



# LITTLE EXPLORERS

## Learning Center

A LEARNING CENTER WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR  
INNOVATION AND EXPLORATION

### Parent's Handbook

# Table of Contents

WELCOME TO LITTLE EXPLORERS LEARNING CENTER:.....	3
WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE US: .....	3
QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE:.....	3
MISSION STATEMENT: .....	3
VISION STATEMENT: .....	3
PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY: .....	4
CONFIDENTIALITY: .....	4
ENROLLMENT:.....	4
TUITION:.....	4
PAYMENTS/REFUND .....	5
SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM:.....	6
CURRICULUM INFORMATION:.....	6
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK).....	7
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) ATTENDANCE POLICY .....	7
FIELD TRIPS .....	8
OBSERVATIONS, ASSESSMENTS & SCREENINGS:.....	8
PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES/COMMUNICATION .....	9
PERSONAL CARE SUPPLIES:.....	9
BIRTHDAY/HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS: .....	9
TRANSITION PLANNING .....	9
PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT: .....	10
HOURS/DAYS: .....	11
CLOSING SCHEDULE:.....	11
MEALS:.....	12
ALL AGES GROUPS .....	12
INFANT CLASSROOMS.....	12
YOUNGER TODDLERS THROUGH SCHOOL-AGE .....	13
DRESS CODE:.....	13
CLOTHING .....	13

JEWELRY .....	13
ARRIVAL PROCEDURES:.....	13
LATE ARRIVAL:.....	13
PICK-UP PROCEDURES: .....	13
ALTERNATE/ EMERGENCY PICK-UP: .....	15
SCHEDULE CHANGES:.....	15
PARENT PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERS: .....	15
HEALTH AND SAFETY .....	16
IMMUNIZATION RECORD.....	16
PHYSICAL EXAM .....	16
PERMISSION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE.....	16
SAFE SLEEP/SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME .....	17
BITING .....	18
NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE.....	18
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE .....	19
THE 24-HOUR “SYMPTOM FREE” RULE .....	20
DISPENSING MEDICATION .....	20
MEDICATIONS DELIVERED BY A DEVICE (I.E. EPI-PEN, INHALER, NEBULIZER).....	21
DIAPER CREAM/OINTMENT/PASTE .....	21
SUNSCREEN.....	21
BUG SPRAY.....	21
FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS.....	21
ALTERNATE SAFE LOCATION .....	22
ACCIDENT/INCIDENT.....	22
POTTY TRAINING & TOILET LEARNING POLICY .....	22
FIREARMS AND WEAPONS.....	24
CHILD SAFETY & ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE POLICY .....	24
MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT:.....	26
RILYA WILSON ACT.....	26
PERSON(S) APPEARING TO BE IMPAIRED BY ALCOHOL/ DRUGS AT PICK-UP:.....	27

EMERGENCY CLOSING AND INCLEMENT WEATHER INFORMATION:.....	27
DISCIPLINE:.....	28
PROPERTY DAMAGE POLICY: .....	29
CHILDREN SUSPENSION/EXPULSION POLICY:.....	30
PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT: .....	30
SWEARING/CURSING .....	30
THREATENING OF EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN AND OTHER ADULTS .....	30
PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN .....	30
SMOKING .....	31
VIOLATIONS OF THE SAFETY .....	31
CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES AND OTHER PARENTS .....	31
VIOLATIONS OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY .....	31
ANTI-IDLING:.....	31
SOCIAL MEDIA/PRIVACY POLICY:.....	32
COURT ORDERS EFFECTING ENROLLED CHILDREN:.....	32
CHANGES TO AUTHORIZE PICK-UPS/GUARDIANS/PARENTS:.....	32
STAFF EMPLOYMENT BY CLIENT(S):.....	33
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY:.....	33
OPEN DOOR POLICY:.....	33
COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:.....	33
EMERGENCY CLOSURE:.....	34
COMMUNICATION POLICY:.....	34
WITHDRAW:.....	34
<b>APPENDIX A</b> .....	<b>35</b>

## WELCOME TO LITTLE EXPLORERS LEARNING CENTER:

We are honored to be part of your child’s early learning journey. At Little Explorers Learning Center, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and engaging environment where children can grow academically, socially, and emotionally.

This handbook serves as a guide to our policies, procedures, and expectations. Our goal is to create a strong partnership with families to ensure each child’s success.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

We look forward to growing together.

## WHY FAMILIES CHOOSE US:

At Little Explorers Learning Center, we go beyond childcare—we provide a structured early learning experience designed to prepare children for lifelong success.

- ✓ Research-based curriculum (Learning Beyond Paper, Creative Curriculum)
- ✓ Ongoing child assessments (Teaching Strategies GOLD)
- ✓ CLASS-aligned teaching practices
- ✓ Daily communication through Procure
- ✓ Safe, structured, and nurturing environment
- ✓ Experienced and trained educators

We focus on the **whole child**—academically, socially, and emotionally.

## QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE:

Hours: 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM

Tuition Due: Every Monday

Late Fee: \$25 + \$5/day

Pick-Up Fee: \$5/min after 5:30 PM

## MISSION STATEMENT:

Little Explorers Learning Center seeks to create a challenging learning environment that encourages high expectations for success through developmentally appropriate programs that allow for individual differences and learning styles.

## VISION STATEMENT:

Our vision is that children leave Little Explorers Learning Center with:

- ❖ A set of moral values -- honesty, integrity, and good judgment.
- ❖ An equal balance of social, emotional, and intellectual support.
- ❖ An enquiring and discriminating mind and a desire for knowledge.
- ❖ Strong self-esteem and high personal expectations.
- ❖ Tolerance and respect for others.

## **PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY:**

Little Explorers Learning Center believes that the care of your child is the single most essential planning when you work outside the home. Parents should feel at ease and confident about enrolling their child at Little Explorers Learning Center. Through daily interactions with the children, our wonderfully trained and caring staff can positively influence your child's education and personal growth. We strive to meet the physical, cognitive, social, and emotional growth of each individual child in a caring and supportive atmosphere.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Within Little Explorers Learning Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of Little Explorers Learning Center who have a "need to know" in order to most appropriately and safely care for the child as well as licensing, accreditation, and other agencies that require information for the purpose of assists in tuition payments. Confidential and sensitive information about faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with parents, as Little Explorer Learning Center strives to protect the privacy of all our clients.

Outside of Little Explorers Learning Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given written consent, except where otherwise provided for by law. Parents will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of Little Explorers Learning Center, person(s) with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees of Little Explorers Learning Center are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

## **ENROLLMENT:**

Enrollment at Little Explorers Learning Center is open to children from six weeks to age ten. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or disability, and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, or disability. The Enrollment Application and Fee Agreement are not meant to serve as contracts guaranteeing service for any duration. Enrollment is granted without discrimination and is contingent upon compliance with all center policies.

Little Explorers Learning Center reserves the right to suspend or terminate enrollment at any time in accordance with center policies, safety requirements, and applicable state regulations.

