at "what I am not doing" and will send a message that staff care for and respect the person as a whole. At times staff may find it challenging to identify any pro-social behaviors, attitudes and beliefs in a certain youth. In these cases it is possible to take negative traits, turn them around to positive characteristics and use them for positive reinforcement.

The second goal for staff is to establish and maintain a positive and respectful interaction with youth during times of correction and discipline. It is important to remember that youth (and for that matter everyone) view corrective and disciplinary interactions as a negative experience. Although challenging, it is possible for staff to correct and discipline youth in a manner that results in a positive experience for the youth, while at the same time building a trusting authoritative relationship with the youth. Giving out correction and discipline in a respectful manner is key to accomplishing this.

When a youth feels that the counselor respects him/her as a person, someone with individual worth, a more positive relationship with staff is established. The staff must be able to reject unacceptable behavior but not reject the person. Acceptance persists despite the typical impulsive, immature, antisocial "acting out" and testing of limits and patience of the adult by the youth. The youth in turn feels that the adult is someone whom he respects and can trust. Controls are then presented in a supportive, non-rejecting manner. There are demands and consequences in the group living setting, but there is no dehumanizing.

- D. The youth individually and collectively "size up" staff. Often their pool of knowledge on a feeling level is richer than that of the staff. Adolescents, especially delinquent, abused, and neglected youngsters, have very keen senses of injustice. They are able to identify injustice and hypocrisy in others much more easily than in themselves. They can tell if the adult is "for real." They respect the hardworking adult who does the full job and still finds the time to meet needs.
- E. All staff develops a "**facility** reputation." Youth, through the group process, may pass on fairly accurate personality descriptions and feeling-tone impressions of staff. Remember, every encounter that you have with an individual youth is one that is experienced by the group, either vicariously as it is witnessed or indirectly by word of mouth.
- F. Our work actually is group work, and only after groups' limits and expectations are in effect as the regular programming, can we individualize. It is only after an established, workable group culture is functioning that the counselor can cultivate meaningful relationships. The initial prevention and control of violent behavior is structured by the prevailing culture in existence.
- G. DJCOs should stress group structuring to focus on telling the youth why we work with them as a group and what the group must do so that the DJCO has time to help individuals in the unit.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Developing and Maintaining a Positive Culture in a Treatment Setting

1. External controls by staff may comprise any measure from kind and firm but fair verbal limit setting to physical restraint and removal if necessary. It should be noted that in the standards set for juvenile facilities by the Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) state:

The facility administrator shall develop and implement written policies and procedures for the discipline of youth that shall promote acceptable behavior. Discipline shall be imposed at the least restrictive level which promotes the desired behavior and shall not include corporal punishment, group punishment, physical or psychological degradation. Deprivation of the following is not permitted:

- a. bed and bedding
- b. daily shower, access to drinking fountain, toilet and personal hygiene items, and clean clothing
- c. full nutrition
- d. contact with parent or attorney
- e. exercise
- f. medical services and counseling
- g. religious services
- h. clean and sanitary living conditions
- i. the right to send and receive mail; and
- j. education

One of the subtlest forms of cruelty is psychological. No practice designed to degrade will be permitted. The use of separation should be resorted to only when a youth is out of control and **they** must be placed there for **their** own protection or the protection of others. **Their** length of stay will be determined on an individual case basis, and separation will be used only with effective casework services to the youth.

Withdrawal of privileges should be used only for specific constructive purposes and caution should be used to make certain it does not take the form of cruelty. Actions are the overt expressions of feeling. All staff must attempt to learn what is behind any flare-up of emotion or unacceptable aggressive situation.

2. Our work efforts should be directed to providing a climate in which there is a minimum of hostile conflict. The diversity of behavior of our youth will produce times when, despite our best efforts, hostile conflict will occur. Whenever this arises, staff should be aware that conflict can quickly turn into combat or into actions which may require physical intervention of staff. Staff should attempt to inject themselves into conflictive situations before this point is reached. Quite often the conflict will be between two youth. Quite often one or more or both of these youth will be amenable to breaking the conflict before it reaches the point of need for physical

intervention. Separation of the youth for periods of time may allow the necessary cooling off which comes before conflict resolution. Such an action may prevent the need for physical intervention. Prevention of the use of physical restraint is our goal.

