

EARLY EDUCATION & CARE FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAM



35 Mt. Carmel Ave. 3rd Floor Chicopee. MA 01013 (413) 552-1559 (413) 532-3235

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Welcome to VOC!!!

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome your family to the Valley Opportunity Council Early Education and Care Family Child Care Program. Family-Based Child Care is a community-based network of educators who offer early education and care to children in a home setting. Educators are licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care, and offer early care and education for children from infancy to school age.

Family-Based Child Care is currently available in Holyoke, Chicopee, Springfield, West Springfield, Westfield, Agawam, Feeding Hills, South Hadley and Wilbraham.

This Parent Handbook is intended to serve as your program guide throughout your child's stay at our family child care program. 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 Child Care!



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.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

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

A Place to Share and Love....

VOC family child care programs are 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 Department od Early Education and Care state standards.

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.

THIS FACILITY IS OPERATED IN ACCORDANCE WITH U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE POLICY, WHICH PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION ON THE BASIS OF RACE, COLOR, SEX, AGE, DISABILITY, RELIGION, NATIONAL ORIGIN, CULTURAL HERITAGE, MARITAL STATUS, SEXUAL ORIENTATION OR POLITICAL BELIEFS.

ACCEPTING CHILDREN INTO THE PROGRAM



The VOC Child Care Program 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-week's notice.

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Any additional circumstances that may arise to alter our ability to serve your child (ren) may result in our right to terminate services.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES



As a developmentally appropriate program, servicing children from one month to six years of age, we believe the process of learning is more important than the product.

As educators we are aware that a child's learning process cannot take place without fully developing self-esteem. Our primary goals are to foster a child's selfworth, emotional happiness, enjoyment of learning, and age-appropriate social behavior within a community.

By working in large groups, small groups, and individual situations we provide opportunities for children to interact with peers and adults to develop the foundation of his/her learning.

In developing the "SELF" we devise activities for:

- ✓ Imagination
- √ Thinking process (acquiring strategies for learning)
- ✓ Reasoning skills
- ✓ Language
- ✓ Creativity (non-product oriented art, use of materials)
- ✓ Music/songs
- ✓ Literature/story telling
- ✓ Dramatization of roles (family, self, community)

Children will be practicing how to ask and answer questions, think critically/independently and how to work cooperatively.

In conjunction with the development of "SELF", the physical well-being must also be developed. In doing so, we address the physical development of children with:

- ✓ Health and their body
- ✓ Total coordination
- √ Large/small motor
- ✓ Eye-hand coordination

- ✓ Spatial awareness
- ✓ Music movement
- ✓ Outdoor play (climbing, jumping, running, etc.)
- √ Self-help skills
- √ Toilet skills
- ✓ Appropriate nutritional activities

Provider's curriculum may include the following areas:

- ✓ Language development and literacy
- ✓ Math skills
- ✓ Science & Exploration
- ✓ Social Awareness of Diverse World cultures

"Whole language" is an integral part of the leaning process which is touched upon in each of the preceding areas. Whole language is incorporated into every activity in which the child is involved. To promote whole language development, we support child participation in the following areas:

- ✓ Development of a print rich classroom environment, including books, magazines, signs, and labels.
- ✓ Engaging children in extensive conversations about their interests, their
 families, their friends, their daily activities, and their reflections on the world
 around them.
- ✓ Development of listening skills, through teacher and parent modeling.
- ✓ Development of an emergent curriculum which includes child chosen ideas and activities.
- ✓ Encouraging children to experiment with ideas in classroom activities.
- ✓ Receiving positive, specific feedback from teachers, peers and parents.

POLICY FOR EDUCATOR-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

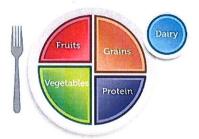


A primary objective of all VOC Early Education programs is to support the growth and development of each child by creating positive emotional environments. Such

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 when appropriate.
- 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.

NUTRITION



Each family child care program provides a nutritious breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack for the toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children.

A menu is posted and previous menus are kept on file. Our Educators 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.

HOLIDAYS & TEACHER IN-SERVICE DAYS

There will be NO CHILD CARE on the following holidays and teacher in-service days:

- √ New Year's Day
- ✓ Martin L. King Day
- ✓ President's Day
- ✓ Memorial Day
- ✓ Independence Day
- ✓ Labor Day
- ✓ Columbus Day

- √ Veteran's Day
- ✓ Thanksgiving Day
- ✓ Day after Thanksgiving
- ✓ Christmas Day
- ✓ Patriot's Day
- ✓ 4 Teacher In-service Days, TBA

INCLEMENT WEATHER CLOSINGS



In the event of severe weather, the Valley Opportunity Council will make every attempt to have child care services available for any parent who requires child care.

