

Principal/Director/NC Pre-K Lead Teacher Procedures

Updated November 2025

Working with NC Pre-K Children Exhibiting Unique/Challenging Behaviors

Working with a young child who is exhibiting untoward behaviors in the classroom can be a challenging and often debilitating experience for any educator. We offer these guidelines in the hopes that professionals working with young children who are struggling will have a greater understanding of what is necessary to comply with the Division of Child Development & Early Education's requirements for NC Pre-K children.

Risk of Harm/Challenging Behaviors

What is challenging behavior?

(Page 3-13, 2025-2026 [NC Pre-K Requirements & Guidance Manual](#))

Challenging behavior shall mean any repeated pattern of behavior, or perception of behavior, that interferes with, or is at risk of interfering with, optimal learning or engagement in pro-social interactions with peers and adults. It is behavior that interferes with children's learning, development, success at play or is harmful to the child, other children or adults, that puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. (<http://challengingbehavior.cbcu.usf.edu/>)

Examples of persistent challenging behaviors for preschool children may include:

1. physical aggression such as hitting, kicking, punching, spitting, throwing objects forcefully, pinching, pushing, and biting;
2. climbing on things in the classroom that is not permitted;
3. destroying property, destroying what another child is working on regardless of the other child's response;
4. taking toys away from other children forcefully;
5. running that poses a safety risk for the child or others or elopement from the classroom;
6. tantrum behaviors that might include behaviors such as kicking, screaming, pushing an object or person, stomping feet, or head banging;
7. verbal aggression including yelling, threats, screaming at another person, calling children bad names, and saying bad words;
8. ordering an adult to do something (e.g., "leave me alone");
9. persistent or prolonged crying that is loud or disruptive or ongoing crying that interferes with the child's engagement in activities;
10. inappropriate use of materials (e.g., jumping off chairs, slamming materials, throwing objects);
11. statements that are noncompliant (e.g., "I'm not going to do it") or clear and explicit verbal or physical refusal to follow directions; or
12. inappropriate touching, stripping, and other behaviors that are hurtful, disruptive, or dangerous to self or others

(Hemmeter, Fox, & Snyder, 2014, p. 24)

If an NC Pre-K child in the classroom is exhibiting behaviors that fall into the category of causing potential “risk of harm to oneself or others” as listed above, it is important that the Principal/Director take these steps before suspension or expulsion may occur. *It is required that unless and until notification has been made to the Region A Partnership for Children NC Pre-K Coordinator’s office and documentation has occurred, no NC Pre-K child receive less than the mandated 6.5 hour NC Pre-K day.*

1. Contact the Region A Partnership for Children (RAPC) NC Pre-K Coordinator, Barbara Jefferys, at 828-226-6445 or 828-586-0661. This notification provides support for the site, teacher, Principal/Director, and the NC Pre-K child and family.
2. Contact your county’s Local Educational Agency’s Exceptional Children’s Program for assistance if a child’s cognitive, language/communication, emotional, social, health and/or physical needs exceed your program’s capacity to address, as indicated by one or more of the following: (A) developmental needs assessments; (B) home visit(s); (C) consultations with family members; (D) daily recorded classroom teacher observations; and/or (E) modified instructional plans and/or differentiated lessons based on the child’s individual goals.
3. Keep accurate documentation of the date, time, situation, and nature of the child’s behavior(s). As part of each event, document what was done/by whom to ameliorate the behavior(s). What is happening before/after the behavior? How long does the behavior last? How did the child respond to redirection or other strategies utilized? What worked/what did not work?
4. Keep accurate documentation of dates and nature of contacts/referrals made as part of efforts to maintain the child in the classroom: Principal/Director of site; parent/caregiver; LEA Preschool Exceptional Children’s Program; Parents as Teachers educators; parenting class professionals; mental health professionals; medical providers. Include phone calls, emails, text messages, and written correspondence.
5. Where available, conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment and implement a Behavior Improvement Plan.
6. Submit written documentation developed as part of items 3. and 4. above to the RAPC, attention Barbara Jefferys (bjefferys@rapc.org, fax# 828-586-0663).
7. Where necessary, it is the Region A Partnership for Children’s responsibility to notify the Division of Child Development and Early Education if/when an alternative placement and/or support services are necessary for a child exhibiting challenging behaviors.

Regional & Local Resources

In its commitment to support children, families, educators and administrators in creating a platform that is optimal for retention of all NC Pre-K children in the classroom, the Region A Partnership for Children will work diligently to bring professional development opportunities to those working in this arena.

Information about up-to-date mental health services and providers is available through Vaya Health (formerly Smoky Mountain Center). Contact Vaya through their 24/7 toll-free number, 1-800-849-6127. Through this resource, School Principals and Center Directors have access to immediate clinical assistance, regardless of insurance coverage.

In western North Carolina, there are several providers of behavioral/mental health services for children:

- *Appalachian Community Services* – This organization provides Mobile Crisis Services that can go onsite in the event of a mental health crisis, severe behavioral concerns with a child at school, etc. Their number is 888-315-2880. Appalachian also offers walk-in clinic services Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm in every county. State funding may be available for the uninsured.
- *Meridian Behavioral Health* hosts clinic-based services available Monday – Friday 8:00 am to 5:00 pm. Contact Meridian Behavioral Health at 828-631-3973.