



## Biting Policy & Action Plan

### Why Do Toddlers Bite?

Biting is a common and developmentally typical behavior among toddlers. It often happens between 12 months and 3 years old, when children are still learning how to express themselves. Some common reasons include:

- **Teething** – Sore gums can cause a toddler to bite for relief.
- **Exploration** – Young children learn about the world with their mouths.
- **Communication** – Toddlers may bite when they don't yet have the words to say, "I'm mad," "I want that," or "I need space."
- **Frustration or big emotions** – Strong feelings can overwhelm a toddler, and biting becomes an impulsive reaction.
- **Attention-seeking** – Sometimes children bite because it quickly gets a big reaction from adults.
- **Imitation** – They may have seen another child bite and try it themselves.

### Is Biting Age Appropriate?

Yes, biting can be a normal stage of toddler development, especially in children under 3. It is usually a phase that children outgrow once they develop stronger language, self-control, and social skills.

However, while it is developmentally typical, it is not acceptable behavior. That's why caregivers respond quickly and consistently: to protect children, teach empathy, and guide toddlers toward better ways of expressing themselves.

## **Purpose of Policy and Action Plan**

To provide consistent guidance and support when biting occurs in the classroom, ensuring safety for children, minimizing incidents, and supporting the child who is biting through positive behavior strategies. While understanding, biting poses a risk to other children and must be addressed promptly and appropriately.

This action plan outlines how staff will respond to biting incidents, support all children involved, and communicate with families while keeping a safe, nurturing environment where all children can thrive.

## **Prevention Strategies**

Staff will maintain supervision at all times and observe children closely to identify triggers or patterns. We will provide teething toys and other sensory materials as needed. We will encourage children to use words, gestures or signs to express themselves and reinforce positive behavior and model gentle touch.

## **When a Bite Occurs**

### **1. Immediate Response**

- Ensure safety first: Quickly and calmly separate the children.
- Comfort the child who was bitten: Provide appropriate first aid (wash area with soap and water, apply ice if needed, monitor for skin break).
- Address the child who bit: Use calm, firm language ("Biting hurts. We don't bite."). Avoid shaming or lengthy explanations. Redirect to an appropriate activity or soothing strategy.

### **2. Documentation**

- Complete an incident report on Procure for both children (victim and biter).
- Include picture of the bite on the Procure incident report to the victim's parents.
- Record: location of the bite, what was happening when the bite occurred.
- Children's names will not be shared with other families to maintain confidentiality.

### **3. Communication with Families**

- Inform families the same day of the incident.
- Share facts only—do not name other children involved.
- Provide support and explain strategies being used in the classroom.
- For the child who bites schedule a private meeting if biting is repeated to develop a behavior support plan with parents.

#### **4. Prevention Strategies in the Classroom**

- **Observation & tracking:** Identify patterns or triggers (e.g., teething, frustration, crowded spaces, transitions, fatigue, hunger).
- **Increase supervision:** Stay close to children who have shown a pattern of biting.
- **Environmental adjustments:** Provide duplicates of favorite toys, add teething toys/chew necklace, create more space during high-traffic times, shorten wait times during transitions.
- **Teach alternatives:**
  - Encourage words/signs for needs (“my turn,” “stop,” “help”).
  - Model gentle touches and empathy (“Let’s give a hug instead”).
  - Provide sensory outlets (chew toys, playdough, stress balls).

#### **5. Support for the Child Who Bites**

- Avoid labeling the child as “a biter.”
- Reinforce positive behavior when they use words, gestures, or gentle touches.
- Provide extra attention and comfort during challenging times.

#### **6. Ongoing Support**

- Track and analyze patterns (e.g., triggers, time of day)
- Document incidents to determine progress or ongoing concerns.
- Review strategies weekly as a teaching team.

### **Communication with Families**

We recognize that biting is distressing for all involved. We commit to:

- Communicating openly, respectfully and confidently.
- Providing reassurance and resources to families.
- Collaborating with parents as partners in their child's development.

### **When Biting Becomes Recurrent**

If biting continues despite preventive measures and support:

- A conference with the parents will be scheduled to maintain consistency between home and school.
- Short-term adjustments may be made (e.g., temporary shadowing, classroom changes, schedule adjustments).
- A bite to the face, parents will need to pick up. Child can return the next day.
- 3 bites a day, parents will need to pick up. Child can return the next day.
- In rare cases, if the safety of others is at risk and interventions are not effective, OLA may consider a temporary or permanent change in enrollment, following all due process.