



## EARLY EDUCATION & CARE CENTER-BASED PROGRAM



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## Welcome to VOC!!!

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome your family to Valley Opportunity Council Early Education and Care. VOC provides high quality early education and care in centers located in Chicopee, Holyoke and South Hadley.

This Parent Handbook is intended to serve as your program guide throughout your child's stay at our child care center. It contains very important information regarding our policies and procedures. Please read this handbook thoroughly and please reach out to us if you have any questions.

Thank you for choosing the VOC Early Education and Care!



THIS PROGRAM IS SUPPORTED IN PART BY THE CITIES OF CHICOPEE AND HOLYOKE, THROUGH THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT USING UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT FUNDS.

*The Valley Opportunity Council, Inc. is dedicated to eliminating poverty by providing the opportunity for our low- and moderate-income neighbors, families and friends in the Greater Hampden County area to achieve greater independence and a higher quality of life.*

*The Early Education and Care Department will passionately represent the VOC mission by providing high quality early education experiences for children and their families. Through the use of agency and community resources and high quality early educational programming, we will strengthen and empower families and increase positive outcome opportunities for children and their families. The department will have a supportive, effective infrastructure that will be financially viable, strong and effective.*

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## OUR PHILOSOPHY

VOC Early Education & Care is.....

A Place to Enhance a Child's Learning Experiences.....

A Place to Explore Personal Interests.....

A Place to Make Friends and Learn Cooperation.....

A Place to Feel Positive about Yourself.....

A Place to Grow, to Learn, to Experience.....



VOC Early Education & Care is a Home Away from Home.....

A Place to Share and Love.....

VOC Early Education and Care is based on the philosophy that each child has inherent talents and should be given the opportunity to explore those talents to the fullest.

Our program provides opportunities that help each child explore and learn about her/his individual uniqueness while acknowledging and honoring her/his cultural diversity within the community.

In building upon life's first experiences, we utilize a comprehensive curriculum that provides each child a variety of developmentally appropriate learning experiences. The VOC Early Education & Child Care Program adheres to all state and national standards, including those of EEC, DOE, and NAEYC.

Care is taken to ensure that the child's needs are met on an individual basis, no matter what the age or need. Through the use of community resources, we ensure the quality of learning for children as their individual needs indicate.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.



## **ACCEPTING CHILDREN INTO THE PROGRAM**



The VOC Early Education and Care is accepting your child(ren) into our child care program with the following stipulations:

- ✚ Your scheduled fees are paid in a timely manner each month. Failure to pay these fees will result in termination. (This stipulation applies to parents who have assessed fees.) Please see page 5 regarding fees.
- ✚ That we are best able to service your child (ren's) educational needs. If we feel that we cannot adequately service your child's needs in any capacity, we reserve the right to terminate your child with a two (2) weeks notice.
- ✚ Paperwork essential to meeting regulations must be kept up to date. Immunization records must be submitted prior to children entering the program. Signed documentation by the child's pediatrician indicating that a complete physical examination and lead screening have been completed must be submitted prior to children entering the program. If a child has a known allergy or chronic medical condition, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner, an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) will be required prior to entering the program as required by the state. Failure to submit this or any other requested paperwork will result in suspension or termination of child care services.
- ✚ Appropriation of funds by the State child care services remains constant. A lack of funding to the VOC Child Care Programs may result in termination of child care services with up to a two weeks notice.
- ✚ Any additional circumstances that may arise to alter our ability to serve your child (ren) may result in our right to terminate services.

## NAEYC ACCREDITATION



National Association for the  
Education of Young Children

All of our centers are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We follow the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct in our practices. These are standards of ethical behavior in early childhood care and education. We have made a commitment to:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base our work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture,\* community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues
- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

## CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES



The Valley Opportunity Council utilizes the *Creative Curriculum*, a nationally known system used in early education programs for children aged 0-5. The *Creative Curriculum* is a comprehensive curriculum with a clear organizational structure and a particular focus on interest areas. A Curriculum Framework presents the five components of The *Creative Curriculum* for Preschool and gives educators all the information needed to set up your program. The five components are:

- ❖ How Children Develop and Learn
- ❖ The Learning Environment

- ❖ What Children Learn
- ❖ The Teacher's Role
- ❖ The Family's Role

Knowing how children develop and learn is the basis for planning your child's program, and guiding her/his learning. The Creative Curriculum® enhances social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development. Goals and objectives for each of these developmental areas are organized into a series of Developmental Continuum objectives. Since children do not master a skill all at once, each objective has three steps that illustrate the typical sequence of development. A special category called forerunners helps educators to look at emerging behaviors for each objective and enables us to assess all children's learning and development, including children with special needs.

### The Learning Environment

The learning environment is the structure of the classroom that sets the context for caring, teaching and learning. The Creative Curriculum sets up the physical environment and maintains interest areas that establish a classroom structure and promote a daily routine and schedule, choice times, and small- and large-group times. This environment creates a classroom community that promotes positive relationships where children make friends and learn social problem-solving skills.

### What Children Learn

The Creative Curriculum identifies the knowledge, skills, and concepts important for toddlers and preschool children to acquire in each content area: literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. Most important, the curriculum emphasizes that young children who develop strong social and emotional skills are best prepared to learn in all these other areas. The creative curriculum describes the key components of these content areas as follows:

- **Literacy**, vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, letters, words, print, comprehension, books and other texts, and sources of enjoyment.  
**Mathematics**: numbers; patterns and relationships; geometry and spatial awareness; measurement; and data collection, organization, and representation
- **Science**: physical science, life science, and earth and the environment
- **Social Studies**: spaces and geography, people and how they live, people and the environment, and people and the past
- **The Arts**: dance, music, drama, and the visual arts

- **Technology:** awareness of technology, basic operations and concepts, technological tools, and people and technology
- Most importantly, we teach these subject areas in ways that respect how preschool children develop and learn, taking into account their social and emotional development.

### **The Teacher's Role**

The Creative Curriculum describes the teacher's role as an ongoing cycle of observing children, guiding their learning, and assessing their progress. We work to motivate children, to build on their prior knowledge and strengths, and to support their learning in an intentional way by using a variety of strategies to increase their knowledge, skills, and understandings.

Educators use Teaching Strategies Gold, a comprehensive, research-based assessment system, to support effective teaching and children's development and learning. We use assessment information to guide children's learning throughout the day: during large- and small-group times, routine times, long-term projects, and in interest areas.

### **The Family's Role**

Home and school are a young child's two most important worlds. Children must bridge these two worlds every day. If home and school are connected in positive and respectful ways, children feel secure. To facilitate this security, VOC staff work consistently to increase family participation, communication and understanding. Teachers and administrators work to build a true partnership that truly values the family's role in each child's education and recognizes how much we can accomplish when we all work together.

The Creative Curriculum provides opportunities for families to communicate with center staff, to partner with them in developing child learning, and to work together to resolve challenging situations throughout the child's years at the center. Progress reports will be made available 3-4 times annually, as will opportunities for parents to conference with staff regarding their child(ren).

The Learning Areas in each classroom are as follows:

**MOVEMENT**            enhancing gross motor, self-help, communication. Problem

<b>AREA</b>	solving and thinking skills are also enhanced.
<b>CREATIVE AREA</b>	enhancing fine motor, creative expression, eye-hand coordination, problem solving and thinking skills.
<b>SENSORY AREA</b>	enhances learning through exploration, thinking, problem solving, fine motor and accomplishment, social/emotional for interactions with others.
<b>QUIET AREA</b>	enhancing independent choices, quiet conversations, and creative reflection.
<b>BOOK AREA</b>	enhancing communication, fine and gross motor, creative expression, social/emotional.
<b>LISTENING AREA</b>	encouraging listening skills, appreciation of music and literature.
<b>WRITING AREA</b>	building on the whole language experience, enhancing of child's own written works.
<b>SCIENCE AREA</b>	promotes foundations of scientific learning through experiences in inquiry and learning. Encourages children to learn and identify what things are called, how they work, and why things happen.
<b>MANIPULATIVE AREA</b>	enhancing fine motor, eye-hand coordination, spatial relationships, thinking skills and social/emotional.
<b>DRAMATIC PLAY AREA</b>	enhances social/emotional, skills and creative thinking, problem solving, communication, fine motor, self-help and dramatic play.
<b>BUILDING AREA</b>	enhancing gross motor, fine motor, spatial relationships, problem solving, communication and thinking.