Parents can apply for enrollment of their child in Little Explorers Learning Center by completing the Enrollment Package and paying the Registration Fee. The Registration Fee is non-refundable. All information including medical and activity forms must be filled out and returned before beginning childcare.

Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of a completed enrollment package, including the registration fee. Immunization records and health assessment must be received within the first 30 days of the child's start date to continue care. Parents agree to submit a copy of each child's current medical card or insurance card, as well as each child's immunization record.

Parents are required to notify Little Explorers Learning Center immediately should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child being dismissed from the program.

## **TUITION:**

Tuition is based on the reservation of your child's space, not attendance. Payment is required regardless of absence, holidays, or center closures.

All tuition payments are due **every Monday** for the current week of care.

Payments must be made through the Procure system. Payments will not be accepted at the center.

**Late Payments:**

- \$25 late fee applied after Monday
- \$5 per day thereafter until paid in full

Failure to maintain a current balance may result in immediate suspension or termination of services.

Returned balances may be subject to collection procedures, including additional fees, interest, and legal action.

Our fee schedule is set up in tiers. These tiers are determined every year in the month of September on your child's birthday. To qualify for a specific tier, your child must be of that specific age group by September 4.

Tuition tiers are calculated annually and charged weekly. Calculations are based on many varied factors. However, the most common factors are current market rates, staff qualifications and requirements, center's qualifications, meals, sleeping aids, and center closures.

The following are our tiers that we offer:

*Infant: Under the age of 12 months*

*Young Toddlers: 12 to 24 months*

*Older Toddlers: 24 to 36 months*

*\*Young Preschoolers: 36 to 48 months*

*\*Preschoolers: 48 to 60 months*

*\*Older Preschoolers: 60 to 72 months*

*\*VPK Wrap-Care: August to May only*

*\*School-Age: 72 months and up*

*\*Summer Camp: 60 months and up*

*\*Additional fee will be applied for children that are 36 months and up that are wearing diapers or pull-ups during the day as well as naptime.*

A child(ren) that participates in the School Readiness program, rates will change when instructions are received from the Early Learning Coalition of SWFL to do so.

**PAYMENTS/REFUND**

All payments are due on Monday at drop off for the current week of care. Parents will use their Procure App to make their weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly payments by using their credit/debit card or checking/savings account. We cannot make payments at our location sites, regardless of payment method.

No payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Little Explorers Learning Center; however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Director immediately. If alternative arrangements for payment are approved, you will be notified by the Director. No spots will be reserved.

If your weekly full payment is not made by Monday, you will be charged \$25 and thereafter \$5.00 per day until the full outstanding balance is paid. Partial payments will still be assessed as a late fee.

If services are terminated due to non-payment, the account holder will be referred to our collection department. Each balance will be charged 18% APR monthly interest fee. Collection attempts will include referral to a collection agency, listing of bad debts with the credit bureaus, and legal action. All collection expenses as well as attorney fees will be applied to the outstanding balance.

Refunds will not be given for tuition and other services and fees used. Please see office staff for further details.

Parents will be charged for the full week whether the child comes for one day or five. Holidays that fall during the week will be paid for even though the center is closed. All schedule closures are paid closures and parents are required to pay for those scheduled closures. Tuition is not pro-rated.

If you take a vacation, the full amount of tuition will be due on the same date specified in your contract. If vacation is taken and not paid for, the time slot may no longer be available to the parent.

#### **SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM:**

We are only a provider for this program. If a parent has questions or concerns about their case with the Early Learning Coalition, they must contact their case worker. We do not have information on the program's guidelines or income eligibility.

**Attendance:** No more than three unexcused absentees per month is allowed. More than 3 days out requires a doctor's note. Excessive absenteeism will lead to termination.

**Co-Payments:** Parents are required to cover any fees that the School Readiness program does not cover, including the parental fee. If payments are not made it will lead to termination and be reported to ELC.

**Termination:** Two weeks' notice is required. If two weeks' notice is not given, parents will be charged for the two weeks. Parents must have a zero balance on their account to receive a closing letter to provide to ELC. Requesting a closing letter will require 24-hour notice and a zero balance on your account.

#### **CURRICULUM INFORMATION:**

Activities in all age groups are based on the most up to date practices recognized by experts in the field of early childhood education. Our staff has access to publications and training classes/conferences on the latest development available. Teachers prepare lesson plans weekly that are approved by the Director.

We use a variety of curriculums to complete our weekly lesson plans. We offer the following curriculums.

- Learning Beyond Paper: Learning Beyond's Lesson Plans and Daily Activities are carefully crafted to meet the development needs of every child. Learning activities are presented in a meaningful way, and every activity is linked to early childhood Standards for each age group.  
<https://www.learningbeyondpaper.com>
- Creative Curriculum: Build children's confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills through hands-on, project-based investigations. Promote discovery and inquiry with opportunities for children to think critically and develop process skills with rich, hands-on investigations of relevant and interesting topics in the classroom. Reinforce learning with family-friendly activities designed for home.  
<http://teachingstrategies.com>

- Learning Without Tears: Learning Without Tears' early learning programs acknowledge what all great educators know and what research supports: Learning needs to be joyful, child friendly, and active. We believe in meeting children where they are and providing classroom experiences that will enable them to develop the foundation skills they need to thrive as learners.  
<https://www.lwtears.com/solutions/early-learning>

*Note: Curriculums are subject to change w/o notice depending on the needs of the children, the partnerships that the centers work with, and approval from the state.*

## **VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK)**

The VPK program is a free program for all Florida's families. Participating in VPK gives parents an opportunity to help their children reach their full potential. High quality preschool increases a child's chances of succeeding in school and earning more as an adult. VPK is free for all children four years old on or before September 1 of the program year. Some 5-year-olds may also be eligible depending on their birth date. There are no income requirements for VPK.

For children to receive the benefit of this program, children must attend all sessions. Excessive absenteeism is not allowed and can lead to termination of the program. Parents are required to sign a VPK monthly attendance sheet.

VPK assessments are conducted at the beginning of the session and at the end of the program. These assessments will be shared with parents through parent-teacher conferences held throughout the year. However, parents can schedule a meeting with the teachers at any time.

## **VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Attendance is linked directly to state funding, as well as the child's success in kindergarten. Up to three unexcused absences per month are allowed. All absences require written documentation. If the child is out sick more than three days, written documentation from a person unrelated to the child (e.g., physician's note) is required for your child to return to school. Little Explorers Learning Center will submit this to the coalition. In the event your child is absent or late you are required to call the school by 9:30 a.m.

Excused absence may be due to one of the following reasons: Illness/injury of the child/family member which requires hospitalization/bed rest. Physician/dentist appointment. Infectious disease/parasitic infestation. Funeral/memorial service or bereavement upon the death of a family member. Compliance with a court order (e.g., visitation, subpoena) Observance of a religious holiday/service. Family vacation (not to exceed three per program year). Extraordinary circumstances beyond the control of the child/parent.

