

"Bringing imagination back to childhood since 2016."

Parent/Guardian Handbook

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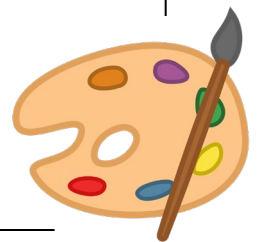
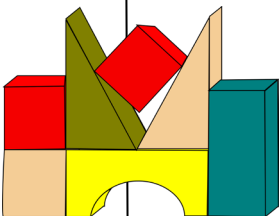


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Welcome Statement

Welcome to Little Acorns Learning Center! We are looking forward to partnering with you for the care and education of your child. While children do not come with instruction books, this handbook provides guidance on our policies and procedures to eliminate any misunderstanding while sharing our philosophy and expectations. We also understand that our handbook may not cover each unique situation that arises. In these instances, we will work together as a team for the most positive outcome. Please read this handbook carefully, and feel free to discuss any questions you may have with our owner, Arlene McMahon.

Who We Are

Mission Statement

At Little Acorns Learning Center, we aim to bring imagination back to childhood where we will inspire the next generation of learners, leaders, and dreamers.

Philosophy

We believe establishing positive and trusting relationships with our children and families is our first priority.

We believe through these relationships; we create an environment where children are supported and can explore and discover while learning about the world around them.

We believe play is truly a child's work.

Values (CHILD)

Connections

Home

Interactions

Loved

Dedication

About Our Staff

Each of our classrooms at Little Acorns Learning Center are comprised of teachers who are loving caregivers and are passionate about being positive influences in the lives of children! Classrooms are comprised of a lead teacher who is certified in education or a related field as well as at least one full-time assistant teacher and one part time assistant teacher. In compliance with our license as a childcare center through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), all staff members have Child Abuse, Criminal Background Check, FBI Fingerprinting and National Sex Offender Registry clearances. During orientation, all teachers are trained to comply with Little Acorns Learning Center's Emergency Crisis Plan, which is reviewed annually. All teachers are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR and attend annual fire safety training. In addition to these trainings, each staff member must complete training hours based on the requirements of our current STAR level. All teachers are considered mandated reporters of child abuse and are required to report suspected cases of abuse or neglect to ChildLine. Staffing classrooms is done according to DHS regulations.

Ages Served

Little Acorns Learning Center serves children ages six weeks to five years. Little Acorns Learning Center offers four classrooms (Nursery, Sprouts, Saplings and Great Oaks) to provide care and education for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers.

Licensing Information

Little Acorns Learning Center operates under, first and foremost, the regulations of the Pennsylvania Code of the Department of Human Services (DHS) Title 55 Chapter 3270. This code provides the foundation for all our health and safety regulations. In addition to these regulations, we participate in the Quality Rating Improvement System called Keystone Stars. Through the Stars program, facilities are challenged to go above and beyond DHS regulations to improve quality in not only health and safety regulations, but program management and community partnerships.

Enrollment

Enrollment at Little Acorns Learning Center is open to children from 6 weeks through 5 years. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability, and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability.

Admission/Enrollment Procedures

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the following:

1. Completed **registration form** and receipt of non-refundable registration fee.
2. **Fee Agreement** – this form contains the payment terms and schedule.
 - a. ***The above two forms do not constitute a contract guaranteeing enrollment for any duration.***
3. **Emergency Contact form** – this form must be updated as changes occur as it provides staff with the means of communication in the event of an emergency. Both parents must be listed on this form. We are required to release children to both parents unless a court ordered document states otherwise and is on file.
4. **Child Health Assessment and Immunization Record** – due within the first 30 days and must be updated according to the American Academy of Pediatrics well child schedule for the duration of enrollment. All physical forms must be signed by a physician or certified nurse practitioner.
5. **Payment** of first two weeks of tuition.
6. **Media Release** – provides us with permission to photograph your child for various projects.
7. **Family Meeting Questionnaire** – provides us with background information to better serve your family.
8. **Ages & Stages Screening Tool** – this tool provides us with insight into the strengths your child shows at home.
9. **Tuition Express** - this tool enables us to process your payment on a timely basis without incurring late payment fees. ***This is required.***
10. **Parent Signature Sheet** – acknowledgement that you have read, understand, and will follow our policies as well as request a copy of your child's Individualized Education Plan/Individual Family Service Plan, if applicable.

Parents are required to notify Little Acorns Learning Center immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being withdrawn from the program. Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to dismiss any parent or child at any time with or without cause.

Continued enrollment at Little Acorns Learning Center is contingent upon the parent's, emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures of Little Acorns Learning Center as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition.

Payment Policies

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians are required to sign a Fee Agreement prior to enrollment of their child in Little Acorns Learning Center. Parents are required to indicate in the Family Intake Survey to whom all billing information and correspondence are to be addressed.

Payment Schedule

Accounts are billed each Friday on a prepaid basis. Payments are due in full on the following Monday. Tuition payment is required through automatic withdrawal from a checking or savings account through Tuition Express or online through www.myprocare.com.

Late Tuition Payments

There will be no credit given for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations, inclement weather or acts of God.

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Little Acorns Learning Center, however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with Arlene McMahon immediately. Failure to pay the account in full will result in a \$5/day late payment fee. Failure to pay the account in full by Friday may result in the account being placed on the waiting list for care until paid in full.

CCW Subsidy Payments

We are pleased to partner with the Early Learning Resource Center Region 1. The ELRC administers the Child Care Works subsidized childcare program. To learn if your family qualifies for subsidized childcare, please contact the ELRC of Erie County at:

Early Learning Resource Center, Region #1
3823 W. 12th St.
Erie, PA 16505
(866)-225-2263

Families who are eligible for CCW funding will be responsible for full tuition payments if ineligibility is determined during enrollment. Parents are required to update income and contact information with Child Care Works according to their regulations. The current daily rate will be charged to your account when you reach the maximum allotted number of absences. This will be in addition to the weekly copay determined by the ELRC. This copay is required to be collected on a weekly basis regardless of attendance and closures. LALC assesses an additional \$5 weekly fee in addition to the copay to ensure the full cost of care is covered. Due to our service agreement with the ELRC, we are required to report any copays that are not paid in full by 5:00PM Monday each week. We are also required to report any absences of 5 consecutive days.

Confidentiality

Within Little Acorns Learning Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with the teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center who have a “need to know” to care for your child most appropriately and safely. Confidential and sensitive information about teachers, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as Little Acorns Learning Center strives to protect everyone’s right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and HIV/AIDS status or other health related information of anyone associated with Little Acorns Learning Center.

Outside of Little Acorns Learning Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise provided by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of Little Acorns Learning Center, persons with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information.

