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# FAMILY HANDBOOK

## About Us

### **Our Philosophy**

Our focus is to provide warmth and security in a nurturing home-like environment in which the child can follow their individual interests engaging with materials that support motor, cognitive and social development. We follow the Montessori approach and believe that providing this experience fosters a love of learning and a strong connection to their community.

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is to support working families in Highland County by providing quality childcare in a homelike setting.

### **Hours of Operation**

Childcare services are provided Monday through Friday from 7:30 AM to 5:15 PM year-round.

### **Holidays**

We are closed for certain holidays:

- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- 4th of July
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day (Teacher work day)
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

- New Year's Day
- Presidents Day (Teacher work day)

These days are included as paid days in your tuition as we pay our staff for these days.

## **Admission & Enrollment**

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and enrollment fee paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

An enrollment fee of \$50.00 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.

A copy of your child's immunization records must be turned in prior to your child's enrollment (please talk to the director if you have an alternate immunization plan), their birth certificate must be turned in within the first 7 days of enrollment and a copy of a physical examination that has been conducted within the last 12 months must be turned in within the first 30 days of enrollment.

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 weeks to 12 years of age.

Children are admitted without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

## **Inclusion**

Highland Children's House believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

## **Non-Discrimination**

At Highland Children's House equal educational opportunities are available for all children without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

When children come to our program with identified special needs, we are committed to providing developmentally appropriate experiences, full access to our program and are willing to work with the family and other community support systems.

## **Family Activities**

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals. These opportunities are limited due to COVID 19, but we continue to strive to make the children's house a welcoming place for parents.

## **Confidentiality**

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential. Any information about your child will not be shared with other parents and/or community members.

## **Staff Qualifications**

All staff are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum.

Typical staff certifications are as follows:

Caregivers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

## **Communication & Family Partnership**

Daily Communications will come from the infant and toddler teachers. Notes will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day or sent via message.

We encourage you to provide an email address and facebook messenger name that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

In case of an emergency when children need to be relocated, Parents will be notified via telephone, social media and on Radio station WVMR if appropriate.

Family & teacher conferences occur in the fall and spring. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

## **Open Door Policy**

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes

parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants. Please let us know ahead of time if you would like to come and visit.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians about their daily activities. However, our regular child care hours are devoted to caring for children and it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

## **Publicity**

Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center or on our website. Written permission will be obtained prior to use of photographs.

Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for publicity.

## **Curriculum & Learning**

### **Learning Environment**

We provide a rich learning environment that is developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We follow the Montessori approach which allows children to follow their own interests and advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through exploring with hands-on individual and small group activities. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: practical Life, sensorial, math, cultural, science, artistic expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

### **Assessment**

Highland Children's House follows the Montessori approach. As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

### **Developmental Screening**

Ages & Stages Questionnaires®, Third Edition (ASQ®-3) is a developmental screening tool designed for use by [early educators and health care professionals](#). It relies on parents as experts, is easy-to-use, family-friendly and creates the snapshot needed to catch delays *and* celebrate milestones.

## **Outings and Field Trips**

Weather permitting; we will conduct supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood for all children. Children are accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child's family.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of childcare programs. The majority of our field trips will be on foot. If it is necessary for children to be transported by vehicle the parents or custodians will be required to drive and provide regulated child restraint seating.

## **Electronic Media**

Our Infant, Toddler and Preschool daily routines do not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use. Our school age program may use a television show without advertisements as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice enrichment and limited usage per child. State rules prohibit any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos and computers.

## **Celebrations**

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

## **Rest Time**

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes.

After lunch, all children under 5 years of age participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep, but must lay on their cot for 30 minutes. If they don't fall asleep, then they will be given quiet activities.

School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

## **Toilet Training**

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

## **Guidance**

### **General Procedure**

Highland Children's House is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

### **Challenging Behavior and Discipline Policy**

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. Each child at Highland Children's House is encouraged to; develop independence and self-direction, ask for help and support from adults and peers, and resolve conflicts peacefully.

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report it to the Director of the Center.

### **Physical Restraint**

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline.

### **The following actions or threats thereof are forbidden**

Physical punishment, striking a child, rough handling or shaking a child, restricting movement or forcing a child to assume an uncomfortable position. Confining a child to a small or enclosed space. Punishment by another child. Separation from the group so the child is away from the hearing or vision of a staff member. Withholding or forcing food or rest. Verbal remarks which are demeaning to a child. Punishment for toileting accidents. Punishment by applying unpleasant or harmful substances.