3. In keeping with the policy of all **facilities** under the jurisdiction of the Orange County Probation Department, it is the policy of all facilities that staff will not use physical means of restraint on youth except when it becomes necessary to use such restraint to control a youth for the purpose of protecting himself/herself or another person from eminent serious injury. Examples of behavior that would require physical intervention include: attempted suicide, a youth doing bodily harm to himself or another person, a youth who, after prolonged counseling, refuses to comply with staff directions, a youth attempting escape, etc. Restraint is to be used in these cases only as the last resort, when no other means will suffice.
4. The burden of justifying the use of physical restraint is on the staff involved and is reviewed by administration. If physical control fails to fall within the parameters outlined above and physical assault has been committed by a staff member on a youth, the matter will be referred to law enforcement officers for investigation who will consider filing criminal charges pursuant to the following sections of the Penal Code:
 - a. Section 273d(a) of the California Penal Code states, (a) Any person who willfully inflicts upon a child any cruel or inhuman corporal punishment or an injury resulting in a traumatic condition is guilty of a felony and shall be punished by imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170 for two, four, or six years, or in a county jail for not more than one year, by a fine of up to six thousand dollars (\$6,000), or by both that imprisonment and fine.
 - b. Section 240 of the California Penal Code defines an assault as an "unlawful attempt, coupled with a present ability to commit a violent injury on the person of another."
 - c. Section 241(a) of the California Penal Code states, An assault is punishable by a fine not exceeding one thousand dollars (\$1,000), or by imprisonment in the county jail not exceeding six months, or by both the fine and imprisonment.
 - d. Section 242 of the California Penal Code states, "A battery is any willful and unlawful use of force or violence upon the person of another."
 - e. Section 243(a) of the California Penal Code states, A battery is punishable by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars (\$2,000), or by imprisonment in a county jail not exceeding six months, or by both that fine and imprisonment.
 - f. Section 673 of the California Penal Code states, "It shall be unlawful to use in the reformatories, institutions, jails, state

hospitals, or any other state, county, or city institution any cruel, corporal, or unusual punishment or to inflict any treatment or allow any lack of care whatever which would injure or impair the health of the prisoner, inmate, or person confined; and punishment by the use of the strait-jacket, gag, thumbscrew, shower bath or the tricing up of a prisoner, inmate, or person confined is hereby prohibited. Any person who violates the provisions of this section or who aids, abets, or attempts in any way to contribute to the violation of this section shall be guilty of a misdemeanor."

5. These guidelines and laws should not be misinterpreted by staff to mean that physical intervention is not occasionally necessary. It must, however, be pursuant to the guidelines outlined above and within all departmental policy and procedures regarding "use of force."
6. For staff's own protection, on any occasion when it becomes necessary for staff to use physical force to control a youth, each staff member involved will complete a Special Incident Report in triplicate to the SJCO/Duty Officer (in the event the Director or Assistant Director is not on duty) before the end of the shift during which the incident occurred, setting forth specifically all details of what led up to the incident, what occurred during the incident, and what action was taken by each staff member.
7. The SJCO/Duty Officer must be notified immediately of any incident that requires the use of physical intervention by staff.
8. There will be those incidents which occur suddenly or which were not prevented by staff effort. Physical intervention and restraint may then be the most expedient tools. Teenagers are in their prime physically, so staff must not rush into a situation assessed as requiring physical intervention, but attempt to alert their coworkers of the situation and request immediate support. The restraint employed should be ONLY the amount necessary to stop the action which is felt to be dangerous. The youth can easily interpret restraint as combative. Restraint should be used only to restore control in a clearly dangerous situation: youth fighting; damaging property; attempting to assault others; and hurting themselves.
9. A juvenile facility is a restricted society where the youth's feelings may be focused on staff. It is very important that youth and staff both know what the mutual expectations are, as well as what the rules are. Adolescents are in need of detailed orientation, ongoing structure, both individually and collectively, and individual and group counseling. The staff must communicate to aim at treatment goals and to assure the youth are getting the same messages from all staff.

B. Preventive Measures

1. Staff teamwork is essential for all phases of treatment work, but it is vitally important as a preventive device. The counselor should know as much as possible about each youth in the group. Discuss observed behavior with other staff. Basic to any consideration of emergency situations is the preceding established relationship, plus lines of communication. It is

necessary to individualize the approach, at the same time be cognizant of group dynamics. Group work and group control are effective when limits are set. This means there are standards of acceptable and unacceptable behavior. DJCOs are charged with the responsibility of recognizing significant behavior, being aware of interpersonal relationships within the group. The DJCO should constantly be sensitive to ethnic grouping as well as any negative grouping, negative leadership, and physically "strong" or emotionally unstable youth. Group problems develop from peer conflicts, group pressure, and negative reactions to authority.