Any parent who violates the Confidentiality policy will not be permitted on center property. Refer to the policy regarding *Parents Right to Immediate Access* for additional information regarding disenrollment of a child when a parent is prohibited from accessing center property.

You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e., biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our *Confidentiality Policy* protects every child’s privacy. Teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

Violations of the Confidentiality Policy:

Little Acorns Learning Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all persons associated with the center. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and teachers associated with Little Acorns Learning Center. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential, pressures teachers or other parents for information, which is not necessary for them to know, will be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any **suspicion** of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center are considered mandated reporters, under this law. The teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Little Acorns Learning Center take this responsibility very seriously and will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children.

As mandated reporters, the staff of Little Acorns Learning Center cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in "good faith."

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

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

Parent Code of Conduct

Little Acorns Learning Center always requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Little Acorns Learning Center is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center but, is the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. **Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on center property.** Please refer to the Policy on *Parent's Right to Immediate Access* for additional information regarding dis-enrollment of the child when a parent is prohibited from accessing center property.

Swearing/Cursing:

No parent or adult is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on center property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or adult feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At NO time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the staff.

Threatening of Teachers, Children, Other Parents, or Adults Associated with Little Acorns Learning Center:

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today's society, Little Acorns Learning Center cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the center will not assume the risk of a second chance. **PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.**

While Little Acorns Learning Center does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Arlene McMahon.

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or Arlene's attention. At that point, the appropriate person will discuss the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, we are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our center have privacy rights and are further protected by our *Confidentiality Policy*. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center. While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited.

Smoking:

For the health of all Little Acorns Learning Center teachers, children and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on center property. Parents are prohibited from smoking in the building and on the grounds.

Violations of the Safety Policy:

Parents are required to follow all safety procedures at all times. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interest of the teachers, children, and associates of Little Acorns Learning Center. Please be particularly mindful of Little Acorns Learning Center entrance procedures. We all like to be polite. However, we need to be careful not to allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite, however that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful. Immediately report any breaches to Arlene McMahon.

Parents Right to Immediate Access

Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at Little Acorns Learning Center, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Little Acorns Learning Center must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order as well as all amendments. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order. If conflicting court orders are presented, the most recently dated court order will be followed.

Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order or a Restraining Order, Little Acorns Learning Center is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order and/or a Restraining Order to be violated. Little Acorns Learning Center will report any violations of these orders to the court.

In the absence of a court order on file with Little Acorns Learning Center, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Little Acorns Learning Center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of a one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Little Acorns Learning Center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Little Acorns Learning Center staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments and are allowed in the childcare facility only at the discretion of the LALC staff. A teacher of Little Acorns Learning Center will accompany visitors at all times, throughout the center.

Dismissal

Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time, with or without cause.

Parents will be refunded any unused tuition within two weeks of the dismissal. A center check will be mailed to the address indicated in the child's file. Any past due balances must be paid within 30 days of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balances remaining after the 30-day period will be referred to the center's legal counsel for collection.

Arlene McMahon or a designee will assist the parent in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal and parents are required to leave center property in a calm and respectful manner, immediately. Little Acorns Learning Center will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative while gathering their child's belongings upon dismissal.

A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with Arlene if they wish to return to center property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at Arlene's discretion and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent.

Following a dismissal, any parent or child who harasses, threatens or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the center by calling, writing, or any other means, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law, by Little Acorns Learning Center.

There may be circumstances in which Little Acorns Learning Center will have to terminate services to a family. In most cases, a discussion between Arlene and the parents will take place outlining our concerns and possible solutions before care is terminated by Little Acorns Learning Center. However, the LALC reserves the right to immediately end care for failure to comply with the policies set forth in the handbook:

- Destructive or hurtful behavior of child(ren) that persists even with parent cooperation in stopping the behavior.
- Failure to comply with the childcare agreement.
- Non-payment of childcare fees or late and/or recurring late payment fees.
- Failure to show up for five consecutive scheduled days without communication.
- Failure to complete required forms.
- Repeated failure to pick-up your child by 5:30PM.
- Inability to meet child's needs without additional staff (including following sick guidelines).
- Disrespect to Little Acorns Learning Center providers and teachers.

LALC has the right to terminate care without notice in the case of harm or a dangerous situation is posed to other students.

Withdrawal/Schedule Changes

Two weeks' written notice through email or the parent app is required when withdrawing a child for any reason. If the proper notice is given, any unused tuition will be refunded within thirty days of the withdrawal. If the required notice is not given, parents will be charged tuition for two additional weeks. At your request, we will transfer your child's files to another educational setting. You will be offered a release to sign providing us with the setting's name and address in which to send your child's files.

The parents and child, following their last day of enrollment, are not permitted to re-enter the center property without prior permission. A withdrawn child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment if they wish to return to center property following the last day of enrollment at Little Acorns Learning Center. Appointments are made at the discretion of LALC and are not a right of the withdrawn child or parent.

Parents who wish to change their child's days or times of enrollment at Little Acorns Learning Center, must submit a request to do so two weeks in advance of the proposed change. Arlene will notify the parents in writing if the new schedule is available. A schedule change will not be considered to be final until a new fee agreement is signed. If the schedule change requires an additional tuition and/or registration fee, the change will also be contingent upon payment of these monies. Due to staffing and room capacities, we may not be able to accommodate every change and families may be placed on a wait list for additional days. If the requested schedule is not available parents may choose to continue with the current schedule until such time as the requested schedule becomes available or may choose to withdraw their child from the program. Children who arrive without being scheduled for the day will not receive service due to limited classroom space or staffing limitations. If space is available, the account will be billed at daily rate. Families who enroll for less than Monday –Friday are not permitted to trade days in the event of an absence or closure.

While we value family time and understand that situations may arise that a later drop off time may be desired, however we require that children be dropped off prior to 9:00AM so that they can successfully participate in the routines of the day. Children who come in at a later time may not receive the full benefit of our program and will not be accepted. Our focus is to provide meaningful play-based learning activities rather than providing a place for nap and lunch.

Summer & Planned Leaves of Absence

Little Acorns Learning Center cannot hold spaces for families who wish to reduce schedules for summer months and/or planned leaves of absence (maternity leave, vacation, etc.). Little Acorns Learning Center operates as a business that is dependent upon tuition money to ensure payment of its obligations. Any family who wishes to reduce their schedule and ensure their days will be available in the future is required to pay for all days per the Parent Agreement. Reduction in schedule without payment for future needed days will result in Little Acorns Learning Center filling these vacancies with families on our waiting list.

