

How do teachers respond to biting at Wild Lilac?

Wild Lilac seeks to ensure that every child is safe and feels safe while in our care. Our program provides an environment that encourages and promotes cooperative interaction, respect for others, and problem solving between the children. Biting is a normal stage of development for young children who are teething and are still developing their language skills. It is usually a temporary condition that is most common between thirteen and twenty-eight months.



Wild Lilac CDC takes all hurtful and harmful behavior, including biting, seriously. When it happens, it can be scary, frustrating, and stressful for children, families, and teachers. It is also not something to blame on children, families, or teachers, and there are no quick and easy solutions to it.

Children bite for a variety of reasons: simple sensory exploration, panic, feeling crowded, seeking to be noticed, or intense desire for a toy. Repeated biting becomes a pattern of learned behavior that is often hard to change because it does achieve results (even if they are not the intended results): the desired toy, excitement, or attention. Knowing that the effect of their biting will hurt another person is not yet a part of a child of this ages' mindset; the "cause-effect" relationship as well as strong empathy is not internalized. Our teachers plan activities and supervise carefully in order for biting not to happen. There are times, however, when teachers cannot be within immediate reach to prevent a bite.

When children bite at Wild Lilac, the teachers attend to the bitten child immediately, comforting the child, helping her with language to express her feelings. If the bite breaks the skin, it is cleaned and bandaged. The biter is helped away from other children calmly, without a dramatic or emotional response (which might provide negative reinforcement for the child). The teacher will remind the child of ways to be gentle and help the child with

language to express his/her feelings. The teacher will help the child return to the group when he/she is calm.

Wild Lilac teachers focus on each child's positive behaviors and lovingly describe any gentle touching and respectful interactions they experience between children. When a child does something that hurts another child, the teachers use positive language, stating what the child can do rather than what he/she must not do ("be safe with friends" or "gentle hands" rather than "no biting") to empower the child to use his/her body in a gentle and respectful manner.

Wild Lilac teachers communicate unconditional regard for all children at all times, no matter their behavior.

When a bite occurs, teachers follow this procedure:

- The child who is bitten is reminded that when someone does something s/he does not like, s/he has the power to say "no" or "stop".
- An oral incident report is given to the parents/guardians of all children involved the day the incident occurs. The name of a biting child is not released because it serves no useful purpose and can make an already difficult situation more difficult.
- A written incident report is put in the biter's as well as the bitten child's file. This report is signed by the child's parent or guardian.
- We look intensively at the context of each biting incident for pattern, in an effort to prevent further biting behavior.
- We work with each biting child on resolving conflict or frustration in a constructive and safe manner.
- We try to adapt the environment and work with parents/guardians to reduce any child stress.
- We make special efforts to protect the potentially bitten child.
- We make every effort to extinguish biting behavior quickly and to provide support to families.