2. The DJCO must be comfortable in talking to and with the group. Structuring spells out expectations. Group sessions are very effective, i.e., group sessions are held to discuss an activity, then the group, under the direction of the counselor, can discuss possible problem areas. Group ventilation can clarify feelings, misconceptions, rumors, etc., and redirection can be the result.

C. Maintenance of Group and/or Individual Control

Following are some things to do when trying to maintain or achieve control of individual youth or the group:

1. One of the greatest difficulties faced in any **facility** situation is that of keeping the program filled with meaningful activities so that boredom does not take over. There are times when the DJCO must exercise the best of his abilities to keep the program moving--otherwise too much free time will take over your program and trouble will result. If the program of activities is heavy, vary the activities so that the variety will add zest to the day. When appropriate, keep a few surprises in reserve so that when the program begins to drag, changes of pace will not only give the youth, but the leader as well, a lift that will carry over a rough spot. Saturdays, Sundays, and the evening hours are most important. Plan these hours so that you will have a moving program. Adhere to your plan. Make it contain enough variety so that interest will not fall. You will eliminate many group problems by this method.
2. Every group will contain **youth** who cannot hold their own in the give-and-take of group living. Maintaining a constant vigilance to protect these weaker members will, in addition to protecting them, provide opportunities to create a more tolerant and/or supportive group climate. Keep weak, acting out, and unresponsive youth in areas nearest direct supervision. As much as is possible, make use of nonverbal confrontation. This approach can be very effective for redirecting individual behavior without drawing any unwanted attention from other members of the group. Meaningful direct looks, shaking or nodding of the head, motioning with the hand are examples of nonverbal confrontation. Asking questions rather than making statements is another effective tool. Examples would include: "Is that what you're supposed to be doing?"; "Are you helping or hurting?"; "What is your goal?" Use the group to control him; let him and the group know that they are waiting on him. Let the group know that if he complies, the program schedule will continue. Find ways of being directive by showing an attitude of expectance and urgency. Demonstrate an interest in each youth. Identify for the youth the

sequence of events which he can anticipate. Offer explanations, if possible, to help clarify gaps in his understanding and help enable him to be patient or accepting. Let the youth know about reports, communication between staff and with probation officers.

3. Establish a reasonable objective for conduct for each and every youth in your care. You will find some adolescents with superior minds, but the majority will fall around the recognized average. Some will fall in the borderline range. You will not be able to expect the same conduct or superior mentality.
4. Exceptionally bright adolescents may have the energy and inclination to cause you real trouble. Youth with varying degrees of physical abilities and disabilities will also be in your group. You will find it necessary to either vary your total program to account for these differences or to make exceptions in specific cases.
5. Anticipate or interpret what the youth's needs are or may be. If you do something for him, tactfully and subtly let him know that an adult did something for him without his asking. See if you can't get him to do something for others and to consider needs beyond his own! Be a variety of things to the same or various youth. Enlist their interest in helping themselves. Find out what capacities they have to work with. Find ways of friendly confrontation. Do not enter into challenges with them, they need to win. At times they may be really asking you to place your authority on the "block." Avoid giving them the impression that they are going to be allowed choices that do not fit the overall program.
6. Be consistent--if they know what to expect from you, they will learn to live up to your expectations. Youth residing in a juvenile facility must adjust to a wide variety of personalities. Always present the same picture of yourself to them so that they learn to appreciate your consistency and will react in a pattern that you expect.
7. Let them know what your job is. Do you really know? They will be matching your knowledge and awareness against that of other staff.
8. A good staff member recognizes that there may be more than one method of achieving an objective. **They** try to understand other staff members' viewpoints and does not allow differences to imperil the worth of their work. Adolescents are the first to see differences between staff members and have been known, far too often, to take advantage of such differences to the point where staff members have been manipulated or in conflict with co-workers.
9. Commit the youth to the total program. Getting along in the unit/group is not enough, expect them to get along wherever they are: school, outside activities, dining hall, etc., and expect them to participate in the entire program, i.e., cleanup, school, recreation, etc.
10. We give the youth an initial orientation, but our ongoing expectations really provide the functional orientation. Do you know your routines and what you plan to do for the shift? If you do not give the impression that

you can really take charge, how can you expect the group to follow you? Let them know why, how, and when we do something. Explain and define expectations as needed. Structure group and individuals at least once each shift. Sometimes it is necessary to structure every hour!