### **Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families**

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

### **Tuition and Fees**

All payment and fee processing will be completed by the Bookkeeper and/or Highland Children's House Director. The Director will be in charge of collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families regarding payment issues.

Families contract for a specific schedule as indicated on the Enrollment Agreement Form.

Payment for this contracted schedule is required every month year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary all year. Monthly rates have been calculated such that while there are an average of 22 attendance days per month, families are charged 21 attendance days per month. Monthly rates will not be adjusted based on planned actual attendance, they will remain the same month-to-month. The 12 unbilled days accrued through the course of the year are considered Vacation/sick day credits and may be used at the discretion of families. Advanced notice of a planned absence is still expected.

Please see the vacation policy below.

### **Vacation**

Vacation days are built into the monthly tuition rates. Each child accrues the equivalent of one vacation day per month, totaling twelve days per contract year. Advanced notice of a vacation is still expected. If a child will be absent/vacationing for a prolonged period (approximately a full

month or longer), please communicate with the Director and a child MAY be eligible for a tuition waiver for that period.

Vacation days do not apply to summer program attendees.

If receiving subsidized assistance, families need to follow the DSS absence policy.

## **Methods of Payment**

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by cash, check, or money order or through the Wonderschool App.

## **Late Payment Charges**

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance over a long period of time. Late payments can result in termination of services. Families experiencing economic hardship should speak to the director and request financial assistance.

If payment is more than 30 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a 3<sup>rd</sup> party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

## **Returned Checks**

All returned checks will be charged a fee of \$25.00. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status.

## **Credits & No Credits**

- Families contract for a specific monthly schedule as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every month year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary all year. No credits are given for sick days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.
- Credit may be given for maternity leave or serious illness/injury – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child is hospitalized, absent due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor's note is required to receive a credit.



## **Attendance & Withdrawal**

### **Absence**

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 8:45 AM, please message or call us at 540-468-1100. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

If a school age child will not be attending before or after school care, please notify us through message or 540-468-1100 by 2 PM.

### **Vacation**

Vacation days only apply if your child is normally scheduled to attend on those days. Each child accrues one vacation day per month, equivalent to twelve days per contract year. These days may be used during the month earned or saved for subsequent months.

Vacation credits do not apply to summer program attendees.

If receiving subsidized assistance, families need to follow the DSS absence policy.

### **Withdrawal**

A written notice, 2 weeks in advance, is required when a child is being withdrawn.

### **Termination**

Highland Children's House reserves the right to terminate the enrollment agreement for the following reasons:

1. Severely inappropriate behavior as described in our discipline policy.
2. Past due accounts.
3. The parent/guardian is consistently non-cooperative in working with the center staff or following center policies.
4. If the teaching staff are unable to meet the needs of the child enrolled. The Director will meet with the parent to explain the reason for his/her child's removal from the Center.

### **Transfer of Records**

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

## **Weather Policy**

When Highland County Public Schools close due to inclement weather or the forecast of inclement weather, Highland Children's House will notify parents of the school's status and the possibility of a closure for HCH as well. As the situation evolves, HCH will assess our ability to offer childcare as well as the status of Highland County Offices. If the county offices close, the Highland Center closes the building and we are definitively not able to offer care. Because county offices may close with limited notification in the morning of a weather event, delay and/or closure of HCH may happen quickly. Parents may wish to have alternative plans for childcare in place upon notification of Highland County Public Schools closure.

## **Drop-off and Pick-up**

We open at 7:30 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in.

We close at 5:15 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

The average day for a child to be in childcare should not exceed 9 hours.

## **Cell Phone Usage**

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

## **Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up**

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after 1 hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

### **Right to Refuse Child Release**

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

## **Personal Belongings**

### **What to Bring**

- **Infants:** enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least 10 diapers per day, at least 3 changes of clothes per day and a sleep sack. Socks and shoes for outside play. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Young Toddlers:** Diapers, 3 changes of clothes per day and a blanket for nap time. Socks and shoes for outside play. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Older Toddlers:** Diapers or Pull ups, at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program and a blanket for nap time.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes, blanket for nap time
- **After School Care Children:** books for homework, appropriate play clothes and an extra set of clothes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

### **Cubbies**

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

### **Lost & Found**

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located in the director's office. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

### **Toys from Home**

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center.

### **Linens for Cots and Cribs**

Cot sheets will be changed weekly and washed at the center.

Crib sheets are changed daily.

