

CHILDREN CENTRAL CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTER

Parent Handbook

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CHILDREN CENTRAL CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTER

Thank you for choosing **Children Central Child Care / Learning Center**! We are honored that you have entrusted us with the care and early education of your child!

This handbook has been created to help ensure your family has a positive, informed, and rewarding experience with our center. Inside, you will find answers to many common questions about our program, policies, and daily operations. While the handbook is designed to serve as a helpful guide, it may not include every policy or practice in full detail.

Our mission is to provide high-quality care and education in an environment where children, families, and staff feel valued, respected, and supported. We believe that strong partnerships with families are essential. To help us work together effectively, we ask parents and guardians to:

- Read and follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook
- Provide all necessary information and documentation in a timely manner
- Maintain open and honest communication regarding your child's experience
- Share comments, questions, concerns, and suggestions at any time

Any changes to policies or procedures will be provided to families in writing. For questions or clarification about any part of this handbook, please contact the Center Director.

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center reserves the right to revise or update policies and programs at its discretion.

Policy Two: Mission and Vision Statement

MISSION STATEMENT

CHILDREN CENTRAL CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTER

At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, we strive to be a trusted and essential extension of your family. We believe that the early years are the foundation for a child's lifelong growth and success. With this in mind, we are committed to providing a warm and supportive environment where every child feels seen, heard, and valued.

Together with families, we walk hand-in-hand to create a strong foundation that supports each child's developmental journey.

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is to deliver the highest standard of early childhood care and education within a secure, engaging, and developmentally rich environment. We are dedicated to fostering opportunities for children to explore, discover, and thrive—academically, socially, emotionally, and physically.

We aim to be a center where:

- Children feel empowered and inspired
- Families feel supported and welcomed
- Educators feel valued, trained, and motivated
- The community recognizes us as a leader in early childhood excellence

Through innovation, compassion, and a commitment to best practices, Children Central strives to positively shape the early learning experiences that set the stage for future success.

Policy Three: Program Philosophy

At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, we believe in serving as a meaningful extension of your family—partnering with you to nurture, support, and guide your child's growth.

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We are committed to creating a warm, loving, and supportive environment where each child can build the strong foundation necessary for lifelong happiness, confidence, and success.

Our philosophy is centered around three powerful principles: LOVE, LEARNING, and UNDERSTANDING.

- LOVE cultivates trust, emotional security, and a sense of belonging.
- LEARNING encourages curiosity, discovery, and the excitement of new experiences.
- UNDERSTANDING allows us to recognize and respect each child's unique strengths, needs, and developmental pace.

We believe that young children learn best through active exploration and hands-on experiences. Learning begins at birth and continuously evolves through interactions with people, materials, and the world around them. As children mature emotionally and socially, they develop the essential framework that supports meaningful learning and future academic growth.

Through developmentally appropriate activities, supportive relationships, and thoughtful guidance, we aim to help each child express themselves, build independence, and discover the joy of learning. Our team is dedicated to fostering an environment where every child feels valued, capable, and empowered.

Policy Four: Goals for Children

Children learn by hearing, seeing, moving, and touching. With a foundation of security, love, and encouragement, they confidently explore and understand the world around them.

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At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, we recognize that children grow through meaningful play and hands-on experiences. Through interactions with peers, adults, and a variety of materials, children build essential social skills, expand language abilities, and strengthen cognitive development.

We honor each child's unique learning style and developmental pace. Our classrooms provide engaging and age-appropriate activities designed to support thinking skills, problem-solving, and early academic concepts. Teachers carefully observe children and introduce experiences that extend learning in purposeful, developmentally appropriate ways.

Play is at the heart of learning. Through imaginative play, sensory exploration, and cooperative activities, children practice communication, build friendships, and learn to navigate social situations. Manipulatives, art materials, and fine-motor tools help strengthen hand skills needed for writing and self-care, while outdoor play and physical activities support gross-motor growth, coordination, and overall health.

Language development is woven into all daily routines. Teachers model rich vocabulary, engage children in conversations, and encourage them to express their needs, ideas, and feelings. Open-ended questions and meaningful dialogue help children build confidence and become active thinkers.

We believe children learn best when they are curious, supported, and encouraged to explore. Our curriculum is designed to spark creativity, promote independence, and lay a strong foundation across all areas of development—social, emotional, cognitive, physical, and language.

Policy Five: Licensing Information and Professional Affiliations

A. Licensing

CHILDREN CENTRAL CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTER

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is a private, for-profit community child development center licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS conducts annual inspections to ensure that we meet all state regulations for health, safety, staffing, and program quality. Our current license is prominently displayed in the lobby for all families to review.

Families may access the most recent DHS policies and regulations directly on the DHS website.

B. Professional Affiliation

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is proud to participate in the Keystone STARS Quality Rating and Improvement System, Pennsylvania's statewide program designed to support early childhood centers in achieving excellence.

Keystone STARS evaluates childcare programs on four key areas:

- Staff qualifications & professional development
- Classroom and learning environment quality
- Program administration and leadership
- Family and community partnerships

We are honored to maintain a Keystone STARS 4-STAR rating, the *highest quality rating* awarded in Pennsylvania. This distinction reflects our commitment to high standards in curriculum, teacher training, safety, family engagement, and overall program quality.

For additional information about our affiliations or quality standards, please contact the Administration Office.

You are also welcome to learn more or reach out through the following:

Website: www.childrencentral.net

Email: director@childrencentral.net

Policy Six: Admissions

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center welcomes children from 6 weeks (Infant Room) to 5+ years (Pre-Kindergarten & Cub Camp). Enrollment is offered without regard to a child's or parent/guardian's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, age, pregnancy, or disability, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment for all families.

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To apply for enrollment, parents must complete the enrollment application and submit:

- Annual, non-refundable registration fee
- One-week security deposit
- One-week tuition

Tuition rates, registration fees, and parental financial obligations are outlined in the Tuition Agreement Sheet.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of:

- Completed enrollment application
- Signed fee agreement
- Child's health form signed by physician
- Emergency contact form
- Current immunization records

Please note that the enrollment application and fee agreements do not guarantee service for any specific duration. Children Central Child Care / Learning Center reserves the right to dismiss any child or parent at any time, with or without cause.

Continued enrollment requires parents, guardians, or authorized caregivers:

- Follow all policies and procedures outlined in this handbook
- Submit all fees and tuition on time
- Provide any requested forms, including updated health assessments and emergency contact information when needed

Parents are required to notify the center immediately of any changes to information provided at enrollment. Failure to do so may result in the child's removal from the program and forfeiture of any deposits.

Policy Seven: Enrollment

Enrollment & Required Forms

Prior to a child's first day, a conference with the parent/guardian (and child, if appropriate) is available to introduce the family to the environment, staff, and daily schedule. Children may spend time in the program with a parent or guardian before attending independently.

The following forms must be completed and submitted before attendance:

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1. **Registration/Enrollment Agreement** – completed by parent/guardian.
2. **Child Health Assessment** – signed by the child's physician or nurse practitioner.
Children under 2 years of age need this form updated every six months. Children over 2 years old need this form updated yearly.
3. **Emergency Contact Information** – updated every six months or as changes occur.
4. **Special Care Plan** – if a child has a disability, developed with parent/guardian and/or healthcare provider.
5. **Consent for Program Activities** – completed by parent/guardian.
6. **Child Care Agreement** – completed by parent/guardian.

All forms must be completed before the child's first day. If required health services (e.g., immunizations, vision, hearing) are missing, parents will be notified and given six weeks to obtain them. Children must be up to date on all required vaccinations as mandated by the pediatrician and the PA Department of Human Services. Children not meeting these requirements will not be enrolled.

All information is kept **confidential** and shared only with staff, regulatory authorities, or validators (DHS, Keystone STARS, NAEYC) as required. No information is released without written parental consent.

A. Child Transition Policy

Children Central is committed to supporting smooth transitions between program levels. Transitions are gradual, individualized, and designed to foster confidence and independence. Examples include:

- **Infant → Toddler:** Gradual visits to the Toddler room, introduction to mats, finger foods, and cups.
- **Toddler → Toddler Two/Twaddlers:** Gradual introduction to self-help skills, utensils, and cup use.
- **Twaddler → Preschool:** Focus on potty training, self-help skills, and familiarization with preschool routines and centers.
- **Preschool → Pre-Kindergarten:** Practice of early academic skills (writing, scissors), self-help, and social expectations; summer Cub Camp may support adjustment.
- **Pre-Kindergarten → Kindergarten:** Preparation in academics, social skills, and self-help and a graduation ceremony in June.

Families receive documentation and guidance for each transition, including a list of needed items and the opportunity to schedule a transition meeting with staff to discuss questions or concerns.

45-Day Assessment

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Each child entering our program or if a child is showing signs of difficulty, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will complete a 45-day assessment using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) for their age level. Families may choose to participate by completing the ASQ at home, but this is optional.

The purpose of the assessment is to provide teachers with valuable information to plan and support the child's learning and development effectively.

Parents will receive a notification letter offering a conference to review the results of the 45-day assessment or discuss the child's transition. Parents may:

- Schedule a telephone conference, or
- Decline the conference by signing the letter, which will then be filed in the child's assessment folder.

If a conference is held, the assessment and conference form will be signed and placed in the child's assessment file.

Providing Help for Families

Teachers conduct ongoing observations and assessments to support each child's growth. If concerns arise, the following steps will be taken:

1. Staff consult with Administration regarding observations and findings.
2. A private meeting with the parent/guardian and teacher is arranged to discuss the child's needs. A member of Administration may attend.
3. Staff and/or Administration will guide families to appropriate community resources or services, which may include:
 - Family physician or pediatrician
 - Local Intermediate Unit or school support services
 - Behavioral health resources
 - Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants
 - Early Intervention programs
 - OCDEL Connect Line (800-692-7288)
 - Other community resources to support social-emotional, behavioral, and developmental needs

Our goal is to provide families with information and support to ensure every child thrives academically, socially, and emotionally.

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Policy Eight: Tuition & Fees Policy

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians must sign a **tuition/fee agreement** prior to enrollment. Parents must indicate to whom all billing statements and correspondence should be directed.

A. Payment Schedule

Tuition is due in advance on a weekly or monthly basis as agreed at enrollment. Two weeks' tuition (one week deposit plus first week) is due before the child's first day. Payments may be made by cash, check, money order, or credit card (3% card fees apply). Per the tuition rate sheet, a 2% discount is provided for submitting the monthly tuition by the 1st of the month. Receipts are provided for cash payments. Tuition is non-refundable and not prorated for holidays, illness, vacations, days missed or closures due to extreme circumstances.

