



*Helping  
Children  
Thrive*

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# Welcome

We are a network of outstanding early education centers providing safe, clean, and kind spaces for our youngest children to learn, thrive, and grow. Our educators lead age-appropriate, play-based programs heavily informed by a nature-based curriculum, social-emotional learning (SEL), NAEYC's Anti-Bias Early Education (ABE), and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics).

Our Family Handbook outlines our general approach to care and support for families and children. To the extent the information in this Family Handbook conflicts with state or local laws or regulations, our programs and employees will abide by the state and local laws and regulations.

Please review, sign, and return the Handbook Acknowledgment Form to your location's Executive Director on or before your family's first day of enrollment.

Please note that our Family Handbook is subject to change at any time and without notice.

## Sustainable Early Education

Our approach aims to help children sustain healthy development while establishing a strong foundation for life-long learning. Our four strategic pillars:



### *People-First*

**Empowering educators and enrolled families to help young children thrive.**



### *Pedagogy for Tomorrow*

**Incorporating STEAM, SEL, and neuroscience to develop age-appropriate education and approaches.**



### *Planet at the Core*

**Ensuring sustainability and Nature-Based Learning as essential components of our approach and culture.**



### *Positive Growth*

**Helping families, communities, and individuals meet essential milestones.**

## Educator Selection and Training

Our educators, Executive Directors, and support staff undergo a series of state and company-mandated screenings, interviews, background checks, and reference calls before engaging with enrolled children, families, current staff, or leading program activities.

Upon hire, our educators engage in a customized training program to help ensure proper introduction and application of our curriculum and best-in-class health and safety practices, along with all state and locally mandated trainings prior to working in an early childcare center.

# Age Groups & Classrooms

Classroom assignments are based on age and developmental level. Program leaders make decisions regarding classroom placement with the child's best interests in mind. To that end, our program retains the discretion to change a classroom assignment at any time. Likewise, our program retains discretion to set criteria for advancement between classrooms based on children's needs, ages, and developmental levels.

## Infant

Our infant classrooms are safe, comfortable, clean, and kind environments. Infant classrooms are filled with nurturing staff, sensory discoveries, and new friends. We help infants thrive through age-appropriate and individualized interactions.

We partner with enrolled families to develop an approach that is consistent with the family's regular routine to ease transitions from home to our program.

During waking hours, infants are offered both individual and group activities to stimulate senses, brain development, and build core skills essential to self-discovery and empathy.



### *Infant Classroom Focus Areas*

- Body Care
- Rest
- Songs & Sign Language
- Oral Language
- Reading
- Motor Skills
- Sensory
- Socialization

***Infant Classroom Family Pack List – Please note all items below must be labeled with child's first and last names.***

- Diapers
- Wipes
- Diaper Cream (preferred)
- Food
- Sleep Sack (no blankets, swaddles, or toys)
- Crib Sheet (travel / portable crib sized)
- Extra Change of Clothes
- Pacifier (optional, please note we cannot clip to clothing)

# Age Groups & Classrooms

## Toddler

Toddlers often begin to acclimate to a schedule within a whole group setting.

Through a combination of personalized instruction and small group time, our program staff advance toddlers' resourcefulness, critical thinking skills, and capacity for compassion.

Hands-on learning and play keep toddlers actively engaged and continuously interested in understanding more about themselves, their friends and family, and the world around them. Our toddler program includes a balance of child-directed and staff-initiated opportunities to guide their exploration of new themes, skills, routines, and language. Our toddler program nurtures the "I can do it!" mindset, while also helping toddlers understand their relationship with the environment and their peers.



### *Toddler Classroom Focus Areas*

- Whole Group Circle
- Small Groups
- Self-Help Skills
- Playing = Learning (Gross Motor)
- Playground & Nature Based Learning
- Socialization & Compassion
- Rest

### *Toddler Classroom Family Pack List – Please note all items below must be labeled with child's first and last names.*

- Lunch
- Crib Sheet & Blanket
- Sippy Cup / Water Bottle
- Extra Change of Clothes
- Special Sleep Toy (optional)

# Age Groups & Classrooms

## Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten

Our preschool and pre-kindergarten classrooms honor and inspire the incredible connections that children infer about the objects, actions, and people in the world around them.

Our preschool and pre-k classrooms harness the energy of learning to create a focused, engaged environment in which children are poised to thrive. Through play and interactive dialogue, children are encouraged to express their own individuality, as well as appreciate the unique traits of others.

Our preschool and pre-kindergarten programs nurture inquisitive minds and refine core skills as children prepare to enter kindergarten. With a variety of learning labs throughout the room, children are encouraged to explore at their own pace and experiment with new concepts and skills. Our literacy program enables children to advance their language aptitude.



### *Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Focus Areas*

- Whole Group Circle
- Small-Group Rotations
- Sustainable Education & STEAM Inspired Elements
- Playing = Learning (Gross Motor)
- Playground & Nature Based Learning
- Socialization & Compassion
- Rest

***Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten Classroom Family Pack List – Please note all items below must be labeled with child’s first and last names.***

- Lunch
- Crib Sheet & Blanket
- Water Bottle
- Extra Change of clothes
- Special Sleep Toy (optional)

# Everyday Learning

## Music, Movement & Language

Music is an essential component of our program with a distinct blend of music education and multiculturalism to help children achieve developmental milestones through song, sign language, instruments, and movement.

Our music offerings focus primarily on advancing children's cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development.

Research shows that music exposure can enhance learning and is a common language accessible to all children. Music educators are often shared between our locations and visit our programs on a rotating basis.



## Outdoor Learning & Nature-Based Curriculum

Daily outdoor play is very important for young children and is an important component of our program. Children engage in at least 60 minutes of intentional physical activity/gross motor activity/moderate to vigorous play daily. This is typically divided into 30-minute intervals: 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon, but may be modified from time to time based on weather, classroom schedules, and other conditions.

Children will spend time outside daily unless the weather outside is hazardous (following the "Child Care Weather Watch" guidance). Our philosophy and policy are that if a child is well enough to attend the program, they are well enough to play outdoors.

Please provide appropriate clothing and shoes to allow for weather extremes. Every family must also provide their sunscreen. Guidelines for sunscreen application are available for enrolled families at each location.



## Transitions

We strive to ensure peaceful transitions for children and families. When children are ready to transition to new classrooms, families typically receive transition notice at least one week before the transition. In addition, the Executive Director will notify and review the transition approach with all appropriate program personnel.

Responses to classroom transitions often vary from child to child. For example, some children thrive with shorter transitions, while others might need a longer time to become accustomed to a new classroom. We do everything possible to support children and families by answering any questions you may have and providing additional support when applicable.





# Learning Guidance Tools

Based on each child's individual learning journey, appropriate and attainable goals are set with program staff to help children achieve the next milestone. Learning guidance tools and strategies may include:

## Curriculum Modifications

Activities and lessons can be modified to adapt to children's developmental needs. For example, if a child has already mastered a skill, a modified version will increase the challenge of an activity to help keep the child engaged; as a child is introduced to or honing a new skill, a modification may help make the activity more approachable.

## Developmental Observations

Our progress reports, developed by classroom staff and Executive Directors help families reflect on and adjust learning objectives. Program staff observe behaviors and interactions to develop a quarterly comprehensive understanding of each child's skills. Monthly, quarterly, or bi-annual assessments may be provided based on individualized child need.

## Ages & Stages Questionnaire®

The ASQ-3 leverages specific questions to help pinpoint children's developmental progress. Families respond to the questionnaire at home and discuss results with program staff. In addition, the ASQ-3 may be performed across all age groups to better understand a child's developmental level for placement and programming purposes. The ASQ-3 is reserved for use for enrolled families and is only issued with family consent.

## IEP & Early Intervention

Our program partners with Early Intervention and many other state, local, and federal programs that support children's healthy development. Throughout enrollment, Executive Directors, educators, and support staff may ask to review Individual Education Plans (IEPs) or the equivalent.

## Parent Conferences

Private family conferences are available upon request. Bi-annual conferences are scheduled by Executive Directors and program staff. Where state and local regulations require additional parent conferences, our program abides by state and local requirements.

## Pet Plans

If pets are kept on site, a care plan will be readily accessible for educators to use. The care plan will detail the procedures for care and maintenance, as well as the pet's access to the children.