11. Be where the youth are: this is called proximity control. You may not have all the answers of control, but you may acquire a few more if you will keep your attention on the group. It is a difficult technique for staff to learn how to do different tasks while providing visual supervision of the group and sensitivity to the group at the same time. Even when you are involved in conversations, your visual attention should be focused on the youth, not your conversation partner.
12. Go out of your way to elicit a response from a timid or shy youth, tone down an aggressive one, look them in the eye, avoid any gestures which suggest that you find it difficult to face or stand up to them. We need to be cautious but certainly not afraid of the youth.
13. Make sure that you have population checks often and comply with security measures. The youth are keenly aware of your omissions in these areas. Know their names, and associate what you know about each youth with his name and use it. Test what does and does not work with a particular youth; communicate this to other staff. In other words, know the youth individually and individualize your approach. Do not trap yourself; find out what you need to "work around" with specific youth. You have the authority and should use it, but you should know what a little "slack" will gain more. Do not back the **youth** into a corner, and do not trap the youth and yourself.

D. Sensitivity to Potential Problems

When you utilize sound approaches, good techniques, and priorities, with time you may still find yourself in a situation where you must handle an upset youth. Many serious group problems have started with one upset youth. Staff, as a result, need to be continuously on the alert and sensitive to individual youth displaying unusual behavior or any given youth who appears to be somewhat upset. The group can and usually does give strong indications when there is trouble. Usually there are many signs which clearly indicate that a youth is in trouble or is unable to control his emotions. **Their** behavior pattern may change abruptly, i.e., a gregarious person may become remote; a quiet one may become boisterous. Tension can be "read" with an individual, and group tensions tell us that it is high time to take an individual action. Frequently, a youngster will tell you that he is going to have a fight, and frequently others will offer information when trouble is brewing. (The closer the relationship of staff to youth, the more information is received.) Experienced staff can sometimes spot developing problems a shift or two in advance. However, since outbursts are frequently situational (for example, a youth sent back from school, a youth disappointed at visiting time, etc.), staff should attempt to get the youth to verbalize about his problem. Sometimes this is not possible because of schedule, etc., but the ideal time to move is the moment when the "problem is spotted." An adult, as non-threatening as possible, needs to talk with the youth.

E. Procedures for Handling Problems

1. Sarcasm, ridicule, harsh words, or threats of any kind are NOT to be used. DO NOT scold nor personalize criticism that may embarrass a youth in the presence of others. Withholding foods, including desserts or treats as a form of punishment is prohibited. No form, degree, or threat of corporal punishment is permitted.
2. Separate the youth from the group so as to remove the audience. Move quickly, deciding where you are going to talk. It is always necessary to alert co-staff as to your whereabouts. It is also very important to be aware of the group condition; supportive staff should be alerted if advisable. Staff must be sensitive to the potential explosiveness of a group when a youth becomes defiant and/or acts out in front of the group. An experienced staff member can usually resolve the situation by immediately talking with the youth. Experience is a big factor in sensing and handling problems.
3. It is important for staff approaching an adolescent in a crisis situation to keep in mind the need to accomplish the staff member's goal, which is to "settle" the youth. Remember that anger is often a mask for hurt or fear. Asking calming questions rather than giving directions or commands is often a more effective tool for controlling agitated behavior. Keep in mind that very often the more the youth is able to verbalize the miserable feelings inside, the less likely the youth will be to act out with destructive behavior. If you recognize that the upset youth is not going to be responsive to your efforts, you might say to him that you realize that he does not feel like talking now or is unable to talk now, and that you will talk with him at some later time.
4. If the adolescent is totally unresponsive to your requests or whose acting out is "beyond control," you may decide to ask another staff member to work with him. Often a youth is able to relate to someone else, especially if the problem involves you.
5. Remember, the goal is not to prove that you are competent but to settle the youth. Many times the youth will be strongly desirous of a "way out" and the change in staff may let the youth "save face." Many times the behavior will indicate that the adolescent wants an adult to "take charge" of his behavior.
6. What we have been talking about, up to this point, are appropriate approaches in dealing with a single upset youth within a relatively "stable" group. The important thing is the preventative aspect where staff "sees" what is going on and directly makes objective decisions. We must evaluate as early as possible whether the youth's behavior is too serious to ignore, and then we take the appropriate steps.
7. If the group is not stable, if there is unrest due to any number of reasons, all the staff involved should be aware of the problem. Programming should be gradually slowed down. There can be more use of "quiet times or periods" for counseling. If there are problems in your group, then all resources must be utilized until the unit/group returns to normal. Problems will develop in a group from time to time, and staff need not

concentrate on talking to and with the group at these times but may find it more effective to counsel the upset youth in private.

