

# EARLY LEARNING PARENT HANDBOOK

2020-2021

## Rainbow Corner Preschool Toddler Developmental Playgroup

Part of CARE for Children

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United Way of the Bradford Area, Inc.

# EARLY LEARNING PARENT HANDBOOK

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Contents

EARLY LEARNING.....	1
PARENT HANDBOOK.....	1
<b>WELCOME TO EARLY LEARNING!</b> .....	<b>4</b>
WHY INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT.....	4
STAFF CREDENTIALS.....	4
<b>RAINBOW CORNER PRESCHOOL</b> .....	<b>5</b>
PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OVERVIEW/ PHILOSOPHY.....	5
<b>PRESCHOOL EARLY LEARNING CURRICULUM</b> .....	<b>5</b>
THE KEY AREAS.....	5
PARENT INVOLVEMENT AS A KEY TO SCHOOL SUCCESS.....	6
COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS.....	6
PRESCHOOL ADMISSIONS/ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES.....	6
GETTING STARTED.....	7
REGISTRATION FEES.....	7
REFUND POLICY.....	7
TUITION.....	8
NON-PAYMENT OF TUITION.....	8
OPEN DOOR POLICY.....	8
SCHOLARSHIPS/TUITION ASSISTANCE.....	8
REQUESTS FOR STATEMENTS.....	8
WITHDRAWAL FROM PRESCHOOL.....	9
THE GIVING TREE.....	9
MIXED AGE CLASSROOM.....	9
DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION.....	9
PARENT EVALUATION OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAM.....	9
STUDENT ASSESSMENTS & SCREENINGS.....	9
SCHOOL RECORDS & RELEASE OF INFORMATION.....	9
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE.....	10
<b>TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUP</b> .....	<b>10</b>
PLAYGROUP PROGRAM OVERVIEW/ PHILOSOPHY.....	10
DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION.....	10

CHILD ASSESSMENT .....	10
PLAYGROUP ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES .....	11
REGISTRATION FEES.....	11
REFUND POLICY.....	11
PROGRAM FEE.....	11
NON-PAYMENT OF MONTHLY PROGRAM FEE .....	11
WITHDRAWAL FROM PLAYGROUP .....	11
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE.....	11
PARENT VISITATION AT PLAYGROUP .....	12
PLAYGROUP RECORDS & RELEASE OF INFORMATION .....	12
<b>EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM POLICIES.....</b>	<b>12</b>
BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT.....	12
CHILD ABUSE REPORTING POLICY.....	13
DELIVERY AND PICK UP OF CHILDREN .....	13
RELEASE OF STUDENTS .....	13
CHILD CUSTODY .....	13
DRESS .....	13
HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS .....	13
<b>HEALTH &amp; SAFETY POLICIES.....</b>	<b>14</b>
HEALTH INFORMATION.....	14
IMMUNIZATIONS .....	14
STAFF TRAINING.....	14
ILLNESS & TRANSMITTABLE DISEASE.....	15
INJURIES .....	15
AUTHORIZATION FOR MEDICATION DURING PRESCHOOL/PLAYGROUP OR OTHER CARE PROGRAMS .....	15
EMERGENCIES, DRILLS, AND CLOSINGS.....	15
INCLEMENT WEATHER.....	16
IN-HOUSE SEVERE WEATHER NOTIFICATIONS-“SHELTER IN PLACE” .....	16
THANK YOU .....	16
CONTACTS.....	16

# WELCOME TO EARLY LEARNING!

Thank you for choosing CARE for Children’s Early Learning Program for your child. CARE has one of the longest running and best regarded programs in McKean County and we are committed to providing high quality programs that are innovative, and rooted in best practice. This handbook has three sections: Rainbow Corner Preschool information; Playgroup information; and Early Learning Program policies applicable to both programs. Both preschool and developmental playgroups are operated by CARE for Children, a private 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children of all abilities. CARE for Children is accredited under the Pennsylvania Association of Non-profit Organization’s Standard for Excellence Program. The Standards code builds upon the foundations of nonprofit management, governance, and operations to embrace fundamental values such as honesty, integrity, fairness, respect, trust, compassion, responsibility, and transparency. CARE provides pediatric therapy, pediatric health, and community outreach services for children, in addition to early childhood education programs. The Preschool Director and agency Executive Director manage the operation of the early learning programs and a volunteer Board of Directors governs the operations of all of CARE for Children’s programs and services.

