



# Children's Bereavement Center OF SOUTH TEXAS

## Safe Touch Policy

### Rationale

Children learn who they are and how the world is by forming relationships with people and things around them. The quality of a child's relationship with significant adults is vital to their healthy development and emotional health and wellbeing. Many of the children at the Center will require emotional attention and support. That support may be given in many ways that do not require physical touch including eye contact, proximity, smiling, nodding, and active listening.

Physical contact with a child should always be about meeting the needs of the child. CBCST staff and facilitators should always think before making any physical contact. You should be clear about why your actions are in the best interest of the child concerned. Remember that some children like physical contact and will initiate it. When a child spontaneously hugs you upon greeting or leaving the building, it is appropriate to return a side hug or offer a handshake.

Some children may have been subjected to traumatic or distressing events. CBCST staff and facilitators must be mindful that some children do not like, or desire, physical contact and that even young children should be asked for permission before you engage in physical contact.

Types of touch and contact that may be used:

1. Casual/informal/incidental touch  
CBCST staff and facilitators use touch as part of a normal relationship, for example, comforting a child, giving reassurance and congratulating. This might include putting arm out to bar exit from a room, taking a child by the hand, patting on the back or shoulder. The benefit of this action is often proactive and can prevent a situation from escalating.
2. Calming or centering touch:  
CBCST staff and facilitators may be working with children who are having difficulties with emotional regulation. Safe touch may be necessary as a means of calming or soothing a frightened, angry or sad child.
3. Contact play  
Contact play may include throwing or kicking balls, punching bags, foam sword play, rumpus room. Adults need to maintain supervision at all time to ensure that children are following safe contact rules. This includes limiting the number of children in the rumpus room and following other rules for rumpus room and outdoor play.



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## Prohibited Types of Physical Touch

- Do not allow children to sit on your lap, or each other's laps.
- Do not allow children to hang on your arms.
- Do not give "piggy back" rides.

## Bathrooms

When children need to go to the bathroom (during group time) you will take them to the door, check that the lights are on, then tell them you will wait outside. Wait outside the door until they come out and escort them back to the correct room. (Knock on the door if you think it has been a really long time?)

Caregivers should assist children who are very young if they need help with buttons, etc.

Please sign, acknowledging your consent:

Signature of Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_