## EDUCATOR-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS



A primary objective of all ~~VOC~~ Early Education programs is to support the growth and development of each child by creating positive emotional environments. Such environments feature educators who take time to listen to and understand each child in their care. Some of the behaviors which exemplify these educator qualities are as follows:

- ❖ Educators take time to actively listen to each child regarding her/his needs and concerns. Educators encourage children to express interests and concerns.
- ❖ Educators maintain body postures that maximize good communication. This includes positioning at eye level, whenever possible.
- ❖ Educators demonstrate warmth and emotional support with positive nurturing relationships, comfort and hugs.
- ❖ Educators support and reassure children experiencing upsets, including fussing or crying.
- ❖ Educators display a happy, upbeat demeanor on a regular basis, as reassurance and role modeling for children in the program.
- ❖ Educators call children by name and show interest in hearing about their personal interests and concerns.
- ❖ Educators show enthusiasm regarding child activities, efforts, and accomplishments.
- ❖ Educators positively communicate with parents regarding each child's activities, efforts, and accomplishments.
- ❖ Educators participate in children's games and activities.

- ❖ Educators encourage social friendships and actively assist children to identify cooperative strategies that support the same.
- ❖ Educators communicate positively and supportively with co-workers, as role modeling for effective adult relationships.

### **COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES**

Valley Opportunity is proud to offer high quality early education services at all of our Early Education programs.

In addition, participants in our early education programs are eligible for the following:

**Early Education Child Assessments**

**Health Service Support**

**Nutritional Education:** WIC

**Mental Health Services:** Behavioral Health Network

**Parent Involvement:** see Center Director

**Adult Education Services:** Educational Opportunity Center

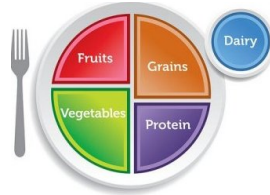
**Job Opportunities and Career Training**

**Financial Counseling and Tax Preparation**

**Fuel Assistance**

For more information on any of the above topics or services, please speak with your Center Director.

## NUTRITION



Each center provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack.

A Cycle Meal plan has been prepared by our Food Service Provider. The menu is posted at each Center and previous menus are kept on file. Our programs participate in the Child and Adult Food Care Program (CACFP) and follow USDA guidelines for nutrition standards. These standards help ensure children have access to healthy, balanced meals and snacks throughout the day.

If your child has a special feeding need as documented by their physician, staff will document daily the type and quantity of food the child consumes and will provide this information to the parent.

If your child has any special dietary needs, such as being vegan or having lactose intolerance, we kindly request that you inform the Director during the intake process. This will allow us to communicate this information to our kitchen staff, ensuring that your child's dietary requirements are met.

Additionally, when providing information about your child's preferences and needs, please include any details about specific dietary restrictions or preferences.

## TOYS



Toys from home are not permitted. We have chosen a wide range of developmentally appropriate equipment and toys for our center for your children to enjoy.



### REST TIME



Each child has time to nap or rest each day, as required by the Department of Early Education & Care. Please provide a **SMALL** blanket and **SMALL** pillow for your child (cubby space is limited). As a SIDS risk reduction policy, staff will place children 12 months or younger on their backs for sleeping, and provide bedding that excludes pillows, comforters, stuffed animals or other padded materials.

### BIRTHDAYS



Birthdays are regarded as milestones in our children's lives. We enjoy celebrating them. If you would like to bring in a special treat, please be aware there may be food allergies in the classroom. Please check with the classroom teacher when planning this event. Treats brought to the center must be store-bought and factory-sealed.

### HOLIDAYS & TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAYS

There will be **NO school** on the following holidays and teacher in-service days:

- |                      |                                  |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| ✓ New Year's Day     | ✓ Labor Day                      |
| ✓ Martin L. King Day | ✓ Indigenous Peoples Day         |
| ✓ President's Day    | ✓ Veteran's Day                  |
| ✓ Patriot's Day      | ✓ Thanksgiving Day               |
| ✓ Memorial Day       | ✓ Day after Thanksgiving         |
| ✓ Juneteenth         | ✓ Christmas Day                  |
| ✓ Independence Day   | ✓ 5 Teacher In-service Days, TBA |

## INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS



In the event of severe weather, the Child Care Center will make every attempt to have child care services available for any parent who requires child care.

Due to safety issues of children receiving VOC transportation, the program will cancel transportation service in the event of school closing or severe weather warning.

Such a decision is made in the early morning, by the Executive Director. Cancellations are announced starting at 6:00 AM.

Holyoke Public School Pre-K Classrooms (Donahue, Kelly and Lawrence) will follow the HPS schools for cancellations and delays.



If weather should become severe during the school day, transportation usually begins returning children two hours earlier than regularly scheduled times, please make arrangements to be home when your child is dropped off.

VOC Early Education & Care will only close or delay opening at the discretion of the VOC Executive Director. Such a decision will only be made when the Massachusetts Governor has declared a state of emergency, or when, in the judgment of the VOC Executive Director, conditions merit such closures or delays. If the closing of the Centers becomes necessary, announcements will be made on Channel 22. In addition, parents will be contacted if weather conditions require closure or delay during the school day.

## FEES



1. VOC has several options available for paying your child's tuition: We offer subsidized slots in the form of vouchers and contracts and we also accept private pay. Subsidized slots are determined upon enrollment in the Early Education & Child Care Program, according to the Department of Early Education & Care eligibility requirements.
2. When a child is enrolled into one of VOC's Early Education and Care programs, the initial fee and payment for the first week have to be paid prior to the child starting.
3. Parents will be notified at the time of their intake about the payment process and discuss their accessed daily, weekly and monthly fee obligations when they have their billing consultation immediately following their initial intake appointment.
4. Payments can be made online through Tuition Express from any computer or mobile device, they can be made through the Procare Parent Engagement app and they can also be made at the check-in screen at your child's center. Please make sure our billing department has your email so they can set you up for this. Payments can also be made in the form of check, money order or debit/credit card and can be made in person at our billing office located at 35 Mt. Carmel Ave, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Chicopee. Parents of children in our center-based programs can pay at the center as well.
5. Under the regulations and policies of the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), parent fee payments must be made in weekly amounts based on your assigned daily fee. All parent fees are to be paid on Friday for the following week of care, but no later than the first business day of the week in which care is provided. If you are newly employed, your parent fees are due the first date of your authorization, regardless of when you will receive income from new employment.
6. If payment is not received, you will be issued a ***Non-Payment of Parent Fees Warning Notice***. Failure to respond to the non-payment of Parent Fees Notice, including payment of balance prior to the next parent fee due date and maintaining subsequent week's parent fees, you will be issued a ***Notice of Termination***.
7. **FAILURE TO PAY YOUR WEEKLY FEE BY THE DATE LISTED MAY RESULT IN THE TERMINATION OF YOUR CHILD CARE SUBSIDY.** Be advised that one instance of termination for non-payment of parent fees will be counted as an

Intentional Program Violation (IPV). Multiple occurrences of non-payment of fees or other IPVs will result in sanctions to be issued by EEC, including disqualification from EEC financial assistance.

8. A ***Notice of Termination*** will state that child care services will end 14 calendar days from the date of the notice if full balance is not paid.
9. If you think that your parent fee has been incorrectly calculated, your balance is incorrect, you may file a Request for Review with EEC to contest your parent fee amount. **Please note that EEC will not review a termination for non-payment of parent fees that are due to an inability to pay your assigned fee.**

**If you have any billing questions or concerns, please call our billing department at 552-1559 x305.**

### **ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE POLICIES**



In order to ensure a comfortable transition from home to school, we have established the following Arrival and Departure Procedures:

#### **Arrival:**

1. Center hours of operation are 7:00 AM-5:30 PM. Holyoke Public School VOC Pre-K classrooms operate 7:30 AM-5:30 PM.
2. Your child must be brought in and picked up at the time indicated on the Hours of Care Form signed every six months.
3. Daily routine becomes very important to your child's learning experience. Therefore, we ask all children to be in school by 9:00am. Please let your Center Director know if you are going to be late.