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Returned checks incur a **\$35 fee**, and late payments are subject to:

- Weekly: \$15 will be charged for a late weekly payment
- Monthly: \$25 late fee if tuition is not received by the 7th of the month.

Non-payment or repeated insufficient funds may result in dismissal. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment.

B. Early Drop

Arrivals before 8AM is \$12 per week for weekly payers and \$48 per month for monthly payers. For the occasional early drop off before 8:00AM, it will be prorated as follows: 7:30-7:59AM = \$5, 7:00-7:29AM = \$10, and before 7:00AM is \$12.

C. Late Pick-Up

Children must be picked up by **5:30PM**. A late fee of \$10 per child is charged every five minutes past closing.

D. Late Payments

For monthly tuition payers, payments not received by the 7th of the month will be considered late, and a \$25 late fee will apply. An additional \$15 per week will be assessed until payment is received.

For weekly tuition payers, payments are due on Friday prior to the week of attendance. A \$15 late fee will be charged if payment is not received by Monday at 5:30 PM.

If a bank returns a check for insufficient funds a \$35 charge will be assessed. If this occurs more than once within a 12-month period, all future payments must be made by cash or money order. Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payment is essential for continued enrollment at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center.

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E. Subsidized Care

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center accepts childcare subsidies from ELRC and will consider other organizations at the discretion of the school. Parents of subsidized children must submit all required paperwork on time to maintain enrollment. Additionally, parents are required to sign a tuition/fee agreement and remain personally responsible for any co-payments.

If a child's total absences reach the maximum allowed by ELRC regulations, the parent or guardian will be responsible for paying the private tuition rate per day for any additional absences.

F. Family Discount

A **10% discount** applies to the lowest tuition for families enrolling two or more children. Registration fees: \$75 for one child, \$125 for two, \$140 for three or more. For families enrolling 3 children, a **10%** discount will be applied to the lowest tuition; **5%** for the second lowest tuition; and the **2%** for monthly payers will be applied to the third child if paid in full by the 1st of the month. Discounts cannot be combined on one child.

G. Additional Days / Schedule Changes

Schedule changes or additional days must be requested in advance and approved by Administration.

- Additional day: \$70 per day
- Switching regularly scheduled day: \$35 per day
- Reducing days (e.g., 5 days → 4 days) requires **30 days' notice**, and tuition for the current schedule applies during that period.

Parents wishing to change their child's days, times, or add additional days must submit a request in advance. Changes are subject to availability and approval on a first-come, first-served basis. Administration will notify parents if the requested schedule is available. Changes are not finalized until a new fee agreement is signed, and any required deposit or registration fee is paid.

If the requested schedule is unavailable, parents may either continue with the current schedule or withdraw their child with a **30-day written notice**.

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Policy Nine: Supervision & Child-to-Staff Ratios

At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, no child is ever left unsupervised. At least two staff members are always present, and caregivers directly supervise children by sight and hearing, even during nap times. Staff regularly count children during transitions- when moving between areas, and at scheduled intervals to ensure every child's safety. The environment is continually assessed for visibility and audibility, with tools such as convex mirrors used to enhance supervision where needed.

Child-to-staff ratios are maintained according to state regulations and the Department of Human Services recommendations, always ensuring safe and effective supervision. The program strives to maintain the following standards:

- **Infants (0–12 months):** 4 children per staff, maximum group size 8
- **Young Toddlers (12–24 months):** 5 children per staff, maximum group size 10
- **Older Toddlers (24–36 months):** 6 children per staff, maximum group size 12
- **Preschool/Pre-K (36 months–5 years):** 10 children per staff, maximum group size 20

In mixed-age groups, ratios and group sizes follow the requirements for the **youngest** child in the group.

C. Supervision of Active (Large Muscle) Play

All active play, whether indoors or outdoors, is closely supervised, with particular attention given to high-risk areas such as climbers, slides, and water play. Children using playground or indoor play equipment are never left unsupervised. Each child is assigned to a specific caregiver, ensuring regular head counts and confirmation of safe whereabouts at all times. Child-to-staff ratios during active play meet or exceed those required for other childcare activities.

D. Family/Staff Communication

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center fosters open and consistent communication between families and staff. Communication occurs through phone, email and the facility app, Procure Engagement, as well as daily informal conversations. Families are encouraged to provide important updates or information in writing, ensuring all caregivers working with the child are informed.

Staff use the app to share daily updates about the child's activities, accomplishments, behavior, sleep, meals, and personal care, including diapering and bowel movements for infants and toddlers. In the Infant Room, written notes are used for daily communication. The app is utilized for photos, supply reminders, and general school notifications.

Policy Ten: Discipline

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A. Philosophy of Guidance and Discipline

Young children learn by exploring, experimenting, and testing limits. Our goal is to support their growing independence, confidence, and self-control within a safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment. We create a positive “yes” environment where expectations are clear and children are guided toward understanding their actions and making better choices. Caregivers use positive guidance, redirection, clear rules, and proactive planning to prevent problems. Children are encouraged to practice fairness, respect, responsibility, and problem-solving skills.

Aggressive behavior toward peers or staff is not acceptable. When necessary, caregivers will intervene immediately to protect all children and help them regain control in supportive, consistent, and age-appropriate ways.

B. Permissible Guidance Methods

When challenging behaviors occur, especially acts of aggression (e.g., biting, hitting), staff focus on teaching appropriate behavior rather than punishment. Caregivers may:

1. Separate and calm the children involved.
2. Comfort and care for the injured child.
3. Inform parents or guardians.
4. Review supervision and classroom practices if behaviors re-occur.

Physical restraint is **only** used when necessary for safety and only in the gentlest, shortest manner required. Redirection or brief removal from an activity may be used when a child is at risk of harm. These breaks are short, supportive, and monitored to ensure effectiveness. Staff may seek additional consultation if typical strategies are not sufficient.

C. Prohibited Practices

Physical punishment, threats, or abusive language are **never** permitted.

D. Biting Policy

Biting is a developmentally normal and expected behavior for infants and toddlers. Staff work proactively to understand triggers, prevent incidents, and support both children involved. Young children are *not* punished for biting; instead, they are redirected and guided to appropriate activities. Repeated biting will be closely monitored. If ongoing incidents compromise safety, services may be reevaluated. Parents are notified of biting incidents through an incident report. For confidentiality, staff cannot share the identity or medical information of the other child involved. Families may consult their healthcare provider if they have health concerns following an incident.

Policy Eleven: Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

CHILDREN CENTRAL CHILD CARE / LEARNING CENTER

Employees of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center are **required by law** to report any suspected incidences of child abuse or neglect. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Under the Child Protective Services Act, *mandated reporters* are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center are considered mandated reporters, under this law. Our employees are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. As mandated reporters, the staff of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center **cannot** be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services, which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect include, but are not limited to:

- “ Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child’s body
- “ Severe verbal reprimands
- “ Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- “ Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g., car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- “ Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- “ Not providing appropriate meals for your child
- “ Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- “ Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- “ Sending a sick child to school overmedicated to hide symptoms, which would typically require the child to be kept at home until symptoms subside.
- “ Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation.

Please refer to the child abuse and neglect procedures for additional information.

Policy Twelve: Authorized Caregivers

A. Documentation of Authorized Caregivers

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Children Central Child Care / Learning Center keeps written authorization from parents or legal guardians identifying all individuals approved to pick up or care for their child, including emergency contacts in the Emergency Contact Form. At enrollment, families complete an Emergency Contact Form listing all individuals who may pick up their child. DHS regulations require the Emergency Contact Form to be updated annually with a 6-month review. Failure to keep this form current may result in dismissal from the program. All changes must be in writing, signed, and dated by the custodial parent(s) only.

In an emergency, parents will be contacted first; if unreachable, staff will call the individuals on the form until someone responds. All authorized individuals must present government-issued photo ID before a child is released. No exceptions.

If a parent is unable to pick up their child, it is their responsibility to arrange for someone on the approved list to do so. Parents are not required to list themselves; they may always pick up their child unless restricted by a court order.

Parents will also indicate which individuals, if any, may act *in loco parentis*. Only those individuals may receive confidential information about the child's day; all others may only sign the child out.

Children Central reserves the right to refuse or ban any individual on the Emergency Contact Form if necessary for safety or policy compliance. Parents must ensure all listed individuals understand the center's procedures.

B. Sign-In / Sign-Out Procedures

Upon arrival, parents must escort their children directly to their teacher. Children must be supervised by an adult at all times while in the building. Due to required ratios, unscheduled early drop-off (before 8:00 AM) is not permitted without prior approval.

Parents must notify staff of any special instructions for the day in writing and discuss them with the teacher or Director. This may include early pick-up, alternate pick-up persons, health concerns, or other important information.

C. Notification of Absence

Parents must notify the center by 9:30 AM if their child is absent or late. This helps maintain proper staffing and classroom planning.

Call the center at 215-752-9330 ext. 103 (leave a voicemail if needed) or email BOTH:

- Director: director@childrencentral.net
- Assistant Director: ad@childrencentral.net

D. Policy for Handling an Unauthorized Person Seeking Custody

1. Staff will immediately contact the custodial parent or legal guardian.
2. Telephone authorization for release will only be accepted when the parent has provided written permission in advance for such rare exceptions.

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3. No child will be released without custodial parent permission.
4. Unrecognized authorized individuals must provide valid photo ID. Parents may provide photos to keep in the child's record.
5. Police will be contacted if an unauthorized person attempts to take custody of a child.

E. Policy for Handling Persons Who May Pose a Safety Risk

1. A child will not be released to anyone who appears unable to safely care for them.
2. The Director will call 911 if an adult is under the influence or poses any safety threat.
3. An alternate emergency contact will be asked to pick up the child. If no one is available, Children's Protective Services will be contacted for guidance.

Policy Thirteen: Pick Up Procedures

A. Pick-Up

Parents or authorized adults must be prepared to show **government-issued photo ID** at every pick-up. Children Central Child Care / Learning Center may refuse to release a child to anyone without proper identification.

B. Late Pick-Up

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The center closes at **5:30 PM**. A late fee of **\$10 for every 5 minutes** will be charged, with time rounded up to the nearest 5-minute mark (e.g., 5:41 PM rounds to 5:45 PM).

Children Central reserves the right to terminate enrollment if a child is picked up late **three times in one school year**, regardless of the reason.

C. Parking

Designated parking spaces in front of the center are reserved for drop-off and pick-up. Please observe the **15-minute limit** for these spots. Handicap parking near the ramps are for vehicles with appropriate handicap plates only.

For safety, **all vehicles must be turned off** while parked. Cars may not be left running or unattended at any time.