Arrival Procedures

Upon arrival at Little Acorns Learning Center, the parents or the adult dropping the child off must sign the child into care through our ProCare check-in kiosk located in the vestibule. Children are required to be escorted by their parent or the adult dropping them off, to their designated classroom. Children are required by law to be supervised at all times while in the childcare facility. Parents are required to help children put away their items and get settled for the day.

Little Acorns Learning Center discourages parents from sneaking out of the center. Some children exhibit separation anxiety when it is time for their parent to leave. Little Acorns Learning Center believes it is best for parents to tell the anxious child upon arrival that after all of the child's things are put away, the parent will kiss, hug and say goodbye to the child. This will prepare the child for their departure. The teacher present in the classroom will comfort and assist the child through the anxious time. Parents are asked to leave after saying goodbye. The longer the parent of an anxious child drags out the departure, the more anxiety the child is likely to feel. The professional teachers of Little Acorns Learning Center are available to discuss other options if the child does not settle into the arrival routine after a reasonable period of time.

At arrival, parents are required to follow the *Medication Policy* if a child must receive medication during the day.

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher of any special instructions or needs for the child's day either verbally, through a written note or message on our parent communication app. These special instructions include but are not limited to: Early Pick Up, Alternative Pick Up Person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the childcare providers should be aware to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day. LALC requires written notification of an alternative pick-up person who is not listed as an approved release individual on the Emergency Contact form.

Notification of Absence

Parents are required to inform the center by 9:00AM if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teacher effectively plan for the day more effectively.

Right to Refuse Admission

Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause. Children must be admitted into care by 9:00am unless prior approval is granted by LALC.

Little Acorns Learning Center strives to maintain an ample list of substitutes in anticipation of staff absences, however, there are times when substitutes are not available, and classrooms need to be closed to maintain compliance with licensing regulations. Refusal will be based on a "first come first served" basis when seeking to maintain appropriate staff to child ratios and/or when closing classrooms.

Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. Lack of staff to maintain appropriate Staff to Child Ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations.
2. The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
3. Staff deems the child too ill to attend.

4. Domestic Situations that present a safety risk to the child, staff or other children enrolled at Little Acorns Learning Center if the child were to be present at the center.
5. Parents' failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
6. Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.
7. Tuition money is past due.
8. Failure to provide necessary supplies to care for your child.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program unless refusal is due to lack of staff.

Pick up Procedures

Parents or other authorized persons over the age of 18 with a government issued photo I.D. are required to sign children out of care through our ProCare check-in kiosk located in the lobby. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on center premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child and are required to directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

Parents must take home all papers in the child's cubby or school bag each day.

Parents or persons designated to act "in loco parentis" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you or another authorized pick-up person at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent(s) is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

Late Pick-Up

Little Acorns Learning Center closes promptly at 5:30PM. Children in care on or after 5:31PM are deemed as a late pick-up. All measurements of time are to be according to the Little Acorns Learning Center clock located in check-in/out kiosk.

A late pick-up fee of \$1/minute past 5:30PM will be assessed on the account and paid on the following due date. This charge will occur regardless of the weather. Our teachers are required to stay until all children are safely in their parent's care. The late fee covers the additional payroll time for teachers to extend their hours.

A child's services will be terminated should the child be picked-up late on three occasions in one school year regardless of the reasons for the late pick-up. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that someone (either a parent or Emergency/Alternate pick-up person) is available to pick up the child on time.

Person Appearing to be Impaired by Drugs/Alcohol at Pick-Up

The staff of Little Acorns Learning Center will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to the staff of Little Acorns Learning Center to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent's right to immediate access does not permit the center from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, Little Acorns Learning Center staff will delay the impaired parent, if possible, while contacting the other parent, the local police and Child Protective Services.

Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the staff of Little Acorns Learning Center to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. The staff of Little Acorns Learning Center will contact the child's parents, local police, and Child Protective Services to notify them of the situation.

Emergency/Alternate Pick-up Forms

At enrollment, parents will be presented with an Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form. Parents are encouraged to include on this form any, and all persons who, in the course of events, may at one time

be asked to pick-up their child from Little Acorns Learning Center. In an emergency situation the child's parents will be called first. If they cannot be reached staff will call the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list. Failure of the parent to make such arrangements will result in dismissal from the program.

Parents do not need to be listed on the Emergency Contact Form as authorized pick-up contacts. The nature of the parental relationship affords the parents (in the absence of a court order indicating otherwise) the right to pick up their child.

Parents will be asked to determine which persons (if any) on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form have the right to act "In Loco Parentis." In Loco Parentis status affords the pick-up person the right to discuss confidential information about the child's day including but not limited to, incident/accident reports, and behavior issues. In the absence of this designation the people on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-Up Form are only afforded the right to pick up the child. Staff are not permitted to discuss the child's day with them.

The persons on the Emergency/Alternate pick-up form will be required to provide a government issued photo I.D. prior to the center releasing the child. There will be no exceptions to this rule.

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form must be made in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Emergency/Alternate Contact Form for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Emergency/Alternate Form of the policies/procedures.

Emergency Closings and Inclement Weather

In the event of an emergency, the Little Acorns Learning Center has a detailed plan in place. Copies of this plan are located within the facility and reviewed annually. Staff are updated when changes occur and at every yearly review. Our plan includes methods to contact families and communicate updates as needed.

Little Acorns Learning Center follows the Millcreek Township School District (MTSD) inclement weather cancellation policy. If MTSD closes due to inclement weather, it will be announced on our Facebook page and ProCare app. Watch/listen for MTSD inclement weather closure announcements on this media and know that if MTSD announces an inclement weather closure, Little Acorns Learning Center will also be closed. In the event MTSD issues a two-hour delay, Little Acorns Learning Center will remain open at our regular hours. However, if the two-hour delay becomes a closure, Little Acorns Learning Center will close within two hours. We will not credit accounts for closed days.

Should the center need to close in the middle of the day, the center staff will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the persons listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the call of the pick-up location should the children need to be evacuated from the childcare center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

Should the center need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than 10 school days. If the closure extends beyond 10 school days, parents will have their tuition reduced to 25% to maintain their placement in the center. For an extended closure you can choose to withdraw your child and would not be charged the tuition holding fee, however, your child would not be guaranteed enrollment once we reopen. If you want to reenroll your child once, we reopen your child would not be given priority and may be placed on our notification list.