# Anti-Bias Early Education

We practice Anti-Bias Early Education (ABE) as outlined by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) <https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/anti-bias>. A deep-seated belief shapes anti-bias education work in early childhood in the importance of justice, the dream of children being able to realize their capabilities fully, and the knowledge that together, human beings can make a difference. Our classrooms, policies, and company culture are shaped by ABE's four goals: Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Activism. (<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/resources/pubs/abe2e-chap-1-excerpt.pdf>)

Please connect with your location's Executive Director on how anti-bias early education and your family traditions play a part in how holidays and birthdays can be recognized.

## Conduct Code & Relationship Expectations

Our program reserves the right to withdraw enrollments due to unacceptable behavior. To help ensure the safety and wellness of children, families, and staff, we require all adults (families, staff, vendors, guests) to adhere to the following:

### *Respectful Conversation & Debate*

Parents and adult caregivers, in addition to enrolled children, must comply with all program policies and procedures when on our properties, in all communications, and when otherwise engaged with our communities. While on our property, all parents and adult caregivers are expected to maintain respectful, cooperative conduct and communications at all times, without disruption to the classroom or care environments. Aggressive, violent, threatening, or disparaging language in writing or conversation will not be tolerated and can result in immediate removal from the location and termination of the child from the program. Aggressive, violent, threatening, or disparaging language may include (but is not limited to) vulgarity, offensive terms, or slurs connected to race, gender, relationship status, religious or spiritual beliefs, body image, or any other aspect of identity as determined by our program.

### *Scheduled Meetings & Planned Difficult Conversations*

We welcome feedback and difficult conversations, and research proves that when we are experiencing big emotions or have strong feelings, better outcomes often result from tempered responses than immediate reactions. When circumstances require deeper conversations and dedicated space, our policy is that program staff and families schedule dedicated time to meet and discuss whenever possible instead of engaging in unscheduled discussions.

### *Zero Hate & Weapons Policy*

Except for applicable law enforcement, no one is permitted to be on any of our properties at any time with firearms, explosive devices, or weapons. This applies even to those with lawfully permitted concealed weapons. In addition, any weapon found on any person or inside the personal property (i.e. a car in our parking lot, or a person's bag on our playground) of any person on our properties may result in said person/people being banned from our properties; this can also include immediate termination of the child or individual from our program and the inability to enroll or work at any of our locations. Legal action may be pursued when



warranted.

Additionally, any member of an enrolled family or any employee who participates or engages in any hateful or harmful actions on or off our properties as determined by the applicable center's Executive Director or designee may be subject to removal from our properties, being banned from our properties, and/or immediate termination of the child(ren) or individual from our program.

## Child Guidance Philosophy

We approach discipline through consistent and optimistic efforts. Our staff offers corrective guidance whenever required while considering each child's unique needs and current developmental stage. We practice positive reinforcement, compassionate listening, and emotional validation. These patient and empathic practices forbid us from engaging in any disciplinary actions connected to corporal punishment, withholding food, beverage, or nature, and the intentional use of shame, blame, embarrassment, or fear to alter behaviors or responses.

We strive to help children master how to self-regulate and self-soothe. We do this by leaning heavily on encouragement instead of praise. Research has proven that praise-based approaches can inadvertently demotivate children and contribute to anxiety as praise unintentionally reinforces the fear and consequences of failure. Encouragement, though, is shown to boost confidence, curiosity, and resilience.

### *For example, Praise vs. Encouragement*

A child places a correct puzzle piece into a puzzle board.

Praise Response: You're so smart! I'm proud of you.

Encouragement Response: You did good work to learn where that goes. I'm proud of you.

Encouragement response focuses on the effort as opposed to praising the outcome.

<https://childcare.extension.org/encouragement-is-more-effective-than-praise-in-guiding-childrens-behavior/>

### *Our approach to positive child guidance includes, but is not limited to:*

- Acknowledgment of feelings
- Calm approaches
- Ask for ideas and solutions
- Collaborative conflict resolution
- Give follow-up support
- Modeling desired behavior/response
- Explain logical consequences
- Delineation between facts and feelings
- Respecting boundaries
- Preparing for challenges

Learning to express emotions authentically is a normal part of childhood. Our educators encourage children to



express their feelings through words or sign language. Through positive guidance and encouragement, we nurture healthy growth and development.

## Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development for children 0-4. When biting occurs in one of our programs, our response is to care for and help all children involved in the incident. The family of the bitten child will receive an injury report, which will include any follow-up actions. This report will not include the name of the child who did the biting. The family of the child who bit will also be made aware of the incident by program staff and be provided a report.

## Anti-Bullying Policy

We do not tolerate bullying or harassment of any kind by anyone in our programs or on our properties. Bullying is defined differently by each state, but often involves a deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical, or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social, or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power or perceived power over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening. While harmful behaviors toward others by younger children (ages 0-5) rarely rises to the level of bullying due to their neurological and social-emotional development, our program will nevertheless respond to such behaviors in accordance with our policies and procedures. Reports or observations of conduct rising to the level of bullying or harassment as defined by applicable state law will be promptly addressed in accordance with the applicable program's state-specific policies. Reports of any bullying, harassing, or harmful behaviors should be communicated to the Executive Director or educators.

## Children Developing Unacceptable Behavior

Providing all children and families with kindness and respect requires our Executive Directors and staff to develop and sustain high levels of emotional intelligence. Emotional Intelligence is essential for effectively addressing unacceptable or challenging behaviors, especially in children. These behaviors include but are not limited to screaming, swearing, kicking, throwing, damaging property, hitting, spitting, biting, and causing harm to self and others. We will try to find a solution that enables the child to stay in our program. Every situation is different, and we address behavior challenges on a case-by-case basis. Any suspension/termination will comply with company standards and/or state regulations.

## Behavior Plans

When determined appropriate and necessary by the program's administration in their sole discretion, behavior plans may be written after educators have gathered at least two weeks of documentation describing concerning behaviors in a classroom. If warranted, a behavioral support plan will be developed incorporating expectations for the child, educators, parents, specialists, and directors. As part of the development of a behavior plan, parents may be asked to contact their pediatrician/health care provider to seek a referral for additional services. Educators and families will keep an open line of communication about the child's behavior. Behavior plans are reviewed as needed to evaluate progress or make modifications.



## Referral Services

We often make referrals to community resources in response to a child's need for assistance with social behavior, mental health, educational development, or medical services (including dental and vision). A referral often begins with a concern voiced by program staff or the child's family. While the process for referrals varies, the Executive Director will typically review the child's record with a supervisor (typically, Director of Operation), schedule a conversation with the family, and then make the necessary/requested referral. When an observation is requested or required, the Executive Director will arrange a meeting with the child's family to discuss the observation, prior to the observation. As part of the referral process, Executive Directors will provide families with a Consent for Referral Form to review and sign.

## Requests for Modifications

Our program does not exclude any individual with a disability from the full and equal enjoyment of our services and facilities, unless the individual poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or the child is unable to meet the requirements of our program, even with modifications of policies, practices, or procedures, or by the provision of auxiliary aids or services. In compliance with applicable federal and state laws, an individualized assessment of a child may be requested, reviewed, or commissioned to determine whether our program can meet the child's particular needs. We will make reasonable modifications to policies, practices, or procedures when such modifications are necessary to ensure equal access to our services and facilities to individuals with disabilities, unless doing so would fundamentally alter the nature of its program and services, would pose an undue burden to employees and the program, or would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others. If you would like to discuss modifications for your child, requests for reasonable modifications can be made to the appropriate Executive Director.

## Termination and Suspension

We reserve the right to withdraw and terminate enrollment due to behavior, when challenges from children or children's family/primary care providers are persistent or disruptive to the program's operations, or when they are threatening or harmful to others at our sole discretion. Our program also reserves the right to end family application and enrollment at any time due to non-compliance, non-payment, or any other reason that counters positive community culture as determined by program administrators and company leaders in our discretion.

If a child's behavior warrants an undetermined length of suspension from the program, the family will be required to meet with the administration before the child returns to the program with a positive guidance plan in place. Any suspensions or terminations will be issued in compliance with state and local law.