Policy Fourteen: Safety Surveillance

A. Hazard Identification and Correction

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center conducts quarterly facility inspections to identify any potential hazards. The Director reviews inspection results, and any unsafe conditions are promptly addressed to ensure a safe environment for all children and staff.

B. Fire and Emergency Drills

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The center performs monthly fire drills and annual emergency/evacuation drills. Drill dates and times are not announced in advance to ensure a realistic and effective assessment of our emergency procedures.

During any drill—or during an actual emergency—**children cannot be released to parents**. Families must wait until the drill is completed and children have safely returned to the building and we can sign your child in or out of the program.

In the event of a real emergency requiring school closure, the Director or designee will notify classroom staff immediately. Parents who are present at that time will be required to leave the premises with their child, and all other parents or emergency contacts will be notified as soon as possible by the school.

C. Alternate Safe Location

If the building is deemed unsafe by administration or emergency personnel, children and staff will relocate to our designated **alternate safe location**: the lobby of the building across the street, pre-approved by the Middletown Township Fire Marshall.

Once relocated, staff will begin contacting parents and emergency contacts for pick-up. Children must be picked up within one hour of receiving this call.

Policy Fifteen: Confidentiality

Within Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, confidential and sensitive information is shared only with staff members who have a legitimate “need to know” to safely and appropriately care for your child. Information about faculty, other parents, or other children will not be shared with families, as we strictly protect every individual’s right to privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and any health-related details of anyone associated with the center.

Outside of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, confidential information about a child will only be released with written consent from the parent or legal guardian, unless otherwise

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required by law. Parents will receive documentation outlining what information will be shared, with whom, and for what purpose.

Any parent who violates this Confidentiality Policy will no longer be permitted on the center's property.

You may observe children who have disabilities or who exhibit behaviors that may seem unusual or concerning (such as biting, hitting, or spitting). While we understand that families may be curious, our Confidentiality Policy prohibits staff from discussing any other child's personal information, behaviors, or circumstances. This policy ensures that every child's dignity and privacy is fully protected.

Social Media

The purpose of this is to protect the privacy, safety, and well-being of all children, families, and staff at Children Central, in alignment with Department of Human Services (DHS) childcare licensing regulations. This policy supports a respectful, safe, and professional environment both in person and online.

DHS Compliance

Children Central follows all applicable DHS regulations regarding confidentiality, child privacy, and the protection of children in care. DHS regulations require that:

- Children's records and identifying information remain confidential
- Photos, videos, and personal information of children are not shared without written parental consent
- Concerns regarding care, supervision, or operations are handled appropriately and not discussed publicly

This policy is intended to reinforce those requirements.

Respectful Use of Social Media

We understand families enjoy sharing milestones and experiences. However, parents and guardians must use discretion and respect when posting content related to Children Central.

Parents and guardians may not post the following on any social media platform (including but not limited to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, or group messaging apps):

- Photos or videos of children other than their own
- Photos or videos taken inside classrooms, playgrounds, or center spaces that include other children or staff
- Any content that identifies children, families, or staff by name or image without written consent
- Any content that is negative, misleading, or harmful to the reputation of Children Central, its children, families, or staff

Privacy and Confidentiality

To remain compliant with DHS regulations:

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- Classroom activities, incident reports, behavior concerns, injuries, or staff discussions may not be shared on social media.
- Questions, concerns, or complaints must be directed to the Director or Administration rather than posted publicly.

Photography and Video Recording on Site

- Parents and guardians may not photograph or record video inside the center during drop-off, pick-up, classroom time, playground time, or events if other children or staff are present.
- Photography or recording of your own child is only permitted when no other children or staff appear in the image.
- Children Central may photograph or record children for educational or promotional purposes only with written parental consent on file, as required by DHS.

Staff and Social Media Boundaries

In accordance with DHS professionalism standards:

- Staff members may not communicate with families or children through personal social media accounts.
- Staff may not “friend,” “follow,” or message parents or guardians on personal platforms.
- Staff will never post photos, videos, or identifying information of children or families on personal accounts.

Official Children Central Social Media Pages

Children Central may maintain official social media pages to share general updates, events, and activities.

- All shared content follows DHS consent and confidentiality requirements.
- Parents are welcome to engage respectfully with official posts.
- Inappropriate comments or content may be removed at the discretion of administration.

Violations of This Policy

Failure to follow any of the above may result in:

- A request to immediately remove posted content
- A meeting with administration
- Additional action as outlined in the Parent Handbook, up to and including termination of enrollment if necessary

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Policy Sixteen: Release of Child's Records

Upon written request, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center may release a child's educational records, including health records, developmental information, progress reports, and any other documentation that may support the planning of your child's educational program. Families may submit a request by email or in writing.

If records need to be mailed, parents must provide a pre-addressed envelope with the appropriate postage. Please allow a **minimum of 48 hours** for the Center to process and prepare the requested materials. Requests may take additional time during busy periods, but we will always make every effort to fulfill them as promptly as possible.

Children Central is committed to maintaining the accuracy, security, and confidentiality of all student records. Only authorized staff members handle record requests, and

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information is released solely in accordance with parent or guardian permission and applicable privacy guidelines.

Policy Seventeen: Care of Acutely Ill Children

A. Admission and Exclusion

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center follows health and communicable disease guidelines based on recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics. A copy of these policies is available upon request.

Parents must pick up a sick child **within 1 hour** of being notified. If a parent cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called. Staff must receive approval from administration before requesting a child be picked up.

Children will be excluded from care if they show symptoms of a communicable illness and may return only when they are no longer contagious. A doctor's note may be required, but acceptance back to the school is always at the discretion of Children Central. Children Central reserves the right to refuse attendance if a child appears too ill to participate.

Children may not be in care if they show any of the following symptoms:

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1. Fever (must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication) or fever accompanied by symptoms such as diarrhea, rash, sore throat, earache, unusual fatigue, or inability to participate.
2. Within the first 24 hours of starting an antibiotic (including conjunctivitis).
3. Vomiting twice or more in 12 hours (including at home).
4. Diarrhea of two or more watery stools in 12 hours.
5. Draining rash or open sore that cannot be covered.
6. Yellowing of skin or eyes.
7. Eye discharge or signs of pink eye.
8. Lice or scabies (may return once treated and no visible signs remain).
9. Stiff neck or other symptoms of serious illness.

If your child is home for more than one day due to illness, please provide a doctor's note with diagnosis, treatment, and clearance to return.

For the health of all children, we ask families to be mindful and avoid bringing a child who appears ill. If you would not want your healthy child exposed to another child with the same symptoms, please keep your child at home.

Children Central may adjust these guidelines during outbreaks of seasonal illnesses (e.g., flu, RSV, rotavirus).

B. Admission and Permitted Attendance

The following conditions do not always require exclusion, unless accompanied by fever or behavior changes:

- Children who are symptom-free carriers of certain infections (excluding E. Coli 0157:H7, shigella, and Salmonella typhi).
- Mild conjunctivitis with clear discharge and no fever or pain.
- Rashes without fever or behavior changes.
- Certain chronic infections such as CMV, Parvovirus B19, HIV, or Hepatitis B carriers.

C. Procedure for Short-Term Illness

A child with higher-than-normal temperature of 99.5 (axillary) degrees may be asked to be picked up by a parent/guardian. The Director or Administration will determine whether a mildly ill child may remain at the center.

If a child becomes ill while in care:

1. Symptoms will be documented and administration notified.
2. Administration will determine if the child may remain.
3. Parents will be called if the child must go home.

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4. Agreed-upon comfort measures will be provided and recorded.
5. A copy of the symptom record will be given to the parent.
6. If the child must go home, they will rest in a supervised area until picked up.

Policy Eighteen: Health Plan

A. Child Health Services

To ensure the health and safety of all children, **a completed physical examination form from a licensed healthcare professional is required for enrollment** at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center. This form must confirm the child's fitness to attend and must be submitted to the Center Director within the first 30 days of enrollment. A Child Health Appraisal form will be provided for your physician to complete. After that, children under the age of 2 will need an updated health form completed every 6 months and children over the age of 2 will need an updated health form yearly.

The Department of Human Services requires routine "*well check-up*" exams at the following ages:

6 weeks, 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years, 6 years, 8 years, 10 years, and 12 years.

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Children who are not immunized cannot be enrolled at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center. This policy helps protect all children and prevents potential outbreaks.

Families may be granted a temporary exception if:

- The child has a scheduled appointment for required immunizations
- Immunizations begin within **one month** of enrollment.

If immunizations fall behind, the center will issue three written reminders over a three-month period. If records are still not updated, the child will be dismissed from the program. The administrators regularly reviews all medical files and will notify families when updated documentation is needed.

B. Health Consultation

Health consultations may involve nutrition professionals, oral health providers, mental health specialists, and other healthcare consultants. All professionals serving in this role should have pediatric credentials or advanced training in pediatrics to appropriately support the needs of young children.

C. Health Education

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center incorporates health education into programming for staff, families, and children.

For staff and families, topics may include:

- nutrition • stress management • exercise • child development • prenatal care • chronic disease management • substance abuse • safety • first aid • infectious disease control • other topics based on community needs

Educational materials and guest speakers may be sourced from:

- community and children's hospitals
- public health departments
- health agencies and consultants
- voluntary health organizations
- medical, dental, nursing, and mental health providers

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- drug and alcohol programs
- local colleges and universities

Children's health education is always developmentally appropriate and reinforced through daily routines. Topics may include:

- physical, oral, social, and emotional health
 - medication and substance safety
 - first aid basics
- infectious disease prevention health-focused events may include *Child Passenger Safety Week*, *Heart Month*, *Week of the Young Child*, *Fire Prevention Month*, and more. Families will be notified in advance if sensitive or personal topics are planned. Parents or legal guardians must inform the center if they choose to opt out of specific activities.

D. Children with Severe Allergies

To ensure the safety of all children, families must provide a signed “**Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies**” form at enrollment or upon diagnosis of a new allergy. This form must:

- Be completed by both the child's physician and the parent/legal guardian
- Detail all allergies (food or otherwise)
- Be **updated every six months** or sooner if changes occur
- Include any additional physician orders or treatment procedures
- Include an **Action Plan form** for staff to know exactly how to treat allergic reactions and when to treat

This form is available upon request from the Director.

Parents must also sign a “Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies,” acknowledging that the center will administer emergency treatment and follow all procedures outlined by the physician.

All allergy-related medications must be provided in accordance with the center's Medication Policy.

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Policy Nineteen: Medication Policy

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will only dispense over the counter or prescription medications that meet all the following requirements:

- The medication must be in its **original, labeled container**.
- A **doctor's note** must accompany the medication, providing explicit dosage and administration instructions.
- The medication label and doctor's note must match the **child for whom the medication is intended**.

