



CONSCIOUS DISCIPLINE

AUGUST 26, 2023

Supporting Neurodiversity



Explore the role of adults during children's significant "brain building" years.

Discover the positive impact of shifting your perception.

Review practical strategies to nurture a felt sense of safety.



Funding provided by Indian River County
Children's Services Advisory Committee
and PNC.





Kristen Balhoff, Certified Instructor

Motivated by the developmental differences of her own children at home, Kristen left her original career to learn about supporting children with unique social/emotional profiles. She immediately fell in love with Conscious Discipline's adult-first and relationship-based approach to parenting. Based on brain science, Conscious Discipline benefits all families, and Kristen has developed practical strategies for any family to build on their strengths and solve challenging problems.

Kristen encourages an affirming approach of parenting that honors each child's individual developmental timeline. She loves to help parents make everything more concrete, predictable, and sensory-aware while incorporating each child's special interests. She also believes that in all situations... there's a visual aid for that! Kristen teaches others how to create authentic connections and how to best support those children hesitant to enter new relationships, with adult-led creativity, playfulness, persistence, and innovative strategies that yield transformational results.

As a retired camp counselor, Kristen loves to incorporate humor, games, singing, and riddles into all of her workshops. She offers energetic optimism to inspire parents to go deeper in their own journey of Conscious Discipline. She invites steady progress with hopeful encouragement as we all grow together.



Kristen Balhoff, Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor
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Conscious Discipline Training Outline

Supporting Neurodiversity

Saturday, August 26, 2023

9:00am – 3:00pm

9:00	Welcome & Brain Smart Start
9:15	Adult First: Common to Conscious
9:30	Conscious Discipline Brain State Model (Survival, Emotional, Executive states)
10:00	Power of Perception
10:30	Bio Break
10:45	Brain Smart Start
11:00	Neurodiversity: Autism, ADHD, and others
11:15	Power of Acceptance
11:30	Supporting all Brains: Part 1
12:00	Lunch & Learn: Neuro-affirming Practices
12:30	Brain Smart Start
12:40	Supporting all Brains: Part 2
1:30	Bio Break
1:45	Brain Smart Start
1:55	Power of Free Will
2:15	Power of Intention
2:30	Reflection and Evaluation
2:45	Post-Test and Closing Ritual



Supporting Neurodiversity

Presented by: Kristen Balhoff, Conscious Discipline Certified Instructor
 kristen.balhoff@consciousdiscipline.com

Conscious Discipline is an adult-first, trauma-responsive approach to self-regulation, wellness, and classroom management.

Traditional Discipline

External Model
 Stimulus: React

You can make others change.

Rules govern behavior; rewards and punishment are the foundation for changing behavior.

Avoid conflict; it is disruptive.

Conscious Discipline



Internal Model
 Stimulus: PAUSE - Response

Changing ourselves creates change in others through dynamic interactions.

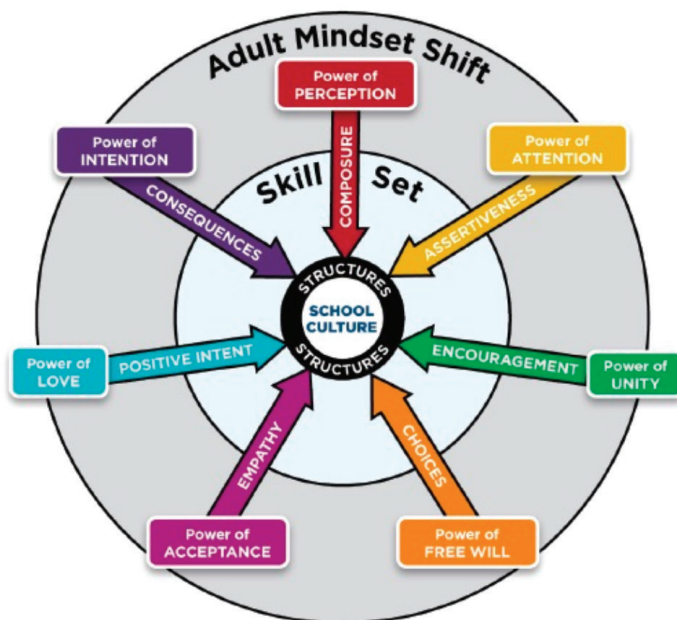
Relationships govern behavior; connection is the foundation for change and encourages willingness.