Due to safety issues of child care children receiving 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.



If weather should become severe during the 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.

The VOC Early Education & Child Care Family Child Care Programs 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 closing becomes necessary, announcements will be made on Channel 22. Also, parents will be contacted if weather conditions require closure or delay during the day.

FEES



 VOC has several options available for paying your child's tuition: We offer Sliding fees that are determined upon enrollment in the Early Education & Child Care Program, according to the Department of Early Education & Care sliding fee scale. We also accept vouchers and private pay. The full day fee for children under 2 years: \$55.00/ over 2 years: \$50.00.

- 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 in the form of check, money order or debit/credit card and can be made over the phone at 413-552-1559 ext 305 or in person at our billing office located at 35 Mt. Carmel Ave, 3rd Floor, Chicopee.
- 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 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.

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. Your child must be brought in and picked up at the time indicated on the Hours of Care Form signed every six months.
- 2. Daily routine becomes very important to your child's learning experience. Therefore, all children must be in care by 9:00 a.m. Late arrivals are only admitted with prior approval by the Educator and in the case where VOC transportation is providing transportation services.
- 3. Children must be accompanied by an authorized individual who is at least 16 years of age when arriving at or leaving the Program.
- 4. Cell phone use is prohibited during arrival and departure. Please see page 15 "Cell Phone Policy".
- 5. Please accompany your child into the program 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 Educator about any special or unusual happenings at home. Keeping the Educator informed helps in working through difficulties with your child if they occur.

<u>Departure:</u>

1. If your child is to be picked up by anyone other than the usual person(s), you must notify in person the Educator. 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 backpack.
- 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 15 "Policy on Late Pickups".
- 5. If for any reason, you need to change your hours of care for a day, please notify the Educator. If your hours of care are changing due to a change in your schedule, new hours of care form will need to be completed.

CELL PHONE POLICY



Our child care programs have a "no cell phone" policy inside the program. 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 the Educator and parents.

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, the Educator will try to contact parents or back-up people listed in the file.

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

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

- Educator 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 the Educator has been unable to reach any of the emergency persons.
- ✓ The child will remain with the Educator until DCF personnel are able to make arrangements. If any authorized person or parent does arrive, the Educator will inform the hot-line personnel.
- ✓ If DCF picks up the child, the Educator 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



Your child(ren) are receiving an EEC child care subsidy and 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;
- 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 <u>will not</u> 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 Educator must be notified by 9:00am that day. Excessive absences may result in termination of service.

"REMIND" TEXT MESSAGING SYSTEM



"Remind" is a free text messaging system that allows us to communicate with you in a quick, effective way. Remind is free, confidential and allows us to send you reminders and updates and also allows you to text us back. All parents will automatically be signed up to receive messages. Please feel free to use this method to let us know your child will be absent.

CLOTHING & BEDDING



 Please dress your child in sturdy, comfortable clothing. If your child does wear special clothing to child care, please be aware that it may get dirty or stained sometime during the day.

- 2. All clothing worn or stored at the program (i.e. boots, coats, etc.) and backpacks 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 with a 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 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 Educators 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. Parents are responsible for providing an adequate number of disposable diapers and/or training pants per day.
- The Educator only assists when needed and encourages the child to do his/her own toileting, without help. An Educator 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 the Educator.

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 program 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. *State regulations prohibit infants under the age of 12 months to sleep with pillows, comforters, blankets, stuffed animals or other padded materials.

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 or the monitor. 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. The case worker will attempt to contact you or your emergency contacts. If contact is not made, your case worker 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 accepts 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 Educator.



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



PARENT INPUT

Parents are encouraged to make suggestions for the operation of the program. \cdot . We value your opinions!



PROGRESS REPORTS & PARENT CONFERENCES

Progress reports are completed every 6 months. For infants and children with disabilities, progress reports are completed every 3 months. Educators are available for individual conferences at the parent's requests and/or scheduled by the VOC staff.



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 Program's regulatory compliance history. The EEC Regional Office is located at 1441 Main Street, Suite 230, Springfield, MA 01103.

