Aggression

Remember:
Aggressive behavior can be common to child care programs because the children have not yet learned to express their strong emotions in more appropriate ways.
When children come together in group settings, they are more likely to experience frustration and conflict that can cause aggression.
Typically children use their behaviors in response to frustration in any setting.

Observe the Situation in Which a Child May Become Aggressive:

**Situation:**
Is the child trying to make contact with someone in an inappropriate manner? Is he/she trying to be friendly?

**Possible Solution:**
Teach ways to touch that do not involve pushing or shoving. Notice when a child is being friendly and using a gentle touch and positively recognize the child.

**Situation:**
Does this child need more space?

**Possible Solution:**
Some children have difficulty keeping their hands to themselves. Give him/her adequate space. Give him/her something to hold or manipulate.

**Situation:**
Was a behavior misinterpreted and thought to be aggressive?

**Possible Solution:**
When children are crowded, they like to bump into one another or knock things over. Children who are aggressive often misinterpret accidents as aggression. Further aggression follows when the second child retaliates. You may need to quickly describe the situation as accidental.

**Situation:**
How much language is this child using?

**Possible Solution:**
A child who uses very few words or who is difficult to understand is more likely to respond to a conflict with aggressive behavior.

**Situation:**
Is this child trying to engage another in roly-poly play and has it turned aggressive?

**Possible Solution:**
Provide indoor and outdoor movement opportunities each day.

**Situation:**
Is this child using aggression to express anger or to get what he/she wants?

**Possible Solution:**
Teach a child who is angry to express him or herself in other ways such as telling someone, yelling, stamping feet, pounding play dough, or scribbling on a piece of paper.

**Situation:**
Is this child hitting many times per day or for a number of months?

**Possible Solution:**
If the child has persistent difficulty controlling his/her aggression, a concerted effort to reduce his/her behavior is needed. Talk to the child about their emotions, teach deep breathing, teach the child to recognize when he/she is angry, encourage and demonstrate cooperation with other children.