# Children's Belongings

## Clothing

Our company policy requires two extra sets of clothes to remain at the center for every enrolled child. Where



state or local policies require additional sets of clothing, the center's Executive Director will notify enrolled families and our program will comply with state and local regulations. We request multiple sets of clothing stay on site, especially for infants and children who are toilet training. All clothing must be labeled with a child's first and last name. Staff will label children's clothing when unlabeled clothing is sent to the program.

## Toys & Gear

Classrooms are filled with developmentally appropriate toys and activities. Our program does not allow personal toys.

It is a natural desire for a child to bring personal items, and we encourage children to bring items such as a favorite blanket or soft item for rest time (except infants). Please label all items clearly. While we provide cubbies, our program does not assume responsibility for items brought from home. A lost and found box is available at most locations. Unclaimed items may be donated or discarded.

Some locations may offer storage space for strollers, car seats, or other child gear. You are welcome to leave your belongings in this common space at your discretion. However, the program is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged goods, and no reimbursement for personal items is offered.

## Non-Violent Toys

We do not allow toys or books that could be interpreted as violent at our discretion. This includes any toy that appears to be a gun, sword, knife, or another weapon, as well as violent items, stories, actions, or images. We request that all families leave children's personal toys at home. Our educators will ask families to remove such items from the center.

## Body Basics

Quality care for each child starts with ensuring they feel safe, comfortable, and nurtured throughout the day. From sleep policies and procedures to food handling, educators recognize the importance of supporting children's basic needs as a critical foundation for early learning.

## Sleep, Nap, and Rest

State regulations require a rest period, which varies by state. Naptime is generally one to two hours long, though can vary depending on location. Children who do not sleep will be given a quiet activity, such as coloring or reading, while other children sleep. A restful naptime gives all children the boost of energy necessary for a successful afternoon. We provide children with their crib, mat, or cot during naptime. All children, except infants, must bring a sheet and blanket and may bring a small pillow or soft item. For infant sleep safety, only a tightly fitted crib sheet, pacifier, and an approved sleep sack that allows the child's arms to be free are allowed in the crib.



## Infant Sleep Safe Policies

Infants nap according to their schedules. Infants (12 months and younger) will sleep on their backs in cribs. No child under 12 months will nap in a crib containing pillows, comforters, stuffed animals, or other soft, padded materials. Swaddling is not permitted; sleep sacks are permissible. We recommend training your infant to use sleep sacks before arrival to ease the transition between home and the program.

## Infant Feeding Guidelines

To maintain consistency between home and the program and to meet the individual needs of each child, infants will be fed according to their feeding schedules or needs. A current feeding schedule will need to be maintained by families and classroom staff, documenting either breast milk or formula use and, if applicable, new foods introduced and food intolerances and preferences. Families must supply enough pre-made formula, breast milk bottles, and/or baby food daily. Please bring these items to the program daily and ensure that all bottles and caps are clearly labeled with a child's first and last name. Infants' bottles need to be plastic and capped.

Bottles can be stored by bringing in insulated lunch bags with ice packs. Families may also store bottles in the classroom refrigerator when available. Our program will follow state and local regulations concerning the storage and disposal of formula and breast milk.

Staff will record infant feeding times and amounts on their daily sheets. The recorded feeding time conveys the time the infant began feeding.

All unopened breast milk will be sent home at the end of the day and cannot remain in the classroom/center refrigerator overnight. Any breast milk left at the center after pick-up will be discarded. All unused formula bottles will be sent home at the end of each day.

## Breastfeeding

Nursing parents are invited to come on site to feed their children anytime.

## Frozen Milk Storage

Depending upon available space, our locations may be able to store one frozen serving of breast milk consistent with state and local regulations. Frozen breast milk kept on-site does not have to be returned at the end of each day. This frozen package must be clearly labeled with the expression date and the child's first and last name.

## Meals & Snacks

Adequate access to healthy meals, snacks, and beverages is essential for healthy development.

Families provide snacks and lunches. Please make snacks and lunches nutritious and enjoyable, and must be nut free. All food should be cut into bite-size pieces that are easy to swallow. Please ensure that all lunch boxes,



bags, and containers are labeled with your child's full first and last name. Lunches are kept in children's cubbies. The use of two ice packs to keep food cool is required and we suggest the use of thermoses to keep food warm. Please plan to pack lunches that do not require heating, as we do not heat up food.

## U.S. Department of Agriculture Non-Discrimination Statement

Per Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits or USDA's TARGET Center at (202-730-2600). Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr> and at any USDA office. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992 or submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

Fax: (202) 690-7442

Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

**We are an equal opportunity provider.**

## Allergy Awareness

All of our programs are allergy aware and strive to remain nut-free. Enrolled families must disclose all known allergy information by submitting state and company-required health/medical forms before children can enjoy their first official day at our program. All enrolled families are required to uphold our nut-free expectation.

## Diapers & Toilets

Diaper changes occur every two hours or sooner if the child's diaper is soiled or based on parent preference and staff agreement. Diaper changes will be recorded on your child's daily sheet. Diaper changes may occur more frequently if required by state and local law.





Toilet training will begin when appropriate for each child's age and stage of development. Families will be consulted on the method used at home. Staff will provide feedback on each child's progress. Children will be offered frequent opportunities to use the toilet, especially after meals and before naps. Normal diapering procedures will be used if the child has soiled or wet clothing. Our program requires at least two (2) changes of clothing on-site, per day, though we prefer (3) clothing changes for each day's use in case of accidents and (4) sets of clothing for infants. If an accident occurs, soiled clothing will be placed in a bag, labeled with the child's name, and sent home at the end of the day. Please provide zip lock bags for sending soiled clothing home. Being toilet trained is not an eligibility requirement for admission.

## Cloth Diapering

Our cloth diapering procedure covers:

- Storage of soiled clothing and diapers in sealed container
- Removing soiled clothing and diapers daily
- Cleaning and sanitizing the container daily

The following cloth diapering procedure is also posted by each of our in-school diapering stations:

- 1) Staff and children will wash hands according to school's Hand Washing Procedure before and after diaper changing (staff will wash children's hands who are too young to do so unassisted)
- 2) Staff will wear protective gloves
- 3) Child will be placed on disposable changing paper
- 4) Soiled diaper will be removed and child will be cleaned with wipes
- 5) Soiled clothing and diaper (un-rinsed) shall be placed in a sealed zip-lock bag and labeled with the child's name.
- 6) Gloves will be removed and a new, clean diaper will be applied
- 7) If needed diaper cream, ointment, or powder will be applied using new gloves
- 8) Staff will wash their hands and the child's hands
- 9) Diaper area will be washed & disinfected after each use
- 10) Staff will again wash their hands and dry with a paper towel
- 11) Families/guardians must remove the soiled clothing and diapers daily.

## Health & Wellness Policy

Our Health & Wellness Policy meets or exceeds state early education regulations and standards.

The Policy below provides an overview of our program's general Health & Wellness Policy. To the extent the Policy below is inconsistent with state or local laws, our program, will follow state and local laws.

## Hand Washing Policy

Proper hand washing is often the first line of defense against infectious diseases. To promote healthy and safe environments, we observe the following approach:



- 1) Use running water that drains out, not stopped-up water.
- 2) Avoid common containers of water to reduce the spreading of germs.
- 3) Use liquid soap, not bar soap.
- 4) Use friction (rub hands together for at least 20 seconds).
- 5) Clean under fingernails.

Proper handwashing is modeled for and taught to children throughout their enrollment. Hand washing is a frequent activity, happening as often as possible, especially (but not limited to) the following:

- 1) Entering a classroom for the first time.
- 2) Returning from playing/experiencing outdoors.
- 3) Completing a hands-on activity with art supplies, elements from nature, or other materials, which can leave traces of residue, particles, or markings on skin and nails.
- 4) Before and after eating or handling food.
- 5) Using the bathroom, including after diapering.
- 6) Sneezing, coughing, rubbing eyes, or touching one's face or someone else's bodily fluids or discharges.
- 7) After handling animals or their equipment.
- 8) Before and after water play.
- 9) After cleaning up or handling the garbage.