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 Educator.
- * Request a private meeting to discuss your issues with the Educator.
- * 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 Educator Support Manager, Norma Cartagena, at $413-552-1559 \times 306$ 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, immediately:

- ✓ Inform the Educator of the incident.
- ✓ The Educator 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.

TOILET TRAINING POLICY AND PROCEDURES



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

- Educators 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, Educators introduce and support the process of toilet training. For this process to be effective, it must be approached in the spirit of cooperation and enthusiasm between the child's parents and the Educator.
- An initial meeting with the child's parents and Educator 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 Educator 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 the VOC Early Education & Child Care Programs 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 the VOC Early Education & Child Care Programs in emergency situations. Please read it and follow through on its guidelines. It is for everyone's benefit.

All Educators are familiarized with all Health and Emergency Procedures in the Program's Health Care Policy.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS AT THE PROGRAM

All Educators, sub-contracted by Valley Opportunity Council, Inc., receive periodic training in Standard First Aid and CPR training.

When an accident has occurred, the Educator will assess the situation. If a child 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 program.

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. Educators will

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

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 Program 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 PROGRAMS A HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL. PLEASE KEEP THIS AS A GUIDE FOR FURTHER REFERENCE.

ILLNESSES

It is expected that when you or an emergency person are contacted, your child will be picked up from the Family Child Care Home 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 Educator will monitor the child. A mildly ill child will be kept quiet and given a few washable activities to use away from others. Juice and crackers will be substituted for meals until child is able to rejoin group or symptoms worsen and child needs to leave the home. If conditions worsen, the parent will be notified. Reasons for sending children home are outlined and signed by parents, on the Sick Child Policy.

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, a doctor's note is needed for them to return to the program.

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; what you should do if your child shows the same symptoms. Please notify the Educator if your child has been identified with a contagious condition so we can control its spread.

SICK CHILD POLICY

Educators take every precaution to maintain a healthy environment for the children they serve. On occasion, children do become ill while at the program. 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: 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 in non-infectious.
- RASH: with a fever or behavior change until the physician has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease.
- FEVER: (100.4°). A child should be free of fever for 24 hours before returning to school.
- 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.

UNKNOWN RASH

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 program. When a child returns to the program after a short illness or contagious conditions, the parent must speak to the Educator. The child must have a health inspection to ensure that she/he is well enough to return to the program. 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 program. If medication is required when your child returns to the program, 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.

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 Educator to administer the medicine while in care. 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 Educator 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 program ONLY with the written consent of the child's physician. The program 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 Educator to administer the non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician. The Educator 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 out of the reach of children, under the proper conditions for sanitation, preservation, security and safety. All medications that are considered controlled substances must be locked and kept out of reach of children.

All unused or expired medication will be returned to the parent or by the social worker returning it to the parent at home. If the medication can not 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 program. 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 the Educator notices 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 Educators are trained in Basic First Aid and CPR procedures. If an injury occurs at the Program, First Aid is administered and the parent is informed through an Accident Report either sent home or signed at the program. 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 evacuation requiring leaving the immediate Child Care area or other situations where the site needs to be closed during the working day, please read the following:

* Water Emergency- In the event the Family Child Care Home has a loss of water, the following procedures will be implemented:

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

If water emergency lasts for more than 1 day, decisions for alternate care will be made by the Educator Support Manager.

Without Prior Notice - If there is an emergency situation and no prior notice is given, the Program 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 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.

- Electrical Difficulties- constitutes no electrical power to the building and it is too dark to see safely or there is danger of electrical fires. The Educator will contact the electric company and the evacuation procedure will be the same as for Water Emergencies.
- Heating Difficulties- no heat in the building during the colder months so that the temperature in the classroom is less than 65 and there will be no heat within an hour, as verified by the HVAC contractor. Similar procedures will be enacted when HVAC cannot remedy cooling difficulties within one hour. Such situations occur when the classrooms are hotter than the outside temperature during the summer months. The Educator will check with DEEC regulations for further information on temperature ranges. The evacuation procedure will be the same as for Water Emergencies.

If the provider needs to be closed the next day, due to the emergency back-up Child Care will be offered.

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 Educator 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.

ORAL HEALTH CARE

Educators will assist children in brushing their teeth once daily while enrolled in our program.

FIELD TRIPS



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

When an incident occurs, Educators will administer immediate first aid, assess the situation, call the VOC Early Education and Care Nurse to relay the incident, and ask for assistance if 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, the Educator 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.