Conflict is a reflection of missing social or emotional skills and creates opportunity to teach life skills.

Discipline is not something you do **to** children.

It is something you develop **within** them.

- Dr. Becky Bailey



Powers - Give us the mindset that yields the intention required to access the Skills necessary to build or repair *healthy relationships*.

Skills - Equip us with the tools to solve problems, manage upset, create or repair *healthy relationships* and set and achieve goals despite all obstacles.

Structures - Provide constant reminders to stay on track with our values and allow us ways to practice these values everyday thereby supporting the development of *healthy relationships*.

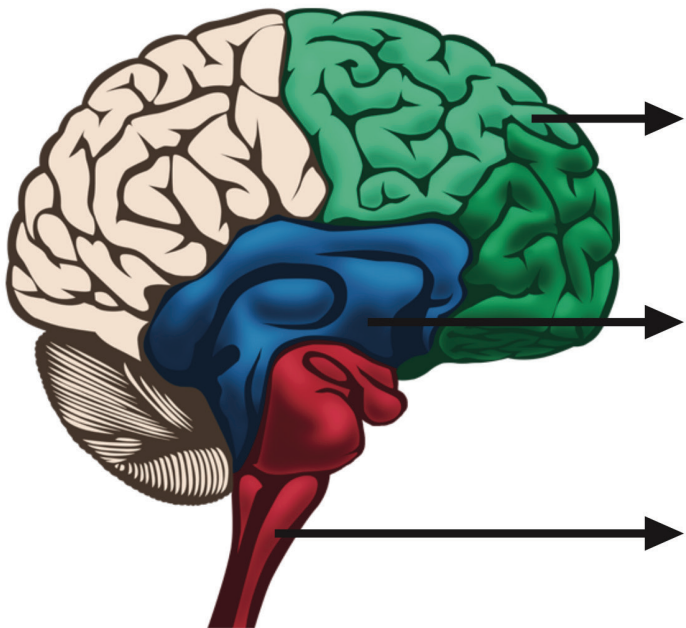
Shift from *unconscious reflexes and emotional reactions* to *conscious, wise responses*



An upset adult is always a threat to children's sense of safety. We must actively calm ourselves if we are to help children calm themselves. Taking three deep breaths helps us calm down by shutting off the stress response in the body.

Conscious Discipline Brain State Model

The Conscious Discipline Brain State Model helps us understand how the brain works in relation to discipline.



Executive State

Developmental Need:

Problem solving opportunities

Looks like: Wisdom, unlimited skills

Message: What can I learn?

Emotional State

Developmental Need: Connection

Looks like: Back talk, sass, yelling, verbal reactions

Message: Am I loved/connected?




Survival State

Developmental Need: Safety

Looks like: Hiding, fighting, surrender, physical reactions

Message: Am I safe?

The Brain State Model consists of three general brain states: **survival**, **emotional** and **executive**. Each state shifts your perception, and each state has a trigger, a question we must answer to move to a higher state, and a skill set that we can access.

	Triggered by	Asks	Skills	Perceptual Lens
Survival State 	Threat.	<i>Am I safe?</i>	Fight, flight or freeze.	Genetic preprogramming.
Emotional State 	The world not going our way.	<i>Am I loved? Do I belong?</i>	Blame, guilt, name calling, and an us vs. them mentality.	Preprogrammed insecurities.
Executive State 	The brain is integrated and organized, and we have a sense of choice.	<i>What can I learn from this?</i>	Problem-solving, reflection and other executive skills.	Gives us the ability to control our impulses and choose our perception.

State dictates perception. Perception dictates intent. Intent dictates action.



Active Calming

- **Breathe in through the nose, and out through the mouth.**
- **Self-talk: "I'm safe." "Keep breathing." "You can handle this."**
- **Wish well, reframe as an Oops, Q.T.I.P., solve the problem.**



The **Power of Perception** states that **no one can make you angry without your permission.** Perception of an experience or situation creates your feelings about it, not the event itself. Your brain state dictates your perception which unconsciously dictates your behavior.

