



Active Supervision

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Keeping Children Safe



- Keeping children safe is a top priority for all Head Start and Early Head Start programs.
- The Head Start Program Performance Standards require that “no child shall be left alone or unsupervised while under their care” (45 CFR 1304.52[i][1][iii]).
- Active supervision is the most effective strategy for creating a safe environment and preventing injuries in young children.
- Each program can keep children safe by teaching all educators how to look, listen, and engage.

What is Active Supervision?



- Active supervision requires focused attention and intentional observation of children at all times.
- Educators (all Head Start staff who care for children) position themselves so that they can observe all of the children: watching, counting, moving about, and listening at all times.
- They also use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what they will do, then get involved and redirect them when necessary.
- This constant vigilance helps children learn safely.

Supervision At All Times



- Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers must be directly supervised at all times.
- This includes daily routines such as sleeping, eating, and changing diapers or using the bathroom.
- Programs that use active supervision take advantage of all available learning opportunities and never leave children unattended.
- Educators set up the environment so that they can supervise children at all times.

Setting Up the Environment



- When activities are grouped together and furniture is at waist height or shorter, adults are always able to see and hear children.
- Small spaces are kept clutter free and big spaces are set up so that children have clear play spaces that educators can observe.
- Educators carefully plan where they will position themselves in the environment to prevent children from harm.
- They make sure there are always clear paths to where children are playing, sleeping, and eating so they can react quickly when necessary.

Staffing Positioning/Scan and Count



- Educators are always able to account for the children in their care.
- They continually scan the entire environment to know where everyone is and what they are doing. They do this by observing and moving around from area to area.
- They count the children frequently.
- This is especially important during transitions, when children are moving from one location to another.

Listen



- Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern.
- Educators who are listening closely to children immediately identify signs of potential danger.
- Programs that think systemically implement additional strategies to safeguard children.
- For example, bells added to doors help alert educators when a child leaves or enters the room.

Anticipate Children's Behavior



- Educators use what they know about each child's individual interests and skills to predict what they will do.
- They create challenges that children are ready for and support them in succeeding.
- But they also recognize when children might wander, get upset, or take a dangerous risk.
- Information from the daily health check (e.g., illness, allergies, lack of sleep or food, etc.) informs educators' observations and helps them anticipate children's behavior.
- Educators who know what to expect are better able to protect children from harm.

Engage and Redirect



- Educators use active supervision skills to know when to offer children support.
- They periodically observe and record briefly what they see and hear.
- Educators wait to get involved until children are unable to solve problems on their own.
- Educators may offer different levels of assistance or redirection depending on each individual child's needs.

Interacting Frequently



- Positive Contacts
 - Friendly, helpful
 - Proactive and non-contingent on behavior
 - High rate of delivery
- Positive Reinforcement
 - Immediate and contingent on behavior
 - Delivered at high rates and consistently
- Corrective Response
 - Non-argumentative, non-critical
 - Specific to behavior
 - Correct, model, practice, reinforce
- Deliver Consequence
 - Neutral, fair

Other Active Supervision Strategies



- Know each child's abilities and levels of frustration
- Establish clear and simple safety rules; involve children in setting rules
- Be aware of potential hazards
- Intervene quickly when needed
- Circulate
- Focus on the positive rather than the negative

Cautionary Measures



- Staff should avoid carrying out activities that will distract them from supervision, such as administrative tasks or speaking for long periods with other adults in the room.
- Even when an educator is directly involved in an activity with an individual child or group of children, he or she should still regularly be looking around the room or outdoor play area to ensure that all children are appropriately engaged.
- Ensure that there is a mix of activities to allow for appropriate supervision and to ensure that staff resources are not overstretched.

Additional Cautionary Measures



- Toileting
 - Be vigilant in monitoring when children go to and return from the bathroom
 - Visit the toilet area if children have not returned within a reasonable period of time
- Drop off and pick up times/New children
 - Greet all children when they arrive, letting them know how happy you are to see them
 - Help those who need special attention to adjust
 - Acknowledge each child's departure
- Transportation/Trips
 - Confirm all children are present before beginning travel
 - Extra attention is required when trips are made

What Does Active Supervision Look Like?