## Infectious Disease Control

Our staff and leaders receive timely training and ongoing professional development regarding how to help prevent the spread of infection and support healthy working and learning environments. In addition, the following sanitization practices are enforced and upheld at all of our locations regularly (always meeting or exceeding state regulatory cleaning and sanitization practices for early education and child care centers):

- Infant cribs are washed and sanitized daily and immediately following any soiling.
- Infant toys shall be kept separate, are washed, and sanitized at least daily and following infant gumming/chewing. Toys for toddlers shall be washed and disinfected at least weekly and as needed.
- Classroom furniture, equipment, and hard toys are washed and sanitized throughout the day.
- Machine-washable fabric toys are washed every week and as needed.
- Children's sheets, blankets, and washable toys from home are sent home for weekly cleaning.
- All essential materials and equipment related to diapering and toileting are washed and sanitized throughout the day.

To the extent state or local laws require additional sanitation practices above and beyond those included above, our program follows state and local laws.

Our program retains professional cleaning services to augment cleaning routines performed by staff.

## Sick Policy

Reducing the spread of infection requires a partnership between all enrolled families and employees. Enrolled children showing signs/symptoms of conditions below will not be permitted to remain in program. If



symptoms present while children are in attendance, families will be notified. The expectation is for families to pick up sick children as soon as possible, with no more than 90-minutes lapsing between the center's outreach and safe and successful pick-up.

Children cannot attend the program if they are experiencing an illness that prevents them from comfortably participating in all regular activities or that requires greater care than the staff is trained to provide.

Symptoms/conditions that require children to remain out include, but are not limited to:

- Fever, equal to or higher than 100.4.
- Open sores or pox.
- Diarrhea, stools with blood or mucus, or uncontrolled, unformed, or uncontrollable stool.
- Vomiting.
- Mouth sore associated with drooling.
- Rash or fever or behavioral changes until a doctor's release is provided.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye with eye discharge) until proof of 24 hours of antibiotics is provided. Impetigo until proof of +24 hours of treatment is provided.
- Strep throat until proof of +24 hours of treatment is provided.
- Chickenpox until proof of recovery/doctor's release is provided.
- **Testing positive for COVID.**

Children who test positive for COVID must remain out of care consistent with guidance from state and local health departments or updated program policies. Executive Directors can provide updated guidance.

If your child is excluded from the program because of a communicable disease, a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return may be required. For fever, diarrhea, vomiting, children must remain home until they are free of symptoms for 24 hours.

## COVID Exposure

When children and staff are exposed to COVID in our program, our program will follow the guidance of state and local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control's exclusion protocols. In the event state and local health departments and the Centers for Disease Control do not provide an exclusion protocol, our program may implement protocol, as determined in the sole discretion of the center administration. Please connect with your location's Executive Director regarding current COVID updates/protocol. A few important notes regarding COVID:

- At the time of publication, the FDA does not approve Antigen/rapid/at-home COVID tests for children under 24 months.
- Due to FDA guidelines, our program cannot provide antigen/rapid/at-home COVID tests to enrolled families for use on children under 24 months.
- Health care providers/pediatricians may approve/recommend antigen/rapid/at-home COVID tests on children under 24 months.
- Our program will accept antigen/rapid/at-home COVID test results for children under 24 months.
- Our program will support any family's request for their child to mask appropriately while at one of our



centers.

COVID policies and procedures can change at any time with little to no warning. While we strive to avoid classroom and center closures due to illness, we will not compromise health and safety and may sometimes need to close even when children are well if too many staff members remain ill. Tuition is not impacted due to these kind of unscheduled closures.

## Medication Administration

Our program will administer prescription and non-prescription medications to children consistent with state and local laws in the jurisdiction in which the program operates. Please refer to the information provided by your location's Executive Director for site-specific procedures relative to the administration of medication.

## Physicals & Immunization Records

All children enrolled in our program are required to have a recent physical and must have up-to-date immunizations, including HIB and lead screening, unless waived by the program in compliance with our immunization policy and state and local laws and regulations. This information must be included on the Health Form, signed and dated by a physician. Health Forms must be updated annually for all enrolled children.

We encourage all eligible individuals to remain up-to-date with COVID vaccinations.

## Injury Prevention

Staff members and the Executive Director are responsible for daily safety inspections of their assigned areas and equipment. Defective equipment will be reported and removed or repaired as soon as possible.

Playground safety is a major concern. As such, we remind families of the potential strangulation hazards of drawstrings on clothing and ask that you remove all drawstrings from all clothes worn at the program. Footwear, such as sneakers, appropriate for active, outdoor playing, climbing, running, and jumping is strongly recommended. As already addressed, infant sleep safety guidelines are in practice, so bibs and blankets will not be left on infants when placed in cribs.

If your child does sustain a minor injury, you will receive an Injury Report within 24 hours outlining the incident and the following staff actions or sooner if required by state or local laws or regulations. You will be contacted



immediately if the injury is to your child's head, produces any swelling, or needs medical attention. In a serious medical emergency, the child will immediately be taken to the hospital by ambulance, accompanied by a program staff member. A child's listed emergency contact will be the first notified.

## Individual Health Care Plans

An Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) must be maintained for each child with a chronic medical condition diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. The plan must describe the chronic condition, its symptoms, and any medical treatment that may be necessary. The plan must also detail the potential side effects of that treatment while the child is in our care and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered. All staff working with the child will have access to and will familiarize themselves with the IHCP to help ensure their understanding of the child's needs. IHCPs require annual review and updates by children's physicians or regular health care providers.

## Quality Audits & Assessments

Safety is our priority. Maintaining safe, healthy and optimal learning and working spaces, for us, includes conducting thorough quality audits and assessments.

### Q365

Designed to help ensure sustained and consistent best-in-class delivery, our proprietary Q365 quality assessment program goes above and beyond state regulations and guidelines. Regarded by state licensors as a model of how all early education centers should monitor their services, Q365 provides senior operational leaders and Executive Directors dedicated time and space to review and rank all health and safety policies and procedures, facilities (maintenance, playgrounds, connectivity, furniture, and furnishings), resources (physical and digital), staff training and development, family communications, active learning deliveries, and child milestone tracking.

## Quality Standards for Center Operations

Daily operational evaluations involve visual and recorded assessments by our Executive Directors to monitor regulatory compliance, documentation, health and safety, classroom routines, kitchen and food preparation, playgrounds, common spaces, and other functions that support safe and smooth days.

## Quality Standards for Learning and Education

Education evaluations monitor and measure standards for classroom operations and quality. Classrooms are evaluated on their health and safety operations, supervision, evidence of learning, environment, staff-child interactions, displays and postings, and other education-related activities that help young learners and dedicated educators thrive.





## NAEYC Accreditation

Select locations are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). You can ask your Executive Director about current accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Retaining NAEYC accreditation requires a rigorous process, which includes supplying the organization with proof of adhering to strict criteria for providing developmentally appropriate early education. You can review NAEYC's accreditation requirements online:

<https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/2022elpstandardsandassessmentitems-compressed.pdf>

## Family Engagement

Responsive relationships with trusted adult caregivers are essential to children's healthy development. In addition to providing outstanding and attentive care to children, we strive to model responsive relationship skills in each of our connections between staff, administrators, and families.

## Daily Communication

Digital and in-person communication is provided to enrolled families daily. Infant and Toddler families are given an individualized digital "Daily Sheet" to track activities, including feedings, diaper changes, naps, play, and progress. Preschool and Kindergarten families will access and receive regular communication updates focused more on curriculum and learning.

## Kaymbu / Digital Communication Program

Kaymbu (rhymes with "Bamboo") is a digital program that lets you remain connected to your child's time in the program by delivering pictures, videos, newsletters, messages, and notes. Through Kaymbu, staff can securely share memorable moments and messages with enrolled family members. While an email address is required to receive Kaymbu content, it is highly recommended that all enrolled families download the Kaymbu app available on the Apple Store and Android Market and include both an email address and a mobile phone number during their Kaymbu set-up period. This way, important and special Kaymbu content can be received through email and text.



## Social Media

Social media enables centers to share information with a large group of families. Enrolled families are often invited to join private social media pages. In addition, families are invited to like and follow our company social media accounts. We often share pictures of active learning while engaged in our programming. Families must consent to having their children included on our social media or in our publications. Please refer to the Media Acknowledgment Form within your enrollment/admission agreement.

## Information Boards and Binders

Bulletin boards or binders are located throughout the center and classrooms to communicate curriculum, news, upcoming events, health alerts, center visitors, and more. Ask your Executive Director and classroom staff where to locate these boards and binders.