VOC CHILD GUIDANCE POLICIES



The objective of all child guidance practices at VOC Early Education & Child Care Programs 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 program. Prevention of circumstances that lead to disruptive child behavior is always a priority. Educators 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 Educator 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 Educator will suggest an alternate activity for the child, using the child's input.
- 3) **Mediation:** When appropriate, the Educator 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: An Educator may choose to spend time with just one child who is struggling with a behavior problem. The Educator may introduce special activities that help the child regain self-control and successfully rejoin her/his social group.
- 6) Parental Assistance: In the event that none of the above strategies prove effective, and the child continues to exhibit behavior that endangers her/himself, her/his peers, or the Educator, the Educator will contact the parents so that s/he may be picked up. The Educator will continue to monitor the child's behavior until pickup happens.
- 7) 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.

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 an Educator is suspected of abuse and/or neglect, the Educator 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 Educator may be reinstated.

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS



Case workers will conduct a developmental screening upon 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 Educator and Parent(s).

TERMINATION POLICY

Termination of a child's Child Care services will occur if it is deemed necessary and appropriate that the program 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 program
- ✓ Failure to pay child care 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, Educator and 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 program. 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 Educator 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.

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.

BACK-UP CHILD CARE

Back-up care is one of the benefits of enrolling with a VOC Family Child Care Educator. If your Family Childcare Educator takes any time off and will be closed for any amount of time, VOC will provide you with back-up childcare. This does not include holidays, professional development days or weather -related closures. With our agency you will have care for your child as long as we are open. If your educator takes any time off during our regular operating hours, you will always be offered back up care with a substitute educator.

How does back-up care work?

- 1. Your educator will inform you of the days they will be closed
- 2. Your educator will ask you if you would like VOC to provide you with back-up care for your child.
- 3. Your educator will inform the VOC office of your decision and will coordinate back-up care for your child if accepted.

If you ACCEPT back-up care:

- 1. If you choose to accept back-up care, your educator will give you the name and address of the educator providing back-up care for your child.
- 2. A back-up folder will be given to the back-up educator that contains your child's emergency and medical information. If there is additional information you wish to

- share with the back-up provider, you may contact them prior to your child's first day or at any time during their schedule care.
- 3. You will need to sign a substitute care form that your Educator or Case worker will give you.
- 4. If you receive transportation, we will do our best to follow your regular hours for pick up and drop off. If we need to make adjustments to transportation hours we will inform you as early as possible.
- 5. You are responsible for calling your back-up educator if your child is going to be out for the day. You will still be responsible for your daily parent fee if applicable.
- 6. If you need to cancel back-up care, you must inform your educator at least 48 hours in advance of the scheduled day. Once the 24 hours has gone into effect, you will be responsible for your daily parent fee (if applicable) regardless if your child attends the back-up care or not.

If you **DECLINE** back-up care:

- 1. You will not be charged your daily parent fee (if applicable) on the days you declined back-up care.
- 2. If you change your mind and decide you do need back-up care, and it is less than 24 hours before the closure day, we will do our best to find you back-up care if space is still available.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact your VOC case worker.

EMERGENCY BACK-UP CARE

If your Educator should have to close her child care home on short notice, you will be notified by phone and asked if you need a back-up Educator. You will be notified by someone from the VOC office with the information of the back-up Educator. VOC staff will also notify transportation if your child rides the VOC bus. We have included extra back-up care permission forms in this hand book, in case of emergency closure.

VOC Early Education & Care IMPORTANT INFORMATION & PHONE NUMBERS

OFFICE HOURS ARE 7 AM TO 5 PM

Billing

(413) 552-1559 x305(413) 532-3235

Enrollment

Educator Support Manager

(413) 552-1559 ×306(413) 532-3235

VOC Nurse

VOC Social Workers

VOC Transportation

(413) 592-4611

(413) 594-3220

(413) 532-3235

EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS

Fire Department	911 Chicopee/Holyoke
Police Department	911 Chicopee/Holyoke
Ambulance	911 Chicopee/Holyoke
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	205-0500
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
Community Legal Services
River Valley Counseling
Massachusetts Rehabilitation Center
Holyoke Visiting Nurses Association
Department of Transitional Assistance552-5400
Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)
M.S.P.C.C. (Mass Society Prevention for Cruelty of Children)532-9446
Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children
Holyoke Hospital Speech and Hearing Center Skinner Clinic534-2508
Holyoke Health Center420-2200
Chicopee Health Center420-2222



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