### **Schedules**

#### **Daily Schedule for Infants 6 weeks to 16 months:**

7:30 Center Opens

- o Greeting and check in as children arrive
- o Breakfast will be served following the child's schedule; all children will be offered food within the first hour and a half of arrival.
- o Children will sleep when tired. They will be placed in their crib on their back. Sleeping infants will be checked every 15-20 minutes.
- o Diaper Check every 2 hours or more frequently as needed.
- o Meals according to family or individualized meal plan.

11:00 infants will have outside play for 30-minutes, weather permitting.

- All infants will have opportunities to explore the environment and interact with caregivers promoting language, motor, cognitive, and social-emotional skills.

- Space and supervised time for rolling, crawling and walking is provided. Infants who cannot turn themselves over and are awake, shall be placed on their stomachs for a total of 30 minutes each day to facilitate upper body strength.

3:45 Infants will have outside play for weather permitting.

5:15 Center Closes

### **Daily Schedule for 16 months to 35 months:**

7:30 Center Opens

- o Greeting and check in as children arrive

9:00 Breakfast

Meals will be served family style at low weaning tables. Toddlers will eventually serve themselves as they prepare to transition into the PreK room.

- Toddlers will have opportunities to explore the environment and interact with caregiver promoting the language, motor, cognitive, and social-emotional skills

- Practice a full sequence of work involving a beginning, middle, and end

- Toddlers will have many opportunities for gross motor development.

Toddlers will transition from diapers to using the bathroom and learn to change their own clothing.

11:00 Outside Play

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Nap time Children who do not fall asleep after the first 30 minutes may engage in quiet activities.

2:30 Quiet play

3:00 snack

3:30 Outside

5:15 Center Closes

### **Daily Schedule for 3 to 5 years:**

7:30 Center Opens

Free choice work cycle in the classroom

8:45 Group time

9:00 Breakfast

9:15 Free choice work cycle in the classroom continues

- o Small and large groups will gather for gross motor, music, literature and various lessons

10:45 Outside time, weather permitting. Indoor gross motor activities in the case of foul weather

11:50 Story time

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Nap Children who do not fall asleep after the first 30 minutes may engage in quiet activities.

2:30 Free choice work cycle in the classroom

3:00 Snack

3:00 Outside time, weather permitting. Indoor gross motor activities in the case of foul weather.

5:15 Center Closes

### **Daily Schedule for School Age:**

7:30 Center Opens

- o Greeting and check in as children arrive

- o Quiet activities

7:40 Children are directed to bus

3:15 Children arrive

- o Greeting and check in

3:30 Snack

- o Various activities that follow their interest

4:00 Outdoor play, weather permitting

5:15 Center Closes

### **On Non-School Days**

7:30 Center Opens

- o Greeting and check in as children arrive

9:00 Breakfast will be served

- Free choice work cycle in the classroom

- o Small and large groups will gather for gross motor, music, literature and various lessons

11:00 Outside time, weather permitting. Indoor gross motor activities in the case of foul weather

12:00 Lunch

12:30 Extended academic lessons for 5-year old's

3:00 Snack

3:30 Outside time, weather permitting. Indoor gross motor activities in the case of foul weather

5:00 Inside activities including, but not limited to reading, artistic expression and constructive play

5:15 Center Closes

### **Transportation**

School age children will be escorted to and picked up at the bus stop in front of the Highland Center. All Field trips will be by foot or transported by parents. Highland Children's House will not be responsible for transporting children at any time.

## **Nutrition**

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service. At this time this service is only provided to children 24 months and up.

## **Food Allergies**

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

## **Mealtime**

At mealtime the dining table is set with plates and flatware. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted for viewing by parents/caregivers.

A caregiver who is trained in first aid for choking is present at all meals.

## **Infant Feedings**

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed “on cue” to the extent possible (at least every 3 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent caregiver/teacher.

Because breastfeeding provides the healthiest start for babies, providing ideal nutrition and a multitude of health benefits for both infant and mother, it is important for the Highland Children’s House to support and encourage breastfeeding.

We will ensure that:

- We provide a breastfeeding-friendly environment. We invite mothers to come to the center and nurse their babies or express breastmilk at any time during the day, and there is a comfortable place for them to do so. We display culturally appropriate posters of mothers nursing their babies.
- All breastfeeding families are able to properly store and label milk for child care center use. There is always refrigerator space available for daily storage of breastmilk. We provide



freezer storage for breastmilk. We have written guidelines that we share with our families, and all milk at our center is properly labeled.