## Family Involvement & Participation

We invite families to become active members of our community. Center calendars are published on a weekly and monthly basis. These calendars offer reminders (in addition to timely invitations and communication) of when and how families can participate in center events in-person or digitally. Please ask your Executive Director for a "Family Traditions" form to share important, fun, and treasured dates, holidays, and events from your home that you would welcome sharing with our community.

## Family Visits

As long as health and safety policies permit, enrolled families are welcome anytime. We encourage families to observe our classrooms. However, for children experiencing separation anxiety, having family members come and go during the day could be more disruptive than beneficial. If we notice that your child is experiencing this problem, we may ask that you limit your time spent in the classroom until your child has successfully passed through this phase. All families must comply with all company policies and procedures when observing or visiting a classroom.

## Field Trips & Special Events

There may be opportunities for children to take occasional educational field trips. Field trip notification will be made at least two weeks before the trip, and eligibility will include (and may not be limited to) a signed and dated permission form by the child's legal/primary caregiver. Families will also be notified of any associated fees before the trip. Alternatively, guest educators and presenters may host special events at our centers during hours of operation (e.g., puppet show, concert, animal exhibit). Families will receive advance notice of these special events along with any necessary permission forms, releases, and fee acknowledgments.

## Confidentiality

While many of our staff and educators live close to our locations and are active members of their local communities, our staff and employees are trained on the critical importance of child and family confidentiality.



Children's progress, education, and milestone information are prepared by classroom staff and only shared with Executive Directors, necessary staff and the children's primary caregivers, unless otherwise required by law. Limiting access to these conversations and progress reports to the listed parties above helps sustain a trusted bond between families, staff, and Executive Directors.

## Babysitting Policy

Some families may approach employees to babysit.. Please note that our company/program bears no responsibility for the care of enrolled children outside of our regular operating hours or off our property. While there is no policy that prevents current staff from accepting babysitting offers from enrolled families, we strongly encourage families to respect the personal and professional boundaries of our dedicated employees and recognize that their time away from our centers is an essential part of educator burnout prevention. Families that choose to employ our employees in a personal capacity agree to do so in a manner that does not interfere with their work schedule or current employment with our company.

## Enrollment

### Program Visit

Required pieces of the enrollment process include meeting with the center's Executive Director (on-site or virtually) and touring after hours, virtually, or during hours of operation. Time with the Executive Director allows families to learn more about the philosophy, policies, and specific program amenities. Families are encouraged to include their children during any touring opportunity. As is often the case in immediate placements, child classroom introductions and brief (no longer than one hour or shorter than a few minutes) child in-classroom observations may be requested by Executive Directors as a term of enrollment application.

### Enrollment Application & Forms

During enrollment, families must complete all registration forms required by the program and the state, including an updated medical history and, other documentation requested by our program. Families must also submit recent physical and immunization records to their Executive Director and/or Enrollment Specialist before their children can officially start. All enrolled children's medical, contact, immunization, and other required forms must be updated during the center's annual re-registration process. A re-registration fee of \$50 is collected per year for each enrolled child.





## Immunizations

A current immunization record must be submitted for each enrolled child before a child's first official day in our program. Acceptable forms of immunization and medical records include certification by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant that states that the child has been successfully immunized following the schedules and requirements set forth by the state or local health department. This record must contain the complete date (preferably the month, day, and year, but at a minimum, the month and year) of each immunization and be signed by the child's health care provider. As the child progresses through the program, ongoing records will need to be updated to include documentation of annual physical examinations, updated immunizations, and lead screenings.

No unimmunized or partially immunized child shall be admitted to, or allowed to remain in the program unless they satisfy one of these requirements, as applicable:

- A valid medical exemption, requiring the submission by a healthcare provider (child's physician, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant) of written documentation that immunization is medically contraindicated.
- A valid religious exemption, requiring parental submission of a signed statement that immunizations contradict sincere religious beliefs (applicable only if consistent with state law).
- Unimmunized or partially immunized children considered homeless under federal law cannot be excluded from early education care programs, per the 2001 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; <https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/>

To the extent state or local law does not allow for the above exemptions, our programs will abide by state and local law.

Families of school-aged children must also provide copies of children's immunization, physical examination, and lead screen records, or legal/primary caregivers can provide a signed and dated statement attesting that all current medical and immunization records are currently on file with the child's current primary school. Copies of these forms may still be requested by Executive Directors.

## Tuition & Payment

### Enrollment Fees

A registration fee and tuition deposit are due and will be collected at the time of any child's registration. Once the registration fee and tuition deposit are processed, enrollment space/availability is guaranteed for the start date submitted with enrollment application. Family deposits will be applied to the final week(s) of enrollment. At the time of enrollment, the Executive Director will be able to share complete tuition rates and tuition payment schedules. Enrollment is not guaranteed until registration and deposit fees are received. All fees and deposits are non-refundable.



## Annual Re-Registration Fee & Tuition Increases

A \$50 Re-Registration Fee is applied annually to any enrollment seeking another year of care/early education. Tuition increases are to be expected each year. Tuition is subject to change at the discretion of the program and may occur at any time. Notice of tuition increases will be made available at least 30 days before tuition increases go into effect, unless sooner notice is required by local law. New Enrollment paperwork must also be submitted annually, even for children/enrollments remaining in the program.

## Payment & Attendance Schedules

Tuition is a prorated annual charge. Depending upon the location, families may have the option to pay their tuition weekly or monthly. A center's Executive Director must approve weekly or monthly payment options. Because the annual tuition is pro-rated, tuition reductions are not offered during weeks that include partial or full-day closures. The same policy applies if a family keeps a child out of care/program for any reason. Centers neither provide make-up days nor offer tuition reductions of any kind for missed or closed days. "Vacation weeks" for families are not provided. Families who do not attend must pay their regular tuition to retain their day and time slots. If a child is absent for two weeks without notice to an Executive Director and without maintaining scheduled tuition payment, the child may be dropped from enrollment, resulting in a vacancy that the program can fill. If a family whose enrollment has been stopped due to non-payment or attendance issues, later wishes to return, the family must wait for an available day and time slot and pay a new registration fee and deposit. Please understand that if a family chooses to end a child's enrollment (withdraw) for the summer months or at any other time; the family does so at the risk of losing current enrollment schedules and placement.

## Tuition Variances

Tuition rates vary for each location and may vary within age groups or classrooms. Upon signing enrollment paperwork, families agree to the payment policies outlined in your enrollment paperwork and any tuition changes associated with rate increases or transition policies. While we will make every effort to provide ample notice of tuition increases, all fees and tuition are subject to change.

## Waitlist & Registered Tuition Quotes

Families who join our waitlist, or who register for future enrollment (start date in the future) are provided current tuition rates as of the date families join the waitlist or register for a future start. However, tuition rates quoted to waitlisted and registered families are not guaranteed or reserved. This means tuition rates could change after joining a waitlist and/or after registering.

## Tuition Rates

Annual tuition rates are set for the following year, typically between the start of May and the end of July, though they may change throughout the year periodically. Annual tuition increases are typical. For example, if a preschool family secures a space in a preschool room in March, for their preschooler to be enrolled in September, that family will be provided the current tuition rates for that preschool classroom, and then will receive an updated notification regarding tuition rates or changes prior to their September start date. Another



example, if a family is looking to enroll a child who is yet to be born, that family will be provided the current infant tuition rate, though the tuition rates may change for that infant program by the time the child is born or begins enrollment. Deposits, which are always required to secure registration/enrollment (guaranteed spots in classrooms), are always based on current tuition rates and are not changed throughout a child's enrollment. Tuition rates are never guaranteed or "locked in," and remain subject to change at the program's discretion.

## Registration Fees

- Initial Enrollment Registration: \$100 per child
- Annual Re-Registration: \$50 per child

While not likely, if registration fees were waived during initial enrollment for any reason, please note that future annual re-registration fees will remain required. Re-registration fees support program initiatives and must be paid by enrolled families annually. Families who were once enrolled but whose enrollment ended (withdrawn) and wish to enroll again will pay another initial enrollment registration fee. Annual re-registration fees are solely for currently enrolled families.