Think → **Feel** → **Act**

How I think dictates how I feel which dictates how I act. I am in charge of my internal state, my feelings, and my behavior. Brain States can be changed. With a changed state, the adult can problem-solve instead of react.

All behavior is communication.

Stressful Ways to Perceive Behavior

Good/Bad, Innocent/Guilty,
Deserving/Undeserving.

Healthy Ways to Perceive Behavior

Safe/Unsafe, Helpful/Hurtful,
Missing Skill or Call for help

Emotional State Thinking




Always/never, no one/everyone
Predicting worst possible outcome
Personalizing: It's all about me
Guilt: Should, must, have to, ought to
Blaming: You made me
I'm not good enough.
There's something wrong with me.
I shouldn't have _____.
Everyone thinks I'm _____.

**Discipline myself first; discipline children second.
When you are upset you are always focused on what you don't want.**

Shift from *"This child is bad."* to *"This child is having a really hard time."*



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	Perception of Conflict	What to Do with Conflict
Survival State 	Conflict is threatening and bad.	It must be punished .
Emotional State 	Conflict is irritating and upsetting.	It must be stopped .
Executive State 	Conflict is a call for help and a teaching opportunity.	It must be solved with new skills.

All behavior is communication

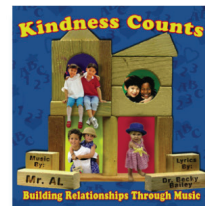
- ♥ When and where does it happen?
- ♥ Is there a repeat target?
- ♥ What is the child communicating? What is the message?
- ♥ What is the child's need? What skills are missing?

We cannot change a child's behavior until we change how we view it.

Get ready with a Brain Smart® Start

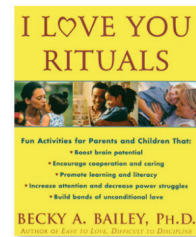
The Conscious Discipline Brain Smart Start is designed to help adjust your inner state and set your brain up for optimum learning.

The activity to **Unite** as a School Family involves everyone doing something together. It builds connection, fosters a sense of safety and releases endorphins.



The activity to **Disengage Stress** involves deep breathing and stretching. It prepares the brain for cortical learning and turns off the stress response.

The activity to **Connect** the students to the teacher and to each other helps to maintain focused attention and the motivation to learn. It also releases oxytocin, which promotes connection and reduces aggression.



The activity to **Commit** oneself to learning involves affirmations and positive thinking. It produces serotonin, teaches responsibility, promotes mindful attention and develops the prefrontal lobe.



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Brains have natural variation. That's **NEURODIVERSITY**.

Some brains are uniquely different in a common way.
That's **NEURODIVERGENCE**.

Most are in the **NEURO-MAJORITY**
or are **NEUROTYPICAL**

ADHD, Autism, Dyspraxia, Dyslexia, Dyscalculia, Dysgraphia, and Tourette's syndrome are lifelong developmental conditions which affect how people communicate and interact with the world.

**It's my job to keep you safe, ...
to remove barriers and evaluate expectations,
to help you make meaning of your strengths,
and to teach tools and strategies that empower you to reach your goals,
as your authentic self.**

- Kristen Balhoff, parent of neurodivergent children



Significance of the Conscious Discipline School Family™

The Conscious Discipline School Family creates caring communities.

Caring is a product of a community that deems all of its members important, believes everyone has something to contribute, and acknowledges that **EVERYONE COUNTS**.



How we respond to the behavior of the children we serve is the greatest social emotional lesson we will ever teach. - *Dr. Becky Bailey*



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The **Power of Acceptance** is mindfulness in action. It's the active, non-judgmental embracing of experience in the here and now. Practicing the Power of Acceptance means quietly observing the moment without needing to judge, negate, or change it in any way. **The moment is as it is.**

We can't support a child until we acknowledge that the child is doing **exactly** what they are doing. It doesn't matter what they **should** be doing. They're not doing it, and so they are calling for help. Shift from judging... to noticing and offering empathy.

Noticing versus Judging

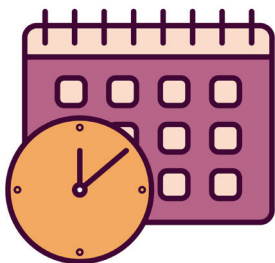
Directs attention	Creates fear
Keeps us in the present moment	Adds stress
Keeps us as a WE	Separates into US and THEM

Noticing in place of Judging creates a felt sense of Safety

By Noticing, we provide a reflection of the child. Reflection helps to build self-awareness.