All VPK instruction begins promptly at 9:00 a.m. Arrivals after 9:00 a.m. are considered an absence for that day. Early departures, before 10:30 a.m., will also count as an absence. Please contact the school if your child is late. If your child has a doctor's appointment a note must be provided. Tardiness disrupts the class, please be considerate of the teachers and students by arriving on time.

Part of the VPK program is signing your child in and out every day as well as verifying your child's attendance at the end of each month by signing the monthly form. We expect that you will verify your child's attendance no earlier than the last VPK day of the month.

## FIELD TRIPS

Little Explorers Learning Center occasionally supplements the class curriculum with off-site field trips. Parents are required to give written permission for their child to attend each field trip. Notification of field trips will be sent home in advance of the trips, with all pertinent trip information including destination, date, time, reason for trip, cost, and mode of transportation. Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out and signed by parents or legal guardian and returned to their teacher prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip must be filled out completely and accurately, and all trip costs must be paid in advance for your child to attend.

Little Explorers Learning Center provides all required supervision for all field trips. Due to availability of space, parents' attendance may not be available. Parents will not be permitted to transport any child, other than their own, on a Little Explorers Learning Center trip.

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

## OBSERVATIONS, ASSESSMENTS & SCREENINGS:

At Little Explorers Learning Center (LELC), we believe every child grows and learns at their own pace. To support each child, we use a variety of tools to observe, assess, and screen development. These help us celebrate progress, identify areas where extra support may be needed, and partner with families to plan next steps.

### Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD)

- Teachers observe and record your child's development in areas such as language, social skills, physical development, and early learning concepts.
- Assessments are completed **four times a year** (February, May, August, and October).
- These observations guide lesson planning and allow us to share meaningful updates with you about your child's growth.

### Developmental Screenings – ASQ

- We use the **Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ and ASQ:SE)**, a nationally recognized tool, to screen children's birth through age 6.
- Screening helps us catch delays early and ensure children are meeting important milestones.
- Results are always shared with parents, and we welcome your input. If needed, we'll discuss extra support or referrals together.

### Individualized Learning Plans (ILPs)

- If screenings show that your child may need extra support, teachers create an **Individualized Learning Plan (ILP)**.
- ILPs provide targeted activities that support growth in specific areas.
- Families are involved every step of the way, and progress is reviewed regularly.

**Our Commitment:** These tools are never used to label or limit your child. Instead, they guide us in providing the best possible learning environment. Together, we'll ensure your child has the skills, confidence, and support to succeed.

## PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES/COMMUNICATION

“A getting to know you” conference is offered at enrollment and 45 days after enrollment. Periodic parent/teacher conferences are scheduled to discuss your child’s development and progress and include child observations. A conference may be requested at any time by the parent(s) if there are questions concerning a child’s progress or a specific problem.

Our main communication between parents and teachers is through our Procure mobile app. Once you download the Procure mobile app, you can stay up to date on your child’s daily activities, milestones, and more! We can send you photos and videos of your child, as well as keep you in the loop on upcoming events and time-sensitive information.

The app also offers several “contactless” ways to check your child in and out. This helps us limit in-person interactions and unnecessary foot traffic in the center so we can better ensure the health and wellbeing of you, your children, and our staff.

## PERSONAL CARE SUPPLIES:

Parents are required to provide a blanket and a zippy cup for water consumption weekly. Parents are responsible for diapers, pull-ups, diaper creams, bottles and wipes.

## BIRTHDAY/HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS:

We allow parents to bring in cupcakes or other special treats to school to celebrate a child’s birthday. All treats must be store purchased. Please provide us with a two-week notice so that we can inform all the parents in the classroom. This will give parents an opportunity to provide an alternative for their child for any food allergies or diet restrictions.

## TRANSITION PLANNING

At Little Explorers Learning Center (LELC), we know that transitions can be exciting but sometimes challenging for children and families. Whether your child is starting school for the first time, moving to a new classroom, or preparing for kindergarten, we are here to make the process smooth and supportive.

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### 1. Starting at LELC

- Families are invited to tour the center, meet teachers, and see classrooms before enrollment.
- Parents receive an orientation and Family Handbook to learn our policies and routines.
- Children visit their classrooms before the first day to meet teachers and peers.
- Teachers provide gentle support during drop-off, using strategies like songs, family photos, or our “waving window” to help with separation.

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### 2. Moving Between Classrooms

- When your child is ready for a new classroom, we communicate with you in advance.
- Families meet the new teachers, receive a classroom schedule, and participate in a gradual 3-day transition plan.

- Mixed-age groups are sometimes used in mornings, evenings, or summer months to help children build relationships across age levels.
- 

### 3. Daily Transitions

- Each classroom follows a consistent daily routine, so children know what to expect.
  - Teachers give time reminders before moving to new activities.
  - Songs, games, and finger plays are used during waiting times to keep transitions fun and positive.
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### 4. Family Support During Life Changes

- We connect families with resources such as the Early Learning Coalition’s social workers, nurses, and financial assistance programs when needed.
  - Staff are available to listen and provide guidance during times of change.
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### 5. Preparing to Leave LELC

- Children leave our center for many reasons, including moving on to kindergarten.
  - We help prepare children by focusing on social, emotional, and academic readiness skills.
  - Parent workshops on kindergarten readiness are offered to guide families.
  - Families receive copies of their child’s health/medical forms to support enrollment in their next school.
- 

### Our Commitment

Transitions are part of every child’s growth. At LELC, our teachers and staff work closely with families to ensure these changes are handled with warmth, care, and consistency—helping children feel confident and ready for every new step.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT:**

Parental involvement is often seen as a cornerstone in a child's education. It can make a considerable difference to your child's school life, both in academic success and in general enjoyment at school.

### **WHY GET INVOLVED?**

Parental involvement is known to be linked to improved behavior, regular attendance, and positive attitudes. In addition, being involved shows your child you care about his or her education and schooling. That can make children appreciate the importance of education and help them to understand that what they are doing has a purpose.

Parental involvement provides a support network for children, which is particularly important when they face academic hurdles or other challenges with friendships or extra-curricular activities. It also means you know where your child's education journey is going and can be part of the highs and lows along the way.

As a result, children whose parents stay involved are more likely to have higher self-esteem, be disciplined, have more self-motivation, and tend to achieve better grades, regardless of their ethnic, social, or racial backgrounds.

### **BENEFITS FOR YOU**

As well as boosting motivation and providing discipline for children, getting involved has numerous benefits for the parent. By walking alongside their son or daughter's education journey, parents are more likely to be sensitive to their child's emotional and social needs.

Parental involvement creates ties and strengthens bonds with children and can boost your confidence in parenting and any decision-making when it comes to your child's education.

