

**Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling**  
**Position Statement on Spanking and Corporal Punishment**  
**Adopted 3-14-15**

The *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* opposes spanking, hitting, and other forms of corporal punishment against children in any setting for any reason.

**Whereas,**

- Continued research clearly notes adverse and harmful results to spanking, hitting and other forms of physical punishment. For example, research indicates that the use of such measures by parents is associated with increased levels of depression, aggression, anxiety, and other antisocial behavior among children and decreased cognitive performance (Afifi, Mota, Dasiewicz, MacMillan, & Sareen, 2012; Coley, Cull, & Carrono, 2013; Durrant & Ensom, 2012; Ferguson, 2012; Gershoff et al., 2004; Lee, Grogan-Kaylor & Gerger, 2014; Taylor, Manganello, Lee, & Rice, 2010 ).
- Researchers have concluded that even across cultures, spanking and corporal punishment are ineffective methods of behavior management (Gershoff et al., 2010).
- Researchers have found that spanking and corporal punishment put children at a greater risk of physical abuse (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2011; Lee, Grogan-Kaylor, & Gerger, 2014).
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has declared that pertinent agencies should use "*all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...*" (Article 19, United Nations Human Rights, retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>).

**Therefore,**

The *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* opposes spanking, hitting, and other forms of corporal punishment against children in any setting. Instead, the *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* encourages the use of evidence based positive discipline techniques that have been shown to increase desirable behaviors in both school and home settings (For example, McVittie, 2003 retrieved from <http://www.positivediscipline.com/research/ResearchSupportingPositiveDisciplineinHomeschoolsandCommunities.pdf>).

The *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* acknowledges and respects that there are diverse cultural family views on this issue, but the preponderance of evidence indicates

that corporal punishment is unhealthy for children (Gershoff et al., 2010). The *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* encourages counselors to work with families to help educate them on this important issue, particularly in regards to alternative behavioral interventions. It is also recommended that counselors work to provide the necessary support and guidance in developing and implementing such alternatives with families, as needed.

### **Summary**

Researchers have consistently found spanking and other forms of corporal punishment by parents and schools to be ineffective and harmful for children of all ages. The *Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling* actively advocates for the elimination of spanking and other forms of corporal punishment.

Respectfully submitted by the ACAC Advocacy Committee: Evette Horton (Chair), Rebekah Byrd, Louise Glenn, Ashley E. Poklar, Stephanie Rickards, and Jill Van Horne.

Adopted by the ACAC membership on 3-14-15.