- To understand what active supervision might look like in your program, consider the following examples and identify the specific strategies used in the bolded text.
- Strategies Include:
 - Set Up the Environment
 - Position Staff
 - Scan and Count
 - Listen
 - Anticipate
 - Engage and Redirect

Example 1



- *Maria and Yasmin have taken their class of 3 year olds out to the playground for outdoor playtime.*
- *The 15-foot square playground has a plastic climber, a water/sand table, and a swing set.*
- *The children scatter through the playground to various areas.*
- *Some prefer the climber, while others like the swings. Many of the children play with the sand table because it is new.*
- ***Maria and Yasmin stand at opposite corners of the playground to be able to move quickly to a child who might need assistance.***

Example 2



- ***Maria and Yasmin have agreed on a supervision plan for the children they will observe and are always counting the children in the areas closest to them, occasionally raising their fingers to show each other how many children are close to them.***
- ***This helps them keep track of where the children are, and to make sure no one is missing.***
- ***If one child moves to a different area of the playground, they signal each other so that they are both aware of the child's change in location.***

Example 3



- *Maria has noticed that Felicity loves to play in the sand table. **She hears children scolding each other** and notices that Felicity throws the toys without looking.*
- *As Maria sees Daisy and Brent playing at the sand table, **Maria stands behind Felicity and suggests she put the toy back in the basket when she is done with it.***
- ***By remaining close, she is also able to redirect Ahmed who has never seen a sand table before and throws sand at his classmates.***

Example 4



- *Michael has been experimenting with some of the climbing equipment and is trying to jump off the third step onto the ground.*
- *While he is able to do this, some of the other children whose motor skills are not as advanced also try to do this.*
- ***To help them build these skills, Yasmin stands close to the steps on the climbing structure.***
- ***She offers a hand or suggests a lower step to those who are not developmentally ready.***

Example 5



- *Maria and Yasmin signal to each other 5 minutes before playtime is over, then tell the children they have 5 minutes left to play.*
- ***When the children have 1 minute left, Maria begins to hand out colors that match color squares they have painted on the ground.***
- ***She asks Beto, a child who has trouble coming inside from play time, to help her.***
- *When the children are handed a colored circle, they move to stand on the colored spot on the playground. As the children move to the line, Maria guides them to the right spot.*

Example 6



- ***When all the children are in line, both Maria and Yasmin count them again.***
- ***They scan the playground to make sure everyone is in place, then move the children back into the classroom.***
- ***They also listen to be sure that they do not hear any of the children still on the playground.***
- ***Yasmin heads the line and Maria takes the back end, holding Beto's hand.***

Example 7



- *When they return to the classroom, there are spots on the floor with the same colors that were on the playground.*
- *The children move to stand on their matching color in the classroom.*
- *Maria and Yasmin take a final count, then collect the circles, and begin the next activity.*

Another Scenario



- Ms. Yazzie directed the class to begin cleaning up for story time.
- She then moved slowly around the various play areas quietly acknowledging children for cleaning up.
- She stood beside Lorenzo for a moment, as he usually does not do well at clean up time and praised him for getting started.
- Ms. Hailey continued to loop around the class, checking progress and making compliments here and there.

A Final Scenario



- The children have just come in from the outdoor play area and the teacher announces that the children should put away their coats and come to circle time. The class responds as requested, except for Michelle, who begins to wander the room. The teacher acknowledges the children who have come to the circle and are ready for the next activity. Michelle continues wandering the room. The teacher says quietly, but loud enough for Michelle to hear, “Michelle, circle time”, and points to a spot in the circle where she can sit. Michelle circles a bit more and then comes to her spot in the circle.

Self-Reflection



Questions to Help You Assess Active Supervision Practices:

- How do you teach active supervision strategies and support educators to apply these skills in everyday practice?
- How do we make sure that educators position themselves to be able to see the children at all times and quickly get to those who need assistance?
- How do we ensure that educators continually scan and count children during both indoor and outdoor play?



Additional Questions to Help You Assess Active Supervision Practices:

- How do educators assess individual children's skills and abilities, adapt activities to avoid potential injuries, and use their observational skills to anticipate when a child may need closer supervision?
- How do educators engage and redirect children who need additional support?

Active Supervision Implementation Plan



Ask Yourself:

- What is the current practice related to each strategy below in the classrooms I supervise?
- What are the action steps needed to help educators improve each strategy?
 - Set Up the Environment
 - Position Staff
 - Scan and Count
 - Listen
 - Anticipate Children's Behavior
 - Engage and Redirect

Resources and Q&A



- A large portion of the information used in this presentation comes from a resource document created by the Office of Head Start National Center on Health
- Additional information comes from my many years in the classroom as an assistant teacher and then lead teacher in child care classrooms and as education director and director overseeing multiple Head Start classrooms in multiple centers.
- **Now for Your Questions and Observations ...**