The center will administer medication exactly as directed on the prescription label and in the physician's instructions. One doctor's note is required for each course of treatment. For example, if a child is prescribed a 10-day course of antibiotics, the note must specify the exact dates the medication should be given.

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Parents must complete a **Medication Authorization Form** ("Medication Log") every time medication is to be administered. The completed form, doctor's note, and medication must be submitted to the child's teacher and the Director.

Parents are responsible for ensuring that all prescription medications are correctly labeled by the pharmacist and replaced before the expiration date.

Policy Twenty: Parent Code of Conduct

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center requires all parents and adults on center property to behave with decency, courtesy, and respect always. Our goal is to maintain a safe, nurturing environment where every child can grow, learn, and thrive. This environment is supported not only by the staff, but by every parent and adult who enters the center.

Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct may lose the privilege of entering the property. Please also refer to the *Parent's Right to Immediate Access Policy* for information regarding possible dis-enrollment if a parent is prohibited from being on the premises.

A. Inappropriate Language

Parents and adults may not curse, swear, or use offensive or inappropriate language anywhere on center property, whether children are present or not. If frustration or anger arises, concerns should be expressed using calm and respectful language. Inappropriate language directed at staff is strictly prohibited. Staff members are expected to report such behavior to the Director immediately.

B. Threats Toward Staff, Children, or Other Adults

Threatening behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

All threats—verbal, written, or physical—will be reported to the appropriate authorities and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies are appreciated, the center cannot

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assume the risk of a second incident. Parents are responsible for always maintaining control of their behavior.

C. Discipline and Interaction with Children

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center does not condone corporal punishment. Physical punishment is prohibited inside the facility. While verbal redirection is acceptable, verbal abuse, shaming, or harsh reprimands toward any child—including one's own—are not permitted.

Parents must never discipline or correct a child who is not their own.

If a parent observes concerning behavior by a child other than their own, they must report it to the classroom teacher or Director. Parents may not approach another child's parent to discuss behavioral concerns.

Staff and the Director will handle all behavior-related communication. Due to our Confidentiality Policy, outcomes involving other children cannot be shared with parents.

D. Smoking

Smoking is **strictly prohibited** in the building, on the grounds, and in the immediate parking lot of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center.

E. Safety Procedures

Parents must follow all safety guidelines designed to protect the children, staff, and families of the center. Please pay special attention to our secure entrance procedures. While holding a door for someone may be polite, doing so for an unauthorized individual compromises security. If you observe a potential security breach or unfamiliar person attempting to enter, report it to the Director immediately. Security is only as strong as the level of awareness and cooperation of everyone entering the building.

F. Confrontational Interactions

Disagreements may occur, but all discussions with staff, other parents, or associates must remain calm, respectful, and non-confrontational. Yelling, arguing, aggressive behavior, and hostile interactions are strictly prohibited. Concerns should be addressed privately with the Director or an appropriate staff member.

G. Confidentiality

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is committed to protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all children, families, and staff.

Parents must not:

- Share confidential information about any child or family
- Pressure teachers, staff, or other parents for information they are not entitled to
- Discuss incidents involving other children

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Any breach of confidentiality is considered a serious violation of policy.

Policy Twenty-One: Parent's Right to Immediate Access

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center honors each parent's legal right to immediate, unrestricted access to their child at any time while the child is in our care. This access does not require an appointment, advance notice, or staff approval, and is guaranteed by state law. This policy is in place to protect parental rights and to ensure transparency in our care of children.

Court Orders Impacting Access

When a child is protected under a court order—such as a Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse (PFA) Order - the center must receive a certified copy of the most recent order and all amendments. Verbal requests or uncertified documents cannot be honored. Once provided, **Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will strictly enforce the court order exactly as written.**

We cannot make exceptions or use discretion unless:

- The custodial parent(s) submit a **written request** for a more flexible interpretation
- In cases of shared/joint custody, **both parents sign** that written request.

If multiple court orders are submitted, the center is legally required to follow the **most recent** dated order.

Protection From Abuse (PFA) & Restraining Orders

After receiving a PFA or Restraining Order, the center is **legally obligated** to uphold the order **for its entire duration**. No staff member may allow the order to be violated under any circumstance, even at the parent's request. Only the issuing judge has the authority to modify or terminate such an order.

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If a violation occurs or is attempted, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will:

- **Report the violation** directly to the court and/or authorities
- **Contact local law enforcement** immediately if there is a safety concern

Access When No Court Order is on File

If no court order has been provided:

- **Both parents have equal legal access** to the child.
- The center **cannot** deny access to either parent based solely on the other parent's wishes.
- The center **cannot** enforce verbal agreements, personal disputes, or informal custody arrangements.

If one parent does not want the other parent to have access to the child, the center strongly recommends that the concerned parent keep the child with them until a legal order is issued.

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center's authority to withhold a child from a parent is legally secondary to the parent's right to immediate access.

Conflicts on Center Property

If a custody dispute, disagreement, or conflict occurs on the premises:

- Staff will not mediate or intervene beyond ensuring safety.
- Staff will immediately contact local police to handle the situation.
- Parents must remove personal disputes from center grounds.

The center's priority is the safety of children and staff—not negotiating custody disagreements.

Impact on Enrollment

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is legally prohibited from caring for a child when a parent with legal access is not permitted on center property.

Therefore, the following policies apply:

- If a parent is legally **barred from the property**, the child will be **dismissed from enrollment**, as the center cannot deny immediate access.
- The center **cannot agree** to keep a child enrolled with the promise that a parent "will not come to the center." Such arrangements violate childcare licensing laws and will not be considered.
- Enrollment may be terminated if enforcing court orders places the center, staff, or children in jeopardy.

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Policy Twenty-Two: Dismissal

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center reserves the right to **dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause**. This policy ensures the safety, well-being, and integrity of the center, its staff, and the families we serve.

-Refunds and Outstanding Balances

Upon dismissal:

- Any **unused tuition** will be refunded within three weeks. A company check will be mailed to the address listed in the children's file.
- Any **outstanding balance** must be paid within 14 days of dismissal. An invoice outlining all past due charges will be sent to the address on file within one week.
- **Accounts not paid** within the 14-day period will be forwarded to the center's legal counsel for collection.

-Dismissal Procedure

At the time of dismissal:

- The Director or designee will assist the parent in gathering the child's belongings.
- Parents must exit the property immediately, calmly, and respectfully.
- If a parent becomes disruptive, confrontational, or uncooperative, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will request assistance from local law enforcement to ensure the safety of all parties.

-Post-Dismissal Access to Center Property

A dismissed child or parent may not return to the center without a scheduled appointment.

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- Parents must **call and request an appointment** with the Director if they wish to come onto the property after dismissal.
- Appointments are granted **solely at the Director's discretion** and are not guaranteed rights.

-Harassment or Threatening Behavior

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center has a **zero-tolerance policy** for harassment or threats. Any parent or dismissed child who, after dismissal, engages in harassing, threatening, or harmful behavior toward anyone affiliated with the center—whether by phone, written communication, electronic contact, or in person—will be **prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law**.

Policy Twenty-Three: Withdraw

A **thirty (30) day written notice** is required when withdrawing a child from enrollment. If proper notice is provided, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the child's final day. If the required notice is not given, parents will be responsible for tuition for the remaining weeks up to 30 days.

Following a child's last day of enrollment, parents and children may not re-enter center property without prior permission from the Director/Owner. Families who wish to return for any reason must call the center to request an appointment. Appointment approval is at the sole discretion of the Director and is not guaranteed.

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Policy Twenty-Four: Transportation & Trip Safety Policy

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is committed to ensuring that all children are transported safely, securely, and in full compliance with state regulations and best practice safety standards. The safety of each child is our highest priority during arrival, departure, and any Center-approved trips.

Safe Transportation & Secure Seating

Families are expected to ensure that their child is properly secured in an appropriate car seat, booster seat, or seat belt upon arrival and departure. Staff will kindly remind and encourage families to follow all child passenger safety laws and to secure their children safely before leaving the premises.

Children Central staff are not permitted to transport children to or from the school. Do not ask anyone working at Children Central to do so; no exceptions.

Walking Trips

For walking trips, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center follows strict pedestrian safety guidelines:

- **Pedestrian Safety Education:**
Children will learn pedestrian safety through caregiver role-modeling, verbal reminders, and consistent practice.
- **Maintaining Group Safety:**
Younger children will remain physically connected to an adult at all times. This may include handholding or using an approved method that keeps the child safely within reach.
- **Supervision Structure:**
A designated adult will lead the group at the front, and another adult will remain at the back to ensure continuous supervision and prevent children from wandering.

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- **Continuous Monitoring:**

Caregivers will remain alert, attentive, and engaged throughout the entire walk, ensuring children stay together and follow safety rules.

Emergency Transportation

In the event of a serious injury, accident, or medical emergency involving your child that requires immediate medical attention, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will arrange for the child to be transported to the nearest hospital or appropriate medical facility. A staff member, either the child's teacher, the Director, or a designated representative—will accompany the child to ensure continuity of care and support until the parent or guardian arrives.

Field Trips and Off-Premises Activities

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center may enhance the curriculum through supervised off-premises walking field trips during Cub Camp. Parents/guardians are required to provide **written permission** for each individual trip.

Notification & Permissions

Parents will receive advance written notice of all field trips. Notification will include:

- Destination
- Date and time
- Educational purpose
- Cost (if applicable)

A permission slip will accompany this information. The permission slip must be completed fully, signed, and returned to the classroom teacher prior to the trip. All fees associated with the trip must be paid in advance for the child to participate.

Parent Participation

Parents who wish to accompany their child on a field trip should notify the classroom teacher. While Children Central Child Care / Learning Center provides all required supervision for every trip, parent participation is always welcome. Any entrance or refreshment fees for attending parents is their responsibility.

Attendance on Non-Scheduled Days

If a field trip is scheduled on a day a child is not normally enrolled, parents may request that their child attend the trip. Approval is based on available space and staffing. If space is available, parents will be required to pay the applicable fee for adding an extra day or switching the child's scheduled day for the child to participate.

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Policy Twenty-Five: School Calendar

Holiday Schedule & Early Closures

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will be **closed** in observance of the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Friday before Labor Day to prepare for the new school year
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day
- Up to two staff **In-Service Days** (staff report to work; center closed to children)

Additionally, the Center will close **early** on the following days:

- **12:30 PM** on Christmas Eve
- **12:30 PM** on New Year's Eve

The full **Holiday Schedule and Early Closures** are:

- Posted on our website
- Included in the tuition agreement
- Posted throughout the center
- Posted in our weekly newsletter, in our Monthly Calendars that families receive, and are posted outside of classrooms on our Parent Boards

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Whenever possible, the Center will provide advance reminders via Facebook and the Procure Engagement app.