Should events beyond the control of Little Acorns Learning Center, including, but not limited to, any fire, act of God, hurricane, tornado, flood, extreme inclement weather, explosion, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, risk of infectious disease, epidemic, pandemic, shortage or disruption of necessary utilities, or any other event beyond the center's control, occur, Little Acorns Learning Center has the discretion to close and/or modify its curriculum, schedules, length of school day, length of school year, and/or means of learning and teaching methods and use of distance learning. The parents' financial obligations under this agreement remain in full force and effect. Should Little Acorns Learning Center close, our duties and obligations under this agreement shall be suspended immediately without notice until such time as Little Acorns Learning Center, in its sole and reasonable discretion, may safely reopen. If Little Acorns Learning Center cannot reopen due to any event under this paragraph, it is the sole discretion of Little Acorns Learning Center whether to refund any portion of tuition paid.

Hours and Calendar

Little Acorns Learning Center is open Monday through Friday from 6:30AM to 5:30PM. Teachers are not permitted to allow children to enter the building prior to 6:30AM. Families who arrive after 5:30PM to pick up their children will be assessed \$1.00 for every minute past 5:30PM. If a parent disregards this policy and/or does not pay the late child pick-up fees, services will be terminated.

Parents must pick up their children at the time agreed upon at enrollment. Staff schedules are based on the agreed upon schedules. If you are going to be late, you must call the center at 814-315-1313 to notify us so that we can communicate this change to the teachers and reduce your child's anxiety. Parents or designated adults are required to sign children into and out of care through our kiosk.

Little Acorns Learning Center will be closed on the holidays listed below. Parents are expected to make other arrangements for care. When a holiday falls on a weekend, the holiday will be observed on the closest weekday. For example, Independence Day lands on Saturday therefore the center will be closed on Friday.

New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Day (staff training day)
President's Day (staff training day)
Good Friday (staff training day)
Memorial Day
Juneteenth
Independence Day
3rd Friday of August (Prep Day for school year)
Labor Day
Columbus Day (staff training day)
Thanksgiving Day
Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving)
Christmas Eve
Christmas Day
New Year's Eve

Curriculum Information

Program Goals

The following is a list of typical milestones achieved within the given age ranges. We will provide meaningful activities as well as love and support to achieve these. Please keep in mind that children develop at their own pace and the ages listed below are merely guidelines. Some children may achieve these earlier while others may need a little extra time.

Nursery – 6 weeks to 12 months (Ratio 1 teacher to 4 infants)

- Smile
- Sit up unsupported
- Hold own bottle
- Roll over
- Crawl
- Cruise
- Babble/Begin some spoken words (mama, dada, etc.)
- Hold small object using a pincer grip

Sprouts 12 – 24 months (Ratio 1 teacher to 5 children)

- Tolerate stage 3 and table foods
- Self-feed using utensils
- Drink from cup
- Transition to one nap per day
- Pull up
- Toddle to walking
- Simple words (mama, dada, more)
- Walk
- Identify 3 animal sounds
- Count to 3
- Sing songs with motions
- Sit for short stories
- Begins to express needs with words

Saplings 24 – 36 months (Ratio 1 teacher to 6 children)

- Name at least 2 friends
- Identify 5 colors
- Count to 5
- Recognize gender differences
- Take turns
- Identify first letter in name
- Sit for stories
- Start to identify differences between letters and numbers
- Follow 1 step directions
- Begin to dress and undress himself
- Complete simple puzzles with guide
- Identify their name
- Jump with both feet off the ground

- Toilet training
- Use scissors with guidance

Great Oaks – 3 - 5 years (Ratio 1 teacher to 10 children)

- Separate easily from parents
- Make eye contact when communicating
- Respond verbally to the teacher
- Express needs verbally
- Cooperate with peers
- Demonstrate age-appropriate self-help skills
- Make friends easily
- Use words to solve conflicts
- Speak in sentences
- Ask questions and expresses curiosity
- Look at books/pictures on own
- Tell or retell stories
- Recognize beginning sounds
- Recognize upper/lowercase letter
- Recognize own name in print
- Print own name in capital letters
- Understand and follow 2 step directions
- Write, scribble, or draw to tell a story
- Recognize some common words in print
- Recognize rhyming words
- Distinguish numbers from letters
- Count up to 10 objects correctly
- Recognize and name basic shapes
- Use scissors without guidance.
- Sort by size, color, or shape
- Extend a simple pattern
- Compare group of objects using more, less, same as (equal)
- Recognize and name basic colors
- Assemble puzzles independently
- Bounce, kick, throw and catch a ball
- Hold and use crayons, markers, pencils correctly

Daily Schedule

Daily schedules vary in each classroom depending on what is developmentally appropriate for each age group. Daily schedules will be posted in each classroom and any schedule changes will be posted in the lobby. Infant daily schedules are open to parent requests. Feel free to request additional feedings or naps depending on your child's needs. At one year of age, children are encouraged to begin transitioning to the set classroom schedule, but we try to accommodate parent preferences when possible.

Family Centered Practices

Little Acorns Learning Center acknowledges and respects the priorities each family has for their child. Families are encouraged and supported to collaborate with staff to ensure that each child has an opportunity for optimum success. We will communicate with families on a daily basis and have regular conferences to discuss the child's successes and challenges.

To better assist the needs of the child, we require that any child receiving therapy/support services list the name of the agency on the child's emergency contact information form. This will provide us with permission to release the child from our supervision to the agency during one-on-one sessions.

Child Observation

During the first 45 days of enrollment into each classroom, teachers will observe your child in each of the developmental domains then use these observations to complete a screening tool that will illustrate the child's strengths and possible areas of need. We understand children often show behaviors at home that they do not share at school. With keeping this in mind, we include the same screening tool for parents to complete upon initial enrollment. Once the screening tool is completed in the classroom, the staff will request a conference to share in the results from both settings.

In the event that an area shows a need for growth, we will incorporate activities to promote growth in these area(s) and conduct the tool again within 30 days. If the area(s) continues to show a need for growth, we will meet with the parent for permission to seek services from an outside agency who specializes in the child's needs. These services are at no cost to the parent.

Evaluations & Conferences

Parents like to know how their children are doing educationally and socially in school. We continually observe and document the developmental progress of each child in our program. This information serves as a valuable tool in the creation of a child portfolio that illustrates your child's growth from month to month. While parent/teacher conferences are not mandatory, they are highly recommended. LALC offers our families parent/teacher conferences in November and May each year which can be held in-person, via phone call or zoom meeting.

Early intervention is a resource that can be utilized by our families and staff. Our staff is trained to note signs of learning, speech, visual, auditory, psychological, and behavioral delays through the use of the Ages & Stages screening tool. We will complete this screening tool within 45 days of your child's first day in our program and within 45 days of each transition to a new classroom.

Special Needs

It is the goal of Little Acorns Learning Center to provide the highest quality care to all children. We recognize that children learn at different rates and additional services may be needed to support their learning process. When additional services are utilized, it is helpful for our staff to have a copy of the IEP or IFSP to ensure follow through is occurring throughout the child's day. Support staff from the service agencies are welcome in our program for sessions as well. Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to discontinue services if the needs of the child cannot be met through our program.