We are a reflector for all children, and it's especially important for neurodivergent students because their self-awareness may be underdeveloped. We add meaning, reveal impact, and build context. We are **Meaning Makers!**

Neurodivergent brains work hard to feel SAFE



In order to feel SAFE the brain looks for patterns and predictability via consistent routines which support safety. Visual routines help children organize and cooperate. The goal is to create a **visually structured, predictable environment.**

Where there is chaos, add structure!



Helping Neurodivergent Brains to Feel SAFE



Visual

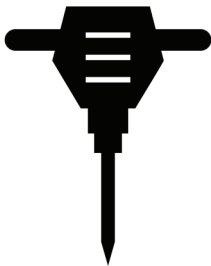
Children think in pictures, so M.A.P. the routines:

M = Model it

A = Add visuals

P = Practice

Start where there is chaos.



Concrete

Tell them what TO DO.

Use words for their literal meaning.

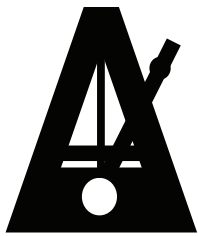
Be specific:

What is the work?

How much work?

When am I done?

What is next?



Predictable

The brain is pattern-seeking. Consistent, clear patterns are soothing to the brain. Knowing what to expect next reduces anxiety.

Routines help children tell time and learn to regulate their internal clocks.



Filtered

Be aware of all 8 senses, including:

- Vestibular: sense of movement through space.
- Proprioception: sense of where your body is in space.
- Interoception: sensing your internal body signals



Tied to Interests

Intense passions shape the brain, improve well-being, and enhance learning. Leverage the child's interests as a gateway into their world.

Incorporate interests into visual supports to encourage better engagement.



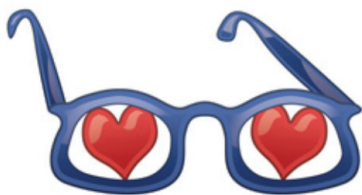
The **Power of Free Will** allows us to make a fundamental choice. Will you spend your efforts attempting to control others, or will you work on controlling yourself? Power comes from choice, not force. **The only person I can make change is myself.**

Outside situations and people are not in charge of me. We can't make others act in ways we desire.

With children, focus on **connection instead of coercion**. Change your job description to: My job is to keep you safe. When we focus on safety instead of judgment, we can calm the lower centers of the brain, make connections and exercise free will.

Motivation comes from the **QUALITY** of the relationship.

Connection wires the brain for impulse control and willingness. Attempting to discipline without willingness is a chronic power struggle.



The **Power of Love** is the conscious choice to see the best in others. When we offer **Positive Intent**, we can look beyond the surface of behaviors to see the child's true need. Then we are able to teach a new skill rather than seek punishment or revenge.

- Negative intent always encourages children to be more oppositional.
- Offering Positive Intent inspires children to cooperate so we can teach them a better way.

Positive Intent for Hurtful Actions

- Step 1:** Offer positive intent.
- Step 2:** Notice the action without judgement.
- Step 3:** State the missing skill by giving the benefit of the doubt to the child.
- Step 4:** Set the limit.
- Step 5:** Teach a new skill.
- Step 6:** Offer encouragement.

A.C.T.

Acknowledge the child's deepest desire and intent. "You wanted ____" or "You were hoping ____."

Clarify what skills to use. "When you want ____, then say (or do) ____."

Take time to practice. "Say (or do) it now for practice."



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Reframe the Blame

1. Children are just mean.
2. They are just trying to get my attention.
3. She is just plain lazy.

*Notice in all your answers that negative intent assumes the child's behavior is about **you**, while positive intent lets the child's behavior be **about the child**.*

Visuals must be **taught**. With any refusal, assume that additional information or a different instructional style is needed. **Provide** more **modeling**, more **concrete**, **specific visuals**, and more **practice**.

Won't or Can't?!

It can be easy to think that a child knows how to do something, but they just **won't** do it. Won't implies that they are choosing not to do something. It can be perceived as willful defiance, and that shifts us to the lower centers of the brain.