## WHY INCLUSION IS IMPORTANT

CARE for Children’s Early Learning Program provides the opportunity for the inclusion of children with delays and disabilities with typically developing peers. Early intervention and education for children with disabilities can have a positive impact on a child’s cognitive and social development. Inclusion for early childhood programs supports the right of all children, regardless of ability, to participate actively in natural settings within their communities.

Participation is guided by developmentally and individually appropriate practices and in preschool by the curriculum. Evidence shows that high quality early childhood programs form the foundation for high quality, inclusive programs from which all children benefit. According to The Early Childhood Research Institute on Inclusion (ECRII), parents of children **without** disabilities participating in inclusive programs report positive changes in their children’s confidence, self-esteem, and understanding of diversity.

## STAFF CREDENTIALS

Kimberly Engstrom, M.Ed. Preschool Director is a certified teacher with early childhood credentials, she also holds a Master’s Degree in Education in Special Education. Alexis Close, M.Ed. is a certified teacher with a Master’s Degree in Early Childhood Education. Both teachers are credentialed as Language Coaches for children birth to five through the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania’s Early Intervention program. Any additional teaching staff is required to hold a B.S. in Early Childhood Education. The teacher’s aides are encouraged to have earned the Child Development Associate (CDA) distinction which is a professional credential recognizing outstanding work with young children. The Council for Professional Recognition awards credentials to early childhood educators who demonstrate the ability to constructively work with young children in group settings. All staff members at CARE for Children/Rainbow Corner Preschool go through an FBI Check, criminal background check and child abuse clearance.

# RAINBOW CORNER PRESCHOOL

Rainbow Corner Preschool is licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education and complies with all of the standards set forth by that Department.

## **PRESCHOOL PROGRAM OVERVIEW/ PHILOSOPHY**

It is the philosophy of CARE for Children that early childhood should be a time of fun, learning, warmth, security, exploring and discovery. CARE believes that our preschool program should consist of positive and purposeful strategies designed to help children meet their individual goals. The preschool is for children 3-5 years of age. Rainbow Corner Preschool has the responsibility to assist students to learn and achieve at their optimal developmental level. The mutual respect and collaboration between parents, teachers, aides, children and peers are of vital importance in helping students meet their goals of independence and self-awareness. Developmentally appropriate, child-centered activities where children can be active participants in the learning process are critical; this paired with teacher-directed learning activities ensures optimal learning and success. The classrooms strive to provide safe, structured experiences in an inviting, comfortable, organized atmosphere which promotes active discovery and choice-making to encourage the development of confident, socially conscious human beings. Our preschool is an educationally-based program rooted in child development as well as current early learning standards and best practices.

## ***PRESCHOOL EARLY LEARNING CURRICULUM***

Rainbow Corner Preschool aligns its curriculum to Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards, and best practice developmental guidelines. The curriculum is aligned with the curriculum used by the Bradford Area School District and the Seneca Highlands Intermediate Unit 9 Three to Five Early Intervention Program. The *Creative Curriculum Teaching Strategies Assessment Tool* is used to gauge and report student progress. The curriculum focuses on the development of: Language and Literacy, Mathematics, Creative Thinking, Problem Solving and Expression, Cognitive Thinking and General Knowledge, and Health, Wellness & Physical Development. Activities in these areas help the student with cognitive development; and to become confident learners. The preschool integrates these areas into thematic units which address key areas and one lesson may address several key areas.

## **THE KEY AREAS**

**Personal & Social Development:** To develop social/emotional skills preschool staff aim to make children feel comfortable in school, learn routines and rules they will need as they advance, trust their new environment, and make friends and feel that they are part of a group. The preschool fosters an environment where students can develop pride, self-confidence, independence and self-control. **Mathematical Thinking:** Students acquire learning skills such as the ability to solve problems using simple strategies, understand numbers and quantities and learn about simple patterns and relationships. **Scientific Thinking:** Students are encouraged to ask questions and use words to describe their ideas, and observations; use simple tools to investigate; and compare objects. **Language & Literacy:** Language development involves listening and speaking activities (understanding and following directions, asking questions, and participating in conversation). Early literacy activities include circle and story time, reading/writing activities including being introduced to the alphabet, and Smart Board and iPad activities. Students preparing to enter Kindergarten will be introduced to “Handwriting without Tears” to help them learn proper letter formation and emerging writing techniques. **Social Studies:** Students talk about their families, the community and relationships; and learn about jobs and technology. Students have different jobs