4. Children must be accompanied by an authorized individual who is at least 16 years of age when arriving at or leaving the Center.
5. Cell phone use is prohibited during arrival and departure. Please see page 17 "Cell Phone Policy".
6. For the safety of your child, we require that they be signed in and out each day by the adult who brings them in and who picks them up. Always be sure that a classroom teacher is made aware of your child's arrival and departure.
7. Please accompany your child to the appropriate classroom each day. Allow enough time for a comfortable good-bye. This helps to ease the anxiety of separation. Also use this time to speak to the teacher about any special or unusual happenings at home. Keeping the teacher informed helps in working through difficulties with your child if they occur.
8. Each child is assigned a special space in a "cubby" for extra clothes and a place to hang outerwear. Please assist your child in removing outerwear clothing and hanging it in its proper place. Reminder, all clothing must be marked with your child's name.

#### **Departure:**

1. If your child is to be picked up by anyone other than the usual person(s), you must notify in person the Center Director or Assistant Director. Notification will not be taken over the phone. The person picking up your child must be at least 16 years of age and be listed on the Authorization to Release form in your child's file. A picture ID will be required before the child can be released. Under no circumstances will we release a child without a picture ID.
2. Please check for papers and notices to be taken home each day. These are usually stored in your child's classroom mailbox.
3. To ensure the safety of each child, it is the law that you buckle each child in a seat belt or restraining seat and drive cautiously when entering and leaving the vicinity of the center. Children must not be left in a car unattended.
4. Please be considerate to your child and staff in picking up your child at the designated time. Please see page 18 "Policy on Late Pickups".

5. If for any reason, you need to change your hours of care for a day, please notify the Center Director or your child's teacher. If your hours of care are changing due to a change in your schedule, a new hours of care form will need to be completed and filed with the Center Director.

### **BUILDING SECURITY AND ACCESS**

The safety and well-being of your child are our top priorities.

#### **1. Secure Entry:**

- Our centers are locked during business hours and visitors must ring the doorbell to gain entry (with the exception of drop-off and pick-up time).

#### **2. Authorized Pick-Up:**

- Only individuals listed on the child's authorized pick-up list will be allowed to take the child from the center.
- Any changes to the pick-up list must be communicated in writing and updated promptly.

#### **3. Emergency Evacuation Drills:**

- Regular emergency evacuation drills will be conducted to ensure staff and children are prepared for emergencies.
- Evacuation routes and procedures are clearly posted in each classroom and throughout the facility.

#### **4. Security Camera Surveillance:**

- Our facility is equipped with cameras to monitor key areas for the safety and security of children and staff.
- Recordings are retained in accordance with privacy laws and regulations.

#### **5. Secure Outdoor Areas:**

- Outdoor play areas are securely fenced to prevent unauthorized access.
- Outdoor gates are kept locked, and staff members monitor access during outdoor playtime.
- Outdoor areas are equipped with cameras to monitor key areas for the safety and security of children and staff.

### CELL PHONE POLICY



All child care centers have a "no cell phone" policy inside the centers. If you must take or make a phone call, please step outside to do so. Transitions are made easier when your child has your full attention at drop off and pick up, and your full attention allows for clearer communication between teachers and parents.

### NO IDLING POLICY



Please turn your vehicles off when in our parking lot. This will help reduce exposure of our children to exhaust fumes that can enter our buildings and could prevent accidents as well.

### POLICY ON LATE PICKUPS



In order to maintain adequate teacher/child ratios, in accordance with regulations of the Massachusetts Department of Early Education & Care, we request that you pick up your child at the time agreed on with the Center Director at enrollment.

In the event that you are unable to pick up at the indicated time, please arrange to have someone on your backup list pick up your child.

VOC Early Education & Child Care Centers close at 5:30 pm daily. All children must be picked up by the 5:30 pm closing time, each day. If you are late picking up your child, you will be given a warning. Three late pickups will result in termination of services.

### **CHILDREN LEFT IN CARE AFTER HOURS**



In the event that a child is not picked up at their assigned time and left in care without any listed emergency back-up people available for pick-up, teaching staff will try to contact parents or back-up people listed in the file.

1<sup>st</sup> late pick up after 5:30pm: Documented Verbal Warning and change of hours form to be updated if necessary

2<sup>nd</sup> late pick up after 5:30pm: Written Warning and meeting with center director

3<sup>rd</sup> late pick up after 5:30pm: A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be issued. This payment will need to be paid the following day at drop-off.

If your child has not been picked up within  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour after Center closing time, the teaching staff will initiate the calling process with the Department of Children & Families Hot-Line as outlined below.

#### **After the $\frac{1}{2}$ hour interval:**

- ✓ Teaching staff will contact the Department of Children & Families (DCF) hot line number: 1-800-792-5200
- ✓ The hot-line personnel will be informed that a child has not been picked up and staff has been unable to reach any of the emergency persons.
- ✓ The child will remain with the teachers until DCF personnel are able to make arrangements. If any authorized person or parent does arrive, staff will inform the hot-line personnel.



- ✓ If DCF picks up the child, Center staff will file a 51-A for Abandonment on the following day.

### **SUPPLEMENT TO THE DAILY PICK-UP POLICY**

It is the policy of the VOC Child Care Programs to release children at the end of the day to the pre-approved parent or back-up person only if this person is of sound mind and body. If there is concern that the pick-up person is not in stable condition (for example, under the influence of alcohol, drugs, medications or is extremely stressed or upset) we will request that the person not take the child. We will then call a back-up emergency person to pick up the child. This policy is to ensure the safety of all parties involved.

### **ATTENDANCE NOTIFICATION POLICY**



If your child is receiving an EEC child care subsidy, they are expected to attend the early education and care program, in accordance with the terms of your child care authorization. Child care educators/providers are responsible to ensure that your child(ren) attend in accordance with terms of your child care authorization.

EEC defines Excessive Absences as more than 45 non-attended days, including any unexplained absences, within a 12-month Authorization period, or more than 15 non-attended days during an initial 12-week Provisional Authorization period. Parent(s) will be financially responsible for all non-attended days over the 45 day limit during a 12 month authorization or all non-attended days over the 15 day limit during a 12 week Provisional Authorization.

To avoid having to pay for Excessive Absences you must:

1. Ensure that your child(ren) attend(s) the early education and care program, in accordance with the terms of your child care authorization;
2. Notify your Subsidy Administrator of a recurring change in your child(ren)'s schedule of care (i.e. after school programs, sports, custody arrangements) which

will result in your child(ren) not needing child care on a particular day or days of the week;

3. Contact your provider whenever your child(ren) will not attend; and
4. Provide at least 2 weeks advance written notice if you plan to remove your child(ren) from the child care program or wish to request an Approved Break in Care.

You will be issued notifications from your Subsidy Administrator after your child(ren) have reached non-attended day 30 and non-attended day 40. If you have a 12-week provisional authorization, you will be notified after your child(ren) have reached non-attended day 10. The purpose of these notifications are to inform you when your child(ren) are approaching the Excessive Absence limit so that you can be aware of the impact of future non-attended days.

After your child(ren) have reached the 45th non-attended day, or the 15th non-attended day during a 12-week provisional authorization period, you will be notified that your child(ren) have reached the Excessive Absence limit and that you are now responsible for the payment of all additional non-attended days during the authorization period at the full rate that EEC pays for your child care. You will be asked to sign the ***Excessive Absence Warning Notice*** form acknowledging that you are willing to remain in care and will be responsible for the payment of all non-attended days during the remainder of the authorization period. Please note that failure to sign the form **will not** excuse you from paying for additional non-attended days. **Failure to pay for additional non-attended days may result in the termination of your subsidized child care.**

### **ABSENCES**

If your child is absent due to illness, vacation, or for any other reason, the Center must be notified by 9:00am that day. Excessive absences may result in termination of service.

## PROCARE PARENT ENGAGEMENT APP



The Procure Parent Engagement app is a free app for your smartphone or tablet that allows you to stay connected with your child care program. You will be able to see all of your child's activities, milestones, photos and videos in one place. You will also be able to check your child in/out and send, receive messages from teachers and pay your bill. Once you are enrolled, you will receive an invitation from your center with instructions about account setup and app download.

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## CLOTHING & BEDDING



1. Please dress your child in sturdy, comfortable clothing. If your child does wear special clothing to school, please be aware that it may get dirty or stained sometime during the day.
2. All clothing worn or stored at the Center (i.e. boots, coats, etc.) must be **MARKED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME** so that there is no mix-up at the end of the day. We cannot be responsible for loss of articles which are not marked.
3. In cold weather, children should be sent to school with hat, coat, and mittens.
4. An extra change of clothing must be provided for all children. This change of clothes must be appropriate to the prevailing weather. Extras should include: diapers, underwear, socks, shirt and pants. For those using diapers, eight (8) extra diapers are required to be kept on hand. Extra clothes will be stored in your child's cubby and used when needed for "accidents". When clothing gets soiled or wet, parents need to bring in a dry supply the next day. Also, clothing needs to be changed as

seasons change or as your child grows. The child's clothing must be labeled with the child's name.