Policy Twenty-Six: Emergency Plan

A. First-Aid Kits:

First aid kits will be in each classroom and will be kept inaccessible to children. The kit will be restocked following use to maintain the supply of items. An appropriately supplied first aid kit will be taken with the class to wherever area they travel (playground, Discovery Village, walking, etc.) The classroom teacher will check the contents of the first aid kits and replace missing or expired items promptly.

B. Emergency Phone Numbers:

All caregivers will have immediate access to a device that allows them to summon help in an emergency. The telephone numbers of the Fire Department, Police Department, Hospital, and Poison Control will be posted by each phone with an outside line. Emergency contact information for each child and staff member will be kept readily available in each classroom's emergency bag. Telephone numbers for contractors who provide specific types of building repairs for this facility are kept in the front office. These contractors can be called for problems with electricity, heating, plumbing, snow removal, trash removal, and general maintenance. The list of emergency telephone numbers and copies of emergency contact information and authorization for emergency transport will be taken along anytime children leave classroom in the care of facility staff.

Emergency phone numbers will be updated at least every 6 months.

C. Lost or Missing Children:

1. To prevent losing children, staff will conduct counts throughout the day, especially when leaving any area of the center. A staff person will be responsible for performing a 'sweep' of the area the children are leaving to be sure that no child is overlooked. Staff will identify and implement specific systems for speedy recovery of missing children, such as uniform, brightly colored T-Shirts, accessible identification and contact information for the children, and instructions to older children about what to do if they separate from the group. Staff will not make the child's name visible to any stranger.

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2. If it is determined that a child is missing or lost, the classroom teacher will immediately notify the local police or sheriff, the program Director, the parents or legal guardian, and other authorities as required by state regulations.

D. Child Abuse: (See Discipline)

E. Injuries or Illnesses Requiring Medical or Dental Care:

1. **First Aid:** The caregiver present with the child, who has received pediatric first aid training, will provide immediate first aid as needed.
2. **Emergency Response:** The classroom teacher will activate the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system by dialing 911 whenever immediate medical assistance is required. The Director will contact the child's parent or legal guardian, or, if they cannot be reached, the alternate emergency contact. The designated emergency facilities for the program are **Jefferson Hospital** and **St. Mary's Hospital**.
3. **Staff Accompaniment and Supervision:** A staff member will accompany the child to the medical facility and remain with them until the parent or legal guardian assumes responsibility. Child-to-staff ratios will be maintained for the remaining children in the facility. The Director or Assistant Director will either go to the medical facility, or substitute for the caregiver who accompanies the child if necessary, ensuring ratios and supervision are upheld.
4. **Documentation:** The classroom teacher will complete an injury report as soon as possible following the incident. The form will be signed by the parent or legal guardian. Copies of the report will be provided to the parent or guardian, placed in the child's file, and recorded in the facility's Injury Log.
5. **Dental Emergencies:** Dental injuries will receive immediate first aid following the procedure outlined in #1. If emergency dental care is required, a staff member will accompany the child and remain with them until the parent or legal guardian assumes responsibility.

F. Serious Illness, Hospitalization, and Death:

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will immediately notify the Department of Health and DHS of a serious illness, hospitalization, or death of a child or staff member that occurs related to childcare or during the childcare day. The Director will plan and carry out communication with staff, families, children, and the community as appropriate.

G. Media Inquiries:

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Refer all media inquiries to the Director or Owners of Children Central Child Care / Learning Center. Do not allow access by the media to the facility during a crisis situation. Media access will be pre-arranged at times when staff and families have been informed and when such visits will cause the least amount of disruption to the program.

Policy Twenty-Seven: Security and Evacuation Plan, Drills, and Closings

A. Security Plan

1. All entrances to the facility will be kept locked to the outside to prevent unauthorized access.
2. If an individual is admitted and later demonstrates threatening behavior, the **Middletown Township Police Department** will be contacted immediately. All caregivers will be instructed to avoid the area where the threatening individual is located until authorities arrive.

B. Evacuation Procedure

1. Child-to-staff ratios will be maintained, and children will be evacuated safely.
2. Children who cannot walk independently will be evacuated according to a plan developed in consultation with a fire safety professional.
3. Staff will count children in each group during evacuation and again upon arrival at the designated meeting location.
4. Children will receive clear, simple instructions to exit the facility immediately when necessary. Activities will stop at the sound of an alarm. Staff will also instruct children in lockdown or shelter-in-place procedures when a situation requires remaining inside the building for safety, such as a severe weather event, intruder, or other emergency. During a lockdown or shelter-in-place, children will be guided to a pre-determined safe area, away from windows and doors, and staff will ensure they remain calm, quiet, and supervised at all times. Staff will provide reassurance, model appropriate behavior, and maintain communication with the Director or emergency personnel until the situation is resolved.
5. The classroom teacher will carry attendance and emergency contact information to the meeting place and verify that all children and staff are accounted for.
6. The last staff member exiting each area will perform a thorough sweep to ensure no children are left behind.
7. If re-entry is not possible, children will be taken to a temporary shelter, and staff will remain calm while reassuring the children.
8. Teachers will carry backpacks with minimal supplies and a first-aid kit to care for children until parents, guardians, or designated people arrive.

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9. The temporary shelter will provide adequate lighting, ventilation, seating, and restroom access.
10. Families will be notified by telephone.
11. Evacuation procedures will be posted in every classroom.
12. Evacuation drills will be held annually at varying times, including early morning, mealtimes, and nap times. Children will be appropriately prepared and reassured during drills.
13. All new staff will receive pre-service training on the evacuation plan.

C. Fire or Risk of Explosion

1. Anyone discovering smoke, fire, or risk of explosion will activate the fire alarm immediately.
2. Staff will follow the posted Evacuation Procedures.
3. The last person to leave the room will close doors and turn off lights.
4. Staff may use a fire extinguisher if it is safe to do so, but the primary priority is child safety and rapid evacuation.
5. The Director will report any fire or explosion to the childcare licensing agency within 24 hours.

D. Power Failures

1. Caregivers will comfort children, explain the situation, and model calm behavior.
2. The Director or Owners will determine whether the outage is facility-wide or affects surrounding areas.
3. Unless there is an emergency requiring evacuation (e.g., fire, flood), children will remain inside. If leaving the building is necessary, staff will follow emergency evacuation procedures and avoid any downed power lines.
4. The Director or Owners will contact the local power company to report the outage and request assistance.
5. If safe indoor temperatures cannot be maintained due to weather conditions, families will be notified by telephone.

E. Closing Due to Snow or Storm

1. If the Center must close mid-day, staff will attempt to contact each child's parents to arrange pick-up. Notifications will also be posted on the Facebook page and app. If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called in order until pick-up arrangements are confirmed. Parents or emergency contacts will be informed of any alternate pick-up locations.

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2. If parents cannot safely reach the facility, Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will continue to care for the child, maintaining proper child-to-staff ratios until a parent or guardian can safely retrieve the child.

F. Floods, Tornadoes, Hurricanes, Earthquakes, Blizzards, or Other Catastrophes

1. Children Central Child Care / Learning Center will contact local Emergency Preparedness Authorities and obtain written instructions for emergency procedures in the region.
2. Any staff member who becomes aware of a significant health or safety hazard will notify the Director immediately so appropriate action can be taken.
3. Staff will follow the posted Emergency Procedures for the specific catastrophe and await instructions from authorities.

G. Lockdown & Shelter-in-Place Procedures

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center maintains clear, comprehensive procedures for responding to situations where it is safer for children and staff to remain inside the building rather than evacuate. These procedures are practiced regularly to ensure preparedness while maintaining a calm, supportive atmosphere for children.

1. Lockdown Procedures

A lockdown is initiated when there is a potential or immediate threat to safety outside or inside the facility (e.g., suspicious person, aggressive individual, law enforcement activity in the neighborhood).

During a lockdown:

1. The Director or acting administrator will announce the lockdown using the designated emergency communication method.
2. Staff will immediately bring all children indoors (if outside) and move them to the safest area of the classroom, away from doors and windows.
3. Classroom doors will be locked, lights will be turned off, and windows will be covered if possible.
4. Staff will maintain quiet, calm supervision and provide comfort and reassurance to children.
5. Attendance will be immediately checked, and staff will continue to monitor children discreetly throughout the lockdown.
6. No one may enter or exit the facility until the "all clear" is given by the Director or law enforcement.
7. Families will be notified once the situation is resolved and the building is secure.

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2. Shelter-in-Place Procedures

Shelter-in-place is used during emergencies where conditions outside make it safer to remain inside (e.g., severe weather, environmental hazards, chemical spills, police activity in the area).

During shelter-in-place:

1. Staff will move children to **designated safe areas** based on the specific emergency (e.g., interior rooms for tornadoes, upper levels for flooding).
2. Windows and doors will be closed and secured, and ventilation may be adjusted per guidance from local authorities.
3. Staff will bring emergency supplies, attendance sheets, and first-aid kits to the shelter location.
4. Children will be encouraged to sit quietly, engage in calm activities, and remain close to staff.
5. Attendance will be taken at regular intervals to ensure all children remain accounted for.
6. Staff will remain with children and follow instructions from the Director and emergency personnel until the situation is resolved.

3. Communication During Lockdowns & Shelter-in-Place Events

- Staff will maintain access to a communication device to receive updates from administration and emergency responders.
- Families will be informed of the situation once it is safe to do so.
- To maintain security, families will **not** be permitted to enter the building during an active lockdown or shelter-in-place event.

4. Training & Drills

1. Lockdown and shelter-in-place procedures will be reviewed with all staff during **pre-service training** and reinforced throughout the year.
2. **Practice drills** will be conducted annually to ensure staff and children understand expectations in a calm and developmentally appropriate manner.
3. Drills will be announced to children with simple, reassuring language to prevent fear or distress.

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Policy Twenty-Eight: Sanitation and Hygiene

A. Hand-Washing

1. Hand-washing signs listing required times and proper procedures must be posted at every sink used by staff, volunteers, or children.
2. All staff, volunteers, and children must wash hands at the following times:
 - Upon arrival for the day
 - When moving between groups or coming in from outdoors
 - Before and after: eating, handling food, feeding a child
 - Before and after giving medication
 - After water play when water is shared
 - After diapering/toileting, handling bodily fluids, wiping noses/mouths/sores
 - After cleaning tasks or handling garbage
 - After handling pets or pet items
 - After sandbox play
 - Any time hands are visibly dirty
3. Hand-washing procedure for all children and staff:
 - Wet hands with clean, running water; apply liquid soap
 - Rub vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including between fingers, under nails, backs of hands, and around jewelry
 - Rinse hands under running water with fingers pointed downward
 - Dry hands with a disposable paper towel
 - Use a clean towel to turn off faucet and open the door (if applicable)

If a child cannot be safely held at a sink: use step stool/stairs provided and stand behind child to keep from falling while they wash their hands.