Let's look at it a different way. With neurodivergent children, it's important to view behavior through the lens of Positive Intent. Rather than thinking that the child won't do it, we understand that the child **can't** do it. The child is not able to do it, and this could be for many reasons.

- lack of understanding of what's expected
- strong desire for sameness
- uncertainty of what's coming next
- sensory challenge with the next activity
- no connection with the adult making the request
- lacking a felt sense of safety
- a missing skill

The child is asking you to play detective and look for clues about what he is communicating.

Even if the student could do it yesterday, something is blocking them from doing it at this moment. They are asking for more support to be successful.

Pivot your perspective:

I have a student who is _____.

I can teach them through that trait when I view it as a strength of being _____ by _____.



The **Power of Intention** says that mistakes are opportunities to learn. We can make it our goal to teach and/or learn a new skill. Becoming conscious of **consequences** is the key to change.

Unfortunately, many of us hold on to mental models of being punished for making mistakes. We might use a common defense against mistakes, such as perfection, blame, apathy, and rationalization.

PUNISHMENTS	CONSEQUENCES
Make children suffer for having a problem	Teach children how to solve problems
Cause children to fear making mistakes	Show children that mistakes are opportunities to learn
Rely on judgment	Rely on reflection and personal responsibility
Provide extrinsic motivation to please others and avoid physical/emotional pain	Provide intrinsic motivation to use or learn new skills
Focus on what not to do	Focus on what to do instead

Shift from *"How can I make this child behave?"* to *"How can I help this child be successful?"*

For a consequence to be effective, it must be applied to a **connected child** who **possesses the desired skill**.

What level are you, according to *Autism Level UP!* ?

- Awareness** - You've heard of Autism. Maybe you know someone who is autistic. You may even know some of the diagnostic criteria and typical forms of "support" offered to autistic people. You're wondering how we could dare call them "autistic people."
- Acceptance** - You embrace Autistic people as part of your community. You realize that your preconceived notions about autism derived from text books and public awareness campaigns are limited and likely wrong.
- Appreciation** - Informed by Autistic people, you strive to understand the reality of autism; that is the strengths AND challenges and the true range of diversity within the Autistic community.
- Empowerment** - You support, follow and let Autistic people lead. You strive to arm Autistic people with the knowledge, tools and strategies to navigate the world as they are.
- Advocacy** - You are committed to being an ally to Autistic people. You are responsive to the priorities of the Autistic community and you work to change the world in ways that are meaningful to them.



Highlights from my first 2-Day Workshop of Conscious Discipline for ASD

1. Connection. Connection. Connection.
Discard the myth that says that “autistic individuals don’t want connection”. Everyone needs connection. It may not be easy to achieve connection (with eye contact, touch, presence, in a playful situation), but it’s a disservice not to find a way in. Keep trying. And then try even harder.
2. Conscious Discipline is designed to build a more resilient brain. As far as we know, neuroplasticity works in the ASD brain, and intervention helps to create optimal brain development.
3. The #1 strategy for supporting students with ASD is understanding ASD and understanding that it impacts every part of you. They don’t leave autism at the door. You can’t separate what’s autism versus what’s not.
4. ASD brains struggle to quickly sort incoming information into (1) this is good/move closer or (2) this is bad/move away or (3) this isn’t important right now/ignore it.
5. To download calm and co-regulate an upset child, we must first *drop our agenda* for the child and be fully present with the child. Everything she does gives you more information to help her. Drop your agenda. Eliminate talking. Go in low and slow.
6. ASD brains use “bottom-up” processing that is sensory-driven and taken at face value every time to ask, “What am I seeing?”

Neurotypical brains employ “top-down” processing to the the attachment template to make predictions (and correct errors) when asking, “Is this something I’ve seen before?”

So to achieve a felt sense of safety, ASD brains require a visually structured, predictable environment. They need a VISUALLY-STRUCTURED and PREDICTABLE environment to begin to manage all of the novelty that comes with processing information this way.
7. We reviewed tons of details about how to gain joint attention (which is the precursor to social referencing), how to design Work Systems, how to motivate communication by providing a reason to do it and a means to make it happen, how to create and practice with concrete visuals, and how important it is to practice Noticing to develop self-awareness and reflection in ASD brains.
8. Conscious Discipline is an adult-first model. It’s time to shift OUR thinking. ASD is elevating our discipline as a society to move away from guilt, fear, and shame and replace it with Executive State brilliance.