5. Please be sure your child is free from strings, laces or jewelry that could become entangled or wedged in playground equipment and present a strangulation hazard. The teachers are required by law to remove any strangulation hazards.
6. **Footwear:** For safety reasons we do not allow the children to wear flip flops, sandals or open-toed shoes of any kind. Please make sure your child wears footwear appropriate for outdoor play. Sneakers are strongly recommended.

**7. Toileting/Diapering:**

- ✓ Each child is brought to the toilet or diapered on an individual basis, as needed. Diapers are checked based on individual need and changed if soiled or wet.
- ✓ Changing facilities are available for those children who need them.
- ✓ The staff assists when needed and encourages the child to do his/her own toileting, without help. A teacher is present at all times when a child is using the bathroom facilities.
- ✓ Toilet Training will occur when requested by the parent, method to be determined by parent and classroom staff.

**8. Bedding:**

- ✓ Each child has his/her own mat which is labeled and used only by her/him. Parents are encouraged to supply a blanket and a crib sheet, to be used at nap time. Blankets and mats are sanitized on a weekly basis at the Center unless they are soiled, in which case, the soiled clothing and blanket are bagged and sent home to be washed by the parent. Please be sure to replace clothing and blanket for the next day.

## TRANSPORTATION

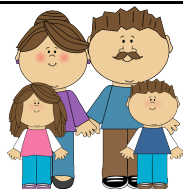


Transportation is available only for eligible families. As the parent/guardian, it is your responsibility to prepare your child/ren to be on time for the bus and escort him/her to and from the bus. Children must be awake and clean. Loose toys, articles, and food will not be allowed on the bus. No open toe shoes are allowed on the bus or at your child's program.

1. Please have your child ready to meet the bus at the time designated. Due to traffic, weather and other unforeseen circumstances, please allow 15 minutes before or after your child's designated pick-up/drop-off time for the bus to arrive.
2. During the first 3 days your child begins transportation, the bus will wait for 5 minutes "AM only". After 3 days, the bus will only wait for 2 minutes. The bus will leave after 2 minutes of waiting and will not be able to return.
3. Please do not relay information to the driver. The driver will not accept money or paperwork. Please place these items in a bag. Medications are not allowed on the bus unless it is a physician ordered emergency medication.
4. As the parent/guardian, it is your responsibility to assure an authorized adult is at home to receive the child at drop-off time. The driver will not release your child to any person not previously authorized by you.
5. If a parent or authorized adult is not present when the child is being dropped off, the transportation office will contact your child care case worker/Center Director. The case worker/Center Director will attempt to contact you or your emergency contacts. If contact is not made, your case worker/Center Director will call the police department and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).
6. Please do not ask the driver to take your child to a different address. Alternative drop-off locations will not be accepted. The parent or authorized adult must be home.
7. The parent is responsible to notify the child care office at (413) 552-1559 of any changes in address (1-week notice) telephone number, place of employment, emergency contacts or authorized back-up person.

8. You are required to inform transportation if your child/ren does not need transportation to or from the provider or child care center, whether for illness, medical appt., vacation, etc. Please call (413)592-4611 or 594-3220 or text the transportation department.
9. On a declared snow day or weather emergency, transportation cancellation or early dismissal will be announced on tv channel 22 and you will also be notified thru text. If transportation is cancelled and you brought your child to their child care provider, it is your responsibility to pick up your child.
10. Please make sure that all driveway and sidewalks are cleared of snow and ice to ensure the safety of your child/ren.
11. Please be aware that your child's pick up and drop off times may fluctuate given the large number of children we transport on a daily basis and we cannot guarantee a set pick up or drop off time. We are not able to accept specific time requests without a documented need by your employer or school schedule.

### **PARENT PARTICIPATION / PARENT RIGHTS**



The following are reminders to all parent/guardians regarding their rights while their child(ren) is enrolled in a VOC Early Education & Child Care program. Please review them and if you have any questions, please be sure to contact the Center Director.



#### **PARENT VISITS**

Each Center permits and encourages unannounced visits by parents to the Center anytime during daily operating hours.



#### **PARENT INPUT**

Parents are encouraged to make suggestions for the operation of the Center. Parents are also encouraged to submit commentary for the monthly newsletter and attend Parent Events. Parent Events are scheduled periodically during the year. If you have any suggestions for topics, please let the Center Director know. We value your opinions!



### **PROGRESS REPORTS & PARENT CONFERENCES**

Parent conferences are held four times a year, and generally follow the completion of the assessment process. Teachers schedule a time to meet with parents and begin by sharing some of their child's work from individual portfolios. Photos of their work and social interactions, drawings and art work, writing samples, and dictated stories are some of the items that engage the parent in learning about their child's learning. Teachers take time to explain the process for each child to complete these work samples and at what level learning objectives are achieved in the process. Teachers also share a sampling of their notes on child progress, accentuating growth and learning milestones, as well as goals and next steps.

In addition, individual conferences may be scheduled at a parent's request and/or scheduled by Center Staff.



### **PARENT NEWSLETTERS**

Each Center provides parents with a NEWSLETTER at the beginning of each month. The NEWSLETTER contains important information about your child's classroom activities, Center information, upcoming field trips, special events and times for Parent Involvement Events. Please take the time to read it and reinforce the concepts being learned at the Center.



### **CHILDREN'S RECORDS**

All paperwork filled in at the time of intake and subsequent reassessments, for each child, will be kept by the program while the child is enrolled in the program. Also maintained in the file will be periodic progress reports, medical reports (including

prescribed medication) and all pertinent correspondence concerning the child. All this information shall be privileged and confidential. Only with a written consent form the parent/guardian has signed will any information be released to an individual, group, or organization other than VOC staff directly related to implementing the program plan. Requests for information, either in whole or in part, will be maintained in the file as a log note listing the name of individual/group to whom the information was given.

Parents/Guardians may have all/some of the information from their child's file within two days of a written request. Files are maintained for a period of 7 years after the child has left the program. Requests for information from these files will also be made available on request from a parent/guardian. Written notification is to be logged in the file.

#### **AMENDING CHILDREN'S RECORDS:**

- Parents have the right to amend or add any information to their child's file.
- Parents may request deletion of information by: Asking for additional information or clarification of information found objectionable. This may be done verbally, in writing or by request of a conference.
- Within one (1) week of the conference a written decision, complete with reasons, will be rendered to the parent. If the decision is in favor of the parent, immediate steps will be taken to delete the objectionable information within one (1) week's time.

#### **TRANSFER OF RECORDS:**

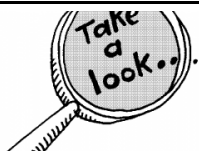
- With a written request parents/guardians may request the transfer of their child's file from this program to another once the child is no longer enrolled.
- Parents have the right to initiate services for their child by contacting the Department of Special Needs in their local school system or Early Childhood Intervention Program.



**NOTE:** The Department of Early Education and Care, the Commonwealth's licensing agency, has the right to examine any information contained in a child's file but may not remove it without written permission from the parent/guardian. Confidentiality of information is maintained.

Parents may contact EEC (788-8401) for information regarding the center's regulatory compliance history. The EEC Regional Office is located at 1441 Main Street, Suite 230, Springfield, MA 01103.

### PARENTAL CONSENT TO OBSERVATION



There may be times when non-employees of VOC Child Care will be required to do observations in your child's classroom. These people may include representatives from:

- ❖ Licensing Agencies
- ❖ Funding Sources
- ❖ Area High Schools and Colleges
- ❖ Human Services Agencies

Under normal situations, your child will not:

- ❖ Be left alone with a non-employee of VOC Child Care
- ❖ Have his/her name used in any report:
- ❖ Be subjected to any type of research:
- ❖ Be asked questions of a personal or family nature:

In the event your child/family has involvement with the Department of Children and Families, or is receiving services from other agencies, your child may then have interviews with those personnel.

With the exception of the Department of Children and Families, your signed Release of Information Form is required before interviews. No studies or research by companies and/or educational institutes will be allowed without prior written consent from the parent/guardian regarding that specific activity.

