



FAMILY HANDBOOK

2023-2024

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This handbook will assist and clarify our school and operational policies in full detail. We reserve the right to update this handbook at any time. We will inform staff and families of any changes to the policies. Please take a few minutes to become familiar with this information, along with the Enrollment Agreement provided to you. On your Enrollment Agreement, you will be asked to acknowledge your receipt and agreement to the policies outlined in this handbook.

WHO WE ARE

Mission and Values

Children at play are the cornerstone of our center of excellence. Our teachers provide vibrant learning environments that nurtures curiosity and bravery through hands-on learning. Our school thrives with the support of engaged family volunteers and alumni. Together we provide an enduring foundation for lifelong learning.

Philosophy

At The Children's Center, we provide the environment essential for children to flourish at the "hard work" we call play. The sights and sounds here reflect the joy, curiosity, and imagination children bring to all kinds of pursuits. The Children's Center asks teachers to be intense observers of children's play and create curriculum using The Project Approach and Reggio Emilia inspired practices. In an emergent curriculum, students experience enriched activities that build on children's strengths in all areas. Each day is filled with activities like art, music, storytelling, reading, outdoor play, dramatic play, morning meeting, and many hands-on explorations. We greatly value and create purposeful opportunities for children's social and emotional growth, helping them to develop skills in self-control and self-awareness, so that they become independent, confident learners.

We place great importance on connecting home life with school and believe that a child's transition to their first school experience is best supported through relationships with our families. Each year, teachers begin connecting with their families and new students through home visits. Conferences are held twice a year and ongoing communication about children's lives is fostered through strong family-teacher relationships and daily conversation.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The TCC Board of Directors sets the policy and oversees the budget for the center. The Board is responsible for the long term fiscal health of the center while always maintaining the highest standards of early childhood education. The Board may engage in fundraising and grant writing activities, as necessary. The Board must approve any capital expenditures in excess of \$1,000.00. The Board is also responsible for hiring and evaluating the Executive Director.

Resolution of the Board of Directors at The Children's Center, Adopted December 16, 2021

The Children's Center values the individuality of each of our students, families, staff, and community members. TCC believes strongly in the truth that belonging is essential for healthy development and well-being; for this reason, we take seriously our responsibility to provide personalized care that cultivates an environment where everyone belongs. Our learner-led curriculum requires us to know the whole picture of a child's reality to help them understand and prepare for the world. TCC is devoted to guiding children's exploration in an emotionally and physically safe environment.

TCC validates the whole self of each child, understanding that a person's experiences and background will affect their self-identity in profound ways. We value, explore, and celebrate the aspects of identity, that:

- Connect us, such as feelings, and our basic needs for safety, acceptance, and love.
- Group us, such as race, language, nationality, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, body size, belief system, socioeconomic status, family makeup, neurodiversity, and more.
- Distinguish us as unique, due to the aspects of identity that intersect to form our distinct individuality and experiences.

We teach, protect, and practice the values of belonging, equity, kindness, and hope in order to nurture our students in their journey of self-understanding, self-expression, self-love, and as they begin to understand and value an inclusive community. We strive to apply an equity lens in all that we do. We recognize that identities are intersectional and those that occur at TCC are shaped by wider structural processes that advantage some and disadvantage others. TCC seeks to accommodate people who have historically felt uncomfortable or unsafe in other environments, and envelop them into our institution equally and civilly. TCC is committed to engaging in action in support of our members.

We respect that our community is made up of people from all classes, races, genders, and many other things that help us identify. We therefore pledge to continue to listen, learn, and re-evaluate our practices and policies as our society continues to evolve. That being said, we understand topics may arise naturally in a learning environment that can make some uncomfortable. We expect all who join our community to honor our philosophy of encouraging people to ask questions and hear how things are experienced by people in different ways. We strive to cultivate a safe space where students, teachers, families, and caregivers can safely explore inequities, recognize systematic marginalization, challenge privilege, act to build more inclusive communities, and build realistic hope for communities of connection.

*** The TCC Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) committee is a space where dialogue is welcomed and discomfort in the process is safe. We strive for a more equitable and inclusive TCC and broader community. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us for any reason, or to join, email:*

diversitycomm@tccmaine.org

The Children's Center welcomes children of all races, identities, and abilities regardless of class status or systemic implications. All children are entitled to natural rights, privileges, programs, and activities in our institution; therefore we will strive to make any accord-to children or staff at the Center as requested. TCC does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), sex, gender, age, nationality (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in the administration of its educational policies or admissions policies, including scholarship and loan programs, athletic, or other Center administrative programs.

The Staff

TCC administration consists of an Executive Director and three teaching coordinators. The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the center, staff hiring and supervision, compliance with Maine licensing regulations, enrollment and program development and evaluation, curriculum coaching, teacher evaluation and training. The teaching coordinators report to the Executive Director and assist in purchasing, program observation, curriculum coaching, assistant teacher evaluation and training, orienting and managing substitutes, and other duties relative to site management. We also employ an office manager who manages tuition billing, receivables, maintains children's files and budget reports.

The quality of the program is due to the quality of the staff. It is vital to attract staff that are experienced and knowledgeable in the field of early childhood. Each classroom is staffed with three full-time teachers.

Each staff person must receive 40 hours of continuing education in child development or special education each year. This requirement is over and above what state licensing regulations require and is crucial in maintaining qualified teachers for the ongoing success of the The Children's Center program. All teachers must have some level of experience with young children and demonstrate a genuine interest in children. All staff members must have an initial physical, TB test, criminal records check, and a reference inquiry before employment begins.

Licensing and Accreditation

Our school is state-licensed and regularly inspected to ensure everything meets or exceeds standards, including child-to-teacher ratios and safe facilities. The Children's Center is subject to inspection by state and local health, fire, licensing, and building agencies. Regulations and inspections pertain to staff qualifications, the facility and playground, nutrition, health and safety matters, record-keeping, and child-to-staff ratios. If you have any questions regarding licensing or regulations, please speak with the Executive Director. Additionally, The Children's Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

NAEYC Accreditation

The Children's Center is a nationally accredited program through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Accreditation means that The Children's Center met NAEYC's ten standards for high-quality early childhood education, has voluntarily undergone a comprehensive internal self-study, invited external professional review to verify compliance, and been found to comply with the Criteria. The Children's Center follows the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct; please go to www.naeyc.org. Copies of the Code of Ethical Conduct are also available in the main office, and all staff receive a copy. For more information about NAEYC, you can go to NAEYC for Families.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Classrooms

The individual developmental needs of each child are considered when placement decisions are made. For a child to develop a positive self-image and appropriate social skills, they need to be grouped with peers whose developmental age is similar to their own. In all groups of children, there will be varying ability levels. We will take all considerations into account and group children together who may best complement one another. Individual classroom compositions are listed below:

- **Infant (Pinecone and Acorn):** multiage classrooms, ages 6 weeks to 18 months. Ratio 1:4. Maximum of 8 students daily in each of the two classrooms for a total of 16 students.
- **Toddler (Purple and Yellow):** multiage classrooms, ages 18 months to 3 years. Ratio 1:5. Maximum of 10 students daily in each of the two classrooms for a total of 20 students.
- **Preschool (Red, Green, Blue):** multiage classrooms, ages 3 - 5 years (must be 3 by October 15th). Ratio 1:8. Maximum of 16 students daily in each of the three classrooms for a total of 48 students.
- **PreK:** ages 4-5 (must be 4 by October 15th). Ratio 1:8. Maximum of 16 students daily in PreK for a total of 16 students.

Curriculum

At The Children's Center, we focus on child-centered teaching, developmentally appropriate practices, and the belief that 'play is a child's work.' Our goal is to develop each child's confidence, creativity, and life-long learning skills in our program. To support this goal, we use our own TCC Framework and the MELDS, Maine Early Learning Guidelines, as a guide when creating our individualized curriculum.

At The Children's Center, we follow an Emergent Curriculum through use of the Project Approach. We are inspired by Reggio Emilia practices meaning our environment is an extension of home and a critical part of our curriculum. We adhere to NAEYC guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practices and reference the Maine Early Learning and Development Standards and other curriculums as needed. Our knowledgeable staff plan developmentally appropriate activities that are responsive to the unique needs, abilities, and interests of children.

We know that children learn best through first-hand experiences, by manipulating and exploring the environment. Our curriculum provides a rich variety of materials and activities within the structure of a

dependable routine. We believe that clear expectations, routines, an enriching environment and responsive caregiving provides security and allows for the freedom that children need to learn.