## Tuition Discounts

Our programs may offer a tuition or registration benefit if a family meets criteria such as, but not limited to:

- Active military discount = 10%
- Sibling discount = 10% off the less expensive tuition rate (typically the rate of the older child)

## Late Pick-Up Policy & Charges

It is important that children be picked up at their scheduled time of departure. If a child is left in the program after closing, we will call the numbers listed on the release form after reaching out to legal/primary caregivers. Please make sure these numbers are up to date. A late fee of \$20 for the first 15 minutes past closing, and \$2 per minute thereafter will be charged directly to the family's account.

## Delinquent Payments & Fees

As stated above, we reserve the right to end family application and enrollment at any time due to non-compliance, non-payment, or any other reason that counters positive community culture as determined by



administrators and company leaders.

Enrolled families who lapse on scheduled tuition payments will receive verbal and digital delinquent payment notices. The company/program will provide a clear timeline (often between one and seven business days) for enrolled families with outstanding payments to bring their accounts current before officially disenrolling. Families with tuition that remain delinquent for two weeks or more will be moved into our withdrawal policy, with their deposits being applied to the past due amounts and any remaining balances needing to be paid in full to avoid the company/program filing for debt collection. In addition, enrollments will be ended within four weeks of the first day of the second week of a missed tuition payment. Upon receiving written notification of delinquency, families must contact our finance department at (781) 451-0100. Upon termination for non-payment or refusal to pay, families will forfeit any previous or promotional priority enrollment policies and may be refused future enrollment at any of our locations.

Additional fees and consequences for enrolled families carrying tuition debt\*:

- There is a \$35 service charge for any returned, bounced, or canceled checks
- \$10 per week, per child, for each week the family account remains delinquent
- 1.5% processing and reminder fee will be added per month, per child, for each month your account remains delinquent
  - The above fee applies to both enrolled and disenrolled/withdrawn families
  - The above fee will be added to a family's total amount due if disenrolled/withdrawn due to non-payment

After two weeks of non-payment, family accounts will be filed with a debt collector, and our company/program is not responsible for any associated legal or consultant costs incurred by families due to ramifications of non-payment.

\*These fees may be subject to change to remain per state regulations, especially regarding enrolled families whose care is subsidized by state programs. Our company/program will comply with state operational and financial regulations. Families receiving state subsidies will need to connect with their Executive Directors to review current state policies and procedures regarding late, missed, and delinquent tuition.

## Attendance & Schedules

Enrollment schedules are subject to availability. Families are advised to consider their full needs at the time of initial enrollment to work toward ensuring the most beneficial/desired schedules. Enrolled families are advised to do the same during the program's annual re-registration. Our locations offer full-time and part-time schedules. Full-time schedules are defined as five full days a week, in accordance with each location's hours of operations. Part-time schedules are any approved schedules that are less than full-time. Preference is given to accommodate full-time enrollments. Enrolled families can request adjustments to their care schedules throughout their enrollment by contacting their Executive Directors. Still, adjustments and alternative schedules are always based on availability and are never guaranteed. Please refer to the below section "Reducing Care Schedules and Withdrawals" for additional information on part-time schedules.



## Hours of Operation

Hours of operation vary by location. As outlined above, a full day consists of six or more hours of care. Tuition rates vary by full-time and part-time options, as available. Families must communicate precise daily schedules/times of attendance during the initial enrollment process to Executive Directors and Enrollment Specialists.

## Sample Daily Schedule

Opening times and hours of operation vary by location. Each room has an individual daily schedule depending on the curriculum and classroom level, starting with arrival each morning; a generalized sample schedule includes:

- 7:30-8:30 - Morning Connection (check-in with friends, families, and staff)
- 9:00-10:00 - Morning curriculum (circle time) and gross motor activities (structured outdoor play, nature lesson)
- 10:00 - Snack
- 11:00-12noon - Finish morning activities Noon- Lunch (provided by families)
- 12:30 - Pre-nap story time
- 1:00-3:00 - Naptime/rest/quiet and calm activity time for older children
- 3:00 - Snack
- 3:30-5:30 - Afternoon (STEAM) lessons, gross motor activities (unstructured outdoor play), and closing

Most focused instruction in toddler and preschool classrooms occurs between 9:00 AM and 12:00 PM. Families in our toddler and preschool classrooms are strongly encouraged to arrive by 9:30 AM. This helps ensure that all children in these classrooms receive the thoughtful and timely instruction designed to support their ongoing healthy development.

## Schedule Changes

Enrollment schedule changes are always subject to availability. Schedule change requests must be submitted from families to the location's Executive Director via email or signed and dated letter. Decreased schedules require a minimum of 30 days/four-week notice. If an enrolled child remains out of care for one or multiple days due to illness, travel, or other reasons, the child's parent/guardian is required to call or email the Executive Director/program to provide notice of the absence. Whenever possible, advanced notice is requested.

## Drop Off, Pick Up, & Contact Numbers

Drop-off and pick-up procedures vary by location and circumstance. Executive Directors can provide enrolled families with the most current information. However, regardless of where drop-off and pick-up occur (in the lobby, at the classroom door, or in a safe and designated area outside of the main entrance), children must be dropped off and picked up by a caregiver that is listed on their authorized drop-off/pick-up list. This list is submitted during initial enrollment and lives in children's official files. Changes and additions to authorized pick-up lists can be made at any time by working with the location's Executive Director, their supervisor, or



interim support professional.

Enrolled children will not be permitted to leave the center with anyone other than those listed on their authorized pick-up lists. For authorized people to complete pick-up, current and legal photo identification will also be required (e.g., driver's license, residency card, passport). If a child arrives at the center with an unknown, unauthorized person, the child will be warmly welcomed to the center, and their legal/primary caregivers will be immediately contacted.

Enrolled families can help ensure timely communication with their Executive Director and classroom staff by programming the center's local number into their mobile phones or equivalent contact address books. Families are also asked to keep in mind the emergency contact numbers in their children's enrollment files and provide updates whenever necessary. This includes notifying Executive Directors and classroom staff when a contact number changes, even for a short time.

The following steps will be taken in the following order if a child remains in the program past closing:

- 1) Call/text/email/reach out to all legal/primary caregivers
- 2) Call the persons listed on the children's Emergency Contact and Authorization forms
- 3) Call the police

As mandated reporters, our employees are required to question any family member or authorized pick-up person who appears to be under the influence of any altering substance that could impair that person's ability to safely drive or provide care. In addition, in the children's best interest, we will attempt to arrive at an alternative transportation solution, including helping to secure a safe ride. If the pick-up person refuses these options, the police and any other applicable state agency will be contacted.

## Holidays & Closures

A current program calendar is provided during the enrollment process. This calendar lists planned/holiday closure dates. While unlikely, this calendar is subject to change. Executive Directors can provide updated calendars upon request. Closure dates may vary by location and year. We do not provide tuition reimbursement or tuition credits for closure dates for any reason (e.g. holidays, inclement weather, illness) unless required by the state for families enrolled through state subsidy programs. Please refer to the family payment agreement for full details regarding tuition and closure days.

## Unplanned Closures

Unplanned closures may occur. This typically happens due to inclement weather, health and safety precautions, or emergencies. We make every effort to remain open, provided that doing so does not compromise the safety of our enrolled children, educators, administrators, or families. We do not offer tuition reimbursement or tuition credits for closure dates for any reason (e.g. holidays, inclement weather, illness) unless required by the state. Please refer to the family payment agreement for full details regarding tuition and closure days.





## **Inclement Weather & Safety Emergencies**

While our preference is to remain open, locations will be closed when weather or other circumstances compromise safety. Family partnership during closures, early releases, and delayed openings remains important and appreciated.

Operational leaders strive to ensure that closures related to weather are made at least twelve hours in advance, but this desired timeline is not always achievable. However, we commit to providing as much notice as possible.

When locations delay opening, close early, or close entirely due to weather or safety concerns, families will always receive a digital alert (email and/or text) and, at times, a phone call.

When a major storm hits, our employees may be unable to attend work, causing us to combine classrooms for the day or reduce or close operations.

## **Absences**

Families are asked to call the center as soon as they know their children will not be attending as planned. Our policy is to follow up with families who do not provide notice of absent children. In addition, when children are out due to illness, we ask for the information to be shared with the Executive Director in case it is relevant to make others aware of possible infectious diseases.