## **POLICY FOR PARENT GRIEVANCE**



We value parental involvement as an essential part of our program and recognize that on occasion parents/guardians may have a grievance in relation to our program policies and/or procedures. As part of the "parent's rights" policy all parents receive upon intake to our program, any parent/guardian may offer suggestions or feedback about the program and its policies. However, in our efforts to provide quality care and services to our families we ask that you adhere to the following procedures.

- ❖ Direct your concerns and complaints to the Center Director.
- ❖ Request a private meeting to discuss your issues with the Center Director.
- ❖ Emotional outbursts that appear of a threatening nature will not be tolerated.

If you feel your issues still have not been resolved, please contact the Center-Based Manager, Heather Carr, at 413-552-1559 x358 who will further discuss your concerns and try to mediate a resolution.

Please refer to your Parent Handbook for additional information regarding parent's rights and your input in the program.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Valley Opportunity Council Inc. is dedicated to provide a work environment that ensures that each and every employee is treated with respect and dignity, and afforded equitable conduct.

Valley Opportunity Council Inc. will not tolerate any kind of harassment or disrespect, and will take all required steps to make sure that employees are not subject to Harassment.

The law assures employees the right to employment in a place of work that is free from harassment and disrespect.

Valley Opportunity Council Inc. will not tolerate sexual harassment whether it is by fellow employees, administrators, clients/consumers to VOC programs or outside vendors.

Sexual harassment can include jokes, vulgar language, sexual innuendos, pornographic pictures, sexual gestures, physical grabbing, pinching and other unwelcome touching or contact.

Everybody needs a little respect and Valley Opportunity Council Inc. expects consumers who utilize our services to treat our staff with courtesy, politeness, kindness and free from any and all types of harassment.

If parents/guardians do not follow the above policies, it may be grounds for termination from the program as stated in our termination policy found in the Parent Handbook.

#### **POLICY FOR INCIDENT INVOLVING A PARENT**

An "incident" is deemed as any event in which the policies of the program are not being adhered to and/or the staff's/children's safety is perceived to be in jeopardy. When such an incident occurs, staff will immediately:

- ✓ Inform the Center Director of the incident.
- ✓ The Center Director or Assistant Director (if Center Director is not present), will then contact the main office for direction in appropriate action to be taken.
- ✓ The incident and action taken will then be documented in the documentation log of child's respective file.
- ✓ If the incident is of severe and/or dangerous nature, staff will immediately contact the local Police Department, for support in the matter and follow-up by informing the above personnel.

Any violent outburst or displays of aggressive behavior towards staff, children, volunteers or parents by other parents while on the premises may result in immediate termination of child care without advance notification.

## **Procedures for Negotiating Difficulties and Differences**

Positive interactions between families and program staff are essential and contribute to a harmonious and effective partnership that prioritizes the child's holistic development and well-being. This collaborative approach enhances the overall quality of care and early education provided in the center. At times, interactions between families and program staff may sometimes lead to differences of opinion. We have a structured approach to address and resolve these issues in a way that respects the concerns of both parties.

### **1. Informal Communication and Resolution:**

- a. **Open Communication Channels:** - VOC encourages an open-door policy where families and staff can express concerns freely. We establish regular communication methods, such as newsletters, to keep families informed about daily activities and policies.
- b. **Parent-Teacher Conferences:** - Throughout the year and as needed, conferences are scheduled to discuss a child's progress, behavior, and any concerns. This provides a structured platform for families and staff to share perspectives and work collaboratively on solutions.

### **2. Semi-Formal Conflict Resolution:**

- a. **Meeting with Center Director:** - The Center Director will facilitate a meeting between families and program staff to discuss the issues, ensuring that both parties have an opportunity to express their concerns. Collaboratively, they will explore possible solutions and agreements, documenting agreed-upon actions.

### **3. Formal Conflict Resolution Process:**

- a. **Meeting with the Center-Based Manager** - Establish a written grievance procedure outlining steps to follow when conflicts arise. - Require parties to submit a written grievance detailing the issue, desired resolution, and any supporting documentation. - Assign a designated staff member or committee to review and respond to grievances within a specified timeframe.
- b. **Written Grievance Procedure:** If a resolution is not established, a written grievance may be submitted to the Director of Early Education and Care. The written grievance should detail the issue, desired resolution, and include any supporting documentation. The Director of Early Education and Care will review and respond to grievances within 30 days.

## TOILET TRAINING POLICY AND PROCEDURES



VOC provides childcare and education to infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Once children have mastered the milestones or goals of a group, they transition onto the next group.

We have established the following guidelines to most effectively support your child and to help children successfully master toilet training:

- Center staff shall toilet train children in accordance with the requests of their parents and consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.
- With that in mind, we recognize that all children develop at different rates and all parents employ different methods. At VOC Child Care, teachers introduce and support the process of toilet training. This process supports a smoother transition to Preschool Rooms, where children will be exploring new and even more challenging *milestones*. For this process to be effective, it must be approached in the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm between the child's parents and the teachers.
- An initial meeting with the child's parents, teacher and the Center Director will serve to define and document an individualized toilet training plan. The use of diapers, pull-ups or training pants will be discussed as well.
- Regular and ongoing communication will occur between home and the Center regarding the child's progress, any concerns or the need to revise the plan. Parents and teachers will determine if communication will be verbal or written and how often.
- Parents are responsible for providing a minimum of eight (8) disposable diapers and/or training pants per day.

- When appropriate, each child is shown the proper way to use the bathroom. They are shown how to take care of their clothes, undoing and doing them up, how to use the toilet and how to wash their hands.

*Toilet training status is not an eligibility requirement for enrollment.*

### **HEALTH CARE POLICIES**



It is the intention of VOC Early Education & Care to provide a safe and healthy environment for all families served. Still, illness and accidents will and do occur.

The following is a Health and Safety Guide for Parents to help understand the procedures used at VOC Early Education & Care Centers in emergency situations. Please read it and follow through on its guidelines. It is for everyone's benefit.

*All Center staff is familiarized with all Health and Emergency Procedures in the Program's Health Care Policy.*

### **EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AT THE CENTER**

All teaching staff, employed by Valley Opportunity Council, Inc., receive periodic training in Standard First Aid and CPR training.

When an accident has occurred, staff will assess the situation and immediately notify the Center Director or teacher in charge, if the situation calls for more than basic first aid.

If children cannot be moved, due to more severe injuries, then an ambulance will be called. In other situations, it may be necessary to call the Rescue Squad or Poison Control Center. Emergency telephone numbers are posted by all the telephones in the Centers.

In cases of accidents needing more than basic first aid but not needing an ambulance, your child may need to be checked out by your Health Care Provider. Staff will make

every effort to contact you, the parent. If the parent is unavailable, then staff will try the emergency back up persons listed in the child's file.

If unable to contact anyone, the Center Director, Assistant Director, or teacher in charge will call an ambulance to transport the child with a second staff person to your Health Care Provider or nearest hospital of your choice (as you have indicated on the Authorization for Medical Care Form).

In all cases of accidents, (no matter how small), requiring first aid, you will be notified with a written Accident Report. Parents picking up their children at the Center should sign the Accident Report. A copy of the report will be available to parents.

***COMPLIANCE WITH THIS HEALTH CARE POLICY WILL MAKE OUR VOC EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILD CARE CENTERS A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL. PLEASE KEEP THIS AS A GUIDE FOR FURTHER REFERENCE. IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CENTER DIRECTOR.***

### **ILLNESSES**

Classroom teachers make every effort to keep the classroom and equipment free from germs which lead to illness. Unfortunately, this is not always enough and children do get sick.

If a child gets ill while in attendance at the Center, their symptoms are noted, their temperature taken, and an Illness Report is filled out. If the symptoms are severe enough for the child to go home, the Center Director or Assistant Director will contact the parent or emergency persons. Reasons for sending children home are outlined and signed by parents, on the *Sick Child Policy*.

### **SICK CHILD POLICY**

Staff members at VOC Early Education and Child Care Centers take every precaution to maintain a healthy environment for the children they serve. On occasion, children do become ill while at the centers. If your child is ill, you or an emergency person will be called to pick up your child. It is expected that someone will come within one hour.

Listed below are some conditions and illnesses that will cause children to be sent home. In this situation we ask that you keep your child home for at least 24 hours after all symptoms have subsided.