in the classroom and learn about leadership and develop an awareness of rules. **The Arts:** Arts & crafts are designed to aid coordination and fine motor skill development, and music and creative movement are used to encourage self-expression. **Health and Physical Development:** The staff works with students to increase their large and small muscle skills through various movement activities. During the week children participate in fun gross motor activities, (including obstacle courses, playing with balls, animal relay races) and if the weather permits, use the playground. These activities promote well rounded physical wellness. Overall health, dental health, and child safety are also areas of focus.

**STEAM:** Through grant funding, Rainbow Corner Preschool integrates enhanced elements of STEAM education into the classroom. STEAM is a collaborative mix of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics, and these areas of learning are changing the classroom experience for today's students and preparing them for the opportunities of tomorrow. By incorporating STEAM education, the staff shapes everyday experiences and prepares students to be excellent problem-solvers, creative collaborators, and thoughtful risk-takers.

**STEAM Enrichment Class:** One day per week, beginning each Fall, Rainbow Corner extends the preschool day until noon for children who turned 4 by November 1<sup>st</sup>. During that hour we focus on STEAM activities. At the end of the school year, we host a family night for all students, with activities based on STEAM.

The foundation of our program is rooted in these key areas and curriculums but lesson plans are tailored to the interests of the class, things going on in the world, and opportunities to integrate lessons in special activities and events like Zoo Day, the Pizza Hut Field Trip, and Early Learning Camp in the summer.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT AS A KEY TO SCHOOL SUCCESS**

Parents are the first and best teachers of their children. Key skill areas are addressed during school but proper follow through and reinforcement at home makes the difference for many students. Please help your child complete take home activities and we encourage parents to use routine activities as learning experiences ("count the eggs in the carton" or "what letter does your cereal start with?"). The staff is here to help your child reach their full potential and parental involvement is not only encouraged but a vital component. If there are significant problem areas or concerns you have regarding your child's progress the teachers are available to help and discuss as needed.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

Rainbow Corner Preschool strongly promotes communication between families and caregivers. Parent conferences are held at the beginning and middle of the school year to explain the assessment tool used by the program as well as discuss the progress that each child is making. Parents receive weekly emails that provide information regarding activities and themes presented. We also post events, activities and updates on CARE for Children's Facebook page. Please read the newsletter that is sent home monthly as it contains important dates; focus areas for the month ahead and fun activities that you can do at home.

Communication can take place through family conferences, emails, telephone calls, conversations at drop-off and pick-up times and prearranged meetings. We encourage parents to provide an email address that you use regularly so we may send you our weekly preschool blast and other general updates.

## **PRESCHOOL ADMISSIONS/ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES**

Children who are 3-5 years of age are eligible to enroll in the preschool. Admission requirements and enrollment procedures are as follows:

1. A child must be at least 2 years, 10 months old, by the first day of school, to be admitted into the program. Rainbow Corner Preschool has admissions based on availability through October of the school year.
2. Classes are filled on a first-come/first-served basis according to the date of enrollment. The classroom teacher and/or the Executive Director set the date of enrollment after registration materials are completed and registration fees are paid.
3. Rainbow Corner welcomes advance registration for children before their third birthday. Because we have rolling registration until October students are able to begin the first day of school. Children, under the age of 3, will be wait-listed based on 1) their date of birth using the month and 2) based on the date of advance registration.
4. Children are admitted regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin or religion.
5. Rainbow Corner is an inclusive program providing early learning opportunities to children of all abilities.

## **GETTING STARTED**

To ensure your family is prepared for preschool:

1. Pay the registration fee to guarantee your child's place in the class.
2. Complete registration form and other paperwork.
3. Review the school calendar and other important information which is sent home a few weeks prior to the start of school.
4. Review the parent handbook which is on <http://careforchildren.info/rainbow-corner-preschool/> or obtain a hard copy at our office.
5. Prior to the start of school make sure your child's immunizations are up to date and have your pediatrician send us a copy of your child's immunization records. (CARE follows the Immunization Policy of the local School District.)
6. Obtain copies of custody/legal guardianship papers, if necessary.
7. Attend the open house or schedule a tour of the classroom.
8. If your child has an IEP (Individualized Education Plan) through the IU9 or you believe your child may need additional services in the classroom please contact the preschool director upon registration.