- Kristen Balhoff

Join us for the next 2-Day Workshop in Raleigh, NC!



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2-Day Workshop | October 27-28 | Raleigh, NC

Conscious Discipline for Autism Spectrum Disorder

Intended for: Educators, administrators, special education teachers, social workers, school counselors, school psychologists and parents for age groups of 3 and up.

- **Learn** how to use Conscious Discipline to increase the social and emotional learning of children with ASD, including those who seem resistant, reactive or unreachable
- **Develop** an understanding of why it's helpful to present information differently for students with ASD, and how to do so effectively
- **Uncover** powerful strategies for fostering the connections and SEL skills that set the stage for lifelong success



Register at: ConsciousDiscipline.com/Events

Your feedback from today's training is helpful!

PLEASE SCAN ME!



<http://qrco.de/KristenBalhoff>



Coaching for



Early Educators



Collaborate with an experienced educator:

- **Build** on your strengths as a teacher or director
- **Work** towards your classroom or school goals
- **Strengthen** relationships with staff and parents
- **Implement** ideas from professional development workshops

Contact A Coach To Get Started!

ChildcareResourcesIR.org/coach · 772-567-3202 ext. 114



Amanda Gooch is an Educator with 14 years of teaching experience. In addition to a Bachelor's degree in Child Psychology and a Master's degree in Teaching from the University of South Florida, she holds her Florida Childcare Professional Credential Certificate and her Educator Certificate from the State of Florida Department of Education. Amanda has completed her Infant and Toddler CLASS Observer certification through Teachstone and holds her University of Florida Lastinger Center for Early Learning Coaching Certificate. She believes that all children and educators are capable of success, no exceptions!



Funding Provided By
Indian River County Children's
Services Advisory Committee

Childcare Resources
2300 Fifth Ave, Suite 149 . Vero Beach, FL 32960

**Early Educators:
Need help taking your next step?**

Childcare Resources

Higher Education Program

Stay on track with our mentorship program!

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- Meet with other local early educators in a supportive cohort.
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- Director's Credential
- A.S. in Early Childhood Education
- B.S. in Early Childhood Education
- M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction, *Concentration: Early Childhood Education Leadership*

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INDIAN RIVER STATE COLLEGE



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STATE COLLEGE OF FLORIDA
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Unsure about the financial cost of higher education?

The Higher Education Program can also help you navigate Florida's Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.) program, helping to pay for your credential or degree, reducing or eliminating your cost.



Want to know more?

Visit ChildcareResourcesIR.org/advance

Email Stephanie Harmody: Stephanie@ChildcareResourcesIR.org

Email Elizabeth Swann: ESwann@ChildcareResourcesIR.org



Funding provided by
Indian River County Children's
Services Advisory Committee.

IS THE COST OF CHILDCARE TAKING A TOLL ON YOUR BUDGET?

Childcare Resources is a nonprofit organization offering childcare tuition assistance to qualifying families in Indian River County. To qualify for the program, parents/guardians must:

- work full-time, attend school full-time, or a combination of work and school equaling full-time (at least 30 hours per week)*
- live in Indian River County
- meet the income eligibility requirements** below

Number in Household	Household Income		
2	\$27,465	-	\$38,451
3	\$34,545	-	\$48,363
4	\$41,625	-	\$58,275
5	\$48,705	-	\$61,187
6	\$55,785	-	\$78,099

*Registered students must provide proof of enrollment

**Income verification may be waived for full-time students

For more information, please call 772-567-3202 or visit ChildcareResourcesIR.org.

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Indian River County
Children's Services
Advisory Committee



HIGH-QUALITY EARLY EDUCATION

Education-based classrooms for students 6 weeks through 5 years

All program sites are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)



FAMILY WELLNESS RESOURCES

All students are assessed twice each year

Physical, occupational, and speech therapies are available at all sites

On-site wellness nurse



FAMILY SUPPORT

Parent education meetings on early childhood education and development

Clothing closet for growing children



Thank you!

Childcare Resources Mission:

To elevate and promote the highest quality early childhood development and education in Indian River County, focusing on economically challenged children and families.