- **DIARRHEA:** Two (2) instances of loose stool that cannot be contained in the diaper or the child cannot make it to the bathroom. There are some diarrhea illnesses that require children to be out for a longer period of time. These include; E coli, giardia lamblia, shigella and rotovirus.
- **VOMITING:** two or more times in the previous 24 hours at home or once at the center.
- **MOUTH SORES:** with drooling, unless the health care provider states that the child is non-infectious.
- **RASH:** with a fever, behavior change or unknown rash until the physician has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease. A note must be provided from the physician as documentation.
- **FEVER:** (100.4°). A child should be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school.
- **CHRONIC GREEN/YELLOW RUNNY NOSE**
- **HEAD LICE:** until free of all lice and nits
- **PINK EYE:** until 24 hours after the treatment has begun, symptoms include redness of the whites of the eyes. May have yellow or white crusty matter around eyes.
- **SCABIES:** until after treatment is completed.
- **TUBERCULOSIS:** until a health care official states the child is on appropriate therapy  
and may attend child care.
- **IMPETIGO:** until 24 hours after treatment has begun.
- **STREP INFECTION:** until 24 hours after treatment has begun.



- **CHICKENPOX:** for five (5) days after onset of rashes or when all weeping sores are crusted over. Note: Children who receive vaccine may still get chicken pox.
- **PERTUSSIS:** until five (5) days of appropriate anti-biotic treatment.
- **HAND, FOOT AND MOUTH:** fever free for 24 hours without any open sores
- **COVID:** testing positive, needs to be out for 5 days and can return on the 6th day being able to wear a mask for the following 5 days. If unable to mask will need to be out for 10 days unless testing negative.
- **RSV:** Doctor's note required, fever free and able to participate fully in daily activities
- **FLU:** Doctor's note required to return and be able participate fully in daily activities

You will be asked to pick up your child when these or any other contagious conditions or illnesses occur. You should plan on taking your child to your health care provider before returning her/him to the center. When a child returns to the child care center after a short illness or contagious conditions, the parent must speak to the Center Director or the child's teacher. The child must have a health inspection to ensure that she/he is well enough to return to the Center. VOC will not transport sick children unless a severe condition presents itself, in which case an ambulance will be called.

If a child is sent home more than once in a ten-day period for the same symptoms, a note from your health care provider will be needed for your child to return to the child care center. If medication is required when your child returns to the center, it must be prescribed by your health care provider. (See Children's Medication page)

**Preventative Measure:** if your child has had any of the above-mentioned conditions or illnesses within the last 24 hours, please do not send them to child care. They should rest at home to see if the symptoms persist. Children should be free of symptoms at the center. The child care center also reserves the right to request that a child go home if there are other symptoms which make it difficult for the child to function for the day or if multiple mild symptoms are noticed.

### TREATMENT OF ILLNESS

It is expected that when you or an emergency person are contacted, your child will be picked up within one hour or as soon as possible. Your child will be made comfortable, kept quiet and away from others until that time.

In cases when children are *mildly ill* in the Center, they will be constantly monitored. A mildly ill child will be kept quiet and given a few washable activities to use away from others. An illness report will be presented to the child's parent at pick up time, which the parent should sign.

If symptoms of illness last for more than 24 hours or if a contagious condition (chicken pox, head lice, etc) is suspected, your Health Care Provider needs to be notified and your child seen by them.

If your child is sick for more than three (3) days and absent from the Center, a doctor's note is needed for them to return to the Center.

When there are other children who may have a contagious condition and have exposed your child to it, you will be notified with a Medical Alert, which is information as to what the condition is, what the symptoms are and what you should do if your child shows the same symptoms. Please notify the Center if your child has been identified with a contagious condition so we can control its spread.

### MEDICATION

When a child requires medication, a *Medication Consent Form* must be completed and signed by the parent/guardian. This authorizes the VOC Early Education & Child Care staff to administer the medicine while at school. Medications **MUST** be in its original container with the prescription label, have your child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the number of times per day and the number of days it is to be administered.

The center will NOT administer any medication contrary to the directions on the label unless so authorized by written order from the child's physician.

The first dosage **MUST** be administered by the parent at home, in the case of an allergic reaction.

Non-prescription medication (such as Tylenol or cough medicine) will be given at the Center ONLY with the written consent of the child's physician. The center will accept a signed statement from the physician stating the medication, the dosage and criteria for administration. The statement will be valid for one year from the date it was signed. Along with written consent from the physician, the parent must also complete a *Medication Consent Form* which allows the center to administer the non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician. The center will make every attempt to contact the parent prior to the child receiving the non-prescription medication unless the child needs medication urgently or when contacting the parent will delay appropriate care reasonably.

All medications will be stored in a secure, designated area that is inaccessible to children, under the proper conditions for sanitation, preservation, security, and safety. All medications that are considered controlled substances will be locked and kept out of reach of children. Refrigeration is available for medications that require cold storage. Emergency medications, such as epinephrine for allergies, are stored in easily accessible locations.

All unused or expired medication will be returned to the parent at the center or by the social worker returning it to the parent at home. If the medication cannot be returned to the parent, the parent must have a plan for disposal of the medication that includes documentation of the disposal. If needed, the program can contact the DPH for assistance.

Topical ointments and sprays such as petroleum jelly, sunscreen, and bug spray will only be administered to the child with written parental permission. The signed statement from the parent will be valid for one year and include a list of topical nonprescription medication.

In any case of illness, please do not send your sick child to the Center. If she/he has a temperature, diarrhea, vomiting, very runny nose, PLEASE KEEP HIM/HER AT HOME until the symptoms are better or under a doctor's care. Sick children should be kept home for at least 24 hours after treatment has begun.

**IMPORTANT-** If Center staff notice symptoms of illness when you arrive with your child, you will be asked to wait while they perform a quick HEALTH CHECK. If illness is noted and the child has a temperature or other severe symptoms, you will be asked to

keep your child at home for the day. THIS IS FOR YOUR CHILD'S PROTECTION AND COMFORT.

### **ACCIDENTS AND EMERGENCIES**

All VOC Early Education & Child Care Teachers and Assistant Teachers are trained in Basic First Aid and CPR procedures. If an injury occurs at the Center, First Aid is administered and the parent is informed through an Accident Report either sent home or signed at the Center. If an injury requires a doctor's treatment, the parent will be notified at work, school or home immediately. An injured child will be transported by a parent or other medical transportation to the designated location as needed. If the parent cannot be reached, contact persons listed as emergency back-up in child's file will be called.

***EMERGENCY BACK-UP TELEPHONE NUMBERS AND ADDRESSES MUST BE KEPT UP TO DATE IN EACH CHILD'S FILE.***

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the Child Care Center or other situations where the center needs to be closed during the working day, the following procedures will be implemented:

★ **WATER EMERGENCY-** In the event the Center has a loss of water, the Director will contact the City water department and the following procedures will be implemented:

**Prior Notice Given-** If the City needs to shut off the water supply and informs the Center with at least a 24 hour notice, the Center will close for the day due to the lack of adequate water for sewage needs. Parents will be notified in person or by telephone. Notices will be posted on all exits.

If water emergency lasts for more than 1 day, decisions for alternate care will be made by the Director of Early Education and Care.

**Without Prior Notice-** If there is an emergency situation and no prior notice is given, the Center will have to enact an Emergency Closure. All parents/guardians will immediately be notified by telephone. They will be informed of the nature of the

emergency and informed that children must be picked up as soon as possible, within an hour (1 hour).

If unable to reach the parent/guardian, emergency persons listed in the child's file will be used.

Bottled water for drinking will be supplied for children while still on site.

In the event of an emergency where evacuation is necessary children will go to the following locations:

**Churchill Homes:** All children will go to Holyoke High School.

**Cabot Manor:** All children will go to Bowe School.

**Montgomery Street:** All children will go the Montgomery Dental Associates, 377 Montgomery Street, Chicopee.

**Mount Carmel:** All children will go to the Chicopee Boys & Girls Club on Meadow Street or Stefanik School.

**Gorse Children's Center:** Mary E. Wooley Hall at MHC

Once at an alternate site, we will proceed with calling Persons for Pick Up as outlined above.

Following evacuation, staff will contact fire, police, and other authorities, with cell phones. Staff will communicate with parents and emergency personnel if they haven't already.