Transitions

As your child meets various developmental milestones and becomes skilled in them, we will be

determining the need to transition your child to the next classroom. When preparing to transition a child, we look at not only their age, but also what they have accomplished and what space is available in the next classroom. We consider how their personality and social skills will fit into the dynamics of the next classroom. We will talk with you about our findings and provide you with a transitional letter that will request a meeting with your child's new teachers. This meeting is beneficial and highly recommended so that you may become familiar with the new routines and learning goals for that room.

We begin the transition process by your child visiting the new classroom with his/her teacher during various times of the day for a period up to two weeks. Once the two-week period is completed, we will determine if your child is ready to spend the entire day in their new room. Transition periods typically run as follows:

Nursery to Sprouts:	Child is mobile (12-13 mos.), beginning to use a sippy cup and tolerating table foods. Child can sit at table and is beginning to communicate through a few spoken words/gestures. Child is no longer on a bottle during the day and transitioning to a set meal and nap schedule.
Sprouts to Saplings:	Child is proficient in walking (24-25 months). Child can use words to begin sentences: Cup mine, Where mommy? Child has adapted to set meal and rest times. Child can drink from cup and uses fork and spoon with reminders.
Saplings to Great Oaks:	Child can communicate clearly & toilet trained (3 yrs.). They are beginning to show signs of independence and self-regulation. Child can generally follow the routine and is beginning to express needs through words and positive gestures.

As your child approaches the transition to kindergarten, we will assist you in registering for school and provide a checklist of items to consider before, during and after the transition to their new school. With your signed release, we will provide the kindergarten teacher with our progress reports.

Field Trips

Little Acorns Learning Center frequently supplements the curriculum with off premise walking field trips in the neighborhood. Parents are required to give written permission on the emergency contact form for their child to attend. Little Acorns Learning Center may look to outside transportation services for off-site field trips. Notification of a field trip, other than walking trips, will be sent home in advance of the trip, with all pertinent trip information including, destination, date, time, reason for trip, cost, and mode of transportation. Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out, signed, and returned to the teacher prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip must be filled out completely and accurately, and all trip costs must be paid in advance for your child to attend.

If parents wish to attend the trip with their child, they should discuss attending with the classroom teacher. Little Acorns Learning Center provides all required supervision for all field trips, but always invites and welcomes parents to attend. Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, other than their own, on a Little Acorns Learning Center sponsored trip.

If your child is not scheduled to attend on the day of a field trip and you wish for your child to participate in the trip, please discuss this with your child's teacher at least three days prior to the date of the trip. Your child will be permitted to attend if required ratios can be maintained with his/her addition to the class.

Meals & Snacks

Children in the Nursery are required to provide all meals, snacks, and bottles. Children in Sprouts, Saplings, & Great Oaks may eat breakfast at drop off until 8:00AM. Lunch is provided in each of these classrooms. Snacks are donated to the classroom as noted on the monthly snack calendar.

Snack	Sprouts 9:15am and 2:30PM Saplings 9:15am and 3:00PM Great Oaks 8:00am and 3:00PM
Lunch	Sprouts 11:30AM-12:00PM Saplings 11:45AM-12:15PM Great Oaks 12:00PM-1:00PM

If your child(ren) will eat breakfast at Little Acorns Learning Center, please pack their food at home and label their containers with their first name and last initial. A microwave is available to warm up breakfast items.

Mealtimes are pleasant times for socializing and eating together, reinforcing manners and social skills. We encourage the children to eat all food provided, but never coerce.

Rest Period/Nap Time

All children up to kindergarten age are required to have a rest period. Children are not forced to sleep; however, they must remain quiet during rest time. Infants nap according to their own schedules, yet as we prepare them for the transition to the Sprouts room, we will transition from sleeping in a crib to a cot and rest between 12:15 to 2:30. Rest periods are as follows: Sprouts 12:30PM-2:00PM, Saplings 12:45PM-2:45PM, and Great Oaks 1:00PM-3:15PM. Parents are to provide a blanket for nap time as well as a crib sheet to cover the mat. These may be sent daily or can stay at the facility and be sent home weekly for washing. Please label your child's items with their first name and last initial.

Toilet Training

Toilet training at Little Acorns Learning Center begins in the Saplings room. We ask that parents begin working on toilet training with their child(ren) at home by this age. Toilet training children will be escorted into the bathroom by a teacher and receive any necessary assistance while still promoting self-reliance. Children are to come in diapers or training pants until they are without accident for one week before transitioning to underpants. Little Acorns Learning Center requires parents send at least three spare outfits for their child(ren). These spare outfits may be sent daily in a backpack or kept at

the facility. Soiled clothes will be sent home in a plastic bag. We are unable to wash clothing at our facility due to facility and health code restrictions.

Parents will receive an overview form of what to expect from our staff during the toilet learning process. This form includes types of clothing to provide, how often we will take children to the potty and inquire if your male child will be taught to sit or stand.

Celebrations

Little Acorns Learning Center honors major holidays and all children's birthdays. If you would like to bring a special treat for the children, please arrange this with the classroom. Each classroom has it's own list of allergies and dietary concerns to be considered.

Religious Practices

We at Little Acorns Learning Center feel religious teachings are the parent's decision. That does not mean God is never mentioned. If you do not want your child to participate in activities and celebrations like Christmas parties or Halloween, please let us know. If you have any additional restrictions or concerns, please feel free to address them with us.

Graduation/Send-off Ceremony

Little Acorns Learning Center will host a send-off ceremony to honor our time with our preschool children who will be moving on to kindergarten the upcoming school year. During our ceremony the children will share a brief performance and we share highlights of our time with them since enrollment.

Guiding Behavior

Parent Communication

We value the relationship we develop with each of our families and understand how important it is for our families to feel like they are a part of our program. We will spend a few minutes at pick-up and drop off times to share updates and understand your child's needs for the day. Please share with us any information that will help us better care for your child. Things like how their night was, did they eat breakfast yet, when was the last diaper change, is someone new picking them up today are just some examples of information that will help us.

Parents will receive a daily report through the ProCare app, which will illustrate the activities your child participated in, how they slept and ate and any highlights of their day with us. This communication will paint a picture of your child's day with us.

Professional Development and Support for Staff

Training and support is provided to ensure that all staff are comfortable, confident and competent to meet the developmental and educational needs of all children. All staff receive an orientation on inclusion policies and attend training focused on effective inclusion and/or other disability topics as needed. Teachers are provided additional support and resources as appropriate such as ongoing feedback, reviews of the classroom schedule/routine, and social/emotional curriculum resources.

