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# Corporal punishment in Cyprus

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## “HOPE FOR CHILDREN” CRC POLICY CENTER

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CHILDREN HELP MOVEMENT  
AGAINST PHYSICAL  
THREATENING AND  
EMOTIONAL REPRESSION



Co-funded by the  
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Citizenship Programme  
of the European Union

## “VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN SHOULD BE EVERYBODY’S CONCERN”

- Silence is not acceptable. If an adult is a witness of violence against a child and does nothing about it, it’s like s/he is telling this child that what is happening to him/her is acceptable.
- No child deserves abuse. Every adult has an important role in order to bring an end to violence against children.
- It’s everyone’s job to take care of children’s wellbeing and anyone who is responsible for it should respond to their duties, so that children are protected against perpetrators.
- [video "handscape"](#)

## THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATORS

- Family violence is a delicate issue and can be an obstacle in teaching.
- Educators can play a key role in the prevention and decrease of the exposure of children to violence.
- They can help children by creating a predictive environment, listening to children's stories and reassuring children that whatever happened is not their mistake.
- The willingness of a teacher to listen to a child's story can be a base for the child's resilience and personal strengths.

## THE ROLE OF THE EDUCATORS

- Depending on children's age, teachers can observe if a young child cries more than usually, has difficulty soothing, gets easily scared, or screams and gets in panic.
- Children in school age may be more aggressive and fight with others, may have phobias, may be anxious, or may worry about their home.
- Adolescents may use violence to get what they want, may show revolution at school, may stop caring about their appearance, or may refuse to follow rules.

# IDENTIFICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

**Some physical symptoms educators can observe on children:**

- Unexcused bruises and scratches (usually found on the face, the butt, the back, or the thighs)
- Unexcused fractures of the scalp or the bones, or even hematoma.
- Unexcused burns at palms, feet, butt, or back.

# IDENTIFICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

## **Some behavioral signs educators can observe on children:**

- A child may be self-harmful, aggressive, or isolated.
- The child explains his/her injuries in strange or inconsistent ways.
- A child may seem afraid of adults, including his/her parents.
- The child warns that s/he will harm an animal.
- A child reports that an adult harms him/her.

# IDENTIFICATION OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

## **A parent may:**

- Perceive the child as bad or difficult or speaks negatively about the child all the time.
- Use harsh discipline or gives instructions to teachers or caretakers to use harsh punishment for bad behaviors.
- Have been negatively disciplined or physically abused themselves as children.
- Ask from the child an unrealistic performance level based on his/her age and abilities.
- Use extreme methods of corporal punishment, perceiving them as normal.
- Not give an excuse or give an inconsistent or unpersuasive excuse for the child's injuring.

## THE ROLE OF PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

- Positive communication, motivation, and boundaries enhance children's skills and wellbeing, and promote their self-regulation and self-esteem.
- It is essential for parents to know their kids' progress at school and have a clear picture of the school's expectations.
- Good collaboration between school and family is crucial for giving the appropriate support to children to thrive both at school and home.

# SCHOOL-FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- Parents' involvement in children's learning and recreational activities is one of the most effective holistic preventive interventions (Desforges & Aboucher, 2003 · Graham-Clay, 2005).
- In today's society, schools and parents need to respond to increasing expectations, financial pressures, and time restrictions.
- In these changing times, effective collaboration between teachers and parents are of high importance for covering children's needs.

# SCHOOL-FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- In order to keep mutual interest, school and family need to have a regular and reliable communication (Bluestein, 2001 · Desforges & Abourchaar, 2003 · Dyches, Carter & Prater, 2012).
- Basic ways to improve school-home relationship :
  1. Giving information to parents,
  2. Giving parents a “voice” and
  3. Encouraging parents to collaborate with and trust schools.

## SCHOOL-FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- Teachers-family relationships are important for the socio-emotional wellbeing (Desforges & Aboucher, 2003)
- Bluestein (2001) reported that parents identify themselves with the educator's traits below:
  - Emotional Warmth
  - Accessibility
  - Positive Discipline
  - Focus on children and youth
  - Effective Classroom Management
  - Reliability
  - Trust

## BENEFITS FOR PARENTS

- The way schools approach parents affects the quality and extent to which parents get involved with their children's learning and development
- Parents can take ideas from school staff on how to support and raise their children effectively.
- Parents develop more respect for the important role they play in their children's education.