★ **ELECTRICAL DIFFICULTIES-** In the event of electrical difficulties, the Center Director will contact the electric company. The evacuation procedure will be the same as for Water Emergencies.

★ **HEATING DIFFICULTIES-** During the colder months, when the temperature in the classroom is less than 65 and there will be no heat within an hour, the Center Director will contact the HVAC contractor. The evacuation procedure will be the same as for Water Emergencies.

★ **CHILDREN NOT PICKED UP-** In the event of an emergency where evacuation is necessary and parents and emergency persons are unavailable, children left will be transported by the Center Director or another approved driver to an alternate VOC site.

Mount Carmel - Cabot Manor or Montgomery Street

Cabot Manor - Mount Carmel or Montgomery Street

Montgomery Street - Cabot Manor or Mount Carmel  
Churchill Homes - Beaudoin Village or Mount Carmel  
Beaudoin Village - Churchill Homes or Mount Carmel  
Gorse Children's Center - Montgomery Street

Placement will be decided on availability of space due to licensing numbers for each site. If at all possible children will be kept in the same city as the crisis' site.

If a child is transported, a copy of the file with the emergency authorization signature and information will accompany the child to the alternate site. Center personnel will continue to try reaching parents or emergency persons. These same procedures will be followed for electrical or heating difficulties at any of the sites. Children will be kept secure and comfortable.

★ **NATURAL DISASTERS OR STATE OF EMERGENCIES-** In the event of hurricane, tornado, earthquake, flood, etc., the Advanced Warning System in each City will be utilized. Staff and children will proceed to the approved civil defense sites, as announced following the Emergency Evacuation Procedures posted in each site. VOC vans will provide emergency transportation when possible.

★ **APPROVED CIVIL DEFENSE SITES-** In Chicopee Cabot Manor will go to Bowe School, Mount Carmel will go to Stefanik School or Chicopee Boys & Girls Club on Meadow Street, Montgomery will go to the Knights of Columbus on Granby Road and if necessary will be bused to Bellamy Middle School; Beaudoin Village will go to Sullivan School, Churchill Homes to Holyoke High School and Gorse Children's Center to So. Hadley High School.

★ Escape routes from each building are posted at all entries and exits, with designated meeting places indicated. Staff will take child emergency information and cell phones. Staff will utilize strollers and other means to assist toddlers and other children needing special assistance to leave the facility. Following evacuation attendance will be taken while a designated staff person inspects the facility to assure no child is left behind. Staff will document the date, time, number of children, and exit routes used during an evacuation.

### TRANSPORTATION IN EMERGENCIES

In the case of emergencies where the Center must be evacuated, it may be necessary to transport your child to another child care site or an approved evacuation site.

When the center must be evacuated due to an emergency water or electrical failure, loss of heat, etc. or natural disaster hurricane, earthquake, etc., and the children cannot be returned to the Center, parents or an emergency person will be contacted to pick up children within an hour of receiving the telephone call. If we are unable to reach anyone, then your child will be transported by the staff to an alternative VOC site:

- ☺Mt. Carmel children will be at Cabot Manor or Montgomery
- ☺Cabot Manor children will be at Mt. Carmel or Montgomery
- ☺Montgomery children will be at Cabot Manor or Mt.Carmel
- ☺Churchill children will be at Montgomery, Mt Carmel or Cabot Manor
- ☺ Gorse Children's Center will be at Montgomery Street

Child care staff will continue trying to reach someone to inform you of the whereabouts of your child. Also, a note will be posted on the entrance of the closed Center.

If immediate evacuation is necessary due to a disaster that would put your child in jeopardy, transportation to an alternate site will be provided by a private bus company or VOC vans. Busses will meet public transportation standards which do NOT require seat belts.

In the event of a national disaster or Civil Defense Alert the Center will evacuate to an approved Civil Defense site. Transportation will be provided on private buses if at all possible. Seat belts may not be available.

In Chicopee, Chicopee High School on Front St. will be used by Cabot Manor. Chicopee Comprehensive High School on Montgomery St. will be used by Mt. Carmel and Montgomery. In Holyoke, Holyoke High School will be utilized. In South Hadley, So. Hadley High School will be utilized.

I have read and understand that my child may be transported to an alternate site in case of an emergency at the VOC Child Care Center. I give the teaching staff or other approved child care staff my permission to transport my child either by walking, approved staff driver or private bus company as the situation indicates.

### **ALLERGIES AND MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

If a child has a known allergy or chronic medical condition, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner, please inform the Center Director upon enrollment. An Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) written and signed by the child's health care practitioner will need to be submitted and maintained in the child's file. The IHCP must describe the chronic condition, it's symptoms, any medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, the potential side effects of the treatment and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered. The appropriate staff will be informed of all allergies and medical conditions and the information will be listed in each individual classroom and near food preparation areas.

### **ORAL HEALTH CARE**

Children enrolled in our program will receive assistance from Educators in brushing their teeth once daily. This practice is in place to promote oral health and hygiene among the children in our care.

### **FIELD TRIPS**



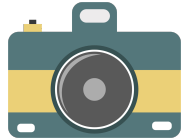
While on a field trip, VOC staff will carry a portable first aid kit, a cell phone and emergency sheets for the children in the class that include signed permission for medical treatment if necessary.

When an incident occurs, VOC staff will administer immediate first aid, assess the situation, call the Center to relay the incident, and ask for assistance if necessary. The Center Director or other appropriate child care staff will meet the class and assist as needed if more than basic first aid is necessary. The same procedures as outlined in **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES** will be used in contacting the parent.

In case of necessary evacuation of the Child Care site, qualified teaching staff will lead children in a single file to the nearest exit. Fire and evacuation drills are to be conducted once a month. Evacuation plans are posted at each exit.



## **MEDIA**



The centers participate in annual photographs both single and group. If you do not wish to have your child photographed, please indicate on the media release form. For confidentiality and copyright reasons we insist that group photos are not scanned or reprinted in any form. Photos taken during any center event or show may not be published or reprinted without prior written notification from parents. The centers also use photography to record development and activities your child participates in. Your child's photos will be used in programming and evaluation documentation and for staff training purposes.

## **FUNDRAISING**



Children may participate in occasional fundraising to support center programs. A separate permission form for outside fundraising will be sent home for these activities.

## **VOC CHILD GUIDANCE POLICIES**



The objective of all child guidance practices at VOC Early Education & Child Care Centers is to provide positive and guidance based on each child's individual needs and development, to assist all children to have a happy learning experience and to better understand strategies for communicating, cooperating, and getting along with peers and teachers, as a component of successful social/emotional development.

In general, every effort will be made to plan for each child's success in the early childhood classroom. Prevention of circumstances that lead to disruptive child behavior

is always a priority. Our goal is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures. Teachers are always planning and providing educational programs that assist children to learn through play and help them constructively resolve social disagreements. Such activities are part of the curriculum.




In the event that a child engages in an inappropriate behavior, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) **Verbal Reminder:** The teacher will gently remind a child of the appropriate behavior in a given situation.
- 2) **Redirection:** If after one or more verbal reminders a child still engages in the above behavior, the teacher will suggest an alternate activity for the child, using the child's input.
- 3) **Mediation:** When appropriate, the teacher will mediate between two or more children, who are engaging in inappropriate behaviors. The goal of such activity will be for the children to agree upon a solution to their problem.
- 4) **One-to-one problem solving:** A teacher may choose to spend time with just one child who is struggling with a behavior problem. The teacher may introduce special activities that help the child regain self-control and successfully rejoin her/his social group.
- 5) **Alternate staff person:** If a teacher feels s/he is unable to deal with a child's behavior problem effectively, s/he may elect to seek assistance from another teacher or the Center Director.
1. 6) **Parental Assistance:** In the event that the child continues to exhibit behavior that endangers her/himself, her/his own peers, or her/his teachers, the Center Director, Assistant Director or Classroom Team Leader will contact the parents so that s/he may be picked up for the day. The Classroom Team Leader will continue to monitor the child's behavior until pickup happens. If behaviors are continuous, a success plan will be written by the Center Director with the input from parents, teachers, and any outside consultants working with the family.

Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. If exclusionary measures must be taken, the program offers assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

**At no time will staff members use physical restraint to control child behavior.**

Supportive holding will not be implemented unless:

-  The safety of the child and others demand immediate intervention; or,
-  All possible interventions have been attempted prior to supportive holding; and,
-  The goal of this child guidance technique will only be sustained long enough to remove a child from an unsafe environment or keep her/him from hurting self or others.