B. Diapering

1. Diapering will only occur in a designated diapering area separated from food preparation and food service areas.
2. Diapering surfaces must be smooth, waterproof, nonporous, and free of cracks, tears, or crevices.
3. All creams/lotions must be labeled with the child's name, used only for that child, and stored off the diapering surface and out of children's reach.
4. Staff and volunteers must follow these diapering steps (Keystone STARS standard procedure):
 - Gather all supplies before beginning; keep only the items needed for this diaper change on the surface.
 - Always keep one hand on the child and avoid contact with soiled items.
 - Place the child on the diapering surface; remove soiled clothing and place in a tied

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plastic bag.

- Open the diaper; lift the child by the ankles; clean from front to back using a new wipe for each swipe.
- Place soiled wipes inside the soiled diaper.
- Remove the soiled diaper and deposit it into a hands-free, lined, covered step can.
- Remove gloves (if used) and discard immediately.
- Use a wipe to clean the caregiver's hands.
- Slide a clean diaper under the child; apply cream if needed; fasten diaper.
- Wash the child's hands with soap and water (or approved alternative if not possible at sink).
- Take the child back to the classroom area before cleaning the surface.
- Clean visible soil from the diapering surface.
- Disinfect entire surface with center's approved disinfectant and allow to air-dry or remain wet for the required contact time (usually 2 minutes).
- Caregiver washes hands following posted procedures.

C. Toileting

- Toilets must be kept visibly clean and sanitized daily.
- Children under age 5 or children who require assistance must be accompanied by a staff member.
- Potty chairs are not permitted due to contamination and sanitation risks.
- Gloves must be worn for cleaning toileting areas.
- Staff must wash hands after assisting a child and again before any food handling.

D. Facility Cleaning Routines

The facility will be maintained in a clean, sanitary condition at all times!

- Spills must be immediately made inaccessible to children.
- Surfaces soiled by bodily fluids must be first cleaned with soap and water, then disinfected.
- Disinfecting solution must remain on surfaces for the manufacturer's required "wet time" of 5 minutes.
- Staff responsible for cleaning will receive training on proper cleaning techniques, safe chemical use, PPE, and OSHA requirements.
- Carpets or rugs in infant/toddler areas should be shampooed only when children are not present and fully dry before use.
- Use of hazardous chemicals must be scheduled to avoid child exposure.

Children Central also has a cleaning company that comes in after hours every day to clean the entire building by wiping down and disinfecting all surfaces, cleaning bathrooms, mopping all floors, vacuuming rugs, etc.

E. Pets

- Teachers must ensure all pets are appropriately cared for and meet health and safety requirements.

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- Pets must be healthy, nonaggressive, and free of disease. Dogs/cats/furry animals must have up-to-date vaccinations and parasite control.
- Animals must be housed in clean enclosures with bedding changed weekly or more often if needed.
- Children may not access animal food, waste, or cages.
- Animals must be securely housed to prevent tipping or climbing.
- Pets may be handled only under direct adult supervision.
- Pets may not be in food prep, food storage, or food eating areas.
- Hand-washing must occur immediately after animal contact.
- Animal bites or scratches must follow the center's first aid and parent-notification procedures.

F. Plants

- Only non-toxic, low-allergen plants may be present in classrooms.
- Poisonous or high-pollen plants are prohibited.
- Plants must be kept clean and dust-free.
- Children may not put plants in their mouths.
- Hand-washing is required after contact with plants.
- Any suspected exposure to a toxic plant requires Poison Control consultation and parental notification.

G. Toys

- Teachers must check toys for safety, wear, and choking hazards using a small-object tester for children under age 4.
- No latex balloons, plastic bags, Styrofoam, or objects small enough to fit entirely in a child's mouth.
- Diapering-age groups must use washable toys that are not shared between groups unless sanitized.
- Mouthed toys must be placed immediately in a labeled "dirty toy" bin and washed, rinsed, and disinfected before reuse.
- Cloth toys for children who mouth toys must be limited to one child until washed.
- Toys used by non-mouthing children must still be cleaned DAILY and when visibly soiled.
- Water tables used by multiple children require:
 - disinfected containers/toys before each use
 - hand-washing before water play
 - direct staff supervision
 - strict prohibition on drinking or body fluid contamination
 - OR individual water basins as an alternative
- Toys with sharp edges, loose screws, lead paint, broken parts, or other hazards must be repaired or discarded.
- Families are NOT to bring any toys from home to remain at the school unless requested to do so for a special day (e.g., Show & Tell, etc.)

H. Exposure to Blood or Potentially Infectious Materials

1. Staff must follow Standard Precautions (CDC & CFOC3).
2. All blood or bodily fluids must be treated as potentially infectious.

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Procedures:

- Clean all spills of blood or bodily fluids immediately.
- Use gloves or a barrier (paper towels) to avoid contact.
- Avoid touching eyes, mouth, or open wounds during cleanup.
- Clean the area with soap and water, then disinfect.
- Place all contaminated materials in a tied plastic bag before disposal.
- Mops used for spills must be rinsed in disinfectant and dried fully.
- Wash hands thoroughly after cleanup.

Every staff member receives the “Blood Borne Pathogen” training during their CPR and First Aid certification.

Policy Twenty-Nine: Food Handling and Feeding Policy

A. Drinking Water

Children will always have access to safe drinking water, both indoors and outdoors. Water will be served from pitchers filled from our water filtration system in our kitchen area and into each child's water bottles. Our water source is approved by the local health department and tested for contaminants. Younger children will be offered water throughout the day, and all children will be offered water more frequently in hot weather (above 80°F).

B. Food Safety, Dishes, Utensils & Surfaces

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Only healthy staff can handle food. Food preparers will follow strict hand-washing procedures and will not change diapers. All food preparation areas, equipment, and storage spaces are kept clean and sanitary, with separate sinks for hand-washing and food prep. Refrigerators and freezers are kept at safe temperatures, and all foods are stored and cooked according to state health guidelines. Dry goods are kept sealed and 6 inches off the floor, and trash is covered and removed daily. Cleaning supplies are stored separately from food. If dishes are washed by hand, a three-step wash, rinse, and sanitize system is used. Bottles, utensils, and food surfaces are cleaned and disinfected after every use, and uneaten items served from a child's plate are discarded.

C. Food Brought from Home

Food brought from home must meet safe-handling and temperature guidelines. Perishable items must arrive cold and will be refrigerated as needed. Foods intended for group sharing must be store-bought or fully cooked homemade baked goods. Children may not share food unless it is meant for the entire group. Leftovers will be discarded unless unopened and shelf stable. All items from home must be labeled with the child's name and date.

D. Food Prepared at or for the Facility

Menu items are planned by our Chef and may be reviewed by nutrition professionals. All food served meets local and federal safety codes, and ingredients such as meat and dairy are sourced from approved suppliers. Food is prepared using the same sanitation procedures listed above, and items such as reconstituted milk are labeled, safely stored, and used within 24 hours.

E. Infant & Toddler Feeding

Each infant and toddler follows an individualized feeding plan based on family instructions and developmental needs. A trained caregiver is present during all feedings, and children are fed in a seated, supervised manner. Food is cut appropriately for safety and choking-hazard foods are not served to children under age four. Bottles are never propped, microwaved, or taken into sleep areas. Breastfeeding is welcomed, and expressed milk must be labeled and stored safely. The infant room has breast milk and formula bottle warmers. Formula must be brought in factory-sealed containers and prepared according to manufacturer guidelines. All leftover milk or formula is discarded after feeding.

F. Preschool & School-Age Feeding

Older children eat in small social groups with a caregiver who encourages positive mealtime habits. Children remain seated while eating, and food is never used as a reward or withheld as punishment. Staff model healthy eating and only consume items permitted for children while in view.

G. Feeding Children With Nutritional Special Needs

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Children with medical or dietary needs will have an individualized plan that outlines safe foods, prohibited foods, and any required substitutions. Plans must be provided in writing by the parent or health care provider.

H. Meals & Snacks

Children Central provides daily lunch and both morning and afternoon snacks for Toddler through Pre-K classrooms. The monthly menu is sent by email, and is available in the lobby, and on our website. Families of children with allergies or dietary restrictions must supply meals on days when their child cannot eat the provided option. Infants must have all food, bottles, and feeding supplies brought from home each day, clearly labeled. Staff will follow each infant's feeding schedule, and unused food or milk is discarded daily. Food is never shared, and all items needing refrigeration should be placed directly in the classroom refrigerator.

I. Peanut-Restricted Areas

Due to severe allergies, peanut products are not permitted in Infant or Toddler classrooms. Peanut-free tables or areas may be designated throughout the center. Because some reactions can occur from even trace exposure, Children Central reserves the right to restrict peanut products on the premises or at center events to ensure the safety of all children.

Policy Thirty: Sleeping

A. AREA FOR SLEEPING / NAPPING

Play, dining, and napping may occur within the same room (excluding bathrooms, hallways, and closets) under the following conditions:

1. **Programming and room usage must be arranged so that one activity does not interfere with another.**

This includes ensuring that active play does not occur near children who are resting, that

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noise levels are developmentally appropriate, and that transitions are planned to minimize disruption.

B. HANDLING OF SLEEPING EQUIPMENT

1. Individual, Labeled, and Sanitary Sleeping Equipment

- Each crib and cot must be clearly labeled for individual use.
- Before any sleeping equipment is reassigned to another child, all surfaces must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected following state-approved sanitizing procedures.
- All sleep equipment must provide a firm, safe surface and meet U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standards.
- **Soft bedding materials**—including sheepskin, quilts, comforters, pillows, and any material filled with foam beads or pellets—must not be accessible to infants.

2. Infant Safe Sleep Practices

- Infants must always be placed to sleep **on their backs**.
- Cribs must be free of loose bedding, toys, soft objects, blankets, bumper pads, sleep positioners, or any item not approved for safe sleep.
- Only a fitted crib sheet may be used.

3. Safe Spacing and Sanitation of Sleep Areas

- Teachers must ensure cribs and cots are placed at least **two feet apart** from any other child's sleeping space to prevent cross-contamination and allow for adequate supervision.
- All sleep surfaces must remain sanitary and free from contamination during storage and use.