Inclusion & Preventing Suspension/Expulsion

We believe that all children are entitled to a high-quality early learning environment where children can freely explore, discover, and be curious about the world around them with the support of families and professionals. Through ongoing collaboration and communication, we may deem it necessary to remove a child from our program if we believe the child's needs cannot be met by our program or other violations of the Parent Handbook occur. Little Acorns Learning Center will abide by all federal policies, including but not limited to: ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) & IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act).

Developmental Screenings

We believe in monitoring the development of the children we work with. Our staff will complete a screening tool on each child within the first 30 days of enrollment and each transition to a new classroom setting. We ask families to complete the same tool at enrollment and return it to the teacher for scoring. We will offer a conference to discuss the results of the screening tool and identify strengths of the child as well as areas that may need to be explored further. Classroom teachers will provide activities for families to work on at home that will support learning and growth. If after a subsequent screening an area of need continues to be identified, we will offer another conference to explore the use of community services including but not limited to: Early Invention, Behavior Support Consultants and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants.

Classroom Management

It is the goal of the Little Acorns Learning Center to develop positive values for the children enrolled in our program through positive, non-threatening teaching techniques. No child will be hit, spanked, belittled, humiliated, or otherwise intimidated. No corporal punishment will be used. Children will be treated with courtesy, respect, and patience. We hug here! Each classroom has a positive behavior support plan built into the daily routine. Children will receive praise and earn rewards throughout the day/week for appropriate behavior, attitude, good manners, or effort. We recognize that children are

inquisitive and curious about the world around them. Younger children lack self-control and are impulsive; therefore, explanation and re-direction is the standard method of discipline. In some cases, “time-out” or loss of privileges may be necessary. Parents will be contacted when serious discipline problems occur with their child. Children will receive the appropriate step stated in our policy for the following behaviors:

- Physical harm to staff or other program participants. This includes hitting, kicking, biting, scratching or pinching with the intent to cause harm.
- Malicious and willful destruction of personal or Little Acorns Learning Center property. Parents may be billed for any defacing of the above property.
- The child poses a safety threat to themselves, other children, or the staff.
- Leaving space assigned as license by Department of Human Services or his/her assigned group.
- Possession of weapons, firearms, ammunition, and/or explosives.
- Possession of drugs, tobacco, and/or alcohol.
- Creating an unsafe walking environment.

Parents will be notified by phone/writing/conference if the child continues to struggle with any of the above behavioral issues. All behavior reports will be stored in the child’s confidential file. If 30 days has passed without incident from the last infraction, the previous reports become “void”. This will prevent a child that has had a rough day every few months from being in danger of termination from the program.

Should any child exhibit any of the behaviors mentioned above, the following steps will be taken:

Step 1 – Our teachers will document the incident with details such as what happened before, during and after the incident. They will share this information with the parent at pick-up. A call to work/home may be made if either the teacher or the parent will not be available at the end of the day. We ask that you talk with your child at home about the seriousness of their behavior and making appropriate choices.

Step 2 – A behavior report will be completed and shared with the parent illustrating the details of any ongoing incidents and the actions of the teaching staff. We will schedule a parent conference to discuss our observations and brainstorm ways to serve the needs of the child. The parent and teacher will be required to sign the parent conference form which will denote a plan of action for future incidents. The child may return to Little Acorns Learning Center the following day. The child will not be permitted to stay unless the parent has reviewed and signed the parent conference form.

Step 3 – With continued documentation from steps 1 and 2 above, the parent will be required to attend a second parent conference. Prior to the conference, both the teacher and the parent will complete an Ages & Stages screening tool. Results from the screening will be discussed and the current plan will be revised based on the findings. A request for support from an outside service agency will be offered. These services are free and will assist us in developing plans to best support the child in our group care setting. The parent will be required to sign the second parent conference form and report back to the classroom teacher the following day on the desire to pursue outside services. The child may return to Little Acorns Learning Center the following day. The child will not be permitted to stay unless the parent has reviewed and signed the parent conference form.

Step 4 – Additional documentation will be reviewed at the 3rd parent conference. We will discuss the plans utilized in the classroom as well as any service provider reports. At this time, if a service provider is not requested by the parent, Little Acorns Learning Center will terminate services if the request for services is not made by the close of the next business day. Little Acorns Learning Center will assist in providing information to begin the referral process. Families are welcome to have any assessments/services completed in our facility. We do request that if the child qualifies for services, that we be listed as a team member that can participate in goal setting and reviews of service plans. This enables us to ensure we are working together to meet the goals of the child and permits continued enrollment in our facility. Please be advised that Little Acorns Learning Center has the right to terminate care if the child does not qualify for services and we deem that a change of setting would be beneficial for the child.

Step 5 – We will notify the Office of Child Development and Early Learning of the steps taken to ensure successful inclusion of the child. With their assistance, we will explore any further service options which may include relocation to another facility/setting.

Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to remove a child from the program if attempts of supporting the child and parent fail or if the parents do not follow through on seeking support services.

Dress Code

Children are engaged in various activities during the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Our weather permitting guidelines include real feel temperatures between 25 and 92 degrees. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate and comfortable clothing. Outside play is important to the well-being of children therefore, all children are expected to go outside on weather permitting days regardless of clothing and/or illness.

Coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and winter boots must be provided in the winter months. It is not necessary for the children to wear their winter boots to school. Teachers will change the children into their winter boots when they go outdoors. Clothing may be stored at the center. Sun hats and sunscreen are needed for warmer weather. Swimsuits/get wet clothing and towel are required during the summer for outside water play days. Our facility does NOT take children swimming or wading.

We ask that parents refrain from dressing children in overalls, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present particular challenges for children in relation to toileting. For safety purposes, please refrain from sending children in open toed shoes or flip flops. Girls who have difficulty keeping their skirts in a modest position may be asked to wear shorts under their skirts.

Children ages 3 through 5 are required to always have at least one seasonably and size appropriate complete change of clothing at the center. Children under 3 years of age are required to have at least two seasonably and size appropriate, complete changes of clothing at the center at all times. A complete change of clothing includes shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will post reminders for parents to update changes of clothing as the weather begins to change.

All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first name and initial of last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. Little Acorns Learning Center is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

What to Bring

Needed Items

The following is a list of items by age group that your child will need to have at the center on a regular basis.

	Infants (0-12 mos)	Toddlers (13-36 mos)	Preschool (3-5 yrs)
Diaper Supplies (diapers, wipes & creams)	X	X	X if not trained
Bottles	X	X	
Pacifier	X		
Nap time blanket & fitted crib sheet	X	X	X
Changes of clothing	X	X	X
Backpack		X	X

All items must be marked with your child's name. We have many similar items, and it is often impossible for us to determine which item belongs to whom. Marking every item that belongs to your child, including coats, containers, lids, extra clothing, bottles, and pacifiers makes a teacher's job easier.