The goal of all child guidance technique is to help the individual child return to a state of self-control and normal enjoyment of her/his daily activities.

If a child displays ongoing challenging behavior, teachers will assess the behavior to develop a hypothesis as to why the child is displaying the challenging behavior. The teacher will gather information to determine what happens before the problem occurs and what happens after the problem occurs. Once the hypothesis has been developed as to why the behavior occurs, a behavior intervention plan will be designed to decrease the challenging behavior and increase positive, prosocial behavior.

VOC complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

### **ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

It is the agency's commitment to protect all children from abuse and neglect while in the center's care. Educators are mandated by law to make a report to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if they have cause to believe a child is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. Parents will be notified of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

If a staff person is suspected of abuse and/or neglect, the staff member in question will be suspended immediately from the program, pending the outcome of the DCF screening, in accordance with DEEC and VOC policies. If the report is screened out by DCF, the staff member may be reinstated.

## **DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS**



Educators will conduct developmental screening on all children within thirty days of enrollment. The screening tool that will be administered is the Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ). The ASQ is a systematic way to screen young children for developmental and social-emotional delays in the crucial early years of life. Educators will communicate the screening results to the child's parents/guardians and suggest resources for follow-up or further assessment if needed.

## **REFERRALS**

Referrals may be initiated by any concerned adult who has contact with the child and/or the child's family.

Specific referrals to agencies providing health, mental health, social services or educational services will be made as a team effort through communication with the following persons: Center Director and/or Lead Teacher, Classroom Teacher(s), Social Worker, Preschool Coordinator, and Parent(s).

When a child is identified in need of special services:

1. The Center Director will complete and submit an overview of the concern and hers/his on proposed supports to the Center-Based Manager.
2. The Center-Based Manager may then make a series of classroom observations, review the child's record and discuss concerns, with Center Director and/or authorized clinicians.
3. Parent will be notified and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss reasons for referral, summary of observations and efforts to accommodate child's needs.
4. The Center Director and the parent(s) will work together to coordinate services, documentation, implementation and follow up.

## **TERMINATION POLICY**

Termination of a child's Child Care services will occur if it is deemed necessary and appropriate that the Center no longer provide care for the child and/or family. Reasons may include:

- ✓ Geographic relocation
- ✓ Being age appropriate for Public School Programs
- ✓ Family ineligible to receive Child Care services
- ✓ Family dissatisfaction with Center
- ✓ Failure to pay child care center fees
- ✓ Requested paperwork not returned by due date, including physical and immunizations
- ✓ Excessive absences (as outlined in the Attendance Notification Policy).
- ✓ Program unable to meet assessed needs of child or family
- ✓ De-funding of Child Care Programs by the Government
- ✓ Additional circumstances that may arise which alter the ability to provide quality, safe child care services

Children are not expected to immediately understand or fully comply with all of the rules. They are taught the rules, reminded of the rules and when necessary redirected. Our staff receives regular training on how to set up the classroom environment to encourage cooperation and sharing as well as to model and develop age appropriate social skills.

To support children in their development, specific behavior guidance steps have been established and will be followed by the staff. Please refer to the Child Guidance Policies described previously in this handbook.

However, there are times when children may actually endanger themselves or others by their actions. When such behavior occurs, a conference will be held with the child's parents, teacher, the Center Director and/or the program Social Worker. At that time, a behavior intervention plan will be developed and reviewed with all parties. This will include any necessary referrals for the child and family as well as strategies and techniques to be implemented at home and at the center. If the behaviors do not improve and it is felt the child is unable to successfully participate in the program, a second conference will be scheduled to discuss next steps which include termination of child care services. Specific determinants for termination include but are not limited to:

- ❖ Frequent injury to self or others as a result of aggressive behaviors
- ❖ Frequent need to be removed from the group as a result of aggressive behavior.
- ❖ Parent's inability to comply with requirements of behavior intervention plan.

In such occasions, parents will be provided with written documentation of the cause of termination.

Prior to termination, the Center Director and Center-Based Manager will conference with parents to discuss the child's needs, reasons for termination and other alternative options for care. At that time, the parent(s) will receive a two week written notice of termination. The Center-Based Manager will offer assistance to ensure proper future placement in an alternate program, if appropriate. Classroom staff will help transition the child from the Center, discussing when the child will be leaving, answering any questions the child may have and make leaving a positive experience. Parents are encouraged to prepare their child for leaving the Program.

Parents are encouraged to fill out and return a "Parent Evaluation of the Program" before the date of termination. Advance notice of termination may not be issued if the severity of the situation could endanger other children or staff members in any way.

**VOC Early Education & Child Care Centers**  
**IMPORTANT INFORMATION & PHONE NUMBERS**



Cabot Manor Early Education & Care  
 106 Stonina Drive  
 Chicopee, MA 01013  
 ☎ (413) 594-3230  
 📠 (413) 612-0134  
 Serving Ages: 2.9 years -5 years



Churchill Homes  
 334 Elm Street  
 Holyoke, MA 01040  
 ☎ (413) 534-2480  
 📠 (413) 534-2457  
 Serving Ages: 12 months - 5 years



Montgomery St. Early Education & Care  
 374 Montgomery Street  
 Chicopee, MA 01020  
 ☎ (413) 331-1331  
 📠 (413) 331-1400  
 Serving Ages: 2.9 years - 12 years



Gorse Children's Center  
 27 Morgan St.  
 So. Hadley, MA 01075  
 ☎ (413) 533-9819  
 📠  
 Serving Ages: 6 weeks - 12 years



Mount Carmel Early Education & Care  
 35 Mount Carmel Avenue  
 Chicopee, MA 01013  
 ☎ (413) 533-6407  
 📠 (413) 532-3236  
 Serving Ages: 12 Months - 12 years



VOC Early Education and Care at Donahue  
 School  
 210 Whiting Farms Rd.  
 Holyoke, MA 01040  
 ☎ (413) 265-8869  
 Serving Ages: 3 - 5 years



VOC Early Education and Care at  
 Lawrence School  
 210 Whiting Farms Rd.  
 Holyoke, MA 01040  
 ☎ (413) 348-2987  
 Serving Ages: 3 - 5 years



VOC Early Education and Care at Kelly  
 School  
 216 West St.  
 Holyoke, MA 01040  
 ☎ (413) 537-0529  
 Serving Ages: 3 - 5 years



VOC Enrollment & Billing  
35 Mt. Carmel Ave., 3rd Floor  
Chicopee, MA 01013  
☎ (413) 552-1559  
x303 or x304



VOC Transportation  
35 Mount Carmel Avenue  
Chicopee, MA 01013  
☎ (413) 594-3220  
☎ (413) 594-3222



### EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Fire Department .....	911 Chicopee/Holyoke/So. Hadley
Police Department .....	911 Chicopee/Holyoke/So. Hadley
Ambulance .....	911 Chicopee/Holyoke/So. Hadley
Poison Control .....	1-800-682-9211
Bay State Medical Center .....	794-0000
Holyoke Hospital .....	534-2500
Mercy Hospital .....	748-9000



### OTHER IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS YOU MAY NEED

Child/Family Services.....	737-1426
Center for Human Development and Behavioral Health Network.....	733-6624
Parents Helping Parents.....	1-800-882-1250
Department of Children and Families (DCF)	
261 High Street, Holyoke, MA 01040 .....	493-2600
112 Industry Avenue, Springfield, MA 01104.....	205-0500
DCF 24-Hour Hotline.....	1-800-792-5200
Parental Stress Line .....	1-800-632-8188
Mt. Tom Mental Health.....	536-5473

BHN, (Behavioral Health Network) 24 Hour Emergency crisis number .....	536-2251
Womans' Shelter/Compañeras .....	536-1628
Office.....	538-9717
24-Hour Hotline.....	1-877-536-1628
Community Legal Services .....	781-7814
River Valley Counseling.....	540-1100
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Center .....	736-7296
Holyoke Visiting Nurses Association .....	534-5691
Department of Transitional Assistance.....	552-5400
Department of Early Education and Care (EEC).....	788-8401
M.S.P.C.C. (Mass Society Prevention for Cruelty of Children).....	532-9446
Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children.....	787-2000
Holyoke Hospital Speech and Hearing Center Skinner Clinic.....	534-2508
Holyoke Health Center .....	420-2200
Chicopee Health Center .....	420-2222



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