## **REGISTRATION FEES**

There is a registration fee that is set each year prior to the beginning of the preschool year. This must be paid at the time of registration, prior to enrollment in the preschool. This fee is non-refundable. The registration fee helps Rainbow Corner cover the cost of the online assessment tool used for each student.

## **REFUND POLICY**

Refunds are only given in cases of extenuating circumstances (i.e. child moving out of town; child becomes seriously ill and cannot attend school). Refund requests must be submitted in writing for consideration.

## **TUITION**

Tuition is pre-paid on a monthly basis. The Finance and Office Manager handles the billing of the preschool program. There is a locked drop box for tuition checks or checks may be given to staff. If a parent pays in cash they must obtain a receipt from preschool staff or from the finance office. **Checks for tuition and registration fees are to be made payable to CARE for Children.** Checks returned for insufficient funds will be subject to a bank charge.

## **NON-PAYMENT OF TUITION**

It is very important that tuition be paid on time. In the event that tuition payments are late, parents/guardians will be given up to one month to make up the payment, unless suitable payment arrangements have been made and approved by the Executive Director. A reminder/ invoice for tuition payment will be sent home monthly in the student's bag. Rainbow Corner Preschool reserves the right to assess an additional charge of up to 10% of the amount past-due tuition. If, after one month, payment has not been made, a letter will be sent home to the parent requesting immediate payment. They will be given two weeks to complete payment; otherwise, the child will be considered un-enrolled in the preschool. We make every effort to help families facing financial hardship, please call the Finance and Office Manager to make payment arrangements if needed.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Rainbow Corner Preschool has an open door policy for parent visitation with prior arrangement with your child's teacher. We understand that the transition to preschool is sometimes not only difficult for the child but also the parent. Please keep in mind, many times children have an easier time adjusting if parents are not present. You are welcome to observe your child during the preschool session as long as your presence is not disruptive to the classroom routine. If your child is having a particular tough day, you are more than welcome to call the office and a staff member will check on your child.

## **SCHOLARSHIPS/TUITION ASSISTANCE**

The United Way of the Bradford Area, Inc. provides an annual allocation that helps our program keep tuition low. CARE for Children is also listed as a Pre-Kindergarten Scholarship Organization through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) Program. The scholarships are funded by businesses that make contributions to scholarship organizations in exchange for a tax credit. The amount of scholarships available to students is contingent upon the contributions made by businesses. The minimum family income level to qualify is much higher than most programs.

To qualify for this scholarship, the parents of the student must reside in Pennsylvania. An eligible student is at least three years of age, enrolled in a pre-kindergarten program located in Pennsylvania, and must meet income guidelines. Families applying for financial aid must show proof of wages (copy of most recent paycheck stubs for one month or a copy of the Schedule C form from the previous years' tax reporting if current pay stubs are not available) and all parent/household income should be reported, regardless of relationship with a child or living arrangement. Parents are responsible for reporting changes of financial conditions throughout the school year. For more information contact the finance department at CARE or visit the Early Learning page on the CARE for Children website: [www.careforchildren.info](http://www.careforchildren.info). Scholarship determinations are made when funding is available each year which may not be until December and tuition must be current to receive funding.

## **REQUESTS FOR STATEMENTS**

Requests for year-end tax statements and tuition records must be made seven business days in advance to the Finance and Office Manager.



## **WITHDRAWAL FROM PRESCHOOL**

If a child needs to be withdrawn from preschool, one month's notice is required. If one month's prior notice is not given, the monthly tuition fee will be billed to the parent or guardian.

## **THE GIVING TREE**

The Giving Tree helps our program through students' families contributions of healthy snacks or supplies. Parents take the apples/or the featured item off the tree and donate items that they wish to contribute to the classroom. This program helps keep our tuition low and still provide a quality early learning experience for your child.

## **MIXED AGE CLASSROOM**

Rainbow Corner Preschool follows a mixed-age classroom model. This means that there are children of different ages in each room. Both classrooms have 3, 4, and 5-year olds. When determining what classroom to place each child in before Preschool begins, we strive to place both younger and older children in each room. Studies have found that younger children learn best when interacting with older, more competent children who set good examples for cognition and behavior and older children develop leadership skills, independence, confidence and empathy, giving the older student a wider range for personal development. Children of different ages have different strengths and they have the opportunity to share those strengths with their peers. We encourage the students to learn from each other and to problem solve together in order to come up with solutions that work for them. The wide range of skills and abilities in each class enable the teachers to work with children "where they are", focusing on individual skills and interests and tailoring lessons to best meet their needs. This model moves the focus away from pre-conceived milestones or expected achievements and allows children to develop at their own pace.