4. Proper Storage of Bedding Equipment

- Sleeping equipment and bedding materials must be stored so that sleeping surfaces do not touch one another or come into contact with contaminated surfaces (including floors).
- Storage methods must prevent cross-contamination and maintain cleanliness between uses.

C. BED LINEN

1. Weekly Cleaning and Individual Assignment

- Teachers must send children's bed linens home for washing at the end of the week, or more frequently if soiled.
- Each child must have an individual sleeping space and may not share bedding of any kind.

2. Infant Crib Bedding Requirements

- All crib linens must be **tight-fitting** and designed specifically for the crib mattress to prevent suffocation risks.
- Only an approved fitted sheet may be used in infant cribs.

Consistent with Keystone STARS and CPSC safe sleep regulations.

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REST TIME

(Aligned with Keystone STARS & PA DHS Regulations)

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center provides a daily rest period that supports children's health, development, and emotional well-being. Rest time is structured to ensure safety, comfort, appropriate supervision, and respect for each child's individual needs.

Purpose of Rest Time

1. To provide children with a consistent, calm period each day to sleep, rest, or relax their bodies.
2. To support healthy growth, brain development, and emotional regulation.
3. To maintain a predictable routine that aligns with developmentally appropriate practices and Keystone STARS standards.

Rest time typically occurs **once daily**, usually after lunch, and lasts **between 45 minutes and 2 hours**, depending on age group and individual needs. Children are **not required to sleep**, but they must rest quietly on their assigned sleep surface to allow others to rest. Children who do not fall asleep within a reasonable period may engage in **quiet activities**, such as books or soft table toys, while respecting peers who are still resting.

B. Supervision & Environment

1. Staff will always maintain active supervision. Rest time is never a break period for staff in the classroom.
2. The room will be kept at a comfortable temperature, with adequate ventilation and appropriate natural or soft lighting.
3. A calm, soothing environment will be created using quiet voices, soft music (if appropriate), and minimal disruptions.

C. Waking Children

1. Children will not be forced to sleep and will not be kept awake unnecessarily.
2. Children who wake up early will be offered quiet, developmentally appropriate activities.
3. Staff will gently help children transition awake using calm verbal cues—never shaking, abrupt touching, or loud noises.

D. Special Considerations & Family Preferences

1. Parents may share any cultural or individual sleep routines (comfort items, soothing strategies, etc.).
2. Teachers will incorporate comfort items if they meet licensing and safety requirements.

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3. Any medical or developmental needs related to sleep must be documented with physician guidance.

E. Emergency Situations During Rest Time

1. Staff will maintain child–staff ratios and follow all evacuation or emergency procedures while ensuring sleeping children are safely awakened and moved.
2. Attendance and emergency information must always accompany teachers during rest time transitions.

Policy Thirty-One: Early Intervention and Referrals

Some children may need additional help and support that can be provided through Early Intervention Services!

Children learn naturally during their early childhood years—by doing, by observing others, and by receiving guidance from adults and peers. Occasionally, you or your child's teacher may notice that a child is developing at a different pace than others of the same age.

Children grow in five key developmental areas:

- **Physical Development:** Ability to move, see, and hear.

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- **Language and Speech Development:** Ability to talk, express needs, and understand communication.
- **Social and Emotional Development:** Ability to relate to others, manage feelings, and interact socially.
- **Self-Help/Adaptive Development:** Ability to eat, dress, and take care of personal needs.
- **Cognitive Development:** Ability to think, reason, problem-solve, and learn.

While all children grow at their own pace, some may experience delays. When concerns arise, **Early Intervention** can provide valuable support.

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania offers services and resources for families of children from birth to age five who have general developmental delays or specific disabilities as defined in federal and state law. Early Intervention promotes close collaboration among families, service providers, and others who play a significant role in the child's life.

Early Intervention staff provide specially designed instruction, related services, and information on child development and early learning. Services may be delivered in a variety of settings depending on the needs of the child and family.

The first step is screening, a brief check to determine whether the child may have developmental delays. If concerns are identified, Early Intervention staff partner with families to arrange a comprehensive evaluation. During this evaluation, professionals assess the child's overall development. Following the evaluation, the team works with the family to develop a written plan outlining recommended services and assigning a service coordinator.

- For children **under age three**, this plan is called an **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)**.
- For children **ages three to five**, it is called an **Individualized Education Plan (IEP)**.

Early Intervention services may include developmental information, early childhood education support, physical and occupational therapies, family guidance, and classroom recommendations for supporting the child's learning.

To begin the process, families should contact their local Early Intervention service coordinator. In **Bucks County**, this is the **Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 (1-800-770-4822)**. With parental permission, the coordinator will conduct a screening. If concerns remain after the screening, families have the right to request a full evaluation. If delays are identified, the child may qualify for Early Intervention services. An **IEP or IFSP** is then developed with the family to outline the child's strengths, areas of need, and the services recommended.

Services are provided in the environment best suited to the child's needs. This may include the childcare setting, in the home, or another community location.

Although the BCIU typically uses a **25% developmental delay** as a criterion for service eligibility, teachers or parents who have well-documented observations may challenge the

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screening results if concerns remain. This documentation may lead to a different determination regarding eligibility.

If you identify a child who may need additional support, follow these steps:

- **Record observations** of behaviors or developmental concerns. Save work samples when relevant. Consider using running records or frequency charts to track patterns.
- **Meet with the Director** to review observations and discuss next steps. Arrange for additional staff observations if needed.
- **Schedule a conference** with the teacher and Director to share concerns and discuss recommendations. This may occur during scheduled conference days or at any appropriate time.

Information about the Intermediate Unit is available through the Director. We also maintain a list of counselors recommended by parents and professionals. Families may receive referrals through their insurance provider for speech therapy, occupational therapy, mental health services, and more. Pediatricians may also provide recommendations when supported by detailed observation data.

Children with an Existing IEP/IFSP

Because we serve children with a wide range of needs and learning styles, we strive to gather all relevant information that can support a child's success. Parents are encouraged—but not required—to share any existing **IEP or IFSP** with Children Central Child Care / Learning Center. Providing this information allows us to partner with families and implement the strategies and accommodations included in the child's plan.

Policy Thirty-Two: Curriculum Information

At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, we use the Funnydaffer curriculum, a research-based early learning program for infants, toddlers, preschool, and Pre-K children. Funnydaffer provides fun, engaging, and age-appropriate lessons that cover all areas of development — including language, social-emotional skills, motor skills, and cognitive growth. The curriculum includes hands-on activities, play-based learning, and creative projects, helping children explore, learn, and grow every day. Teachers customize lessons to meet the needs and interests of each child while making sure learning is both meaningful and enjoyable. We believe that children learn best through actively engaging with people and things in their environment.

A. Classroom Assignments

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Children Central Child Care / Learning Center compares each child's age and level of development when determining the child's classroom assignments and move-up dates. Due to individual development, the classroom age definitions may vary slightly.

B. Play Based Learning

At Children Central Child Care / Learning Center, we believe young children learn best through play, exploration, and hands-on experiences. Play helps children develop critical thinking, symbolic understanding, language, social-emotional skills, and early academic concepts like letters and numbers. In a safe, nurturing, and stimulating environment, children learn at their own pace, gain confidence, and develop self-esteem. Our caring teachers guide children through engaging activities, developmentally appropriate centers, and early technology exposure, supporting growth in creativity, communication, and social skills every day.

C. Curriculum and Lesson Planning

Teachers are provided with paid time for curriculum and lesson planning—two hours per month, which can be scheduled before or after their shift or during a split lunch period. Lesson plans must incorporate the PA Early Learning Standards (ELS), with activities clearly aligned to the standards for each age group. Teachers will adapt lesson plans based on observations or assessments, intentionally including children with IEPs or identified needs. Initials may be added to classroom copies of the lesson plan to indicate adaptations, but these are not displayed publicly. As part of our commitment to high-quality care and education, teachers are responsible for integrating the PA Early Learning Standards (ELS) into their weekly lesson plans. All planned activities must clearly reflect the standards they address. Each classroom will be provided with the appropriate ELS for its age group to support accurate and intentional planning.

To ensure developmentally appropriate practice, teachers will adapt lesson plan activities based on ongoing observations and assessments of the children. Children with identified needs—outlined in an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or assessment—will be purposefully included in targeted activities that support their goals. The child's initials will be noted on the teacher's copy of the lesson plan* next to the activity designed to address those needs.

D. Learning Through Play

Children learn about the world by exploring with all their senses. Through hands-on materials like blocks, they begin to understand sizes, shapes, colors, and how objects relate. As they grow, they start using one object to represent another, marking the beginning of symbolic thinking—such as pretending a stick is an airplane or a block is a hamburger. Over time, this ability leads to using more abstract symbols like pictures, words, letters, and numbers to express ideas. Play is central to this development, forming the foundation for later academic learning and supporting the core goals of our early childhood curriculum. Play truly is a young child's work.

Our teachers are expected to actively engage children in meaningful play and learning experiences throughout the day. By joining children in their activities, guiding interactions, and modeling positive communication, teachers help children build trust, feel secure, and develop

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strong relationships. Through play, children practice using their words, expressing their needs, and navigating social situations with support. These daily interactions foster growth across all developmental areas—social, emotional, physical, and language—while creating a warm, responsive classroom environment where every child feels valued, understood, and encouraged to learn.

E. English Language Learner Policy

Early care and education professionals play a vital role in supporting the development of dual language learners. For many children, the early childhood setting may be their first experience in an unfamiliar social and cultural environment. By creating warm, supportive classrooms that foster language development, build strong relationships with adults and peers, and honor connections to each child's home culture, teachers help children benefit from the "bilingual advantage" and prepare them for future academic success.

At Children Central, we use an immersion approach that allows children to acquire English naturally and at a rapid pace. Young children are highly capable language learners, absorbing new vocabulary and communication skills from both teachers and peers. To support English language development, our teachers use the following practices:

- Speak slowly and clearly
- Take additional time to understand the child's message
- Use visual supports, such as picture schedules, to show what will happen next
- Incorporate gestures, pointing, and objects to reinforce understanding
- Encourage children to use gestures and pointing as well
- Identify and consistently repeat frequently used words
- Display labeled pictures at children's eye level for easy reference
- Make simple comments and name objects related to the child's interests or activities
- Allow extra time for children to process and respond
- Demonstrate patience, warmth, and care at all times

F. Parent/Teacher Conferences and Communication

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center values ongoing, open communication with families. All caregivers are expected to encourage parents to take an active interest in the center and its programs. Families are offered multiple opportunities for both direct and indirect involvement in their child's learning experience.