It also leads to the building of stronger relationships within the school, leading to clearer communication between teachers, parents, and children. This can give you more confidence in the school's approach to education and learning. Schools that have high levels of engagement with parents tend to experience better community support and positive reputations. Also, when children see a unified approach to their education between their parents and the school, they are more likely to understand the importance of their studies.

### **BENEFITS FOR YOUR CHILD**

Research indicates that two thirds of teachers believe parental involvement in education results in better performance in school. As mentioned earlier, children tend to achieve better grades and tend to be more motivated when parents are involved. There are a couple of reasons for that.

Some research suggests parental involvement helps give children attention and praise which, in turn, helps them recognize their education is worthy of adult interest. As children tend to model adult behaviors, when parents are actively involved with their schooling, children will learn the importance of education and try to emulate those behaviors from their parents. It also helps children understand that their schooling is not just about them. It is a collaborative approach between pupils, teachers, and their parents. This team approach can further motivate them to work hard and produce positive results. Children who have help from their parents are also more likely to feel competent, and school attendance becomes more important to them.

Being involved also boosts the mental health of children. It encourages communication between children and parents, which can foster higher self-esteem and confidence. It can also help children interact better with their peers and advance their social skills.

Since parental involvement has many benefits for you, the teachers and of course your child help him or her succeed by thinking about what you can do to get involved.

### **HOURS/DAYS:**

Opening time is 7:30 AM and pickup time is no later than 5:30 PM unless prior arrangements have been made. If you are late picking up your child, you will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$5.00 every 1-minute past closing time per child.

### **CLOSING SCHEDULE:**

On the days, the Center is closed, substitute care is not provided.

We will provide a closing schedule yearly to all parents in the month of August.

**\*VPK follows a different schedule. Each session will be provided with a VPK calendar to follow.**

### **MEALS:**

Little Explorers Learning Center participates in the Federal Food Program and provides all necessary food and beverages throughout the day. Outside food is prohibited without Director's permission due to the Food Program guidelines.

BREAKFAST: 8:00 - 8:50 A.M.  
LUNCH: 11:00 - 12:00 P.M.  
AFTERNOON SNACK: 2:00 - 3:00 P.M.

All meals are family style with the children sitting at tables to promote good manners, eating habits and socialization skills. Staff will encourage children to eat their main entrée first, followed by healthy snacks.

If your child is dropped off after breakfast time, it is your responsibility to feed your child. It is prohibited for children to bring in outside food without the consent of the Director.

For your child to participate in the food program, your child must participate in all three meals. Parents will not be able to offer any alternatives for any of the meals. If your child has any food allergies, parents will be required to provide all three meals, including beverages.

If you are providing meals for your child, please note that it must be items that do not require to be kept in a refrigerator or warmed up. Items must be kept in a lunch bag throughout the day so be sure that you provide items to protect them from spoilage. Food items must be healthy and follow the guidelines of the food program. The center will not serve items that are considered junk food, such as cookies, chips, soft drinks, sugary juices, candies, and chocolate and are not limited to such items. If you need assistance on what to provide for your child, please feel free to contact the center for guidance.

### **ALL AGES GROUPS**

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

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

### **INFANT CLASSROOMS**

Staff will complete a daily chart for each child detailing for the parents what the child ate, when and how much. Parents that choose a different formula than what the center offers must provide formula with water or pre-made bottles.

Parents are required to provide diapers, wipes, extra clothes, formula, snacks, and baby food. We encourage parents to provide baby bottles made of glass (covered with a silicone sleeve to prevent breaking), or plastic baby bottles/sippy cups that are labeled "BPA-free".

Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come to the center during the day to feed their child. Appropriate, private feeding locations will be made available. Please discuss your desire to come to the center to breastfeed your child with the Director.

## YOUNGER TODDLERS THROUGH SCHOOL-AGE

The center provides breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snacks. The meals are nutritious well-balanced meals. You should be aware of mealtimes to ensure that your child is present.

### **DRESS CODE:**

#### **CLOTHING**

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

Children are not permitted to wear open-toed, and/or open-backed shoes. The most appropriate type of shoes for participating in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes. All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. Little Explorers Learning Center is not responsible for lost or damaged items of clothing.

#### **JEWELRY**

Children are not permitted to wear jewelry of any kind. It is a safety hazard for your child as well as the other children enrolled in the program. In addition, Little Explorers Learning Center will not be responsible for the lost or stolen valuables. It is the parent's responsibility to enforce this policy with their children.

### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES:**

Upon arrival at Little Explorers Learning Center, the parent(s) or authorized adult dropping the child off must sign the child into care. If you fail to sign in your child, you will be charged an administrative fee of \$5.00 for any corrections that need to be made to your child's timecard. Children will be escorted by a member of our staff to their designated classroom.

Children are required to be checked in by **9:00 AM** daily. Parents who know in advance that a child must contact the office for approval to arrive past 9:00 AM.

### **LATE ARRIVAL:**

Children that have a scheduled appointment that will not allow them to be checked in by 9:00 AM must get prior approval from the administrative team, not their child's teacher. Same day notice will not be accepted. The scheduled appointment must be for the sole purpose of the child arriving late and proof of the appointment must be provided. Children that arrive after 9:00 AM with administrative approval and proof of appointment must be checked in no later than 11:00 AM. Children that arrive after our 11:00 AM cut-off time for arrival will not be accepted into the program for the day regardless of the purpose of the late arrival. We do not accept any children after 11:00 AM. This includes children that are checked in and taken to the appointment and returned. Your child must return prior to 11:00 AM.

### **PICK-UP PROCEDURES:**

Parents or authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out system. If you fail to sign out your child, you will be charged an administrative fee of \$5.00 for any corrections that need to be made to your child's timecard.

Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on agency premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms and/or playground. Parents are required to handle all business issues prior to signing out their child and are required to directly exit the building once they have signed their child out of care.

Parents will pick their child up at the door and will walk their child to the car. No child will be released to a honking horn. Only designated person(s) will be allowed to pick up the child.

If my child is not picked up at that time, I understand that I will be charged a late pick-up fee of \$5.00 a minute after 5:30 p.m. per child. Excessive late pick-ups will NOT be tolerated. Child may be expelled from the center.

If your child is at the center after an hour from closing time, and we do not have any contact with you or your authorize pick-ups, we are required to contact the Department of Children and Families and the Police Department so that they can take custody of your child until you are able to pick your child up.