## **DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION**

Rainbow Corner Preschool operates a three day program (mixed age classroom) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays and a five day program (mixed age classroom) Monday through Friday. The sessions are held from 8:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Children are permitted to be dropped off at 7:45 a.m.

## **PARENT EVALUATION OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

Once a year, parents/guardians will be given a program satisfaction survey to gain important feedback regarding their child's and family's experience with the preschool program. The information gathered from the surveys is used to gain outside funding to help keep the cost of tuition low and to gauge the quality and effectiveness of different components of our program.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENTS & SCREENINGS**

For preschool students a skills report/evaluation is sent during and at the end of the school year. The report covers different objectives that align with the Pennsylvania State Standards for Early Learning. They also highlight preschool skills that are mastered in preparation for Kindergarten. If your child is entering Kindergarten, the end of the year evaluation will be shared with the school district to help your child with Kindergarten transition and to help your child's new teacher be prepared for them prior to them entering the next stage of their education.

## **SCHOOL RECORDS & RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

Student records are maintained in a locked file cabinet in the office. Access is only made on a need-to-know basis by authorized staff. Parents are authorized to review their child's record. The teacher must be present

for the review. If a parent requests photocopies of the record, copies can be made at twenty-five cents per page. For verification and record keeping purposes, parents are asked to put into writing their requests to review, copy, or receive copies of their child's educational records. The student's record may be released only on written consent by the parent/guardian with the following exceptions:

- a) Authorized representatives of the Department of Education
- b) Health or safety emergencies where it is believed that a clear and present danger exists.
- c) When courts or government agencies mandate the release of information the principle of informed consent shall apply in all cases except those under child abuse or neglect statutes.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Any concerns a parent/guardian has regarding CARE's early learning program should be brought to the attention of the preschool director/teacher. Questions or concerns that are not satisfactorily resolved between the parent/guardian and the teacher after one week should be brought to the attention of agency Executive Director who will investigate the matter under the direction of the Policy & Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors. If the concern or grievance involves the teacher, it should be brought immediately to the attention of the Executive Director of CARE for Children. If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within 30 days, the concern may be brought to the attention of the State Board of Private Academic Schools. Correspondence can be directed to: Secretary of the Board of Private Academic Schools, 333 Market Street, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333, (717) 783-6840.

# **TODDLER DEVELOPMENTAL PLAYGROUP**

## **PLAYGROUP PROGRAM OVERVIEW/ PHILOSOPHY**

It is the philosophy of CARE for Children that early childhood should be a time of fun, learning, warmth, security, exploring and discovery. Playgroup is based on the idea that toddlers learn through playing. Social skills are promoted through structured play, and by reinforcing self-help skills and manners. Playgroup focuses on the five senses to introduce toddlers to methods of exploring the world around them and expanding their view of how things work. Playgroup participants have the opportunity to acquire new and practice existing language skills. The playgroup staff encourages social interaction, and works to enhance language development and further creativity in a language rich environment. Playgroup is a wonderful environment for young children to prepare for the next step into preschool or for children with delays to work on developmental milestones. Playgroup is developmentally-based in contrast to Preschool which is academically-based.

Playgroups are held at the Ashley Booth Griffin CARE for Children Center in an early learning classroom and are staffed by a licensed Early Childhood Educator/ Early Intervention Special Instructor and at least one teacher's aide.

## **DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION**

Playgroup is offered twice a week for a two hour session on Mondays and Fridays from 8:30am to 10:30am.

## **CHILD ASSESSMENT**

The Ages and Stages Assessment is completed for playgroup participants at the beginning of the year and then developmental skills are assessed throughout the year using an age appropriate assessment tool.