Written developmental assessments, aligned with Work Sampling and Ounce, are provided to parents twice per year. Following each assessment period, families are offered a parent–teacher conference. These assessments are based on daily observations recorded by the child's teacher and maintained in classroom documentation. Teachers use these notes to complete the Work Sampling or Ounce assessments and are responsible for distributing copies to parents and obtaining signatures confirming receipt and indicating whether a conference is

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requested. If a conference is requested, the office will contact parents to schedule a meeting. Teachers are also available for phone conferences during the school day as needed.

Each classroom includes a bulletin board, which teachers are responsible for keeping updated with timely, relevant, and engaging information for families.

G. Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an essential and healthy part of the daily schedule and curriculum. The Department of Human Services emphasizes that children should have outdoor time every day. If a child is well enough to attend the center, it is generally assumed they are well enough to go outside.

According to PA Position Statements related to ECRS-R (page 3), children are expected to go outdoors when:

- The forecasted temperature or wind chill is above 25°F
- The forecasted temperature or heat index is below 90°F
- There is no precipitation
- There is no current air quality alert

It is recognized that these conditions may not be met throughout the entire day, as forecasts reflect specific points in time.

Summer Guidelines:

During warm weather, children are provided with ample fluids and opportunities to rest in the shade if they become overheated. Children should wear light, loose-fitting clothing and a hat. Sunscreen and insect repellent will be applied upon parent request for children of all ages. Activities such as sprinkler and water play are encouraged to help keep children cool and comfortable.

H. Nap/Rest Time

Each child ages 12 months to 5 years (up to Pre-K) will have an afternoon nap/rest period as required by state regulations. Parents are responsible for the provision and weekly laundering of their child's sheets and blankets used at the Center. Each item must be clearly marked with the child's name. Children in classrooms with nap/rest time are permitted to include with their bedding supplies, one small plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest. This toy is to be placed with the bedding supplies and use of it will only be allowed at nap/rest time.

I. Continuity of Care

At Children Central, we recognize the critical importance of continuity of care for young children and their families. Strong, stable relationships with teachers are essential for a child's emotional

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and developmental well-being, so our program design supports flexibility in classroom transitions. For example, infants are not required to move to the toddler room immediately upon turning one; transitions are guided by each child's developmental readiness and emotional comfort. Similarly, preschool children may transition in the winter to allow ample time to build a relationship with their PreK teachers before the new school year. We do not follow rigid age-based transition rules, as each child's needs are unique.

Continuity of care also depends on retaining qualified, satisfied teachers. To minimize staff turnover, we provide competitive compensation, annual reviews, ongoing feedback, generous bonuses, and supportive policies. Teacher assignments are made thoughtfully, considering schedules, personal circumstances, and classroom needs, with input from staff when special situations arise. These practices reduce disruptions to teacher-child relationships and support consistent, high-quality care.

We also prioritize direct communication between teachers and families. Scheduling ensures teachers have opportunities to speak with parents or guardians face-to-face at least once daily, fostering strong home-school connections. While new staff can form relationships over time, maintaining experienced, consistent teachers remains the most effective way to support children's emotional security and developmental growth.

Policy Thirty-Three: Toys from Home

To prevent damage, sharing conflicts, and loss, children are generally not permitted to bring toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for curriculum purposes. Parents are responsible for reinforcing this policy with their child and are encouraged to consult the teacher if their child has difficulty adhering to it.

In classrooms with naps or rest time, children may bring one small, non-musical plush toy to include with their bedding. This toy is to remain with the bedding and may only be used during nap or rest periods.

All toys brought to the center—whether for curriculum activities or nap/rest time—will be inspected by Children Central Child Care / Learning Center staff for safety and appropriateness. The center reserves the right to prohibit any item at its discretion.

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Policy Thirty-Four: Dress Code

A. Children

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name, including coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is not responsible for lost or damaged clothing or personal items.

Children participate in a variety of activities throughout the day, including outdoor play, messy projects, and physical activities. For this reason, children should be dressed in comfortable, seasonally appropriate clothing. Washable play clothes and rubber-soled shoes, preferably sneakers, are recommended. Parents are encouraged to avoid overalls or clothing with difficult closures, as these can make toileting challenging. Coats, hats, and gloves should be provided during winter months.

Children ages 3–5 are required to always have 1–2 complete changes of seasonally appropriate clothing at the center. Children under 3 years of age must have 2–3 complete changes. A complete change includes a shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will post

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reminders for parents to update clothing as the seasons change. **Parents should avoid clothing with drawstrings or other features that could pose a safety hazard, particularly items that tie around the neck.**

Children are discouraged from wearing jewelry or hair accessories such as beads, barrettes, or bobby pins, as these can pose safety risks. The center is not responsible for lost or stolen items. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their children.

B. Parents/Guardians

Parents are encouraged to model appropriate attire while at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center or participating in center-sponsored events. Clothing should be modest and professional; revealing, excessively short, ripped or torn in inappropriate areas, or see-through clothing is not permitted. Clothing or jewelry with suggestive or vulgar language is prohibited.

Policy Thirty-Five: Parent Participation/Volunteering

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center recognizes that active parent involvement is essential to a child's success, well-being, and development. Research shows that children thrive when families are engaged in their learning and when strong partnerships exist between parents and educators. For this reason, parents are invited and encouraged to participate in their child's school activities in meaningful ways.

Parents may volunteer in the classroom, attend field trips, read to children, assist teachers, and help coordinate special events. Teachers will post available volunteer opportunities in the classroom. Parents who prefer not to volunteer directly may still support the center by donating age-appropriate books or supplies, which are always appreciated.

Regular classroom volunteers, including parents, must complete and secure all required criminal background checks in accordance with licensing regulations. Individuals with felony convictions, sex offender convictions, or ongoing criminal investigations are not permitted to volunteer in the classroom or on field trips.

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Parent participation is also guided by custodial arrangements. Parents with court-ordered custody may volunteer only on days they have custody, while parents with visitation rights may volunteer with written permission from the custodial parent.

Partnership and Communication

Children Central believes that strong family partnerships form the foundation for a secure and nurturing learning environment. We provide multiple avenues for parental communication, including daily, written summaries via our app and a confidential suggestion box for feedback, located near the front of the center to ensure privacy.

We maintain an open-door policy and encourage parents to actively engage with staff and children. By working together, families and teachers can foster a safe, supportive, and enriching environment that promotes children's social, emotional, physical, and academic growth. Active parent participation not only strengthens the child's connection to the school but also reinforces learning at home, builds trust, and helps children feel valued and supported.

Policy Thirty-Six: Prohibited Substances and Weapons

The safety and well-being of children, families, and staff at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is our highest priority. Our indoor and outdoor environments, as well as all vehicles used by the program, are designated non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form, alcohol, or illegal drugs is strictly prohibited on center premises. Signs indicating these restrictions will be clearly posted throughout the facility.

The odor of cigarette or cigar smoke on staff is unacceptable, as it impacts both the health of the children and the quality of care provided. All staff must be free of tobacco odors during working hours. Possession of illegal substances or other unauthorized, potentially harmful substances is prohibited, and all staff are required to maintain sobriety while on duty. Caregivers, staff, or other adults under the influence of alcohol or mind-altering substances will be asked to leave the premises immediately.

No firearms or lethal weapons are permitted at the center. Families and staff are expected to model professionalism by adhering to these safety standards, fostering a secure and respectful environment for all. **Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.**

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Policy Thirty-Seven: Staff Pre-Employment Requirements

A. Health Appraisals

All employees are required to obtain a health appraisal prior to employment, including a physical examination (dated within the past year) and a TB test. Employment at Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is contingent upon receipt of a satisfactory health appraisal at the start of employment and bi-annually thereafter.

Health appraisals will be maintained in the employee's confidential medical file. Employees are also required to acknowledge the essential functions of their position prior to employment and periodically throughout their tenure.

B. Child Abuse and Criminal Clearances

State law requires that all new employees obtain current clearances (less than one year old) from the Pennsylvania State Police and the Department of Human Services, including:

1. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance
2. FBI Fingerprinting
3. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check

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4. National Sex Offender Registry Check (NSOR)

Employees must provide current clearances or copies of completed clearance applications at the time of hire. These documents will be maintained in the personnel file and must be renewed every five years or as required by DHS regulations.

Applications are valid for 30 days from the date of signature. Employees must also sign a disclosure statement affirming they have not been convicted of, attempted, solicited, or conspired to commit any crimes. This disclosure statement is valid for 30 days. If clearances and the disclosure statement are not received by the Director before expiration, the employee will be removed from direct childcare duties until all documentation is received, in compliance with DHS regulations.

Policy Thirty-Eight: Staff Employment by Client's Policy

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center does not condone or endorse the solicitation of any staff member for private employment by current or former families. The center is not responsible for any privately arranged services and assumes no liability for claims, losses, or issues that may arise from such arrangements.

For the purposes of this policy, "employment" refers to any relationship outside of the center's services in which a staff member interacts with a current or former family member. This includes, but is not limited to, babysitting, house-sitting, nanny services, mother's helper duties, or carpooling, whether voluntary or compensated.

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Policy Thirty-Nine: Design and Maintenance of Our Center and Its Contents

Children Central Child Care / Learning Center is committed to providing a safe, clean, and healthy environment for all children. The center meets or exceeds federal, state, and local regulations for facility maintenance, safety, and physical plant standards.

Cleaning and sanitation are performed according to established guidelines, monitored and overseen by the Director and Owners to ensure a consistently hygienic environment.

All potentially hazardous or toxic materials—including pesticides, cleaning chemicals, aerosol products, and poisons—are used strictly according to manufacturer instructions and under the direct supervision of the Director or Owners. These materials are securely stored in locked areas, completely inaccessible to children. Children are never exposed to hazards from these materials; for example, pesticides are never applied while children are present, and precautions are taken during painting or renovations to minimize exposure to fumes or lead.

Furniture, toys, and classroom materials are regularly inspected and maintained to ensure they are safe, age-appropriate, and free from damage. Broken or worn items are promptly repaired or removed, and new materials are added as needed to provide a safe, engaging, and developmentally appropriate environment.

Children Central is dedicated to creating a nurturing space where families can feel confident that children are protected, cared for, and surrounded by safe, high-quality materials at all times.

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Policy Forty: Adopting and Amending Policies

This policy manual has been adopted by Children Central Child Care / Learning Center and its administration.

The manual is reviewed and updated as needed. Any recommendations for changes should be directed to the Director or Owners. A digital copy of the handbook is always available on our website, and a hard copy is kept at the front of the center for review at any time. Please contact Administration with any questions or for clarification regarding policies.