Supplies may be sent daily or stored at the facility. Due to our licensing regulations, sunscreen, medication, and diaper creams may not be left in diaper bags/back packs. You will be notified when more supplies are needed.

Toys from Home

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Parents are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy.

If the parents fail repeatedly to enforce this policy with their children, the staff will call the parents and require that they come to the school and remove the toy.

Children in classrooms with nap/rest time are permitted to include with their bedding supplies, one plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest. This toy is to be placed with the bedding supplies and use of it will only be allowed at nap/rest time.

All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum, and/or for nap/rest time will be inspected by Little Acorns Learning Center staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of Little Acorns Learning Center.

Parent Participation/Volunteers

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child's school activities. There are many different ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the childcare center. Parents may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events. Teachers will have posted in their classrooms any volunteer opportunities available. Parents not interested in volunteering directly in the classroom may donate items, do maintenance work, or assist in the front office. These volunteer opportunities are posted in the main office area on the parent bulletin board.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks and physical with TB test as required by our licensing regulations. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions, sex offender convictions and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom, or on walking field trips.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. For example, if a parent is afforded custody on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, that parent will only be able to volunteer on those days. Parents with visitation only (sole/exclusive custody arrangements), will only be permitted to volunteer with the express written permission of the custodial parent.

Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to make Volunteer assignments. Little Acorns Learning Center does not guarantee the volunteering parents will be assigned to locations where their child(ren) is present.

Health & Safety

Hand washing

Children's hands are washed upon entering the facility, before eating, after eating, after diapering or using the toilet, when coming in from outside play, after coming in contact with a runny nose, and after completing messy crafts and projects. Provider's hands are washed before preparing food, before feeding a child or giving a bottle, before and after administering medication, after diapering or assisting a child in the bathroom and after touching bodily secretions.

Illness & Exclusion from Care

Under no circumstances is a sick child to attend Little Acorns Learning Center. Children should be allowed to recover for a full day from an illness in the comfort of their own home for their own benefit as well as to protect other children in the center from exposure to any illness your child may bring into the center. If you are unable to stay home with your child, it is your responsibility to make other arrangements for childcare. For the benefit of all involved, the following policies will be strictly enforced:

If you are called because your child is ill and needs your attention, you must make arrangements for your child to be picked up within one hour of our call. Please do not wait until your child is sick to make arrangements for someone to pick your child up for you. This is for the protection of all of the children. The standard guidelines for determining if your child is too sick to participate are as follows:

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher with a behavior change.
- Vomiting
- 2 bouts of diarrhea during their day with us
- Rash that cannot be identified and is spreading or causing discomfort
- Contagious diseases such as pink eye, scabies, impetigo and lice (not an inclusive list).

If your child has any of these symptoms or is showing signs that they cannot participate in the daily schedule, they will be sent home and may not return to care the next day. This will help to ensure the well-being of the other children in our program as well as our staff.

Parents will be informed whenever a highly infectious condition or disease, such as head lice, chicken pox or measles occurs at Little Acorns Learning Center without compromising the confidentiality of the individual child(ren). Parents are expected to notify Little Acorns Learning Center to report a diagnosis of highly infectious condition or disease. A letter from a doctor stating the child is not at risk of spreading the condition or disease to other children at Little Acorns Learning Center may be required before the child may return to the center.

Children with Severe Allergies

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the "Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan" form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be completely filled out by the child's physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every six months, or more frequently, as needed.

Parents must also execute a “Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies” form. This form releases Little Acorns Learning Center from liability for administering treatment to children with severe allergies and taking other necessary actions set forth in the “Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan” form, provided Little Acorns Learning Center exercises reasonable care in taking such actions.

Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.

Communicable Diseases

Little Acorns Learning Center follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual. A copy of this manual is on file with the office and is available upon request for review.

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 1 hour of notification by phone. If a parent is reached, but cannot pick their child up within 1 hour, it becomes the parent’s responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child’s emergency contact form. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Children must present a doctor’s note stating they are no longer contagious and can return to the program. Little Acorns Learning Center reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if Arlene or the designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program.

Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, he/she is not permitted to return to the program the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of at least 101 degrees Fahrenheit or more as taken under the arm.

Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur 2 or more times in a 24 hour period of time. Children may return to the program when normal bowel movements resume and the one day at-home period has been observed.

If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify your child’s teacher or the office through the parent communication app. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a “need to know” basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the office, so that the parents of the children in the school maybe notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Little Acorns Learning Center will take all measures necessary to protect your child’s confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child’s absence from school.

Dispensing Medication

We understand that from time-to-time medication must be administered during care. We require all

medication to be administered at home unless the medication is lifesaving (Epi-Pen) or for long term medical necessity. Over the counter or short-term medications (antibiotics, eye drops, cough medication, etc.) cannot be administered during the day. We are only permitted to administer medication when a medical form has been completed and signed by the parent and a special needs plan is in place.

When listing the frequency of needed medication, we require a specific example. To list “as needed” is not acceptable due to inconsistencies in what “as needed” means. Families are required to give the medication to a teacher to be stored in a locked cabinet. Please do not leave medications in book bags, diaper bags or lunch boxes as this poses a safety risk of accidental ingestion from other children.

All medications must be in the original container with your child’s name clearly listed on it. Prescription medications must be accompanied by a script from the doctor. We are required to follow the doctor’s written instructions and are not permitted to administer more medication than what is listed. Siblings are not permitted to share any form of medication. Staff will complete the medication log showing when the medication was administered and how much was given. Little Acorns Learning Center will make the final determination of when to accept a child back into care.

Vaccinations

The parent/guardian of a child who has not received the age-appropriate immunizations prior to enrollment and who does not have a documented medical or religious exemption from routine childhood immunizations must provide documentation of a scheduled appointment or arrangement to receive immunizations. This could be a scheduled appointment with the primary care provider, or an upcoming immunization clinic sponsored by a local health department or health care organization. An immunization plan and catch-up immunizations should be initiated upon enrollment and completed as soon as possible according to the current “Recommended Immunization Schedules for Persons Aged 0 Through 18 Years – United States” from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and the American Academy of Family Physicians (AAFP). If immunizations have not been or are not to be administered because of a medical condition, a statement from the child’s primary care provider documenting the reason why the child is temporarily or permanently medically exempt from the immunization requirements must be on file. If immunizations are not to be administered because of the parents/guardians’ religious or personal belief, a legal exemption with notarization and signed by the parent/guardian must be on file. If a vaccine preventable illness is reported in the child’s classroom, unimmunized children will be excluded from care for 1 month and responsible for payment during the absence.

Biting

Little Acorns Learning Center recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through 3-year-old classrooms. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bit or will bite another child. LALC understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff is working to identify situations which provoke, or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to

work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's placement terminated.

Children older than 3 years of age may occasionally be involved in a biting incident. For children in this age group who bite, the staff will use the discipline procedures outlined in the discipline section of this handbook, as well as observe the child to determine what provokes or elicits this inappropriate behavior. Parents are expected to cooperate with staff to help their child control this behavior. Uncooperative parents will have their child's placement terminated.

Parents will be notified by incident/accident report that a biting incident occurred during the course of the day. The staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is considered to be confidential and cannot be disclosed. The staff of Little Acorns Learning Center cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident with the other party. It is recommended that any child involved in a biting incident be seen by their family physician if the parents are concerned about communicable diseases possibly resulting from the biting incident.

When biting occurs, we will do the following:

- The biter will be told, "No biting. Biting hurts." at their eye level.
- The biter will be removed from the situation.
- The teachers will comfort the victim and clean the area with soap and water.
- The bite will be shown to the biter and the biter will help comfort the victim.
- The incident will be documented to determine the cause.

The teachers will evaluate the room setting, noise level, routine, and activity level of the room to determine a probable cause. In the event of repeated biting, we will request a parent conference to brainstorm ways to curb the instances. If biting continues after this plan has been put into place for one month, we will request services from Early Intervention, an Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, or Infant/Toddler specialist for services to continue. If these options have been exhausted and improvement has not been observed, we reserve the right to terminate care.

Emergency/Fire Drills

Little Acorns Learning Center conducts bi-monthly fire and emergency/evacuation drills. Parents, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

In the event of a real fire/emergency situation, Arlene or the designee will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. All other parents or emergency contact persons will be notified by telephone of the situation. As with the sick child pick up policy, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the center is in the midst of a fire/emergency

drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the center is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents will be asked to wait until Arlene or the designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

Alternative Safe Location

Should the administration of Little Acorns Learning Center or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the childcare center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to Kearsarge Fire Department. Once the children are assembled here, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 1 hour of the telephone call.

Incident/Accident Reports

Should your child be involved in an incident/accident during the course of the school day, a staff member will complete an Incident/Accident Report. Parents or persons designated to act "in loco parentis" are required to sign any incident/accident reports from the day at pick-up. The classroom teacher will be able to briefly discuss the matter with you at pick-up. However, should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom. A telephone conference may be scheduled for later in the day or for the next day at nap/rest time if the parent(s) is unable to meet at the center during the course of the day.

Injuries and Medical Emergencies

All staff members at Little Acorns Learning Center are trained in pediatric first aid and CPR. In the event of a medical emergency, a staff member will perform first aid. If an emergency injury or illness occurs, you will be contacted immediately. If we are unable to contact you, we will call the emergency contact numbers supplied to make medical decisions for your child. If necessary, your child will be transported by ambulance to the nearest hospital. Parents are responsible for costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including transportation if required. Minor injuries such as scrapes, and cuts will receive appropriate first aid. We will keep a log of all injuries which receive first aid and parents will be asked to sign an injury report form.

Meals & Snacks

All age groups:

All food items must be labeled with your child's name. Little Acorns Learning Center does not permit children to share or exchange food items.

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide notification, in the form of a doctor's note, of any allergies (food or otherwise), with instructions for treatment should a child have an allergic reaction. Please refer to the Health and Safety Policies contained herein for further information.

Parents are required to provide written notification of any food/dietary restrictions. (i.e., lactose intolerance, vegetarian diets, wheat free/gluten free diets).

Little Acorns Learning Center never uses food as a punishment. Children will never be denied participation in lunch or snack time for behavioral reasons.

Infant through 2 ½ year old age groups:

Children enrolled in the infant classroom must have all food items for consumption prepared and labeled each day the child is in attendance. This includes formula/breastmilk bottles, baby food, snacks, and juice bottles. Be sure to prepare one more bottle than you think your child will consume in a day to assure that your child won't run out. Prepared bottles must be stored in the designated refrigerator and will be warmed in a water bath prior to feeding. No bottles will be microwaved. All bottles must be taken home by the parents each night to be washed.

Little Acorns Learning Center will provide all utensils and bowls necessary for feedings. Children will not be fed directly from baby food jars, nor will the staff use previously opened baby food. Staff will mix baby cereal just prior to feedings. All unused food remaining after a feeding will be discarded.

Parents are required to complete a feeding schedule upon enrollment and as the child's feeding requirements change. Staff will complete a daily chart on ProCare for each child detailing for the parent what the child ate, when, and how much.

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the classroom teacher.

1 year and older classrooms:

Little Acorns Learning Center does not serve breakfast but does provide lunch once children are 1 year of age or older. All meals are family style, with the children sitting at tables, to promote good manners, eating habits and socialization skills. LALC understands that families have religious or dietary allergies that may warrant substitution to our menus. These items will be honored provided it does not pose an added financial burden to meal costs and/or preparation.

Little Acorns Learning Center curriculum focuses on developing healthy, well-balanced eating habits. Therefore, each lunch that we provide contains a serving of protein, vegetable, fruit and milk. Little Acorns Learning Center will provide water for children who wish to have it with lunch.

Little Acorns Learning Center prohibits any food item in glass containers (except Baby food in the infant classrooms), as well as aluminum cans. These can be safety hazards for the children and staff.

Little Acorns Learning Center will create a monthly snack calendar in which each child will be required to supply a snack for the classroom. Snack ideas are listed below:

Carrot Sticks	Oreos	Pretzels
Celery	Chips Ahoy	Popsicles
Peppers	Teddy Grahams	Trail mix (no peanuts)
Broccoli	Shortbread	Pudding
Applesauce	Rice Krispy Treats	Yogurt
Grapes	Nutri Grain Fruit Bars	Jell-O
Oranges	Ritz Crackers	
Apples	Cheese sticks	
Bananas	Goldfish Crackers	
Melon	Ice cream sandwiches	
Raisins	Graham Crackers	
Plain Cheerios	Veggie Straws	

A Final Note

We look forward to providing a positive, caring, and educational experience for your child. We recognize how difficult it can be to leave your child in the care of others. Here your child will have the support of teachers, develop friendships, and share many special times. It is our goal to provide outstanding service to your family and make the transition from home to school as smooth as possible. Always remember your concerns and questions are important to us. Feel free to share concerns and joys with the classroom teachers and Center Director.