## **PLAYGROUP ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES**

1. Children who are 24-42 months are eligible to enroll in the playgroup.
2. The child's spot is secured upon completion of the registration packet and payment of the registration fee.
3. Prior to the first day of playgroup CARE must have an updated immunization form. Your child's pediatrician may fax it directly to our office at 814-362-1066.
4. Children may either attend Monday group, Friday group, or both Monday and Friday. Most children attend both days, but it is not required.
5. Children are admitted regardless of race, creed, color, sex, national origin or religion.
6. The playgroup is an inclusive program providing early learning opportunities to children of all abilities.

## **REGISTRATION FEES**

There is a registration fee to hold your child's spot in playgroup. This must be paid at the time of registration. This fee is non-refundable.

## **REFUND POLICY**

Refunds are only given in cases of extenuating circumstances (i.e. child moving out of town; child becomes seriously ill and cannot attend). Refund requests must be submitted in writing for consideration.

## **PROGRAM FEE**

The playgroup fee is pre-paid on a monthly basis. The Finance and Office Manager handles program billing. There is a locked drop box for checks or checks may be given to staff. If a parent pays in cash they must obtain a receipt from preschool staff or from the finance office. **Checks for program and registration fees are to be made payable to CARE for Children.** Checks returned for insufficient funds will be subject to a bank charge.

## **NON-PAYMENT OF MONTHLY PROGRAM FEE**

It is very important that the program fee is paid on time. In the event that the fee is late, parents/guardians will be given up to one month to make up the payment, unless suitable payment arrangements have been made and approved by the Executive Director. A reminder/ invoice for tuition payment will be sent home monthly in the student's bag. Rainbow Corner Preschool reserves the right to assess an additional charge of up to 10% of the amount past-due tuition. If, after one month, payment has not been made, a letter will be sent home to the parent requesting immediate payment. They will be given two weeks to complete payment; otherwise, the child will be considered un-enrolled in the program. We make every effort to help families facing financial hardship, please call the Finance and Office Manager to make payment arrangements if needed.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM PLAYGROUP**

If a child needs to be withdrawn from playgroup, one month's notice is requested. If one month's prior notice is not given, the fee will be billed to the parent or guardian.

## **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Any concerns a parent/guardian has regarding CARE's early learning program should be brought to the attention of the preschool director/teacher. Questions or concerns that are not satisfactorily resolved between the parent/guardian and the teacher after one week should be brought to the attention of the agency Executive Director who will investigate the matter under the direction of the Policy & Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors. If the concern or grievance involves the teacher, it should be brought immediately to the attention

of the Executive Director of CARE for Children. If the issue is not resolved satisfactorily within 30 days, the concern may be brought to the attention of the CARE for Children Board President.

## **PARENT VISITATION AT PLAYGROUP**

Our staff understands that for children, being away from their parents can not only be difficult for the child but also the parent. Please keep in mind, many times children have an easier time adjusting if parents are not present. You are welcome to observe your child during a playgroup session as long as your presence is not disruptive to the routine and with prior approval from the teacher. If your child is having a particular tough day, you are more than welcome to call the office and a staff member will check on your child.

## **PLAYGROUP RECORDS & RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

Playgroup participant records are maintained in a locked file cabinet in the office. Access is only made on a need-to-know basis by authorized staff. Parents are authorized to review their child's record. The teacher must be present for the review. If a parent requests photocopies of the record, copies can be made at twenty-five cents per page. For verification and record keeping purposes, parents are asked to put into writing their requests to review, copy, or receive copies of their child's educational records. The child's record may be released only on written consent by the parent/guardian with the following exceptions:

1. Health or safety emergencies where it is believed that a clear and present danger exists.
2. When courts or government agencies mandate the release of information the principle of informed consent shall apply in all cases except those under child abuse or neglect statutes.

## **EARLY LEARNING PROGRAM POLICIES**

*These policies apply to both preschool and playgroup participants*

### **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

Our staff uses age appropriate, positive guidance, redirection, "time-out" and the setting of clear-cut limits that foster each child's own ability to become self-disciplined. Staff will encourage children to respect other people, to be fair, respect property and to be responsible for their actions. Discipline involves teaching character and self-control. Under no circumstances will children be subject to physical punishment or abusive language, as these approaches teach children to respond in the same manner.

Staff will guide children to develop self-control and orderly conduct in relationship to peers and adults. Aggressive physical behavior toward staff or other children is unacceptable. Staff will intervene immediately when a child becomes physically aggressive to protect all of the children and encourage more acceptable behavior. To this end, staff will show children positive alternatives rather than just telling children "no". Good behavior will be encouraged and praised.