You will rarely see teachers correct children's "wrong" ideas. Children's thinking is qualitatively different from adult thinking and evolves over time in a smooth and gradual way. Making errors and questioning uncertainties are a natural and necessary part of development; they create the mental tension that motivates growth and change. Because the "right" kinds of errors are essential to development, the teacher's role should not be to try to root out and correct children's errors, but rather to implement learning encounters that let children work on the problems that naturally interest them. This perspective challenges one of the most common assumptions of teachers that they should try to "correct" children's errors right away. Instead, teachers should create learning experiences that amplify the problems and uncertainties inherent in children's own thinking. Similarly, curriculum is derived from what teachers observe children talking about, questioning and experiencing in their lives. Confronted with the discrepancy between their "theory" and experience, the child must re-evaluate and construct a new, more differentiated "theory." Such experiences are called "constructive play." Constructive play describes all play that leads to an increase in skill or competence.

The Project Approach refers to a set of teaching strategies which enable teachers to guide children through in-depth studies of real world topics. Projects are described as having a complex but flexible structural framework with features that characterize the teaching-learning interaction. When teachers implement the Project Approach successfully, children can be highly motivated, feel actively involved in their own learning, and produce work of a high quality. Teachers can also use project-based learning to individualize the learning process for their students. Projects, like good stories, have a beginning, a middle, and an end. This temporal structure helps the teacher to organize the progression of activities according to the development of the children's interests and personal involvement with the topic of study.

BEHAVIOR GUIDELINE PHILOSOPHY

Our foundational goal at The Children's Center is to help our students develop strong social and emotional skills. Instead of discipline, we use guidance. Guidance is about building an encouraging setting for every person in the group. It means helping young children understand they can learn from their mistakes, and it starts with showing them how (NAEYC). Research indicates that children with strong social-emotional skills tend to be happier, show greater motivation to learn, have a more positive attitude toward school, more eagerly participate in class activities, and demonstrate higher academic performance than students who exhibit social and emotional difficulties (Hyson 2004; Kostelnik et al. 2015).

Additionally, socially-emotionally healthy children are better able to establish and maintain positive relationships with adults and peers. To support our students in developing these skills, we take a proactive and preventive approach to guidance that reinforces appropriate behaviors rather than focusing on inappropriate behaviors.

- **Our Environment:** We provide children with exciting materials and engage them in activities that are appropriate for their age to keep them focused and attentive. We develop schedules that meet the needs of young children by avoiding long periods of wait time without activity. Yet, our schedule is flexible enough to follow the children's interests as well as their cognitive, physical, and biological needs.
- **Our Teachers:** We work to develop a strong rapport with each child speaking to children calmly, especially during redirections. We help children put words to their emotions. We use social stories to help teach our students healthy social skills. We strive to serve the individual needs of each child while ensuring the safety of young children.
- **Our Families:** We communicate regularly with families to ensure consistency in guidance between home and school. We partner with families to offer support, guidance and, if necessary, connect them with experts to help give their children the best foundation for academic and life success.

Hyson, M. 2004. *The Emotional Development of Young Children: Building an Emotion-Centered Curriculum*, 2nd ed. New York: Teachers College Press

Kostelnik, M.J., A.K. Soderman, A.P. Whiren, M.L. Rupiper, & K.M. Gregory. 2015. *Guiding Children's Social Development and Learning: Theory and Skills*, 8th ed. Stamford, CT: Cengage.

GUIDANCE PROCEDURES

Conflict Resolution with Children

When any student at The Children's Center presents with challenging behavior, teaching staff shall follow the standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):

- Observe the children to identify events, activities, interactions, and other factors that predict and may contribute to challenging behavior.
- Teaching staff shall focus on teaching the child social, communication, and emotional regulation skills and using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to support the child's appropriate behavior.
- Teaching staff shall respond to challenging behavior, including physical aggression, in a manner that provides for the child's safety and the safety of others in the classroom. Our response will be calm, respectful and give the child information on what is acceptable behavior and what is not.
- We will document the challenging behaviors and the intervention methods that were attempted in a log. Documentation may include incident reports, ABC charts, or Behavior Plans.
- Teacher-family discussions regarding a child's behavior shall be held in private. They shall focus on working as a team to develop and implement an individualized plan that supports the child's inclusion and success.

- If necessary, intervention shall ensure each child has access to professional services, such as referrals to community agencies offering early intervention services, community mental health centers, and/or a private therapist.
- All discipline decisions will always be individualized, consistent, and appropriate to each child's understanding level.

Children can experience very intense feelings such as anger, sorrow or excitement. Sometimes these feelings are so strong that children can no longer control their behavior. They may kick, scream, hit or sob uncontrollably in an effort to express their emotions. When this happens, teachers will be patient, supportive and firm in their efforts to help the child regain control. Teachers use a "safe place" for children to have a space where they can go when they are "sad, mad or miss their family." Teachers will maintain ongoing communication with families about the strategies being used at school to help alleviate the frequency and intensity of behaviors. This may include communication notebooks, emails, family/teacher conferences, and phone calls. Teachers and/or families may also recommend a CDS referral to identify any underlying developmental concerns that could be causing the behavior.

When a child's behavior reaches a degree of escalation that requires additional adult support (someone outside of the normal classroom staff), or needing to be removed and unable to return despite the additional support, families will be notified via phone call from the Executive Director. If the teachers and Executive Director feel that it is in the best interest of the child to not return to the classroom that day, families will be obligated to pick up their student within 45 minutes of the phone call. The child may return on their next scheduled school day.

In the case that the child's behavior meets any of the following criteria:

1. They show an ongoing pattern of being unable to be redirected using the strategies available to teachers;
2. Child's behavior is persistently disruptive, violent or damaging towards other children, staff or materials;
3. The child is a danger to themselves or others as determined by the Executive Director;

The Executive Director will require families to meet and jointly develop a positive behavior support plan acceptable to the school before the child can return to the classroom. In scheduling the meeting, we will make every effort to accommodate everyone's schedules within normal business hours of 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Our goal is to meet as soon as possible, optimally within 48 hours. Tuition contracts remain in place and binding until a meeting has taken place and a mutually agreed upon plan has been decided.

The Children's Center staff works collaboratively with families and outside agencies to support the child and their family. Our goal is to be a resource to families and to demonstrate respect for both individual and group needs. If a student's continued unsafe behavior poses a considerable safety risk to themselves, peers or TCC staff, The Children's Center reserves the right to terminate an enrollment contract immediately.

The Maine Licensing Regulations state: Corporal punishment, including spanking or shaking, is strictly prohibited. Shaming and embarrassment shall not be used. Punishment or threat of punishment shall not be associated with food, rest, isolation for illness or toilet training. No child shall be punished for soiling,

wetting or not using the toilet. No child shall be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse or unusual confinement. Teachers will not use inappropriate language with children, including sarcasm.

Use of any of the techniques stated above by TCC teachers may result in immediate termination of their employment at the Children's Center.

ENROLLMENT

Admissions Process

Children transition into Toddler, Preschool and PreK classrooms in September of each year. Children who are enrolled in our infant program and who will be at least 18 months old by October 15th of the upcoming school year will transition into our toddler program. Children who are enrolled in our toddler program and who will turn 3 years old by October 15th of the following year will be invited to transition into preschool. Families should be aware that the public school "cut-off" date for Kindergarten enrollment is also October 15th.

Registration occurs from January-March of any given year for September through August contracted enrollment. Siblings of children already in the program are given priority for admission to the program. A non-refundable registration fee (\$100) is required to hold the spot for new families and is required for enrollment each year as well as a deposit of one month's tuition to be applied to the last month the child is enrolled in the program.

Children must be able to benefit from participation in an inclusive group setting. If, after a tour and discussion of the child's needs, it is determined that The Children's Center is not a good fit for the child, The Children's Center will attempt to give resources and information about other programs that may benefit the child and family.

Families must first submit an application to indicate their interest in enrolling their child. When a space becomes available families must fill out an enrollment packet consisting of the following:

- Emergency Contact Form,
- Emergency Contact Amendment for: place of employment, supervisor contact information and authorization to obtain emergency medical care
- General Permission Form
- Emergency Transportation Agreement
- Vaccination and Under Immunized Policy
- Volunteer Contract
- Tuition Agreement/ACH Authorization/Security Deposit Payment Options Form

In addition, a record of immunizations are required before the child's first day and must be updated after each pediatrician visit resulting in new immunizations. **PLEASE NOTE:** We are required to have each of these forms in our files in order to maintain our license to operate. State law requires us to exclude from school any student whose files are incomplete until we have received their missing paperwork. We appreciate your cooperation.

Withdrawing

One month's tuition deposit is required at the time of enrollment. This deposit will be credited toward tuition for the child's last month in the program and is payable via ACH on our Brightwheel platform. This deposit is only refundable with **written cancellation 60 days prior to the contracted program date**. One

month's written notice to the Executive Director is required for withdrawal and a family shall only be released from financial obligation if the Executive Director is able to fill the spot. Receipts can be printed out via your Brightwheel payment portal for employer reimbursement or tax purposes.

Annual Fees

Annual registration fees for currently enrolled families are due each April for the following school year. All registration fees are nonrefundable.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Your Child's First Day

Preparing for the first day of school can be exciting, but it can also be an overwhelming and anxious time – we understand! We will work with you to make your child's first day the best it can be. Don't hesitate to share any concerns you have before that first drop-off. If possible, we recommend new students start with a few half days, gradually lengthening their time. This supports your child in becoming familiar with the new environment, new faces and reduces anxiety. Each child is unique in their patterns and ease of adjustment to new situations.

Be sure to talk with your child's teachers daily during the transition phase. A consistent daily schedule (arrival and departure routines) also helps children adjust to a new routine and environment. You're always welcome to call any time to see how your child's adjusting or download the Brightwheel app for updates throughout the day.

On the first day, we ask that you send in the items listed below. Please make sure to label each item with your child's name.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Complete extra set of seasonally appropriate clothing❖ Blanket, crib sheet for nap (stuffed animal is also allowed for 18 months and up)❖ Arms free sleep sack for infants (6wks - 18 months)❖ Family photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Diapers/Pull ups and wipes (if not potty trained yet)❖ Water bottle❖ lunch and two snacks❖ Wet bag for soiled clothing
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Children should be sent in play clothes and shoes that will stand the wear and tear of food spills, painting, outdoor play, etc. Nap items and water bottles will be sent home at the end of each week to be washed. We ask that all home toys remain at home. We do not allow any toy guns, war toys, or weapons of any type in the center at any time.

Please label all clothing and articles sent from home.

Hours of Operation

The Children's Center is open from **7:30 am-5:30 pm, Monday-Friday.**

The Children's Center Mini's is open from **7:30 am-5:00 pm, Monday-Friday.**

Parking

In front of The Children's Center, both on Stevens Avenue and on Waverly Street, there is short-term parking for drop off and pick up. If you plan on being at the Children's Center for longer than 15 minutes, please use one of the "1 hour" (or longer) parking spots in the area. In keeping with our efforts to be conscious of the environment, we respectfully ask that you not leave your vehicle idling when parked at The Children's Center, except in extreme weather conditions. Winter months can be especially tricky for parking as parking is restricted to one side of Waverly Street. Please be mindful of this and work to create smooth drop off and pick up routines that take only a few minutes so others waiting for spaces may park sooner. Minis families may use the parking lot for drop off and pick up. The Children's Center is not responsible for any parking tickets accrued.

Please **DO NOT** park on the opposite side of the Waverly Street directly in front of the main entrance.

Entry & Security

All TCC staff/families are given a 4-digit entry code number, to use at either entrance, to deactivate the lock to enter the facility. Please be aware of your surroundings at arrival and departure. Do not hold the door open to let others into the building. For the security of all, everyone should use their entry code to get in and out. Those without an entry code will come to the main entrance, ring the doorbell, will be received by office staff, sign into the visitor's log, answer a COVID questionnaire, wear a visitor's badge, and sign out prior to departure. Family entry codes work M-F 7:30-5:30. If you push the wrong code, you can push ** to reset the system and try again.

Arrival

The Children's Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m, while our Minis location is open 7:30 a.m. to 5:00p.m. Please call or text if your child is going to be late or absent. Children who are arriving after morning appointments or are picked up from the Center for a doctor's appointment, special activity, etc. may not return to the Center unless they arrive back by 11:30 a.m. No child may arrive after 11:30 a.m. It can be too difficult and disruptive for the child and the rest of the classroom if they enter during lunch/nap times or are asked to spend the afternoon when they have not had a nap or rest period.

A family member must accompany their child into the classroom and tell the teacher that their child has arrived. Children must be under adult supervision at all times. A family member must also tell the teacher when they pick up their child. Children will be released to adults only, no exceptions.

Mornings can be busy times, and they often set the tone for our day. Help your child have a successful start to their day by doing the following when you and your child arrive at school:

- Sign your child in using the Brightwheel App and your check-in code. There is a kiosk at the entrance, or you can use your smart device to check in.
- Families must accompany their child to and from the classroom each day.

- You must connect with the teacher upon your child's arrival. This is a wonderful opportunity to share any important information they should know about your child's morning or changes to their schedule.
- Help your child wash their hands before playing.

Please plan to bring your child to school by 9:30am. We want each of our students to gain the most they can from their experiences at The Children's Center. When children consistently arrive late, they miss out on educational opportunities and fun activities that the teachers have carefully planned. Children may not be dropped off after 11:30am, as it can be difficult for children to enter the classroom during the busy transition times for lunch and rest.

Separation Anxiety

The first few weeks of school are always a time of adjustment, and many students (and families) feel a sense of separation anxiety which is perfectly normal. Here are a few strategies to help with the process. Remember, separation anxiety is a phase, it is perfectly natural, and it will pass.

- Make the goodbye prompt and cheerful. Giving your child "one more minute" prolongs the inevitable. As a family, the best thing you can do is hug your child, say "I love you," and reassure them that you will be back soon.
- Establish a goodbye routine. Children crave routine, and families who establish a consistent goodbye routine have better luck with successful goodbyes. This could be a secret handshake or a special 'I Love You' ritual. This provides a special moment between the two of you that offers a sense of reassurance.
- Trust your child's teacher. This may be difficult to do when you do not yet know them, but keep in mind that our teachers have chosen this profession because they love children, and they have a wealth of ideas and strategies to help settle an upset little one.
- Acknowledge how your child is feeling. It is important to accept and respect your child's temporary unhappiness as it is genuine and normal. Say things like, "I know you feel sad when Mommy leaves, but you will have a good time, and I will be back very soon."

Also, be prepared for regression. Sometimes a change in schedule like a long weekend or an illness that keeps your child home for a few days can make you feel like you are right back to square one. As frustrating and upsetting as this can be, it is perfectly normal. Stick to the above strategies, and you should notice a significant difference in a couple of days.

Absences, Sick Days & Vacations

For children to learn from our program, they need to be here on a regular basis. As participants in the DHHS subsidy program, we must record attendance.

- Please notify your child’s teacher if you know that your child will be out of school ahead of time for an appointment or vacation. If your child is sick, please notify us as soon as you can. You can send all notifications to your child’s teacher via messaging within the Brightwheel app.
- If your child has been absent two days in a row for unknown reasons, a staff member will touch base with you to check in and ensure the child is well and when to expect their return.

CLASSROOM SCHEDULE

Each classroom follows a slightly different schedule that is customized for their students. While all parts of the school day are important, if you need to make appointments during the school day, we generally recommend your child not miss the primary educational time of 9:30-11:30. During this time, we heavily focus on working in large and small groups, completing centers, and morning meeting.

Staff is sensitive to the attention spans of young children and plan accordingly, making activities extensive enough to be challenging and fun but short enough to avoid overwhelming a child. Each classroom has a schedule posted that lists approximate times of activities. Routine provides security, but flexibility is also important in meeting the varying needs of young children.

Classroom Activities

Teachers plan activities for the learning centers in the classrooms weekly. Teachers strive to be culturally aware and sensitive in their approach to planning. They plan concrete activities that can be modified to meet all children's needs and provide challenges in skill development.

The classrooms are organized into centers or defined interest areas. Activities are planned for each center in which the children move freely throughout each day. The variety of learning centers include: art, writing, math, science, reading, dramatic play, sensory play, and building.

Learning Experiences

Teachers connect with and use their communities resources and the families we serve to expand our curriculum and provide additional hands-on learning experiences. In-house learning events may include cultural experiences through community members as well as a cultural experience provided by families within the center, demonstrations by community helpers, or scientific investigations.

Play Yard and Outdoors

Our playgrounds have many nooks and crannies that are wonderful for children but can be challenging to monitor and supervise. We strive to supervise without intruding on the children’s play or imposing unnecessary rules, which is not always an easy thing to do. Physical dangers are present on the playground, so we remind you, when you are on the playground with your child(ren) during the school day or when we have special events, that your careful attention to your child(ren) is crucial. No family pets are allowed on the playground or in the building, unless a visit has been arranged with your child’s classroom.

You may notice, when staff are out with children on the playgrounds, they use a zoned supervision system. They spread out into specific areas, staying aware of where children are, moving with them as needed, to make sure that every child can be seen by at least one adult. At times, staff will close off a

section(s) of the playground in order to maintain strong supervision. Safety is always our primary concern. Each playground has rules/guidelines to keep your children safe.

Air Quality

The Children's Center staff monitor the conditions and make decisions using the Child Care Weather Watch poster from the Maine Department of Public Health. On days that are labeled code yellow, outdoor time will be reduced. Children will not go outside on days labeled code red, and gross motor activities will occur indoors. Children will use the playground at least twice daily in most situations. In exceptional cases such as a child with asthma or an extreme allergy condition, a doctor's note is required outlining proper care for the child.

Mealtimes

Families provide two snacks a day. Some great examples are crackers, cheese, sunbutter, fresh fruits, fresh vegetables, yogurt, and bagels. Cooking projects are an important part of our curriculum and children help make smoothies, low-sugar muffins, pancakes, etc. We do not use any food containing aspartame and we are a peanut-safe school.

Children will need to bring a complete lunch and two snacks from home each day. Please label your child's lunch box and containers with their name. We require that lunches stay within the general food guidelines of the center and do not include foods containing excessive sugar or salt. Soda, candy and gum are not allowed at any time. We serve whole milk to infants over one year of age and toddlers, preschoolers and pre-kindergartners at lunch and water at snack times. Children use child sized, open cups when drinking fluids. Should your child forget their lunch, the teacher will provide a balanced lunch from the kitchen.

Please remember that we are a nut safe facility. This includes peanuts, tree nuts, etc. Please read labels carefully. We will not serve children food items that "include" these allergens or that "may contain" these items. Some of our students may have severe allergic reactions. We are unfortunately not able to heat lunches for children in the microwave. If your child has special feeding needs, please request a daily food report.

Infant bottles must be plastic or glass with a shatter resistant outer sheath. Bottles may come premixed or may be mixed on site. Bottles will be warmed to room temperature in a bottle warmer. Bottles will be offered for a period of one hour. If the infant does not drink the contents in that time frame, the remainder will be discarded. For breast milk, we are unable to offer this "liquid gold" to infants a second time from the same bottle but please let us know if you'd like us to send it home for you to reuse. All Breast Milk must be labeled with the infant's full name and the date on which it was expressed. Frozen breastmilk can be kept on site for a period of one month for "back up". At that time, we will return it to the family for use at home. If providing formula or baby foods, please provide unopened containers. We will send home unused portions of baby food to be used at home if the family wishes. Infants are allowed to follow their own schedule of eating and sleeping. Infants will be placed on their backs for safe sleeping.

Special Dietary Needs

We can provide allergy-friendly alternatives with documentation from a doctor for students with food allergies or intolerances. We encourage all students to eat the meals provided at school; however, we understand that may not be the best option for all students.

For children with disabilities who have special feeding needs, program staff keeps a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes and provides families with that information.

Rest Time

All children will participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep; however, we have a very busy and stimulating morning, so most toddlers and preschool-aged children will nap when given a relaxing and quiet space to do so. If a child does not fall asleep after a short rest, they are given quiet activities within the nap room. The center provides a rest mat or cot. These items are washed and disinfected daily.

There are always two teachers within the nap room during naptime observing by sight and sound. We do not use mirrors, video, or sound monitors in place of sight and sound supervision.

Personal Belongings

To prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost, please label ALL items brought from home with your child's name. Within each classroom, each child has a hook and/or cubby assigned to them. This will provide storage space for your child's personal belongings. Please check your child's cubby daily for items that need to be taken home.

Clothing & Shoes

A full day at our school includes fun activities like singing, painting, playing indoors and out, dancing, and eating, so we recommend easy-fitting, washable clothes. Being comfortable lets children focus on learning and having fun!

Make sure your child is wearing shoes for easy movement. Flip-flops, clogs, cowboy boots, and slick-bottomed shoes often cause children to fall when running outside and limit their play. Please be sure that your child's shoes are rubber-soled and closed-toe with a closed heel or heel strap. Shoes are required for all students.

- Please provide two complete sets of extra clothes, including socks, for your child. It's always a good idea to keep an extra pair of shoes and a sweater or sweatshirt at school, too. Clothing should be labeled with your child's first and last name and checked periodically to make sure it still fits.
- Please provide appropriately layered clothing to keep warm in cold weather, including mittens or gloves, caps, hoods, or hats, sweaters or sweatshirts, socks, and warm, waterproof outerwear and footwear.

- Please have your children wear sun-protective clothing such as clothing made with fabrics rated for ultraviolet protection or clothing that protects skin areas most prone to sun damage.
- Sometimes learning and fun can get messy! The Children's Center isn't responsible for lost, stained, soiled, or torn clothing.

Diapers & Wipes

Families of children in diapers and of children who are toilet training must provide an ongoing supply of diapers, wipes, and additional necessary clothing. If your child is wearing pull-ups, it is helpful to send in the type with Velcro sides. This allows us to help your child change without having to take off their pants and shoes. Cubbies and coat hooks should be checked daily for items that need to be laundered. For children who require cloth diapers please provide a doctor's note. Diapers must have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine.

Both the diaper and the outer shell must be changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a wet bag provided by families (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.

Change in Pickup Person

The safety of our students is our top priority. Please notify your child's teacher if someone other than you will be picking up your child. The Children's Center staff will only release your child to the family and guardians or the other adults you authorized on the student's Enrollment Application or within the Brightwheel App. If you need to authorize a new pickup person, please send the request via Brightwheel or to director@tccmaine.org. For your child's safety, anytime a person we do not recognize comes to pick up your child, we will ask for a government-issued photo ID.

Departure

It is critical that you check in with your child's teachers before leaving. The school closes at 5:30 p.m. sharp for TCC and 5 p.m. sharp for Minis. A late pick-up fee of \$20 will be assessed when a child is picked-up after the center's operating hours. The late pick-up fee does not constitute an agreement to provide after-hours service. If you believe you will arrive after 5 pm for minis and 5:30 p.m. for Toddlers/Preschool and Prek, please alert your child's teacher via the Brightwheel app as soon as possible. For habitual late pickup, we reserve the right to terminate the child's enrollment.

Late Pickup

The Children's Center closes at 5:30 p.m and 5pm sharp at Minis. which means everyone is out of the building. As the teachers also have families to attend to. It is important for you to plan your day in such a way that you can pick-up and leave the Center with your child by 5:30 PM. To ensure that this happens, the Center has adopted the following policy on late pick-up. *For habitual late pickup, we reserve the right to terminate the child's enrollment.*

Time of Pick Up	1st Late Pick Up	2nd Late Pick Up	3rd (and any subsequent) Late Pick Up
Minis 5:01-5:15	Family signs a late slip. No charge	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$30
MINIs 5:16 or later	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15 + \$1 per minute.	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15 + \$5 per minute	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$30 + \$5 per minute. Family must meet with the Executive Director.
5:31-5:45	Family signs a late slip. No charge.	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$30
5:46 or later	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15 + \$1 per minute.	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$15 + \$5 per minute	Family signs a late slip. Charge of \$30 + \$5 per minute. Family must meet with the Executive Director.

YOU WILL BE BILLED FOR LATE FEES ON MONTHLY STATEMENTS.

Custodial & Foster Care

Some families have legal custodial orders that address who is permitted to pick up or visit a child. If there are custody orders or protection orders relating to your child, a copy must be provided to The Children's Center for your child's file. This information is confidential and solely for the safety and well-being of your child. Families must update the Executive Director when custody orders change or expire. Please note that employees cannot be responsible for supervising family time (visitation), and, as a result, visitation for non-custodial families is not permitted in our centers.

For enrolled children in the foster care system, The Children's Center needs a copy of the foster care paperwork. The Children's Center will release the child only to the foster family or the child's caseworker, who must sign the child in and out on the visitor's list and provide proper identification. The caseworker must verify any additions or changes in writing (by letter or email).

SPECIAL CELEBRATION DAYS & HOLIDAYS

School Calendar

The infant, toddler, preschool and prek programs operate 12 months of the year. Our [calendar](#) includes closing for the week between Christmas Eve and New Year's Day, Spring break in April, and the week of July 4th. The calendar will also include three days for teacher professional development to be determined by the Board of Directors each year. If employee sick calls exceed the number that allows TCC to offer safe programming, it may be necessary to close specific classrooms temporarily. Said programs will reopen when ill staff are able to return to work safely. This type of crisis situation is highly unlikely given our already enhanced ratios.

TCC is closed to observe the following National and Federal holidays, and professional learning days:

- ★ **Labor Day**
- ★ **Indigenous Peoples' Day**
- ★ **1 day in October** (Professional Development Day)
- ★ **Veterans Day**
- ★ **Thanksgiving (Wed-Friday)**
- ★ **Christmas Eve through New Year's Day**
- ★ **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day-**
Closed for family/teacher conferences
- ★ **President's Day**
- ★ **Friday before April vacation** (Professional Development Day)
- ★ **April vacation week**
(coincides with PPS spring break)
- ★ **Memorial Day**
- ★ **Juneteenth**
- ★ **1 day prior to 4th of July week**
(Professional Development Day)
- ★ **Week of July 4th**
- ★ **Last week in August** - (Staff Work Week)

Snow Days

The Children's Center will adhere to the snow day policy of the Portland School System. If the Portland School System declares a snow day, The Children's Center will be closed for the day. However, in the case of a second snow day designated specifically for snow removal by the Portland School System, The Children's Center will remain open.

We understand that snow days can present challenges for families, and we greatly appreciate your cooperation and understanding as we prioritize everyone's safety during inclement weather. In the event of severe weather conditions, please tune in to your local television news or visit their websites for information on cancellations or delays by 6:00 a.m. The Executive Director is responsible for making any decisions regarding cancellations or delays and will communicate them via email to all families, a Brightwheel alert, as well as notifying local television stations (WCSH TV - Channel 6, WMTW TV - Channel 8, WGME TV - Channel 13).

Celebrations & Birthdays

Celebrations and birthdays are special days for kids, and we want to share in the fun! If you'd like to provide a small treat for the celebration, all items must be nut-free (including peanuts, tree nuts, peanut butter, and food processed in plants using nuts) and commercially packaged with ingredient statements so we can be sure we're accommodating any allergies or dietary restrictions. Please do not send in any treats or candy, which may be a choking hazard to our students. Healthy snack options such as whole-grain items, vegetables with dip, fresh fruit, fresh fruit popsicles, or yogurt are always a great choice. Please be sure to provide enough for everyone in your child's classroom and check in with your child's teacher before the special day so they can share any tips and plan accordingly.

Transitioning to a New Classroom

The Children's Center strives to make the transition from one classroom to another as smooth as possible. When the time comes to transition from one class to the next, your child's current teacher will share with the new teacher about your child's strengths, areas for growth, and supportive strategies. If you are interested in setting up a conference centered around transition, feel free to reach out to your child's teacher.

COMMUNICATION & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

We believe strongly in daily verbal communication. In the morning please let a teacher know any information which might affect your child's behavior that day, i.e. woke up during the night, spouse away, relatives visiting, etc. Although it may seem trivial from an adult's perspective, disruptions in routine may truly affect how a child behaves during the day and will give teachers cues on how to respond. We will let you know at the end of the day how things have gone at school and will alert you to any specific behaviors we have noticed during the time your child has spent here. Sometimes, it is difficult to have a meaningful conversation of any length at drop-off or pick-up. Please call or email during the day if, for some reason, your morning or afternoon communication might take longer than is possible at the moment or feel free to make an appointment with your child's teacher to touch base in a quiet setting.

A child's teacher will communicate via messages on a regular basis sharing anecdotes, developmental information or patterns in behavior. We also use an electronic tool called "Brightwheel" which shares daily and weekly information via pictures, videos and newsletters. In the infant and toddler rooms, information will be sent daily and will include how your child slept and ate as well as a description about their day, any developmental information, and behaviors the teachers have noticed. These messages should never take the place of daily verbal communication but we hope they provide you with insightful information about your child. In the Preschool and PreK rooms, children are more verbal and can typically tell their families what they did at school. Preschool and PreK teachers will communicate daily through Brightwheel with photos of activities but detailed information regarding eating and sleeping will not be included. We will also share "conversation starters" at pick up time so you can prompt your child to share something about their day with you. At first, this can feel like a significant shift from the communication in the younger classrooms and we encourage families to ask questions and seek information that you may desire about

your older child's daily life at TCC so that you still stay well-informed. We can tailor our information as needed for your family.

Brightwheel App

Upon enrollment, you will receive an invite via email or text to set up your Brightwheel account. Through the app, you can communicate with your child's teacher or administration via messaging, as well as pay tuition and receive your child's daily report.

- Create a free Brightwheel account. When you receive an invitation via email or text, please create a free family account using either the website or mobile app. Make sure to use the same email address or cell phone number that the invitation was sent to.
- Confirm your child's profile. You will see your child's profile after you create an account - you can confirm information such as birthdays, allergies, and additional contacts. If you do not see your child's profile, please contact us with the email address or phone number you used to sign up. You will not see updates within Brightwheel until we start to use it regularly.
- Set your account preferences. You can adjust your notification preferences within your profile settings on the app.
- Add your payment information. Brightwheel offers secure, automated online payments that save time and give you advanced tools and reporting.

Parent, Family, Approved Pickups and Emergency Contacts

We ask that you add and edit Family Members, Approved Pickups, and Emergency Contacts on your child's profile. When adding contacts, you are given four options: Family Members, Approved Pickup, and Emergency Contact. Each one has slightly different functions and privileges, as listed in the chart. We do not recommend listing anyone as an Emergency Contact as emergency contacts do NOT have pick-up privileges. Only families, and approved pickups may check a child out. For more information on how to add contacts to your child's profile, [click here](#).

	Parent	Family	Approved pickup	Emergency contact
Create a brightwheel account	✓	✓	✓	
Can check-in & check-out	✓	✓	✓	
View activity feed	✓	✓		
Send and receive messages	✓	Send only		
View child's profile	✓			
View and pay bills	✓			

Check-In Codes

You must use your check-in code to ensure proper record keeping! To make this easier, Brightwheel allows you to customize your check-in code at any time. How to do this from your profile in the app:

1. Tap the Edit icon next to your check-in code
2. You will see a red-orange screen with your current code displayed
3. Enter a new 4-digit code
4. If your code matches that of another staff or family, a warning message will be shown, you can still save and use that code, but it is not recommended*
5. Once you enter a unique code, tap the Save button

*Please Note: If your check-in code is not unique, you will be required to take a second step and enter the last four digits of your phone number to verify your account before completing a check-in.

Conferences

All Children's Center programs will conduct two family conferences per year, the first will be held in January with the second in May. Conferences are a great time for teachers to showcase your child's strengths and work with you to identify goal areas and how to best support their growth. Families and/or teachers may request additional information and conferences as needed. The center Director is always available to meet with families individually or in conjunction with the teacher should you have concerns or questions about your child's experiences and developmental growth. Never hesitate to arrange a conference; no concern is unimportant. For more information regarding developmental milestones in children, we encourage you to visit mrtq.org/program-resources for more information on the Maine Early Learning Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers, and the Maine Early Learning Development Standards for Preschoolers.

The Children's Center's Assessment Framework is based on the Maine Early Learning and Development

Standards (MELDS) and Maine’s Infant/Toddler Guidelines for Learning and Development. It includes the following domains: Creative Expression, Social/Emotional, Approach to Learning, Early Language and Literacy, Physical Development and Health and Cognitive. The teachers then choose which indicators are appropriate for each child’s portfolio to focus on to ensure an individualized approach. TCC Teachers are trained to observe and collect evidence on student growth over time. Preschool teachers are required to complete a 30-hour MELDS course. The infant/ toddler teachers are required to take both the Infant/Toddler Guidelines and MELDS through Maine Roads to Quality professional development network.

If and when teachers have concerns about a child’s development or behavior, families will be part of a collaborative process for referral, typically through Child Development Services (CDS).

Family Support

While The Children’s Center specializes in providing high-quality early childhood education, we recognize that our students and families may have needs outside early education. We have a variety of ways that we can support our families. These include:

- Assist families with locating community resources
- Help families obtain emergency assistance in areas such as food, clothing, utilities, housing, and counseling
- Assist families with a successful transition to school
- Access to a Family Resource Lending Library

Please reach out to the Executive Director, director@tccmaine.org if you are in need of support.

Home Language

It is important to The Children’s Center that all families are given the opportunity to fully understand, interpret, and become involved in their child’s education. The Children’s Center will work with the family to provide information in the language they are most comfortable with for any family that makes a request.

Confidentiality

All information contained in your child’s records, including your personal information, is confidential. Anyone who is not directly involved in the care of your child or affiliated with Maine State Licensing, protective services, or other government agencies will not have access to your child’s records without your written authorization or court order. All The Children’s Center staff members and contracted therapists must sign a Statement of Assurance of Confidentiality upon employment and annually after that.

As a family member or guardian, you can request access to your child’s records; to do so, please email director@tccmaine.org. If you withdraw your child from the center, we will maintain your child’s records for at least three years per Maine State Licensing regulation. Lastly, out of respect for other children and

families, please do not post photos or videos that contain images of children other than your own on the Internet.

Family Involvement

An integral part of the success of The Children’s Center is the role families play at TCC. TCC is a non-profit and relies on volunteers to assist in a broad number of ways, such as assisting in the care and upkeep of the building and grounds, volunteering in the classroom or on field trips, responding to specific requests for help from teachers and staff and assisting with fundraising activities. **The Center cannot successfully function without active family participation as we do not have the administrative layers that public schools and independent schools do.** While family members of children at the Center lead busy lives, the Center encourages you to lend a hand and be involved in some way to create a sense of community. There are a number of ways in which you can contribute, many of these are listed in the volunteer contract sent out with the enrollment paperwork.

Field Trips

The Children’s Center offers a variety of experiences both at and away from the center. Field trips where students will be transported will require a “Field Trip Permission Form.” Families will be notified in advance of all field trips requiring a “Field Trip Permission Form.” If you do not wish for your child to attend a particular field trip, please find alternative childcare arrangements for that day, as we will not have staff available to stay behind with children not participating in the field trip.

As a participant in our child care program, your child may participate in short, unannounced field trips including but not limited to: walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods; trips to local playgrounds; trips to local businesses. Teacher-child ratios are maintained at all times. A “Family/Guardian Permissions” form must be completed at the time of enrollment for this type of field trip.

Communications & Solicitations Policy

At The Children’s Center, we take the private lives of our staff and teachers very seriously. Accordingly, we have some simple rules about communicating with our teachers and staff about your child(ren) or about TCC.

Staff

Families shall use only the following communications methods to communicate with TCC Staff:

- Through the Brightwheel App
- Calling the TCC office
- Emailing using the appropriate email address (e.g. director@tccmaine.org, yellowroom@tccmaine.org)

Attempting to communicate with a staff member through their personal email address or personal cell phone without that person’s permission is prohibited, and could be grounds for your child being removed from TCC.

Teachers & Classrooms

Families shall use only the following communications methods to communicate with TCC teachers:

- Through the Brightwheel App
- Emailing using the classroom's group email address (e.g. yellowroom@tccmaine.org)

The teachers in each classroom work as a team, and address all concerns and questions as a team. Attempting to communicate with a teacher through their personal email address or personal cell phone without that person's permission is prohibited, and could be grounds for your child being removed from TCC.

TUITION & FEES

Tuition

Tuition payments are due and payable by the 10th of the month via Brightwheel automatic debit from your checking account. If the 10th falls on a holiday or weekend, Brightwheel transactions still occur on the 10th. Insufficient funds notifications are considered late payments and a \$25 late fee will be charged to the account. Late fees shall be due and payable with the next scheduled tuition payment unless an alternative payment plan has been discussed with the Executive Director.

One month's tuition deposit is required at the time of enrollment. This deposit will be credited toward tuition for the child's last month in the program and is payable via ACH on our Brightwheel platform. This deposit is only refundable with **written cancellation 60 days prior to the contracted program date**. The registration fees are non-refundable.

Should any tuition payment be past due for a period of 30 days and arrangements for prompt payment have not been made with the Children's Center, we reserve the right to terminate enrollment and attempt legal remedies necessary to collect non-payment of tuition.

One month's written notice to the Executive Director is required for withdrawal and a family shall only be released from financial obligation if the Executive Director is able to fill the spot.

No deductions from tuition shall be made for absences, holidays, staff in-service days, snow days, vacation days, or for closures dictated by the CDC. The Children's Center charges a \$100 Annual Registration and Supply fee each year during the re-registration period in March or April.

Returned Checks

There will be a service charge for any returned checks. In the event of a returned check, a money order will be due immediately, late fees will apply, and immediate termination of services may apply. Payments from customers with prior unpaid returned checks must be, from there on out, in the form of a money order or cashier's check.

HEALTH & SAFETY

We all know that safety comes first! At The Children's Center, our first goal is to keep children safe, which starts with paying attention to every detail - big and small. Every day at our center, you can be confident that your child is in the very best hands.

Daily Health Checks

Each morning when your child arrives, we will conduct a daily health check. This is a quick physical observation where we check and observe a child's behavior/mood and physical condition, including breathing, skin, eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Additionally, we ask that you please alert us of anything out of the ordinary we need to know regarding sleep, appetite, bowel movements and urination, mood, and behavior at home and/or unusual events.

Illness Policy

We realize that it is difficult for working families to keep their children home, but exclusion from school will help prevent contagion and promote the health and safety of your child. Children should be kept home from school if they are feverish, have diarrhea and/or vomiting, have nasal mucous discharge that isn't clear, or if they show signs of becoming sick (listlessness/drowsiness, productive cough, sore throat, ear pain, eyes that are pink, burning, itching, or producing discharge). **See exclusion criteria on the following pages for more specifics.** If your child cannot comfortably participate in the day's usual activities or your child needs to stay indoors and/or have additional rest, these signs are generally indicative that the child should not be at school.

The Children's Center has established guidelines in accordance with state child care law and other best practices concerning sick children. In case of a communicable disease or condition, and at the discretion of the Executive Director at director@tccmaine.org other families will be notified to watch for symptoms in their children.

If your child becomes ill during the school day, every effort will be made to make them comfortable, away from the other children, but with a familiar caregiver. The family will immediately be called to come and pick them up. The Children's Center is not able to provide arrangements to care for sick children. Families are required to respond as soon as possible concerning the sick child when contacted by The Children's Center staff. If we cannot reach the family within thirty minutes, we will reach out to the family's emergency contacts as stated on enrollment/annual forms. If the illness warrants, the child's pediatrician will be contacted for consultation.

Children may attend with minor illnesses if it is not contagious, and it does not affect the child's ability to participate in the day's routine. Minor illnesses include:

- Mild respiratory infections
- Acute infections subsiding after treatment, such as pink eye, impetigo, ear infections
- Cold symptoms without a fever

If the child's health deteriorates at some point in the day, the family will be contacted to come to pick them up.

It is always helpful if you can provide The Children's Center a doctor's note, when applicable.

Illness Exclusion Criteria

Disease/Condition:	If your child has been diagnosed with this disease, our program will:	When to allow your child to return:
Chickenpox (or rash suggestive of chickenpox)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the sick child from childcare ● Notify all families regarding possible exposure and include a warning about aspirin use. ● Contact the Child Care Health Consultant if needed to find out other preventative measures to take ● Unimmunized children must be excluded until they are permitted to return by their health care provider ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures 	Approximately 5-7 days after the rash begins or when ALL blisters have scabbed over
COVID-19 or symptoms of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the sick child from childcare ● Contact the Child Care Health Consultant if needed to find out other preventative measures to take ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures 	Guidance from our Board of Directors is updated frequently. Please reach out to director@tccmaine.org for more info.
Diarrheal illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude a child that has had 2 or more diarrhea episodes in one day. ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures 	When the child is diarrhea-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication.
Fifth Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the sick child from childcare ● The program will notify all families ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures 	When the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication and has the energy to participate in center activities.
Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child from childcare if the child has a fever of 101.0 or greater. 	When the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication.

Hand Foot and Mouth Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Exclude if the child has an open, draining lesion on hand or has lesions in the mouth and is drooling. ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	When lesions heal and/or drooling ceases, and the child can participate in center activities (including meals)
Hepatitis A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the sick child from childcare ● Contact the Communicable Disease Section of DHHS ● Contact the Child Care Health Consultant if needed to find out other preventative measures to take ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures 	At least one week after onset of illness or jaundice. Permission to return should be sought from the local health authorities first.
Impetigo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child from childcare ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	After treatment has been started
Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child from childcare ● The program will notify all families ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	When the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication and has the energy to participate in center activities.
Lice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child from childcare 	24 hours after treatment and no signs of nits or lice
Pink Eye/ Conjunctivitis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child with yellow eye drainage and itching ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	24 hours after the first dose of medication and symptoms are mild
Pneumonia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child from childcare if they present with fever or difficulty breathing. ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	When the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication and has the energy to participate in center activities.
Ringworm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Temporarily exclude the child if lesions cannot be covered 	If unable to cover the lesion(s), after treatment

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	begins and the lesion starts to shrink.
RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child from childcare if they present with fever or difficulty breathing. Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	When the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication and has the energy to participate in center activities.
Scabies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child until treatment is complete. Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. The program will notify all families All clothing and blankets will be sent home to be laundered in hot water and dried in a hot dryer. 	Until treatment is completed.
Strep Throat/Scarlet Fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child from childcare Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	24 hours after antibiotics are started when the child is fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication and has the energy to participate in center activities.
Tuberculosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child from childcare Contact local health department and Childcare Health Consultant Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	Exclude until a healthcare professional provides a written statement that the child is not infectious.
Vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child from childcare Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	When the child is vomit-free for at least 24 hours without the aid of medication.
Whooping Cough/Pertussis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temporarily exclude the child from childcare Contact local health department and Childcare Health Consultant 	Exclude until five days after treatment has started. Exclude untreated cases for 21 days from the date cough began.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unimmunized children must be excluded until they are permitted to return by their health care provider. ● Carefully follow hand washing and cleaning procedures. 	
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** This chart is not an exhaustive list of the communicable diseases and policies for exclusion from childcare. For more information, please contact a member of the The Children's Center Administration team.*

Chronic Health Conditions

For any child with health care needs such as allergies, asthma, or other chronic conditions (ex: seizures, G-Tube, etc.) that require specialized health services, a medical action plan shall be completed. The medical action plan must be updated annually and when changes to the plan are made by the child's family or health care professional. Blank medical action plans may be found in the document section of Brightwheel. The medical action plan shall be signed by both the family and the child's health care professional and must include the following:

- A list of the child's diagnosis or diagnoses, including dietary, environmental, and applicable activity considerations
- Contact information for the child's health care professional(s)
- Medications to be administered on a scheduled basis; and
- Medications to be administered on an emergency basis with symptoms, and instructions

Medications

Whenever possible, we recommend that you administer medications at home. To help with medication scheduling, you may consider asking your health care provider for prescriptions with 12-hour dosages. At the center, medications will be administered in accordance with Maine State Licensing regulations and the policies described below.

General Medication Policies

- No prescription or over-the-counter medication and no topical, non-medical ointment, repellent, lotion, cream, or powder shall be administered to any child:
 - a) without written authorization from the child's family
 - b) without written instructions from the child's family, physician, or another health professional

- c) in any manner not authorized by the child's family, physician, or another health professional
 - d) after its expiration date
 - e) or non-medical reasons, such as to induce sleep
 - f) with a known allergy to the medication.
- All medications will be given following the doctor's written instructions.
 - Medication will be stored separately for each child.
 - Medications will be stored in a locked cabinet in the classroom or locked box in the Center refrigerator, depending on the medication. Medications for external use will be stored separately from medications for internal use.
 - Do not store medication in diaper bags, lunch bags, backpacks, or any other personal belongings.
 - We do not mix the medication with food, formula, or juice, nor will we dispense any medication in a bottle or cup.
 - Medications will be administered by regular classroom staff who have been trained in medication administration in the presence of another staff person. All staff follow the Six Rights of Safe Medication Administration: right child, right medicine, right date/time, right dose, right route & right documentation. Staff will document each dosage on the medication form, listing time, amount given, and initial. If any side effects are noticed, they will be noted on the form, and the child's family will be notified.
 - Medication forms will be added to the child's file after the medication request is completed. Forms for long-term medication will be considered confidential and treated as such.
 - It is the responsibility of the family to remove or dispose of any medication after the duration of the request has ended. The classroom staff will dispose of any medicine at the Center after the medication form has expired or after a child has left The Children's Center.
 - Alternative medications, such as herbal or homeopathic medications that are not tested by the US Food and Drug Administration for safety or effectiveness, lack safety information and cannot be administered at The Children's Center.
 - The Children's Center reserves the right to refuse the administration of medications if we feel that it is in the best interest of the staff.

Special Management Treatment/Care

If a child requires special medical management care due to a medical or dental diagnosis, we will work with the family, and if possible, train a/the classroom teachers to provide special care. If a teacher can't be trained to help provide medical/dental management, it would be up to the family to have someone trained in the procedure(s) on site while the child attends TCC.

Prescription Medication

- For a staff member to administer any medication to your child, you must complete the Medication Administration Permission Form in its entirety.
- The medication must be brought to school and stored in the original, tamper-resistant container in which they were dispensed with the pharmacy labels. The pharmacy label must specify:

1. The child's name
 2. The names of the medication
 3. The amount and frequency of dosage
 4. The date the prescription was filled and the expiration date
- If the medication is provided via pharmaceutical samples; they must be stored in the manufacturer's original packaging, shall be labeled with the child's name, and shall be accompanied by written instructions specifying:
 1. The child's name
 2. The names of the medication
 3. The amount and frequency of dosage
 4. The signature of the prescribing physician or other health professional the date the instructions were signed by the physician or other health professional
 5. Medication expiration date
 - The medication shall be administered only to the child for whom they were prescribed. It shall be administered according to the prescription, using the amount and frequency of dosage specified on the label.
 - A family's written authorization for administering a prescription medication shall be valid for the length of time the medication is prescribed to be taken or up to 6 months when needed for a chronic medical condition, whichever is less.

Emergency Medication

If your child requires the use of emergency medications (i.e., inhalers, Epi-pen, Diastat, etc.), you will need to complete the corresponding medical action plan. These plans MUST have a doctor or healthcare professional's signature. Emergency medicines will be kept unlocked and easily accessible to adults but out of children's reach (at least 5 feet off the ground). This is to ensure easy access in the case of an emergency. All staff members have trained on emergency medication administration annually. We work with a county nurse to ensure our staff is appropriately trained for your child's specific medical needs.

Over-the-Counter Medication

In general, The Children's Center staff will not administer over-the-counter medication except when a health professional prescribes the over-the-counter medicines. This situation is most common for chronic health conditions (ex: Benadryl for students with allergy action plans or fever-reducing medication for students with febrile seizure action plans). The Children's Center will not administer over-the-counter medicines such as cough syrup, Tylenol, ibuprofen, antibiotic cream for abrasions, or medication for upset stomach in the cases of acute illness or pain. Children that have these symptoms may need to remain at home until they are symptom-free.

The over-the-counter medication must be brought to school and stored in the manufacturer's original packaging with the child's name written or labeled on it. It shall be accompanied by a Medication Administration Permission Form that specifies:

- a) The child's name
- b) The medical conditions or allergic reactions
- c) The names of the authorized over-the-counter medication
- d) The amount and frequency of the dosages, which shall not exceed the amount and frequency of the dosages on the manufacturer's label
- e) In cases where the prescription says, "as needed" (i.e., allergy exposure, etc.), the instructions need to specify criteria for the administration of the medication (be specific with what symptoms or situations are criteria for administration)
- f) The route in which the medication shall be administered
- g) Possible reactions or side effects
- h) The signature of the family AND physician, or another health professional
- i) The date the instructions were signed by the family and physician or other health professional.

Topical Creams and Sunscreen

Families and guardians may give The Children's Center standing authorization for up to 12 months to apply over-the-counter topical ointments, topical teething ointment or gel, lotions, creams, and powders, such as sunscreen diapering creams, baby lotion, and baby powder, to their child, when needed.

The over-the-counter topical medications form must be completed before we can administer these medications. You can find the necessary form in your enrollment packet.

The Children's Center does not provide sunscreen, families must provide sunscreen for their child. Please apply sunscreen to your child before arriving at the center and dress them in hats/visors and tightly woven clothing to help prevent sunburn during outdoor play. The Children's Center staff can reapply sunscreen in the afternoon before going outside if we have an up-to-date Sunscreen Permission Form on file. Please label your child's sunscreen.

Medical Report & Immunization Record

A record of immunizations and a children's medical report must be completed and on file at school before the child's first day of attendance. Records should also include results of any screenings, prescribed medications, descriptions of any allergies, and current or chronic health conditions.

As the child receives new immunizations, the date and type of shot or immunization should be reported to administration to be added to the child's record. Immunizations may be obtained either through the pediatrician. A schedule of immunizations can be acquired through the Center office. See <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/> for the current national immunization schedule.

Cleaning & Sanitation

Cleaning and disinfecting are part of our broad approach to preventing infectious diseases at The Children's Center. Each classroom has a “yucky bucket” for toys that have been contaminated with bodily fluids. Contaminated toys are specifically washed, sanitized, and air-dried. All surfaces and toys are sanitized and air-dried daily upon arrival and departure. For more specifics about the frequency and type of cleaning that occurs for each surface at The Children's Center, please reference the [NAEYC Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting Frequency Table](#).

Hand Washing

Handwashing has long been established as one of the most important things to prevent the spread of illness.

In our school, hand washing requirements for staff are as follows:

- Upon arrival at school/center
- Before and after setting up snacks/food for student consumption
- Before and after helping students use the bathroom
- After handling items soiled with body fluids such as blood, drool, urine, stool, or discharge from nose or eyes
- After handling an ill child
- After using the bathroom or taking care of other personal needs (i.e., nose-wiping) and eating

In our school, hand-washing requirements for students are as follows:

- Upon arrival in the morning
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after eating food
- Before and after sensory play
- After they have touched a child who may be sick or who has handled soiled items
- After blowing/wiping their nose

The required method for handwashing is as follows:

- Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds using warm water and soap.
- Wash between fingers and back of hands and wrists.
- Rinse hands well under running water and dry thoroughly with a clean paper towel.
- Turn off water using a paper towel instead of bare hands. This helps prevent acquiring new germs on already clean hands.

Universal Precautions

The Children's Center follows universal precautions to prevent the transmission of HIV/Aids, Hepatitis B, and other bloodborne pathogens. Universal precautions refer to infection control measures that all healthcare workers and childcare providers follow to protect themselves and the children in their care from disease-producing microorganisms. The concept requires workers to treat all blood and various other bodily fluids as infected with HIV, hepatitis B virus, and other bloodborne pathogens. The Children's Center staff follow the following universal precautions when encountering blood or bodily fluids:

1. Gloves are worn for contact with blood, body fluids, mucous membranes, open wounds, and handling items or surfaces soiled with blood or body fluids. Only approved latex or vinyl gloves are worn. Gloves are never to be washed and reused.
2. Hands and other skin areas are washed thoroughly if they contact blood or body fluids. Hands should be washed immediately after gloves are removed.
3. Saliva is not considered by the Center for Disease Control to transmit HIV. Still, it is a body fluid, and mouth-to-mask ventilation devices will be available for resuscitation and shall be used by trained personnel.
4. Staff must review information and procedures about universal precautions, HIV/HBV infections/transmissions, and handling of infectious waste annually.

Toilet Training

High collaboration between you, your child, and your child's teachers makes for more successful toilet learning. Children learn toileting skills through consistent, positive encouragement from all the adults who care for them.

When your child shows an interest, you and your child's teachers will discuss how to work together to encourage toilet learning. We're committed to working with your child consistently so that toilet learning can be accomplished in a developmentally appropriate manner with minimum stress for you and your child.

Every child begins toilet learning at a different age and progresses at a different rate. We're always available as a resource to answer any questions about your child's progress. Several complete changes of clothes and two pairs of shoes should be kept at the center during toilet learning.

Safety

Supervision

The Children's Center staff assume responsibility for enrolled children when they enter the classroom or are escorted by a staff member onto the The Children's Center property. Teaching staff always supervise toddlers/twos by sight and sound. Children 3-5 years of age are supervised primarily by sight, but supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers frequently check on children who are out of sight.

All classrooms monitor attendance by updating their attendance records throughout the day and counting and matching the numbers of children present with names on attendance records. "Name to Face" headcounts occur throughout the day, particularly when moving about the center at every threshold.

Injuries/Accidents

Your child's safety is of our utmost concern, but we recognize that minor bumps and scrapes are an everyday part of your child exploring and learning through experience. Known minor injuries sustained at school are reported to families on an Incident Report Form, of which you will receive a copy. If your

child is injured in our care, our first step is to administer first aid. A first aid kit is available in the office, and each class always has a small first aid kit with them as well as an emergency backpack. The most common treatment is ice on bumps, soap and water cleansing, and a bandage on a minor wound. All permanent staff members are trained in First Aid and Infant/Child CPR within the first 90 days of their employment, and they must maintain their current certification every two years.

If an accident is more than minor, a family will be called to discuss the need for possible medical treatment. If the accident is more serious, a family will be contacted and requested to come immediately. In the event of a life-threatening illness or injury, an ambulance will be called. To ensure your child's safety, your Enrollment Agreement provides a record of names, addresses, and phone numbers of the people you have authorized to pick up your child. We ask you to keep this information current and supply names and phone numbers for your child's doctor and preferred hospital.

You must have an alternative adult who is authorized to pick up your child. Families must have some arrangement whereby the child can be picked up within an hour in case of illness or accident.

Emergency Procedures

We make every effort to be prepared for potential emergencies. The Children's Center has an emergency response plan for fire, inclement weather, or if a lockdown becomes necessary. This plan is updated annually and submitted to Maine state licensing. These plans are reviewed annually with the staff. Additional precautions we take in the event of an emergency are:

- Emergency phone numbers are posted by all phones.
- The Children's Center keeps an emergency "To-Go" bag in the main office and each classroom with first aid supplies and emergency contact information for all students and staff.
- Fire drills are practiced once each month, and shelter-in-place drills every three months to prepare children in the case of an emergency.
- Emergency evacuation plans are posted in each room.
- Annual inspections by the Portland fire inspector. If an emergency requires evacuation, we'll notify you as soon as the children have been relocated to a safe area.

The Children's Center has a comprehensive Emergency Response Plan which can be emailed to you and includes additional emergency procedures at your request.

Mandated Reporting Requirements

It's our mission to ensure all children in our center are safe and well cared for, not only while they are at our center, but at all times. Maine law requires everyone who works directly with children to report suspicions or evidence of child neglect or abuse to local law enforcement. Those who fail to report can be held accountable under the law. The law prohibits interference with an individual's attempt to report child abuse or neglect. Our school will offer full cooperation during the investigation of the reported incident.

- Should a staff member have reason to suspect abuse, they will contact The Executive Director and follow up with an immediate phone call to Cumberland County Human Services. If an

Executive Director is unavailable, staff members should reach out to a Coordinator to make the call and to prepare a written report of the account.

- The Children's Center will not hire a person who has been convicted of abuse of any type, and all staff undergo a fingerprint and criminal background check before employment begins.
- All staff members are responsible for protecting all children from abuse from any child or staff member.
- All staff members are required to report any suspected cases of abuse, whether it is suspected at The Children's Center or away from The Children's Center.
- All Children's Center staff receive training in recognizing and responding to child maltreatment, including abuse and neglect.
- The Children's Center strictly prohibits the mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of any child in the program by any staff member. Any employee found in violation of the abuse and neglect policies shall be immediately terminated. If the charges are not upheld, the Board of Directors and Executive Director will determine eligibility for reinstatement.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Smoke-Free and Weapon-Free Environment

The Children's Center and its playgrounds are smoke-free and tobacco-free environments. Smoking and the use of any product containing, made, or derived from tobacco, including e-cigarettes, cigars, little cigars, smokeless tobacco, and hookah, shall not be permitted on the premises of the childcare center or during any off-premises activities. Additionally, firearms and ammunition are prohibited in all licensed childcare centers, including The Children's Center, unless carried by a law enforcement officer.

Transportation

The Children's Center does not transport children to and from school. Families are expected to provide transportation for their children.

Babysitting

The Children's Center strongly discourages families from entering employment arrangements with staff. However, we recognize that our staff members are highly trained, wonderful people and are often the people that know your child best, next to you. Any arrangement between a family and The Children's Center employee for employment or services outside the program and services of The Children's Center is an individual endeavor and private matter, not connected or sanctioned by The Children's Center. Babysitting is considered outside employment as per our outside employment policy in the employee handbook. Any outside activity **must not** interfere with staff members ability to properly perform their job at TCC.

Program Oversight

Our program's quality and compliance with State laws are carefully regulated and evaluated annually by the Maine State Licensing and NAEYC Accreditation. In addition, we also ask families to complete and return an evaluation of the program intermittently. Summaries of evaluations are presented to our Board of Directors to enable them to monitor the quality of our services.

Code of Ethical Conduct

For an updated NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct, please go to www.naeyc.org.

Commitment to Diversity

Tolerance and understanding are fostered by positive exposure to various ages, genders, lifestyles, family structures, races, cultures, religions, and physical abilities. Therefore, we emphasize an environment that welcomes diversity and challenges bias and discrimination.

Grievance Procedure

Before reaching out to administration, it is our hope that every effort will be made to find solutions with your classroom teacher. If you feel you are not able to find solutions/answers, the next step would be to bring your concerns to the Director. In the event that a concern is not satisfactorily addressed or resolved by the administrative team, families should contact any member of the Board of Directors to seek additional input. The BOD will work with all parties in confidence to address concerns and seek solutions.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Nondiscrimination

The Children's Center does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring, and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all staff members, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients. The Children's Center is an equal opportunity employer. We will not discriminate and will take affirmative action measures to ensure against discrimination in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Our policy is to accept children in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), its regulations, and any other applicable local, state, or federal laws pertaining to providing services to individuals with disabilities.

Record Retention

The Children's Center complies with the requirements outlined in the "Records Retention and Disposition Schedule" developed by the Maine State Government.

USDA

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/familial status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or

reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- 1) Mail:
U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,
1400 Independence Avenue, SW,
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- 2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.