## **Reducing Care Schedules & Withdrawal**

We require a 30-day/four-week written notice to reduce care schedules or to voluntarily disenroll. This dated written notice (which may be digital) must be given to Executive Directors, their supervisors, or interim support professionals. It will not be honored if given to classroom staff or other employees. Families are required to pay tuition until their final day of enrollment under their current care schedule or for four weeks following the notification to reduce their care schedule or to voluntarily disenroll, whichever is later. Deposits will be applied to final payments, but remaining balances may still be owed. All requests for reductions in care schedules are not guaranteed and subject to availability and approval. For additional information on part-time schedules, please refer to the above section on “Attendance and Schedules.” Once a withdrawal has been submitted, the withdrawn enrollment will remain ineligible for re-enrollment until 30 days have passed since the final day of care.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

In case of emergency or crisis, each center will enact a response plan in compliance with applicable state and local standards that includes, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining information from local authorities to determine whether to evacuate or shelter in place during the emergency event or natural disaster.



- Following escape routes from each floor level approved for childcare.
- Assembling at a designated meeting place outside and away from the facility.
- Contacting the fire department or other appropriate authorities after the center has been evacuated.
- Communicating with parents in the event of an emergency evacuation (after all children are safely relocated and communication with authorities is complete).
- A means to assure that no child is left in the center after evacuation.

Depending upon the nature of the emergency, Executive Directors and company leaders may employ a response procedure that local authorities and/or staff deem appropriate for the situation.

## Natural Disasters

In the case of a snow storm, tornado, earthquake, hurricane, flood, or other events that affect the center's power, heat, or water supply to the degree that we cannot meet safety standards, families will be notified of closures and follow-up plans.

## Shelter in Place

Sometimes, it may be safer to remain inside the center until the emergency has ended. We will shelter-in-place under the advisement of local safety and health authorities. When advised to shelter-in-place while children and staff remain in the center, an operational leader inside and outside of the shelter-in-place location will be designated to maintain communications to emergency contacts listed for both children and staff. If and when shelter-in-place advisement is lifted by proper authorities and/or on-site staff, evacuation plans will also be recorded with proper authorities and communicated to emergency contacts as quickly and completely as possible.

## Intruder Protection

Executive Directors and other employees conduct daily perimeter, playground, and facility checks to help dissuade and disable intrusions during and after operating hours. In addition to structured visual checks that include testing latches, locks, gates, and doors, all entrances remain locked during operating hours, and all guests are directed to the main entrance, where they will need to provide proof of scheduled visit and current photo identification before gaining access to the center.

This approach to intruder protection asks for full family participation. Please:

- Do not hold open the main door for anyone you do not know, nor use your key or keycode to provide entry to anyone you do not know
- Do not prop doors open during your entry and exit to the center
- Do not hesitate to ask your Executive Director or staff about the unknown person at the door

Enrolled families are provided unique access codes for their designated center. These unique codes/keys for enrolled families help provide important logs on entries and exits. Family unique codes/keys are not to be shared; sharing these codes/keys could result in immediate withdrawal for endangering children and staff. Actions that could be interpreted as threatening or endangering our centers and those who depend on their





safe operations will be taken with the utmost seriousness and, when applicable, may result in further action by the company, including legal action.

## Evacuation Procedures

Whether faced with an intruder or any other type of crisis, if staff members question the safety inside the building at any time, they will evacuate children as quickly and calmly as possible. Evacuation plans are posted by classroom exits. In addition, evacuation drills are conducted and recorded monthly.

In addition to an attendance sheet, classroom staff maintain a sign-in/sign-out sheet, which records each child's arrival and departure time. In case of evacuation, staff will use the sign-in/sign-out sheet to conduct an accurate attendance count. The Executive Director or equivalent professional is ultimately responsible for no children being left behind.

The Executive Director or equivalent professional will know in advance which classrooms need support during an evacuation due to children or staff physical limitations, handicaps, or otherwise. The evacuation plan will make a note of these circumstances. During any evacuation or related drill, an offsite operational leader will remain available to consult on timely decisions and maintain communications with appropriate authorities, families, and staff emergency contacts.

If the center must be closed, families and emergency contacts will be informed by multiple forms of digital communication regarding where and when children need to be picked up.

## Evacuation Plans - Location of Assembly

Evacuation plans require a designated Location of Assembly. This is where all children and staff remain accounted for during an evacuation. Sometimes, only certain sections of the center need to be evacuated. In these instances, Locations of Assembly will be in predetermined areas of the center. Sometimes, all children and staff will need to exit the building, which means the Executive Director or equivalent professional will determine the Location of Assembly. No children will be dismissed from the Location of Assembly without approval by the Executive Director or equivalent professional.

Please note that Locations of Assembly are often not the final evacuation location but serve as a critical early step to help ensure everyone's safety during a high-alert transition.

## Missing Child Procedure

We use a "name-to-face" attendance approach to help accurately count and identify each child within our care. This approach requires staff to say each child's name aloud as the staff look at each child's face each time children enter and exit any room or building (e.g. leaving the classroom to go outside, or in the rare instance of leaving the center for a pre-approved field trip). Often, children who can respond do so with a "here," "that's me," or "hello," adding another level of assurance to this simple and effective tracking system.

If a child is not accounted for at any time, the staff member responsible for the child will search the premises. Any area in which a child could potentially hide will be searched in both the indoor and outdoor premises of



the center and the surrounding area of any out-of-center field trip location. If it is determined that a child is missing, the following steps are taken:

- Notification to 911, followed by
- Notification to local Police and Security (if available), followed by
- Notification to Company Administrator/operational leader, who will take responsibility for
- Notifying the child's legal/primary caregiver

When the police arrive at any center location for a missing child report or any other reason, the Executive Director or equivalent professional assumes all communication responsibilities with law enforcement. The Executive Director or equivalent professional will also be provided additional operational and executive leadership support in cooperating with law enforcement. The Executive Director or equivalent professional will remain with law enforcement while at the center. The Executive Director or equivalent professional will also provide law enforcement with direct contact information for all exchanges about this instance.

In the rare instance that a child goes missing from our program for any time without the Executive Director or classroom staff noticing, a full internal investigation will launch, and employment correction plans, terminations, and legal actions will be explored.

## Missing Child Procedure, Field Trips

If a child is missing while the program is on a field trip, after responsibly searching the location (including bus or any other mode of transportation) and notifying any local, onsite security, the following steps will be taken:

- Notification to 911, followed by
- Notification to local Police and Security (if available), followed by
- Notification to Company Administrator/operational leader, who will take responsibility for
- Notifying the child's legal/primary caregiver

When the police arrive at the field trip location, the highest-ranking staff member on the trip assumes all communication responsibilities with law enforcement. This designated employee will also be provided additional operational and executive leadership support in cooperating with law enforcement. The designated employee will remain with law enforcement while at the field trip location. The designated employee will also provide law enforcement with direct contact information for all exchanges about this instance.

The staff member responsible for communication with the police will consult with the police on the approach for the remaining children and staff (e.g. do they remain at the field trip site or do they go back to center and, if so, when and by what method) and will then notify our operational and executive leaders of the plan. The staff member who has assumed communications responsibility with the police then remains with the police for the remainder of the search or until dismissed by the police to return to their center location.

## Following a Missing Child Incident

Following a missing child incident, the company will follow notification procedures outlined by state regulations. Additionally, we will investigate with appropriate authorities and partners to determine how to



minimize this threat further in the future.

## Reporting Neglect & Abuse

Each state in which we operate requires that all people employed within the field of licensed child care serve as mandated reporters. While each state's mandated reporting laws differ slightly, generally our employees' mandated reporter status requires, when in their professional capacity, to report any seen or suspected neglect or abuse endured by a child (anyone under the age of 18). Our program and employees uphold all local and state mandated reporter laws and regulations.

### Neglect & Abuse Reporting Clarifications

Clarification surrounding mandated reporter responsibilities:

- Our employees, mandated reporters, are required to notify Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) of suspected abuse or neglect as defined by state law.
- Notification requires staff to report concerns with Executive Directors and/or appropriate supervisors, in addition to the state mandated reporting system.
- It is not the responsibility of Executive Directors, staff, centers, or the company to conduct investigations into the accuracy of the suspected neglect or abuse; our Executive Directors, staff, centers and company are required to support the gathering of information about the child and neglect/abuse concerns to provide an appropriate report to the state agency.
- Staff members and Executive Directors are trained to share any concerns about child abuse as soon as their suspicions arise.

Our employees, centers, and company will fully cooperate with any investigation and maintain confidentiality to the best of our ability concerning any report of abuse or neglect. Our foremost concern is always the protection of the child.

## Court Orders, Custody, & Restraining Orders

We cannot deny legal guardians access to their enrolled children unless copies of legal documents have been provided to Executive Directors or appropriate supervisors. Therefore, families engaged in custody hearings or who are subject to restraining orders that impact enrolled children must file appropriate paperwork citing these instances/circumstances as soon as they arise. If former or current legal guardians are no longer authorized to drop off and/or pick up, Executive Directors or appropriate supervisors will often ask for photos of the legal guardian no longer authorized to perform these tasks to support staff in ensuring no child is released to an unauthorized guardian or caregiver.

If an Executive Director, staff member, center, or company receives a court order or a subpoena for records; in that case, company leadership will notify impacted families where possible and permissible and comply with the court order or subpoena.





## Confidentiality Following Child Aggressions

Given the diverse communities we serve, we recognize and appreciate the characteristics and behaviors that all children, families, and employees bring to our program. Supporting children's healthy development and responsive relationships between staff, Executive Directors, and families also can require engaging in uncomfortable, difficult, or awkward discussions. When these necessary conversations occur, we lead with respect and kindness and uphold confidentiality to the best of our abilities.

Confidentiality is deeply valued across our centers and company. Therefore, we generally will not reveal the identity of a child who has engaged in an aggressive act against another, even at the request of the family whose child has been the target of that aggressive incident, unless required by law or determined necessary by center staff for health and safety purposes. We understand the concerns of some families in this situation; however, knowledge of the aggressor's identity generally is not significant to families' understanding of the incident or actions taken by staff to ensure children's well-being.

## Records & Data

The information in your child's file is considered privileged and confidential. Access to children's files will be limited to appropriate program staff, Executive Directors, appropriate center management, and relevant state agencies, consistent with state laws and regulations. It is important to note that there may be legal circumstances under which we must provide access to records. The Executive Director and appropriate supervisors and staff will work to ensure compliance with all the appropriate federal and state records regulations. Legal guardians/primary caregivers may access their children's records unless a legal restriction is associated with access. You have the right to add information, comments, or other relevant material to your child's record.

## Concerns & Feedback Procedure

Families can raise concerns, questions, and offer feedback or complaints about center services, care, or operations with the Executive Director or equivalent supervisor. If, after these conversations, families continue to feel unheard or dissatisfied, families can request to connect with the Executive Director's supervisor and/or company leadership. Contact information for Executive Directors' supervisors can be obtained at the center.

Family concerns and feedback can be shared through:

- In-person conversations
- Digital or printed signed and dated notices/letters

Please strive to submit written complaints within two weeks of the concerning incident/situation. While the intent remains to resolve all issues as quickly as possible, please note that some concerns require more in-depth investigation, and full resolutions may require extended timelines.



## Non-Discrimination

We provide equal enrollment opportunities to all children and do not discriminate based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, disability, gender, or the parents' marital status or gender identification or any other protected characteristics.

Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment in our infant through preschool programs.

## Licensing Authorities

### **Massachusetts, Department of Early Education and Care**

<https://www.mass.gov/orgs/departments-of-early-education-and-care>

### **New Hampshire, Department of Health and Human Services**

<https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/programs-services/childcare-parenting-childbirth/child-care-licensing>

### **Connecticut**

<https://www.ctoec.org/licensing/>

### **Vermont**

<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/CDD/Licensing/CC-CenterBased-Regs.pdf>

# HEARTWORKS ADDENDUM

## Returning to School

To reiterate, children may return to school when they are:

- Free of fever (with no fever-reducing medication), vomiting, and diarrhea for +24 hours.
- Treated with an antibiotic for a full 24 hours.
- Testing negative for COVID and experiencing no symptoms.
- Able to participate comfortably in all usual program activities, including outdoor time.
- Free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething), unless:
  - Healthcare provider provides a release stating that the child's condition is not contagious and the impacted areas can be covered without seepage or drainage through a bandage.

If your child is excluded from the program because of a communicable disease, a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious may return can be required.

## Medication Administration

Prescription or non-prescription medication will be administered to a child only if it meets the following criteria:

- Written consent for administration at school signed and dated by the primary caregiver.
- Written medical release for prescription medication, signed and dated by a licensed medical professional, indicating the medication is for the specific child.
- Unless the first dose was administered at home, the medication must be brought to the program in a new/sealed, unopened container. All doses must be recorded/accounted for by staff or Executive Director. If the first dose was taken at home, documentation about that dosage must be provided to staff and the Executive Director by the family. The official prescription label on the container may serve as the medical professional's written order.
- The official prescription label must contain the following information: The name of the child who will be receiving the medication.\*
  - The name of the child's doctor.\*
  - The name of the medicine.
  - The issue date of the medicine.\*
  - The dosage.
  - How often to give the dosage.
  - The route of the administration (e.g., oral).
  - Storage requirements (e.g., refrigerator).

\*Prescription medication only.

**For non-prescription medicines, the following must be adhered to:**

- The family must provide all non-prescription medication.
- No medication may be administered to a child if the family does not provide it.
- An attempt must be made to notify the family before administering medication.



- The child's name must be labeled on the medication.
- Directions for safe use must be in writing on the container, along with a list of active ingredients.
- All families with children under 15 months of age will strive to have their consent updated every three months to ensure proper dosage.
- Fever-reducing medicine cannot be administered to children at school to reduce fever; children with fevers will be sent home.

**Staff will not administer:**

- Any first dose of a new medication. This must be given by the family in case of an allergic reaction.
- Any prescription medication not in the pharmacy's bottle with the prescription label.
- Any medication for which the family's instructions differ from those on the prescription label.

If the family requests the medication to be given by a different method (i.e., fluid medication be put in a bottle or sippy cup, or a tablet crushed into food), this direction would need to be verified by a signed and dated note from a medical professional/health care provider, stating that the alternative method of administering the medication is authorized.

Children are directly supervised for each dose of medication to ensure the medication was delivered in full to the correct child.

**General medication policies include:**

- The first dose must be administered by the primary caregiver at home in case of an allergic reaction.
- All medications must be provided by the primary caregiver directly to the staff or Executive Director.
- Medication is kept in the Executive Director's office or in a lock box located in the refrigerator in the kitchen. Medications that may be needed immediately are kept secure and out of reach of children in the classroom or carried outside when the child is outside (e.g., inhaler, epi-pen).
- Medication will only be administered by someone who has completed the Vermont Medical Administration course.
- Every child receiving medication will be directly supervised during each administration/dose to help ensure that each dose is delivered to the correct child.
- All staff administering medication will undergo any and all state-mandated medication administration training and/or programs.
- All administered medications (excluding topical ointments and sprays applied to normal skin) will be logged per all state regulatory/mandated forms, and the school will maintain a written record.
- The form must be completed, signed, and dated by the child's primary caregiver. The form will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage, and the name of the staff person that administered the medication.
- Any unused medication will be returned to the family.
- Upon completion of the medication, the consent form is kept in the child's file.

**For Medical Administration Chart, see next page.**



Type of Medication	Written Parental Consent Required	Health Care Practitioner Authorization Required	Logging Required
All Prescription	Yes	Yes. Must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature, missed doses must also be noted along with the reason(s) why the dose was missed.
Oral Non-Prescription	Yes, renewed weekly with dosage times, days and purpose	No. Staff may apply product with parental permission or parents may supply their own preferred brand.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature, missed doses must also be noted along with the reason(s) why the dose was missed.
Unanticipated Non-Prescription for Mild Symptoms (e.g. acetaminophen, ibuprofen, antihistamines)	Yes, renewed annually	No. Staff may apply product with parental permission or parents may supply their own preferred brand.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature.
Topical, Non-Prescription (when applied to open wounds or broken skin)	Yes, renewed annually	No. Staff may apply product with parental permission or parents may supply their own preferred brand.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature.
Topical Non-Prescription (not applied to open wounds or broken skin)	Yes, renewed annually	No. Staff may apply product with parental permission or parents may supply their own preferred brand.	No, for items used solely for prevention, such as sunscreen or insect repellent.