For acts of aggression and fighting (i.e. biting, hitting, etc.): the children will be immediately separated and immediate comfort and care/treatment for the injured child will be provided. Parents/legal guardians will be notified of the incident. Each incident is documented and reviewed by the Executive Director to assess adequacy of caregiver supervision and appropriateness of response. Physical restraint will be not be used except as necessary to ensure a child's safety or that of others, and then only for as long as necessary for control of the situation.

## **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING POLICY**

By law, early learning staff and all of the staff at CARE for Children are considered mandated reporters of suspected child abuse, therefore all observations or suspicions of child abuse or neglect will be immediately reported to child protective services.

## **DELIVERY AND PICK UP OF CHILDREN**

Please do not bring your child to preschool or playgroup more than 15 minutes before class or playgroup begins, and pick up should be no later than 10 minutes after class or playgroup is over. The exception is if your preschooler is registered for Extended Care. We ask that you exercise caution in the parking lot when picking up and dropping off your child. Please do not speed through the parking lot or the parking lot adjacent to our playground, a Headstart Classroom is housed in the building in front of the playground and parents and busses are picking up and dropping off there as well. Please make sure your child has your hand or the hand of an adult any time you are in the parking lot since the lot tends to be busy.

## **RELEASE OF STUDENTS**

If a child is to be picked up by someone other than his/her usual caregiver, parents/guardians should send a written note stating who will be picking up the child. Only in cases of necessity or emergency should a change be made over the telephone. Staff will call the parent/guardian back to confirm the information regarding the change and the person picking up the child will be required to present identification when they arrive at the school.

## **CHILD CUSTODY**

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

## **DRESS**

Children are encouraged to wear play clothes and sneakers. Our playground is used as an extension of the school, and daily activities are conducted outside whenever weather permits. Sweatshirts or shirts with drawstrings and dress shoes, sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for playground play and your child will be unable to participate in outside activities. Daily activities include active and messy play and the children should feel comfortable enough to enjoy themselves without worrying about their clothes. The child's name should be placed in all outdoor clothing and other belongings to help ensure the return of all proper possessions and clothes. Each child will be given an individualized bag at the beginning of the school year. This bag is to be kept at school to keep extra clothes on hand in case of emergencies.

## **HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS**

CARE for Children's Early Learning Programs approach holiday activities and celebrations in a way that is developmentally appropriate. The staff takes into account the many different perspectives on holidays and what they mean to the community, families and children that we serve.

When looking at planning activities as related to holidays the staff makes the determination on what to do and what not to do based on whether or not the activities are:

- Developmentally appropriate and in the case with preschool, aligned with our curriculum (which is carefully aligned with PA state standards);
- Age appropriate;
- Relevant to the individual children who are currently in our classrooms;
- Not inadvertently relying on store-bought/commercial content;
- And, not being used as the main or only way of teaching about cultural diversity.

CARE’s Early Learning Program recognizes and respects that special occasions can have religious, cultural and historical significance, as well as personal meaning. We also consider that some families in our community may not celebrate any holidays during the year.

For students in preschool, the classroom bulletin board and monthly newsletter announce any upcoming activities that are holiday related and parents may opt-out from sending their child to school on that day or when appropriate other activities may be offered to the child.

For children in playgroup, we will keep families informed by request of activities that may be holiday related. Since playgroup is a developmental model, holidays are typically not a focus.

## **HEALTH & SAFETY POLICIES**

*These policies apply to both preschool and playgroup participants*

### **HEALTH INFORMATION**

Each child is required to have a health statement on file. It is part of the registration forms and completed by the parent/caregiver and includes a record of up-to-date immunizations. If a child’s health care summary is not completed by the start of school, the child will be not be eligible to participate until the necessary requirements for enrollment are met. The preschool must have on file for each child a signed “Permission for Health Care” form authorizing emergency care and transfer of medical records to the local hospital. Emergency numbers for reaching the parent/guardian and another authorized person must also be on file.

### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

CARE for Children follows the School Vaccination Requirements for Attendance in Pennsylvania Schools <http://www.health.pa.gov/My%20Health/Immunizations/School/Pages/default.aspx#>

All students shall be immunized against certain diseases in accordance with Pennsylvania statutes, unless specifically exempt for religious or medical reasons. No student shall be admitted to or permitted to attend preschool or playgroup who has not been immunized in accordance with state regulations, unless provisionally admitted or exempted for medical or religious reasons. A student shall be exempt from immunization requirements whose parent/guardian objects in writing to such immunization on religious grounds (a religious exemption may also include strong moral or ethical conviction similar to a religious belief) or whose physician certifies that the student's physical condition contraindicates immunization. Monitoring of immunization requirements shall be the responsibility of the Preschool Director.

### **STAFF TRAINING**

All Rainbow Corner and CARE staff members are trained and certified in Child/Infant CPR and First Aid. There is also an AED located in the building. The staff is also annually trained in universal health precautions, infection control, procedural safeguards, and cultural competency. All Early Learning Staff members participate in continuing education and training annually to ensure that skills and knowledge base are up-to-date.

## **ILLNESS & TRANSMITTABLE DISEASE**

If your child is ill and will not be attending preschool or playgroup we do ask that you call the office at 814-362-4621. In the event that your child becomes acutely ill while attending preschool or playgroup, we will contact the parent/guardian listed to pick the child up early. The following guidelines are meant to assist parents with the decision to keep their child at home:

1. The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the usual activities of the program.
2. The staff cannot care for the sick child without interfering with the care of the other children.
3. The child has any signs or symptoms that indicate a contagious disease or an immediate need for medical evaluation.
4. For more information please visit web MD <http://www.webmd.com/cold-and-flu/features/your-child-too-sick-for-school> or the Keep Kids Healthy site [http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/infectionsguide/school\\_exclusion.html](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com/welcome/infectionsguide/school_exclusion.html)

If head lice are present, the teacher and/or classroom aide will check the heads of all students to make certain no other infestations are present. The child is not permitted to return to school without proof of treatment (i.e. note from pediatrician that the child is "nit-free"; box evidencing treatment, etc.).

## **INJURIES**

If a student becomes injured while at school, staff will immediately assess the situation and treat the child's injuries, with basic first aid (staff members are certified in infant-child cpr and first aid). If injuries are severe and require professional medical attention, staff will contact an ambulance and the parents/guardians. When a child is injured, parents/guardians will always be notified, regardless of the severity of the injury.

## **AUTHORIZATION FOR MEDICATION DURING PRESCHOOL/PLAYGROUP OR OTHER CARE PROGRAMS**

Medication should be given before or after preschool/program hours, whenever possible. If, however, it is essential that your child receive medication during preschool/program hours, the medication will be administered under the following conditions:

- The parent/ guardian along with the physician must complete the "authorization for administering medicine" form.
- All medication must be delivered to the preschool or program director by a parent or guardian, not by the student.
- No medication will be dispensed until this completed form is received by CARE for Children.
- All medication must be in the original pharmaceutical container and be plainly marked with the student's/ child's name, name of the medication, dosage and time to be administered. Only that amount of medication, which is required to be administered during preschool/program hours should be delivered. Any medication left after the date of the last prescribed dose will be discarded.

## **EMERGENCIES, DRILLS, AND CLOSINGS**

The safety of your child is of paramount importance. There are written policies for staff to follow in case of emergencies, crisis or the need for school evacuation. Fire Drills are practiced on a monthly basis and the Fire Department visits the preschool annually. The agency is equipped with fire extinguishers that are inspected annually.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

In adverse weather conditions, CARE for Children’s Executive Director will determine whether to delay or close programs or the entire agency. In the event of a closure or delay, information will be shared through the phone tree, the WESB website, Facebook and radio station. If the Bradford Area School District closes due to weather which causes hazardous conditions- CARE center based programs and the main office will close. In the past school districts have closed because of extreme cold, in those cases closures or delays are at the discretion of CARE management.

## **IN-HOUSE SEVERE WEATHER NOTIFICATIONS-“SHELTER IN PLACE”**

In the event of potentially life-threatening weather conditions that may risk those students or children in the building (i.e., tornadoes, etc.), notifications will be made to all parents and we will shelter children in place.

## **THANK YOU**

Thank you for choosing CARE for Children’s Early Learning Program. We strive to give your child the best early learning experience possible. And again, we recognize that parents are truly the first and most important teachers. As we continue to provide a rich educational and developmental experience for your child, we encourage your active participation in the learning process. For more information, forms, or general resources please visit our website at [www.careforchildren.info/preschool](http://www.careforchildren.info/preschool).

## **CONTACTS**

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