- All new staff receive training in storage and handling of human milk, developmentally appropriate infant feeding practices, breastfeeding promotion and the support of exclusive breastfeeding.
- We inform women and families about the importance of breastfeeding. We provide families with culturally appropriate information about the risks/ benefits of different feeding choices and about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding (no infant formula, water, juice or solid food is served.) We discuss breastfeeding with potential families and share breastfeeding materials and resources with our families.
- We support breastfeeding employees. Employees have access to a clean, private location to nurse their babies or express milk and are able to break as needed to do so.
- We develop a feeding plan that supports best feeding practices with each family and share a daily breastfeeding/infant feeding plan with our families. We work with each family to encourage practices that will help maintain breastfeeding. This includes nursing on demand when with their babies, responding to feeding cues rather than feeding on a schedule, and the developmentally-appropriate introduction of complementary foods.
  - Solid foods will only be introduced after consultation with the child's family.

### **Children 24 Months and Older**

- No child shall go more than 3 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy.

### **School Aged Participants**

- After school childcare participants will be offered a light snack. These snacks are not a meal. If your child will be arriving before 7:45 AM, your child will be served breakfast. Otherwise, please make sure your child has had breakfast before arriving at childcare.

### **Health**

## **Immunizations**

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). We check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## **Physicals**

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before enrollment but must be received no later than 30 days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

22 VAC 40-185-140. Physical examinations for children.

B. If the child has had a physical examination prior to attendance, it shall be within the time period prescribed below:

1. Within two months prior to attendance for children six months of age and younger;
2. Within three months prior to attendance for children aged seven months through 18 months;
3. Within six months prior to attendance for children aged 19 months through 24 months; and
4. Within 12 months prior to attendance for children two years of age through five years of age.

## **Illness**

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.

- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever of 100.4 or higher
- Diarrhea – 3 episodes of loose stools or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – All children must be 24 hours free before returning..
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities including playing outside in cold weather..

- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

## **Allergy Prevention**

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

## **Medications**

The center will administer emergency medication which will include, Epi-Pen epinephrine auto-injector, liquid Benadryl when prescribed for an allergic reaction and metered-dose inhaler treatments.

The center will administer over the counter medication with once proper written authorization is received from the parent and physician if required.

All medications should be handed to a staff member with a completed medication authorization form (available in our office and on our website).

- Prescription medications shall be in the original container with a pharmacy label stating the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage amount, and the times to be given.
- Expiration dates will be checked by staff when receiving medication.

Medications that need to be administered for more than 10 Days must have written authorization from the child's physician and parent.

Non-prescription topical ointments such as teething ointment, diaper cream, sunscreen and insect repellent require a signed authorization form. Adverse reactions to ointment must be noted on the form.

Only staff who have received Medication Administration Training can administer medication.

### Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments.

Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis

### **Safety**

#### **Clothing**

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including painting,

outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

### **Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 82°F or less than 28°F degrees. Other factors such as wind chill and heat index will also determine our Outdoor Play exposure.

### **Communal Water-Play**

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease.

### **Injuries**

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

### **Biting**

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

### **Respectful Behavior**

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

### **Smoking**

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

### **Prohibited Substances**

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

### **Dangerous Weapons**

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called, and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

### **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.

Virginia Code 63.2-1813 states: A custodial parent or guardian shall be admitted to any child day program. For purposes of this section, "child day program" is one in which a person or organization has agreed to assume responsibility for the supervision, protection, and well-being of a child under the age of thirteen for less than a twenty-four-hour period, regardless of whether it is licensed. Such right of admission shall apply only while the child is in the child day program

### **Suspected Child Abuse**

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the local Department of Social Services or the toll free hotline if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

### **Emergencies**

#### **Lost or Missing Child**

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, the family and the police will be notified.

#### **Fire Safety**

Our center is fully equipped with fire extinguishers, detectors and alarms.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis.

Our staff are trained annually in Emergency Preparedness and our plan is prepared with assistance from the local authorities. In the case of an emergency the children will be transported to an established assembly point and parents or emergency contact person will be notified via telephone.

#### **Emergency Transportation**

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

The Emergency Preparedness Plan is available for your review.



## **CENTER POLICIES**

Our center policies not included in this handbook are reviewed and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.



# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the Highland Children’s House Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the Highland Children’s House staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself with the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Highland Children’s House Family Handbook that I do not understand.

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Recipient Signature

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Date

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Center Staff Signature

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Date