8. Unit staff should discuss how they would handle any possible situation before it occurs, and close staff analysis, after any such situation, is extremely beneficial. Real learning comes from experience and analyzing incidents to see what could have been done. Were there other alternatives? Did staff work as a concerted team?
9. Typically, if the youth is willing to talk to the interested adult, there will be ventilation, a cathartic reaction, and the youth will be accepting. Sometimes if it is necessary to repeat a request to the youth a number of times, other techniques can be employed. The counselor might say, "Of course, John, you are upset. You have been doing thus and so and we have tried to do thus and so and we really wanted to help." If the youth is so negative and, in the staff's judgment, is likely to harm himself, staff, another person, property, or cause a contagious disturbance, the counseling may want to involve another counselor or signal for supportive staff to monitor and be on the alert. The threat of calling more staff should not be used. It is generally counterproductive to verbalize an "or else." Do not challenge; if the youth chooses to accept, you have placed yourself in a corner since there is only one possible course of action available. The youth has, in effect, won the final battle since he has effectively determined what action you must take.
10. What criteria does the DJCO use in determining a situation is or is about to go out of control? If the youth's emotional state appears to be one in which he is likely to injure himself or others, damage property, and/or seriously disturb the group, then this situation is considered as being out of control. A small amount of time may still be available in which the situation may be contained; however, the decision must be as to how long stringent action may be delayed without inviting group participation. This will vary with the youth's position in the group, Is he a strong negative leader? Is he a scapegoat? The decision must be based on knowledge of the youth, the group composition, and intra-group relationships.
11. Requesting additional DJCOs' assistance is a matter of judgment. When a staff member calls for assistance, he must know what he wants them to do and to quickly instruct them as to what action to take. Staff must recognize that on many occasions having other staff called into the unit when a child is upset may create within the group a potentially more explosive situation. Therefore, acting quickly is paramount to avoid keeping extra staff loitering in the unit. Also, some adolescents feel that they gain status in the group by necessitating additional counselors' assistance.
12. Whenever possible, it is advisable to avoid having staff forcibly remove an "acting-out" youth. However, if the youth will not go quietly, **they** must still be removed. Sufficient staff shall lessen the possibility of injury to either staff or youth. The staff should coordinate plans in order to move quickly and in unison. They should remain nearby to observe, offer assistance and help supervise the balance of the group.

13. Extreme caution should be exercised in physically restraining and removing adolescents. It may be necessary to handcuff a youth if it appears that **they** may harm himself/**herself** or damage property. Here, also, the restraint should only be as extensive as necessary and removed as soon as the youth gains self-control.
14. If there should be a sudden mass outbreak, when precautionary measures are not possible, it is extremely important to remain calm yourself. Ensure supportive staff's notification. Staff apprehensions will only serve to further inflame the already excited group. Speak quickly and decisively in a manner that indicates, in no uncertain terms, that compliance is expected.
15. Staff are legally responsible to protect all residents and to prevent injury to them. This calls for sound judgmental decisions. Staff should be able to demonstrate that all reasonable and responsible measures were taken as quickly as possible in all cases. When any incident has occurred, it must be documented. All injuries must be carefully noted and medical attention requested.

F. Conclusion

1. Remain calm yourself. Use another staff member to assist you or to replace you if there are "rapport problems" with the youth. If you are at all in doubt about what should be done, by all means involve your SJCO, the Duty officer, or coworker. Do not rush into situations, making decisions without all the information. Do not preset discipline; a youth's attitude, circumstances and **their** maturity must be considered.
2. Whenever discipline is needed and utilized by staff, it is very important to have a total follow-up in working through the nature of the problem with the youth concerned. A serious discipline problem should call for corrective action that is readily explainable to all concerned. Hopefully, total corrective action will minimize another incident.
3. In dealing with the hostility and potentially violent behavior that sometimes goes hand-in-hand with the youth's reaction to detention; it is philosophically sound to concentrate staff efforts to minimize hazards.
4. Non-directive techniques on an ongoing basis can be extremely helpful. The youth can and will tell you what is going on in the setting if you are not direct in your approach. Such insights can be utilized to verify empirical observations or can be a "tip-off" as to what to look for specifically. If staff can apply sound principles, they can stay "two jumps" ahead of the youth. You are in trouble if the adolescents are a jump ahead of you, and more and more of your time will be spent in justifying previous incidents.

REFERENCES:

Procedure:	3-1-003	Deterrence of Unacceptable Behavior
	3-1-015	Use of Force – Physical, Mechanical & Chemical
	3-2-002	Prevention and Control of Inappropriate Behavior
Policy:	D-2	Use of Physical Restraint/Corporal Punishment

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APPROVED BY: