

Village of Love Early Learning Academy
PARENTS HANDBOOK

Welcome to the Village of Love Early Learning Academy!

The information contained in this “Parents Handbook” will introduce you to the philosophy and organization of the Center. It will serve as a quick reference to the daily operating policies and procedures. Your familiarity with them will help make your child’s day and stay with us a most rewarding experience.

The Center was created to meet the needs for high quality child care for the children of Lancaster City and those of our corporate and community neighbors. We look forward to working with you to provide a secure foundation for your child to ensure successful growth and learning.

Not all policies and procedures can be listed here. We will be happy to answer any questions you may have. Village of Love Early Learning Academy is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

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PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

We believe that good childcare depends upon consistent caregiving in a home-like atmosphere. Children grow and learn best in a safe environment that provides opportunities to explore, create and communicate with other children and adults. These groups function independently but cooperatively, following routines appropriate to individual needs. The program is designed to be inclusive of all children, including those with identified disabilities and special learning and developmental needs.

The Center's program is designed to include both planned and spontaneous activities in response to children's interests. Experiences with music, movement, art, language and building are incorporated into daily plans. Regularly scheduled snacks and meals, rest time, indoor and outdoor play, and routines in physical caregiving promotes the child's health, comfort and ability to care for his/herself. There is maximum flexibility for the children as a group and as individuals.

Children are encouraged to develop a positive self-image, to learn inner controls and to cooperate with peers and caregivers. Clearly defined limits help them recognize and accept their emotions and express their feelings as they grow and feel secure in the world around them.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

INFANTS

The infant program serves children from the age of eight weeks until the age of 18 months. The program is designed to promote feelings of belonging and the loving care which help infants to grow and develop to their full potential. Children eat, sleep, and play according to his or her own schedule.

Every infant is an individual with unique abilities, desires and emotions. Our program is designed to meet the individual needs of each child and to provide them with educational experiences. In our infant classrooms, we provide a creative and stimulating program which encourages visual, language, gross motor and small motor experiences to enhance learning through their own natural curiosity.

Our highly qualified and professional teachers will guide and encourage your child in every stage of his or her development. We firmly believe in the need for open and thorough communication between teachers and each family to provide loving care for each child and confidence for each parent.

TODDLER

Our toddler program serves children from 18 months to 36 months. The toddler classrooms are designed to provide stimulating experiences for the children where they can learn through their own inquisitiveness. The emphasis during the toddler years is on building self-confidence and fostering the natural curiosity that toddlers possess.

Throughout the day toddlers enjoy the large variety of play materials that are readily made available to them, as well as creative centers where children can dress-up, build with blocks, and experiment in the sensory table. Art, music, language and science activities geared to little hands are also introduced.

Our teachers offer the tenderness, warmth, and patience so essential to this young age. Children feel comfortable in our toddler class settings when their parents leave. Deep respect for each child ensures that your toddler will truly love his or her school environment and, from that, develop a long lasting love for learning.

PRESCHOOLERS

Village of Love Early Learning Academy has one preschool classroom that serves children age three through five years. Our preschool program prepares children socially and academically, as well as, supports and encourages the development of independence, responsibility, and confidence, all of which are essential for the child's ongoing success in kindergarten. Our educational program focuses on each child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical

development by offering concrete, hands-on activities for the child to explore. The preschool curriculum is designed to actively engage each child in developmentally age appropriate activities exploring the content areas of literacy, mathematics, science, social studies, the arts and technology. We support the Creative Curriculum that is exciting and challenging, as well as supportive of each child's own learning style.

Our preschool room arrangement creates the optimum learning environment. It allows children easy access to educational toys, materials and books, enabling them to initiate and expand their activities. Each classroom is organized with areas for block play, manipulative toys, art creativity, dramatic play, and reading in addition to larger spaces for group activities.

To enhance learning experiences in our preschool we offer class trips to theatre, farm and children's museums.

PLACEMENTS INTO OLDER CLASSES

Children are assessed for class placement into the older classes by chronological ages and in terms of their total development – social, physical and emotional. Interest level in the activities typical of each group is also taken into consideration, as is the actual availability of an open place at a particular time that matches the enrollment days of the child being moved. The classroom teacher is also consulted as to the readiness of the child. Parents will be notified and encouraged to set up a transitional conference with the new teacher.

ASSESSMENT OF CHILD PROGRESS

All age groups are assessed formally and informally to ensure that the teachers plan their curriculum goals and activities to support individualized learning.

Our teachers observe, record and document children's development, participation and learning throughout the year. The assessments are ongoing, systematic and gathered from natural play activities and realistic setting that reflects children's actual performance.

Our center uses variety of methods such as observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests. The assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement. When assessments identify concerns, appropriate follow-up, referral or other intervention is used.

Our formal assessments are done twice a year, (October and May). All our assessments are kept in the child's portfolio, which follow the child from group to group to show the progress in cognitive, language, physical social and emotional areas of development that are consistent with our program curriculum and philosophy. Our families are part of assessment process with regular communication, partnership and involvement. Once the formal assessments are completed the head teacher will schedule a parent conference.

GETTING TO KNOW OUR CENTER FAMILIES

Village of Love builds a positive relationship's with our families by being familiar with their unique characteristics, strengths and issues important to each of them. To develop partnerships with the families we create a welcoming environment and opportunities for involvement.

Our center gathers information during the enrollment process by asking parents questions and collecting the following items: enrollment form, health history, child's and family background information. All the data is kept strictly confidential in the child's file and kept locked in the director's office. Village of Love only releases your information under your authorization. In addition we schedule visit days to meet the family members and create a smooth transition for the enrolled child.

Our center has an open door policy. Parents and family members are welcomed at all times. Our friendly entranceway provides an attractive and cozy area for families to ease transitional times. Each family is provided with the labeled mailbox for program communications and below there are easily accessible parenting resources.

COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

In addition to conferences and assessments, there are many ways to keep you knowledgeable about what is happening in your child's classroom.

WAYS OF COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

- Daily or weekly bulletins
- Newsletters
- Telephone calls
- E-mails
- Daily sheets
- Notices
- Journals

CONTACT INFORMATION

Address: 515 Hershey Avenue/244 N. Queen Street

Lancaster, PA 17603/2

Phone: 717-509-1342

Fax:

Cell: 347-869-6033 (Director)

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Children who are having difficulty for any reason will be re-directed to another activity with teacher assistance. In the event that a child's behavior is likely to result in harm to the child, others or property, or seriously disrupts group interaction, the child may be separated briefly from the group. The child will be taken up to the office to sit with an administrator where he/she can gain enough self-control to rejoin the group. The child will always be left in an area where he/she is in full view of, and can be supervised and supported by a staff member. Interaction between the child and a staff member will take place immediately following the separation to guide the child toward appropriate group behavior. A method of discipline which frightens, demean, or humiliate a child is strictly prohibited.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY

All staff of the Village of Love are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment on the part of an employee, parent, or volunteer. Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise is prohibited. Any means of corporal punishment will not be tolerated. Additionally, withholding or using food, rest or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. If any type of abuse or neglect is suspected it will be reported to the State Central Registry at the mandated number –1-800-635-1522.

NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES

When a parent has a concern about some aspect of our childcare program we will take every step to help resolve the issue as promptly as possible, keeping the safety and well being of the children and staff as a priority. Village of Love is always open to suggestions and feedback to improve the way we serve you and your family.

SPECIAL SERVICES

The school districts provide free screening for children who might have special needs. If the school district approves services for a child, outside therapist may provide those services at Village of Love. If you think that your child might have special needs, consult with the director who can assist and accompany you through the referral process.

STAFF HIRED BY PARENTS

We strongly discourage our employees from making independent child care arrangements with families at the school. However, in the event that you enter into an agreement with a Village of Love employee to babysit for your family outside of the employee's normal work hours and/or outside of the school hours, it must be done away from the school and with the full knowledge and understanding that the sitter enters into such an agreement as a private citizen and not as a Village of Love employee. We cannot

be responsible for our employees away from school, outside their working hours, and will not be liable for their acts or omissions when not on our property including the transportation of children. You may be required to sign acknowledgement and waiver to this effect. If you hire a staff member to work for you and that employee resigns their position with us in order to accept your employment offer, you will be required to pay Village of Love a \$500 finders fee.

DAILY ROUTINE

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Center is open from 6:15 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The center is closed:

New Years Day

Memorial Day

July 4th

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day

Christmas Day

Staff Development Days and scheduled vacation

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of inclement weather, Village of Love will make every attempt to open as usual. However, to preserve the safety of our staff and children we will close if conditions warrant such action. It is at the discretion of the Center's Administration to make the decision to close earlier or open later due to natural disasters (i.e. Snow, ice ...)

Village of Love Families will be notified of the decision, prior to 6:00am, in the following ways:

- Channel 5 WGAL News
- Facebook

If the Center is open, but because of severe weather and/or road conditions Administration decides to close early, families will be notified by phone. We will make every effort to remain open for working parents; however, if we find it necessary to close, we will not credit or discount tuition fees.

SIGNING IN AND OUT

Parents are responsible for signing children in and out. This procedure is extremely important for attendance records and safety measures in emergencies. There is a sign in/sign out sheet posted within each classroom near its entry door. Parents are welcome to stay briefly to help their child adjust to the group and to smooth the separation if the child is anxious about saying goodbye.

SECURITY SYSTEM

The doors to the center are kept locked at all times in order to limit access and to keep children from exiting ahead of supervisors/parents. There is a front doorbell to gain entry. For others who are authorized to pick up your child Photo I.D. is required at the time of pick-up if it is their first time.

USE OF THE CENTER PARENT MAILBOXES

Please be advised that the use of center parent mailboxes is for office use only. Parents must have approval from the center administration prior to placing any correspondence in this area.

PARENT VISITS

Parents may visit the center at any time. However, if there are problems arising from parent visits that interfere with the deliverance of quality childcare, then the parent(s) will not be permitted in the classroom.

FAMILIES INVOLVEMENT

Families are welcome to participate in the class activities and school events.

WAYS FOR THE FAMILIES TO BE INVOLVE:

- Making things for the program
- Sharing their culture
- Sharing a talent or a job
- Participating in the class activities or field trips
- Contributing to the class activities and learning

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE A CHILD

A child will be released to parents and those adults identified by the parents as authorized to pickup their child. If another adult comes to pick up your child, we will release the child only through notification in writing or phone call from the child's parent. Proper I.D. must be given before the child is released.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Your emergency contacts listed on your emergency card WILL be contacted in the event that you are unable to be reached. Please adhere to the following policies:

1. Two (2) contacts that live in a 24 mile radius of the Village of Love ELA
2. Your contacts should know that they have been recorded on the card and are responsible for your child in the event that they need to pick up your child at any time throughout the day.

PICK-UP POLICIES

Our concerns for the children's safety, both physical and emotional, ask that once the child has been released to your care at day's end, your child not be permitted to run in the hallways, roam unattended or enter other areas of the building.

Parents who spend a little time in their child's classroom at day's end need to also remember that while your child is in his/her classroom with you, class rules that encourage appropriate behavior still apply for your child. Parent's visiting in classes at day's end may also have an anxious affect on other children waiting for their parents, so please take the gentle cue from the teacher if it time to leave.

PARKING

There is limited short-term parking available in the centers parking lot which is marked Drop Off/Pick up ONLY. We ask that you do not park in the Loading/Unloading area, in front of a Fire Hydrant or in front of any signs that say No Standing or No Parking. We also ask that you not leave car motors running or leave other children unattended within your car when you enter the building.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

A stuffed animal or doll may ease the transition from home and comfort the child feeling anxious; please be sure these items are "soft cuddliest." A book or cassette to share with the whole class is always welcome. It is recommended that other toys be left in the car or at home, so as not to be lost, broken or envied by others. Action figure/superhero toys and projectile toys are not permitted in the center. Action figure toys encourage strong physical play which often leads to aggressive play; this can get out of control when children confuse make-believe with reality. Videotapes brought from home, to be shared at school during inclement weather or when curriculum themes relate, necessitate a few words of caution. Disappointment may arise when we are not able to show a videotape due to time constraints or developmental appropriateness. We require administrative approval after advance screening before your child offers to share a video with his/her class.

MEALS

Breakfast is served only between 8:15 and 9:45 a.m.; children arriving later should already have eaten at home. The major meal of the day is served at lunch; Meals are catered for us by the staff of the center. Nutritious snacks are provided once or twice a day. Milk is served at lunch to all children and made available, as needed, to infants in the bottles parents provide. However, parents must provide their own formula (or expressed milk for nursing infants if parents so choose) for those not yet ready for container milk. Parents must inform the center of any special dietary requirements, including food allergies. Candy and chewing gum are not permitted in the

center. The menu rotates on a monthly basis. You will receive a copy of the scheduled meals. Please notify us of any allergies immediately.

CLOTHING

Children play hard and need to be comfortable. We ask that children be dressed in clothes suitable for the many art, playground and climbing activities of their day. Cold weather does not necessarily keep us indoors, so please be sure that children have the necessary mittens, sweaters and hats, etc., appropriate for the day's weather changes. All clothing should be labeled with the family's name, to facilitate dressing and reduce loss.

Two full sets of extra clothes should be kept at the center, even for the oldest children. When accidents of play, feeding or toileting happen, we know you would want your child to be comfortable. Extra sets will need to be regularly replaced as soon as possible if your child uses them.

Shoes need to be appropriate for indoor/outdoor play. Hot, wet snow boots, for health reasons, need to be replaced with indoor shoes. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are required for safe play; an extra pair may be left in the child's cubby and teachers will gladly help with the changes.

REST TIME PROVISIONS

Parents are responsible for providing and laundering (weekly) towels, bibs, blankets and crib sheets. Sheets & blankets need to be taken home every Friday to be laundered. Cribs will be provided for infants.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

TUITION POLICY

Tuition is payable weekly by the 1st day of the week. Make checks payable to Village of Love. There will be no refund for day's missed while the child is enrolled. Children in transition (moving from one classroom to another) will pay the tuition fees of the classroom they were in on the first of the month.

There will be a \$30.00 late payment fee for all checks returned to us unpaid from the bank.

There is an additional late fee for the children not picked up from daycare by 6pm in the amount of \$10 for every 15 minutes.

LATE PAYMENTS

There will be a \$25.00 late payment fee charged to each weekly bill for any bill that is received after the third day of the week (Thursday) It is center policy that children may be required to withdraw from enrollment in the center when tuition is more than 60 days in arrears.

WITHDRAWAL AND SCHEDULE CHANGING POLICY

Notice of 60 days is required before the withdrawal or schedule changing request of an enrolled child at the center. If the child is withdrawn without prior notice, the security deposit will not be returned.

It is at the discretion of the director to enroll children at our centers. If the Director of the center determines that a child is unsuited for the center's environment, the parents will be consulted. Within two weeks of this meeting the child will be withdrawn and all agreements will be terminated.

HEALTH POLICIES

“The risk of transmission of the agents that cause infectious diseases is increased when children are gathered into groups for any reason. This risk is particularly significant in day care because of the many close physical interactions between children and adults. The majority of daycare programs attempt to exclude ill children. However, illness among young children is frequent and many parents want to bring mildly ill children to day-care programs. This results in a struggle between staff and parents and a desire for absolute criteria to use to determine when a child's illness requires exclusion. Day-care personnel criticize parents for demanding care for sick children. In turn, parents criticize day-care programs, believing that their children acquire their illnesses from day-care contacts. The resulting tensions strain parent/staff relationships, negatively affecting the quality of the day-care experience. Unfortunately, absolute criteria for exclusion of ill children does not exist. Day-care programs base their exclusion policies on two issues:

- (1) risk of transmission of infectious diseases and
- (2) the demand of sick children for increased adult attention, which may exceed the resources of the day-care program”

(Quoted from Pediatrics in Review)

The health policy of the Village of Love is designed to best meet the needs of our children, parents and staff. The policy has been in place since the center opened, but we keep rewriting it in attempt to clarify and better define these policies. We consult with doctors, nurses and other health care professionals in formulating our health policies. No policy will eliminate the problem of illness endemic to group care – especially of young children – no policy will satisfy all the populations the center serves, and no policy can entirely eliminate the element of subjective judgment inherent to individual situations. Center health policies may differ from your child's pediatrician's opinion. In all situations, the Village of Love's policy will override your child's doctor's recommendation. Group care conditions differ from individual care situations.

DAILY HEALTH CHECK

Staff will perform a daily health check on each child upon drop off every morning. The daily check will examine whether or not the child has: Fever or elevated body temperature of 100°
Skin rashes or unusual spots

COMPLAINS OF PAIN

Signs/symptoms of disease including: Severe coughing, sneezing, breathing difficulty, discharge from the nose, ears or eyes, diarrhea or vomiting.

Should any of these symptoms present themselves the child will be excluded until a medical evaluation allows inclusion. A doctor's note must be submitted stating that the child is not contagious and indicating the date that they can return to daycare.

In order to minimize the spread of illness among children, it is important that parents have arrangements available for alternative care whenever your child shows signs of illness. The following symptoms will necessitate exclusion from the center:

FEVERS

A temperature of 100° F or higher is reason for exclusion from group care. A child who has been sent home with a fever of 100° F or higher may return to the center after being fever free for 24 hours without any medication.

SEVERE COLDS

Colds with extreme symptoms of excessive coughing, sneezing, nose drainage that is yellow or green and that interferes with a child's ability to eat, sleep or play are reason for exclusion.

DIARRHEA

Bowel movements that are extremely loose, watery and frequent are reasons for exclusion. A child should be free from diarrhea for 24 hours before returning to the center.

EXPLANATION – Diarrhea in children is an extremely contagious illness. Bowel movements that cannot be contained in a diaper or a toilet pose a high risk of contagion. Young children, especially infants, may have frequent or loose stools regularly or in response to a variety of conditions, but these are different from diarrhea. One or two meals should be eaten during the "24hours free from diarrhea" (overnight with no meals eaten should not be considered 24 hours free from diarrhea). Secondary symptoms of crying, pain, refusal to eat, etc., must be considered.

VOMITING

Vomiting is a reason for exclusion. As with diarrhea, 24 hours should pass (with at least one meal eaten) without an episode of vomiting before a child returns to the center.

EXPLANATION – infants can spit up or throw up for many different reasons. With no other symptoms present we would wait to see if an infant threw up a second time before calling the parent to pick up the child.

RASHES

Rashes must be physician diagnosed for a child to be in the center.

MOUTH SORES

Mouth sores with drooling are reason for exclusion, unless the child's pediatrician states the child is non-infectious.

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge, often with matted eyelids after sleep, and including a child with eye pain or redness of the eyelids or skin surrounding the eye is reason for exclusion. A child may return to the center 24 hours after medication is begun.

TEETHING

Teething is not a reason for exclusion. Teething can cause low-grade fever (under 100 F), crankiness, loose bowel movements and a clear, runny nose. Teething does not cause the exclusionary conditions described above, though.

SYMPTOMS OF CONTAGIOUS CHILDHOOD DISEASE

Symptoms of contagious childhood diseases are reason for exclusion. The center however, adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act in the application of its disease policies. Parents should notify us if their child has been exposed to Measles, Chicken Pox, Roseola, Conjunctivitis (pink eye), Impetigo, Pediculosis (head lice) RSV, Bronchiolitis, Strep Throat, Ringworm and Cocksackie. Exposure to contagious disease is not reason for exclusion.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE SEVERE ILLNESS

Signs of possible severe illness, including unusual lethargy, undefined irritability; persistent discomfort crying or difficult breathing are reasons for exclusion.

ABSENCE

Please call the center if your child will be absent and let us know why. Contagious illnesses must be posted in the classrooms, so other parents know what is going around. To be cleared by a pediatrician for group care, we need:

1. the child to be seen by a doctor,
2. a note from the doctor stating
 - (a) a diagnosis
 - (b) that the child is not contagious
 - (c) the date that the child may return to group care

A child will continue to be excluded if the appropriate note is not received before the child is brought to school.

HEALTH LAW REQUIREMENTS

A complete physical examination is required by state law. It must be within 30 days prior to enrollment if the child is over 6 months old and within 15 days if the child is under 6 months old. An updated physical examination is required yearly, on the expiration date of the current physical.

Your child will be excluded if their physical has expired until an updated physical has been submitted. Pennsylvania Department of Health sets the following minimum required immunizations for school attendance in Nursery, Pre-K, Daycare.

Documentation of immunizations is required from the child's physician, including regular updates.

MEDICATION POLICY

Village of Love staff are not authorized to administer any physician-prescribed medications to enrolled children.

IN CASE OF INJURY

Basic first aid will be performed. In the event of a serious injury, a parent will be notified. If the parents are not available, the emergency numbers on the child's emergency card will be called. If the person(s) cannot be reached, the child will be taken to Lancaster General's Emergency Room, unless the parents have designated a different emergency plan.

IF YOUR CHILD BECOMES ILL AT THE CENTER

If your child becomes ill while at the center, we will call you; if you cannot be reached your emergency contacts will be notified and asked to pick up your child. Please ensure that emergency contacts are aware that they have been listed on your emergency contact list. Please be sure to notify us the very day your work phone number changes, so that you are most efficiently reached. Children with contagious illnesses need to be picked up within a reasonable amount of time to limit their exposure to the other children.

REPORTABLE ILLNESSES

Some childhood illnesses are required, by law, to be reported to our local health agency. In the case of a contagious illness in your child's class, we will post a notice by the sign-in/out sheet in the classroom/facility.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event that the children would be safer remaining indoors, we would shelter them inside the Village of Love. If our building was not considered to be a safe place for the children, we would relocate to a designated space. Next we would begin calling parents to advise them of our location and to request that the children be picked up as quickly and safely as possible. For

cases where parents cannot be reached we would begin to call your emergency contact numbers. Please make sure your child/children have a sheet, blanket and additional clothing appropriate for the season at all times.

If your child is on formula, please supply an additional can of ready to feed formula.

CHECKLIST: WHAT YOUR CHILD WILL NEED

Individual containers will be available for each child so that items can be left at the center. Please label all belongings.

INFANTS

Disposable diapers and diaper wipes

Bibs

Baby Cereal

Extra can of ready-to-feed Formula

Change of clothes

Pacifiers, if used

Blankets and crib sheet

TODDLERS

Disposable diapers and wipes

3 Changes of clothes including shoes/play clothes for outside

Cot sheet, blankets (weekly, or as needed)

PRESCHOOLERS

3 changes of clothes including shoes/play clothes for outside

Cot sheet, blanket (weekly or as needed)

Revised 10/16