### **AUTHORIZED PICK-UP AGE REQUIREMENT**

#### **Authorized Pick-Up Policy**

For the safety and protection of all children:

**All individuals authorized to pick up a child must be at least 18 years of age.**

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#### **Identification Requirement**

- All authorized pick-up individuals must be listed on the child's emergency/contact form
  - A valid government-issued photo ID is required at the time of pick-up
  - Staff will verify identity before releasing any child
- 

#### **No Exceptions Policy**

- Individuals under the age of 18 will not be permitted to pick up a child under any circumstances
  - This policy applies regardless of parental consent
- 

#### **Right to Refuse Release**

Little Explorers Learning Center reserves the right to refuse release of a child if:

- The individual is not listed as an authorized pick-up
  - Proper identification is not provided
  - The individual does not meet the age requirement
  - The individual appears impaired or unable to safely supervise the child
-

## **Parent Responsibility**

Parents are responsible for:

- Keeping authorized pick-up lists up to date
- Informing all authorized individuals of center policies
- Ensuring all pick-up people meet the age requirement

### **ALTERNATE/ EMERGENCY PICK-UP:**

At enrollment, parents will be presented with a Registration Information form. Parents are encouraged to include in this form any, and all people who, during events, may at one time be asked to pick up their child. Parents will be called first; if they cannot be reached staff will call the person(s) listed on this form until someone can be reached. Parents do not need to be listed as an Emergency Contact. The nature of the parental relationship affords the parents (in the absence of a court order indication otherwise) the right to pick up their child.

Parents will ask to determine which person(s) (if any) on the Registration Information form have the right to act “in the place or role of parent.” Only the person(s) in the Emergency and Pick Up section are afforded the right to pick up the child. Staff are not permitted to discuss the child’s day with them. The person(s) on the Emergency and Pick Up section will be required to provide government issued photo ID prior to the center releasing the child. There will be no exception to this rule.

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

Little Explorers Learning Center reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Emergency and Pick Up section for any reason, including but not limited to violations of the policies/procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Emergency and Pick Up section of the policies/procedures contained herein.

### **SCHEDULE CHANGES:**

Parents who wish to change their child’s days or times of enrollment at Little Explorers Learning Center must submit a request to do so two weeks in advance of the proposed change. Schedule changes may be subject to a change fee if you do not give notice of the change two weeks in advance.

The Director will notify the parents in writing if the new schedule is available. If the requested schedule is not available parents may choose to continue with the current schedule until such time as the requested schedule becomes available or may choose to withdraw their child from the program. The date of the request will be used to give the two weeks’ notice required for withdrawal.

### **PARENT PARTICIPATION/VOLUNTEERS:**

Parents are invited and encouraged to be involved in their child’s school activities. There are many ways in which parents can participate and volunteer at the childcare center. Parents may volunteer to attend trips, read in the classroom, assist teachers, and/or coordinate special events. Teachers will have posted in their classrooms any volunteer opportunities available.

Any parent who volunteers in the classroom on a regular basis will be required to pay for and secure all criminal background checks, as required by the licensing regulations. Any person, including parents, with felony convictions,

sex offender convictions and/or open investigations into any criminal activities will not be permitted to volunteer in the classroom, or on field trips.

Parents with court orders detailing custodial arrangements will only be permitted to volunteer on days in which they are afforded custody (joint/shared custody arrangement) as per the court order. Little Explorers Learning Center reserves the right to do volunteer assignments. Little Explorers Learning Center does not guarantee the volunteering parent(s) will be assigned to locations where their child is present.

## **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **IMMUNIZATION RECORD**

Per licensing regulations, all children are required to have a complete up to date immunization record on file at Little Explorers Learning Center. Prior to enrollment, a parent must provide us with an updated immunization record for their child, if the child has not received the age-appropriate immunization and does not have documented medical, religious, or philosophical exemptions from routine childhood immunizations must provide documentation of a schedule appointment or arrangement to receive immunizations. If you have chosen not to have your child immunized, please provide us with an exemption form provided by the Department of Health. Please discuss this with the Director to determine whether you have the right to be enrolled and not have your child immunized.

Parents are responsible to keep up to date on their child's immunization records and provide us with a copy with updated immunizations throughout the year. Parents must understand that there are some children in their care that may not have immunizations because the child is exempt from the Department of Health.

### **PHYSICAL EXAM**

All children are required to have a physical examination form filled out by a licensed medical professional to attend Little Explorers Learning Center. The Physical Examination form, indicating the child's fitness to attend Little Explorers Learning Center, must be completed by a licensed healthcare professional, and returned to the Director within the first 5 days of enrollment. Physical examinations must be updated every two years or sooner.

### **PERMISSION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE**

Parents' permission is required to obtain emergency medical care for my child as follows:

1. Attempt to reach a parent or guardian, my child's physician, or the person(s) listed as Emergency Contact on this Pre-Registration form.
2. If unable to reach any of the above people, Little Explorers staff may accompany and transport my child by vehicle to the Emergency Room for medical care. An ambulance may be called if my child's medical condition warrants it.
3. I give my permission for Little Explorers staff to give written consent for medical care for my child. This includes, but is not limited to examination by a physician, laboratory tests, x-rays, or other procedures ordered by a physician.
4. Expenses incurred for the above medical care and ambulance transportation are the sole responsibility of the parents or guardian.

Granting Little Explorers permission for Emergency Medical Care is in our Childcare Policies Agreement and must be signed.


## SAFE SLEEP/SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME


Infants' experiences early in life literally influence the physical structures of the brain, opening the way for patterns of thought and behavior for the rest of a child's life. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, or SIDS, is the leading cause of death in babies between the ages of 1 month and 1 year. Abusive Head Trauma: Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) is the group of signs and symptoms experienced by incredibly young children who are shaken.


### What sleep position is safest for my baby?


Always place your baby on their back to sleep. This includes all sleep times – nights and naps.


### I have been told my baby should sleep in a safe sleeping environment. What should I do to make my baby's sleep environment safe?


 Make sure baby sleeps only on a firm sleep surface, such as a safety approved crib mattress, bassinet, or portable crib.

 Do not cover your baby with a loose blanket. Instead, dress your baby in a sleeper appropriate for the room temperature.

 Do not place stuffed animals, crib bumpers, blankets, quilts, baby positioners or any other soft items in the crib.

 Never place your baby to sleep on an adult bed, recliner, sofa, air mattress, bean bag chair, pillow, quilt, or any other soft surface.

 Do not sleep with your baby.

 Do not fall asleep with your baby in your bed or in any other place while you are holding your baby (such as on a sofa or recliner).



### How is bed sharing dangerous for my baby?








When babies bed share, they are at higher risk for suffocation and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Suffocation occurs when a baby cannot breathe due to lying in a position where something is blocking oxygen from getting to the baby. This can occur from an adult or child rolling over onto the baby. It can also occur if something soft such as pillow, blanket, sheet, or the mattress itself blocks the baby's airway.

### **I want my baby to be near me, what else should I do?**

Try room-sharing! Place the bassinet or crib by your bed. This way, your baby can sleep safely in their own safe sleep area, and you can sleep better knowing your baby is nearby.

### **I know my baby should sleep on his/her back, in his/her own crib and in a safe sleep environment. Is there anything else I can do to reduce my baby's risk of SIDS?**

Studies have found that there are things you can do to reduce your baby's risk of SIDS. These include:

-  Breastfeeding
-  Not smoking, drinking alcohol, or using drugs during pregnancy
-  Not allowing anyone to smoke around your baby
-  Keeping your baby's well baby visits and immunizations up to date
-  Offering a pacifier at nap and bedtime. (If you are breastfeeding, wait until breastfeeding is going well before offering a pacifier. This is usually around one month.)
-  Do not overheat your baby. If the room feels comfortable for you, it is comfortable for your baby.
-  Talking to everyone who cares for their baby about following your baby's safe sleep practices and other ways to reduce your baby's risk of SIDS.