## BENEFITS FOR THE SCHOOL

- Parental involvement may give more freedom to teachers to focus on their teaching task
- Educators can learn more about their students' needs and the home environment, resulting knowing better how to support children.
- Involved parents tend to have a more positive attitude towards educators, which in turn facilitates educators' work (American Federation of Teachers, 2007)

## BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN

- Increase in academic achievement
- Increased motivation for learning
- Improved behavior
- More regular attendance
- More positive attitude towards school and homework
- Increased child 's wellbeing
- Increased interests
- Increased maturity
- Positive effect in school activities

(American Federation of Teachers, 2007)

## 5 REASONS TO FOCUS ON POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

1. **Words matter:** Words that may not seem important to a parent or teacher may be the defining moment of a child's life.
2. **Building Connection is Essential:** By focusing on the positive, we put our energy into connecting with a child instead of spending energy reconnecting.
3. **Respect is Foundational:** If you respect a child, they will return the favor.
4. **Children Repeat the Behaviors that Work:** We need to make sure that children get our attention when they behave appropriately in positive ways.
5. **Our Goal is to Empower Children:** We want to give children the skills that teach them how to redirect their own behavior and gain confidence that they can make the right choices.

(Kersey, 2013)

# 10 GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE

1. Establish a supportive and trusting relationship
2. Understand child development
3. Acknowledge positive behavior
4. Use positive methods of child guidance
5. Create a safe and engaging learning environment
6. Provide boundaries and consistency
7. Empower kids with age-appropriate choices
8. Model positive behaviors
9. Take care of yourself
10. Celebrate childhood

# ALTERNATIVES INSTEAD OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

- The child needs to be encouraged to achieve one positive behavior and to be rewarded directly after her/his efforts.
- Concise and simple instructions: every instruction needs to be given as statement (not as a question) and needs to explain what exactly the child needs to do.
- If the child is difficult in some cases or during specific activities, then the adult needs to analyze the child's behavior.
- Children have more possibilities to understand discipline measures, to keep their respect towards the adult and follow instructions, when the rules are clear.

# WAYS OF ELIMINATING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

- To eliminate corporal punishment:
  - Legislative reform;
  - Reform of policies (especially prevention and protection measures);
  - Increase of awareness.

# LEGISLATIVE REFORM

- Ensure that there are no grounds of legislation that justifies corporal punishment by parents, teachers and others.
- Adopt an explicit ban on all forms of corporal punishment and other forms of cruel or degrading forms of treatment of children, to apply in all areas of their lives.
- Provide guidelines for implementing these aspects of legislations which focus on the protection and promotion of the rights of children



## LEGISLATIVE REFORM - CYPRUS

- **Schools:** Corporal punishment is considered to be unlawful since 1967. Reaffirmed in 2009 by the Ministry of Education and Culture.
- **Day care:** Corporal punishment is unlawful in all early childhood care and all day care for older children.
- **Alternative care settings:** The prohibition of corporal punishment within the family applies to all persons with parental authority.
- **Sentence for crime:** There is no provision for judicial corporal punishment in criminal law.



## LEGISLATIVE REFORM – CYPRUS (2)

- **Penal institutions:** Corporal punishment is unlawful as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions, however, the prohibition is not explicit. New legislation is being drafted for Juvenile Offenders to fill in existing gaps.
- **Latest success:** The repeal of the provision of the Children's Law 1956 in which there was no explicit prohibition of all corporal punishment of children (in all settings). Even though the Article was inactive, it was repealed in 2013.



## REFORM OF POLICIES

- In order to implement legislation there must be close monitoring by authorities.
- Ensure that corporal punishment and other humiliating forms used for discipline are included in the definition of domestic violence.
- Ensure that Family Courts and other sections of the justice system show sensitivity to the needs of children and their families.
- Ensure that children and young people have the opportunity to express their views and participate in planning strategies on eradication of all corporal punishment forms.



## REFORM OF POLICIES (2)

- Strengthening the skills of professionals working with children and their families.
- Promotion of positive, non-violent forms of education.
- Ensure that advice and appropriate support is available to all parents.
- Ensure that children have access to confidential counseling as well as support and advocacy to fight violence against them.



## INCREASE OF AWARENESS

- Informing and raising awareness
  - Ensure broad informing and awareness on banning all forms of corporal punishment, degrading treatment, humiliation etc. for all people who come into contact with children and young people.
  - Ensure broad informing and awareness on children's rights, including the right to respect human dignity and their physical integrity.



## CHALLENGES AND FUTURE WORK

- Ensure that new legislations (7 in Family Law and Juvenile Justice) provide protection and respect to children's rights.
- Strengthen the skills of future parents in positive parental guidance.
- Life-long learning for professionals who come into contact with children and young people, especially more 'vulnerable' groups such as, children with disabilities, unaccompanied minors etc.

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