

What Is It?

Active supervision is a universal strategy consisting of a series of intentional adult actions that promote child safety and prevent challenging behavior. It may look like adults positioning themselves in a room so they can see all children, scanning and counting children, engaging in problem-solving with a group of children, and/or redirecting children engaged in unsafe behavior. Active supervision creates opportunities for adults to interact positively with children, provide proactive praise and guidance, and redirect children toward safe behaviors. It helps children understand safety rules and helps create a nurturing environment.

When to Use It

Active supervision is essential at all times. Be sure to maintain active supervision:

- During classroom instruction and activities.
- During free play.
- During transitions like arrival, departure, and moving to different locations in the building or program.
- During outdoor play.
- On field trips or in the community.

Steps to Implementation / How to Do It

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| <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. Arrange the room so it is easy to move around. Arrange furniture so adults can see and hear all parts of the room at all times. Ensure good visibility of all exits and any areas where water or electricity is accessible (e.g., restrooms, water tables, light table). Also ensure storage areas are secure, especially anywhere adults store personal items, hot beverages, cleaning supplies, or equipment unsafe for children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Greet children by name when they arrive and throughout the day. Gesture (e.g., high fives) and comment on children's interests. Remain upbeat and positive, and let the children know you are glad they are there. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. Position your body so you can see most or all of the room. Move around regularly to join children's play, have conversations, and provide assistance. Work with other adults to make sure all areas of the room/program are actively supervised at all times. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Continually scan the room to make sure children are safely engaged. During outdoor play, move around the space to make sure children are visible while using equipment and engaging in active play. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Interact with children. Provide behavior specific praise and redirect to appropriate activities as needed. |

Example

Ms. Dominguez is a teacher in an inclusive preschool classroom. She and two paraprofessionals, Mr. Matsumoto and Ms. Cortez, supervise a class of 18 children ages 3-5, with and without identified disabilities. The team has arranged the classroom so there are clear views of all exits, and adults can see into all play areas in the room. Ms. Dominguez greets each child by name at arrival and regularly scans the room to count children. She and the entire team regularly move around the room, joining children's play, having conversations with children, and encouraging prosocial behaviors. The team developed a checklist of adult roles and responsibilities to clarify adult supervision and management tasks during important routines throughout the day. During free choice, one adult manages the restroom and toileting while the other two adults supervise specific areas of the room and engage in warm interactions with children. When there is a safety concern about a child's behavior, the team works with the behavior support team to identify specific supervision needs associated with the functional assessment and behavior support plan. When appropriate, the team rotates responsibilities for individually monitoring a child's behavior during problematic routines.

How to Increase Effectiveness

- Agree on “zones” that each adult will actively supervise, and communicate when you or a child leaves your “zone” or you need assistance. Make sure every child in the space can be seen and heard at all times.
- Rearrange the space to avoid areas where children cannot readily be seen. Use mirrors to provide visibility into any areas that cannot be changed.
- Interact with children by asking about topics of interest (e.g., books, characters, games, family events) as you greet them.
- Avoid long or sustained conversations with adults who come into the room.
- If an adult must stay in one area to lead an activity, make a plan for supervising children who need additional support. For example, if an adult is running a small group art activity (and cannot walk around the room), have a child who needs additional supervision join the group first and then move to a different activity near another adult.

Resources

Casey, A.M., & McWilliam, R.A. (2005). [Where is everybody?: Organizing adults to promote child engagement](#). *Young Exceptional Children*, 8(2), 2-10.

Office of Head Start (2018). [Creating safe and engaging learning environments: Active supervision for preschoolers](#).

Office of Head Start (2020). [Active supervision](#).