*Taken from (<http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/infant-safe-sleep-environment/index.html>)*

### **BITING**

Little Explorers Learning Center recognizes that biting is a developmentally appropriate behavior for children in the infant through 2 ½ year old classrooms. Parents with children in these classrooms should expect that their children may be bit or bite another child. The staff understands that parents are concerned and can be upset when their child is involved in a biting incident. We ask that you remember that this is a developmentally appropriate behavior, and that the staff will be working to identify situations which, provoke, or elicit this behavior so it can be prevented in the future. The staff will not punish or harshly discipline children in the younger classrooms for biting behavior; they will simply redirect the children to different activities in separate areas of the classroom. Parents are expected to work with staff to identify methods and strategies to curb this behavior.

Parents will be notified by an Accident/Incident report that a biting incident occurred. The staff may not discuss with either parent the identity of the other child involved in the incident. This information is confidential and cannot be disclosed. The staff of Little Explorers Learning Center cannot discuss the medical history of any child involved in a biting incident. If the parents are concerned about a communicable disease possibly resulting from the biting incident, please let the child see your family physician.

### **NOTIFICATION OF ABSENCE**

Parents are required to inform the center by 7:00 AM if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to be effective to maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teachers effectively plan for the day. If your child is absent for any reason, you will still be charged the normal daily rate.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the Director not only of the absence but also of the nature of the illness. This information will only be shared with the staff on a “need to know” basis.

***Please keep in mind that children participating in the School Readiness Program are not allowed to miss more than 3 unexcused absences. Excessive absenteeism will NOT be tolerated and lead to termination.***

***Five consecutive absences without any communication from the parent(s) will lead to termination. NO spots will be reserved unless approved by the director of the center. This policy is for VPK students as well.***

***VPK Only – Parents are required to verify attendance by signing a “Child Attendance and Parental Choice Certificate (short form) every month that the child attends our VPK program.***

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE**

If your child has a communicable disease, (Appendix A - communicable disease), we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center’s Director so that parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Little Explorers Learning Center will take all measures necessary to protect your child’s confidentiality.

When the child is no longer ill or contagious and is healthy enough to actively play with other children he or she may come back to the center. This helps protect the health and well-being of all the children at the center and enables us to provide the best possible environment for the children.

These are common symptoms that a child has a contagious condition:

<u>Symptoms</u>	<u>Child May Not Return to School Until:</u>
Fever of 101 or above	The temperature has returned to normal for at least 24 hours.
Cold/Flu symptoms	Thick yellow or green mucus discharge is no longer draining from nose for at least 24 hours and coughing has subsided.
Diarrhea/Vomiting	Loose stools and vomiting have subsided for at least 24 hours and your child has returned to normal eating with no stomach upset.
Earache/Sore Throat	A doctor has written a release for your child to return to school, or has been on antibiotics for 24 hours, or symptoms subside.
Red/ Discharging Eyes	Eyes are clear, or your child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
Rash	Spreading, itching and/or discomfort have disappeared or have been diagnosed by a doctor as non-communicable.
Head Lice	The child has been treated with lice shampoo and <i>all nits have been removed from hair.</i>  Before the child can return to school, we must be provided with a receipt or the box that was used to remove the head lice. No child will be accepted back to school until this has been provided.

Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached, but cannot pick their child up, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact list. The staff will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up.

### THE 24-HOUR "SYMPTOM FREE" RULE

Little Explorers' policy requires that your child be free of symptoms of illness for at least 24 hours before returning to school. *Fever-free means without medication for fever reduction.*

*Please keep in mind that if we send your child home because of illness, the child will not be admitted to the Center the next day because the 24-hour period will not have elapsed.*

### DISPENSING MEDICATION

#### Prescription Medication Only

Little Explorers Learning Center will **only administer prescription medication** when it is **medically necessary during program hours**.

The center does **not administer any non-prescription (over the counter) medication**.

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#### Authorization Requirements

- A completed **Medication Authorization Form** signed by the child's legal parent/guardian is required prior to any administration
  - Medication must be in the **original pharmacy-labeled container**
  - The label must include:
    - Child's full name
    - Medication name
    - Dosage
    - Administration instructions
  - The information on the label must match the authorization form
- 

#### Administration Guidelines

- Medication will be administered **only as prescribed and labeled**
  - Medication must be **hand-delivered by the parent/guardian** to a staff member
  - Medication may **not be stored** in a child's bag, cubby, or personal belongings
  - A written **medication log** will be maintained for each administration
- 

#### Storage Requirements

- All medication will be stored **securely and out of reach of children**
- Refrigerated medications will be stored in a **designated, labeled area**

## Restrictions

- The center will **not administer expired medication**
  - The center reserves the right to **refuse medication administration** if all requirements are not met
  - Medication will only be administered during program hours if it **cannot reasonably be given at home**
- 

## Emergency Medication Exception

- Life-saving medications (such as inhalers or EpiPens) are permitted with:
  - Completed authorization form
  - Physician instructions

## MEDICATIONS DELIVERED BY A DEVICE (I.E. EPI-PEN, INHALER, NEBULIZER)

Parents or health care professionals must provide written instructions on indications for use that include signs and symptoms that the medication is needed for the child. Parents or health care professionals demonstrate use of the device and any special care before and after use to all staff who will be administering the medication. If there are any changes to the medication or device, training is provided to staff who will be administering the medication. If no changes are made, training is required for all staff who will be administering the medication. Please request a medication form from the office staff.

## DIAPER CREAM/OINTMENT/PASTE

Parents may provide diaper cream/ointment/paste if needed for their child. Parents understand that they are required to administer the first use of any of these products prior to bringing them to the center and are aware of any form of allergic reaction to such products. The center will not be responsible for any form of allergic reaction to any of these products. The center will NOT use baby powder of any kind as it has been documented that it may cause breathing problems when disbursed into the air.

## SUNSCREEN

Children spend a great deal of time outdoors during most days. If you would like your child to use sunscreen, please apply it in the morning before coming to school. The center will NOT provide sunscreen or apply sunscreen on a child.

## BUG SPRAY

Children spend a great deal of time outdoors during most days. If you would like your child to use bug spray, please apply it in the morning before coming to school. The center will NOT provide or apply bug spray on a child.

## FIRE/EMERGENCY DRILLS

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

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the center is during a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed, and the staff and children return to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the center is having a real fire/emergency, parents will be asked to wait until the Director or designee staff has accounted for all staff and

children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

### ALTERNATE SAFE LOCATION

Should the administration of Little Explorers Learning Center or any emergency services personnel determine the building which house the childcare center to be dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to the location designated in the evacuation plan located in the center's lobby. Once children are assembled there, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact person(s) for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the telephone call.

### ACCIDENT/INCIDENT

The parent understands Little Explorers Learning Center is responsible for informing parents of any accidents or incidents occurring during the day. Accident/Incident Reports are filled out, signed, and filed into the child's history folder. Should your child be involved in an Accident/Incident during the school day, a staff member will complete an Accident/Incident Report.

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

Should a person other than the parent or designated to act "in the place or role of a parent" pick-up the child, an Accident/Incident Report will be provided but must be signed by the parent(s) and returned within 24 hours. Failure to sign and return an Accident/Incident Report at this time will result in your child's exclusion from the program until the report is returned signed.

### POTTY TRAINING & TOILET LEARNING POLICY

#### Potty Training Start Age

At Little Explorers Learning Center, potty training will **not begin before the age of 2 years old**. Children must demonstrate developmental readiness before potty training is introduced in the classroom.

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#### Readiness Requirements

Before beginning potty training at the center, children must show signs of readiness, including:

- Staying dry for extended periods
- Communicating needs (verbal or non-verbal)
- Showing interest in the toilet
- Ability to follow simple directions
- Ability to pull clothing up and down with minimal assistance

Potty training will only begin when **both the parent and teaching staff agree the child is ready**.

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## Parent & School Partnership

Potty training is a **shared responsibility** between home and school.

Parents are expected to:

- Begin potty training at home first
- Maintain consistency between home and school
- Provide **3–5 full changes of clothing daily**
- Dress children in easy-to-remove clothing (no overalls, belts, or complicated outfits)

Consistency is critical for success.

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## Classroom Procedures

- Children will be taken to the restroom at scheduled intervals
- Teachers will encourage, guide, and support the child
- Positive reinforcement will be used
- Children will never be punished, ashamed, or forced

Our goal is to create a **positive and stress-free experience**.

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## Accidents & Regression

Accidents are a normal part of the process. However:

- If a child has **frequented or excessive accidents throughout the day**, potty training may be paused at the center
- The child may be required to return to pull-ups until readiness improves
- Parents may be asked to continue training at home before resuming at school

This ensures a healthy and manageable classroom environment.

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## Pull-Ups & Transition to Underwear

- Children in training must wear **pull-ups**
- Transition to underwear will occur once the child:
  - Stay dry consistently
  - Communicates the need to use the restroom
  - Demonstrates independence

## Preschool Toilet Training Requirement

Children enrolled in Preschool classrooms (ages 3 and up) are expected to be fully potty trained.

Fully potty trained means the child can:

- Use the toilet independently
- Communicate restroom needs
- Remain dry throughout the day
- Manage clothing with minimal assistance

**If a child is not fully potty trained:**

- Continued enrollment in the preschool classroom may be delayed  
OR
- The child may be transitioned back to a younger classroom (if space allows)  
OR
- Parents may be required to complete potty training at home before returning to the program

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**Diapering, Pull-Ups & Sanitation Requirements**

To maintain proper hygiene and comply with health and safety standards:

- Children in the potty-training process must wear disposable pull-ups or diapers only
- Cloth training underwear or reusable training pants are not permitted in the center
- Due to sanitation and licensing requirements, the center cannot rinse, clean, or store soiled reusable items

**In the event of a bowel movement:**

- Soiled clothing will be securely bagged and sent home
- Items heavily soiled with feces may be disposed of at the center's discretion to maintain a sanitary environment

**Parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Providing an adequate supply of disposable pull-ups/diapers
- Supplying multiple changes of clothing daily

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**Important Note:** Every child develops at their own pace. While we provide guidance and support, we do not force potty training.

**FIREARMS AND WEAPONS**

At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of firearm, ammunition and/or weapon on the property for any reason. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program.

**CHILD SAFETY & ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE POLICY**

At Little Explorers Learning Center, the safety, well-being, and protection of every child in our care is our highest priority. We maintain a zero-tolerance policy for any form of abuse, including but not limited to physical, verbal, emotional, or inappropriate disciplinary practices.

## Reporting a Concern

If a parent/guardian becomes aware of, or a child reports, an incident involving a staff member that may include hitting, rough handling, or any form of abuse, the parent/guardian is expected to report the concern immediately to the Center Director or Administration.

Reports may be made:

- In person
- By phone
- In writing (including through Procure messaging)

All reports will be taken seriously, documented, and handled with urgency and confidentiality.

## Immediate Action by the Center

Upon receiving a report of alleged abuse, the Center will:

- Ensure the immediate safety and well-being of all children
- Remove the staff member from direct contact with children pending further review, when appropriate
- Document the allegation in detail
- Notify appropriate leadership and begin an internal review

## Mandatory Reporting Requirements

Little Explorers Learning Center follows all Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) requirements. Any allegation or suspicion of abuse will be reported to the Florida Abuse Hotline as required by law.

Parents also have the right to report concerns directly to:

- **Florida Abuse Hotline: 1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)**
- Online: <https://reportabuse.dcf.state.fl.us>

## Investigation Process

- The Center will cooperate fully with all regulatory agencies, including DCF and licensing authorities
- Internal reviews will be conducted in alignment with state guidelines
- Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent permitted by law

## Communication with Families

- Parents of children directly involved will be notified as appropriate
- Due to confidentiality laws, specific personnel actions or details of the investigation may not be shared
- The Center will provide updates when permissible and appropriate

## Protection from Retaliation

Little Explorers Learning Center strictly prohibits retaliation against any child, parent, or staff member who reports a concern in good faith.

## **Our Commitment**

We are committed to maintaining a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment for all children. Every concern is treated with the seriousness it deserves to ensure the highest standards of care are always upheld.

### **MANDATED REPORTING OF SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT:**

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

The staff of Little Explorers Learning Center cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith”.

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

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

### **RILYA WILSON ACT**

Pursuant to s. 39.604, Florida Statutes, a child from birth to the age of school entry, who is under court-ordered protective supervision or in out-of-home care and is enrolled in an early education or childcare program must attend the program 5 days a week unless the court grants an exemption. A child enrolled in an early education or childcare program who meets the requirements of this act may not be withdrawn from the program without prior written approval of the Department or community-based care lead agency. If a child covered by this act is absent, the program shall report any unexcused absence or seven excused absences to the Department or the community-based care lead agency by the end of the business day following the unexcused absence or seventh consecutive excused absence.

Educational stability and transition are key components of this act to minimize disruptions, secure attachments and maintain stable relationships with supportive caregivers of children from birth to school age. Successful partnerships are imperative to ensure that these attachments are not disrupted due to placement in out-of-home care or subsequent changes in out-of-home placement. A child must be allowed

to remain in the childcare or early education setting that he/she attended before entry into out-of-home care, unless the program is not in the best interest of the child. If a child from birth to school-age leaves a childcare or early education program, a transition plan needs to be developed that involves cooperation and sharing of information among all persons involved, respects the child's developmental stage, and associated psychological needs, and allows for a gradual transition from one setting to another.

This law provides priority for childcare services for specified children who are at risk of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. *These children are also known as Protective Services children.*

### **Rilya Wilson Act Requirements:**

- Protective services children **MUST** be enrolled to participate 5 days per week.
- Protective services children **MAY NOT** be withdrawn without prior written approval from the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or Community Based Care (CBC).
- If a Protective Services child has 7 consecutive excused or any unexcused absence, the childcare provider **MUST** notify the appropriate community-based care staff.
- The Department and childcare providers **MUST** follow local protocols set up by the CBC to ensure continuity.
- If it is not in the best interest of the child to remain at the childcare or early education program, the caregiver **MUST** work with the Case Manager, Guardian Ad Litem, childcare and educational staff, and educational surrogate, if one has been appointed, to determine the best setting for the child.

Community-Based Care Lead Agencies Contact Information:

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/cbc/docs/leadagencycontacts.pdf>

**\*\* If you have concerns regarding any child that you may care for, please contact the Florida Abuse Hotline at 1-800-96-ABUSE\*\***

### **PERSON(S) APPEARING TO BE IMPAIRED BY ALCOHOL/ DRUGS AT PICK-UP:**

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

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

### **EMERGENCY CLOSING AND INCLEMENT WEATHER INFORMATION:**

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by calling the center's main telephone line at (239) 231-3530, our Facebook page or parent app.

Should the school close in the middle of the day, the school staff will attempt to reach the child's parents first to arrange to pick up. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the person(s) listed in the emergency contact

section will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person(s) at the time of the call of the pick-up locations should the children need to be evacuated from the childcare center. Parents or emergency contact person(s) should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

Should the center need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than 10 school days. If the closure extends beyond 10 school days, parents will have their tuition reduced.

### **DISCIPLINE:**

At Little Explorers Learning Center, we believe that keeping children busy and actively engaged decreases the frequency of behavior problems in the classroom. Transition activities help the children move smoothly from one activity to another. Our teachers use only positive guidance and redirection. Setting consistent, clear understandable limits fosters the child's ability to become self-disciplined, which is our goal. We encourage staff to try to ignore negative behavior as much as possible and reinforce appropriate behavior. Hopefully, this will draw the child into the group and thus avoid the need for frequent discipline. When these methods do not work, your child will be moved to a relaxing area where they can reflect on bad behavior.

Little Explorers Learning Center prohibits corporal punishment of any kind, cruel, or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse. No child will be denied food as a form of punishment or punished for soiling or wetting their clothing. If a behavior problem presents itself, every attempt will be made to remedy the situation. However, dismissal of a child for behavior problems will be at the sole discretion of Little Explorers Learning Center.

Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, this Center will practice the following discipline and behavior management policy. Parents are encouraged to follow the same discipline management policy:

### **WE:**

1. **Do** praise, reward, and encourage the children.
2. **Do** reason with and set limits for the children.
3. **Do** model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. **Do** modify the classroom environment to attempt to prevent problems before they occur.
5. **Do** listen to the children.
6. **Do** provide alternatives to the children for inappropriate behavior.
7. **Do** provide the children with natural and logical consequences.
8. **Do** treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
9. **Do** ignore minor misbehavior.
10. **Do** explain things to the children on their level of understanding.
11. **Do** use short, supervised periods of "Time Out".
12. **Do** stay consistent in our behavior management program.

### **WE DO NOT:**

1. Spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children.
2. Make fun of, yell at, threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
3. Shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
4. Deny food or rest as punishment.
5. Relate discipline to eating, resting, or sleeping.
6. Leave the children alone, unattended, or without supervision.
7. Place the children in locked rooms, closets, or boxes as punishment.

8. Allow discipline of children by children.
9. Criticize, make fun of, or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups.

Please do not be discouraged if your child is disciplined. Children act out and test our limits at all stages of development. This behavior will pass if we are all consistent. You will be notified of any behavior we feel should be reinforced at home.

Children of new clients will be placed in our care on a two-week trial basis. This allows both parties to get acquainted with each other and see any personality conflicts or disciplinary problems that may arise. During this time, both parties can terminate the agreement and seek alternative childcare arrangements.

If the child has a disciplinary problem, parents will be notified so we can take a course of action together to rectify the problem. If the child's behavior becomes unmanageable or endangering the safety of other children or staff members, the child may be suspended or expelled without notice.

### **PROPERTY DAMAGE POLICY:**

#### **Care of Center Property**

Little Explorers Learning Center provides a safe and engaging environment with materials, furniture, and equipment designed for children's use.

Children are expected to treat all center property with care and respect.

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#### **Damage to Property**

While normal wear and tears is expected, **intentional, repeated, or excessive damage** to center property will not be considered typical use.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Breaking furniture or classroom materials
  - Damaging toys beyond normal use
  - Destruction of learning materials
  - Damage to equipment or facility property
- 

#### **Parent Responsibility**

Parents/guardians may be held **financially responsible** for repair or replacement costs if damage is determined to be:

- Intentional
  - Repeated after redirection
  - Caused by unsafe or inappropriate behavior
-

## Assessment of Damage

The center administration will:

- Review the incident
  - Determine if the damage exceeds normal wear and tear
  - Notify the parents of the cost and resolution
- 

## Behavior Support

In addition to any financial responsibility:

- A behavior plan may be implemented
- Continued behavior may result in suspension or termination of services

## **CHILDREN SUSPENSION/EXPULSION POLICY:**

I (we) understand that my (our) child may be suspended or expelled without notice due to the child's unmanageable behavior, endangering the safety of other children or staff members. In addition, inappropriate parent, or legal guardian behavior such as vulgarity, intimidation and sexual or other harassment will not be tolerated and can result in the termination of services.

## **PARENT CODE OF CONDUCT:**

Little Explorers Learning Center requires that parent(s) of enrolled children behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect always. One of the goals of Little Explorers Learning Center is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Little Explorers Learning Center but is the responsibility of each parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on the property thereafter.

## **SWEARING/CURSING**

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

## **THREATENING OF EMPLOYEES, CHILDREN AND OTHER ADULTS**

Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. Today, Little Explorers Learning Center cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. All threats will be reported to the local police and will be fully prosecuted by the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the center will not assume the risk of a second chance. Parents must always be responsible for and control their behavior.

## **PHYSICAL/VERBAL PUNISHMENT OF YOUR CHILD OR OTHER CHILDREN**

While Little Explorers Learning Center does not necessarily support nor condone corporal punishment of children, such acts are not permitted in the childcare center. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate, it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional

distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures.

Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. No parent or another adult may physically or verbally punish another child. If parent(s) should witness another child behaving in an inappropriate manner, or is concerned about their behavior, it is most appropriate for the parent(s) to direct the child's behavior to the classroom teacher and/or Director.

All behavioral concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or Director's attention. At that point, the teacher and/or Director will address the issue with the parent(s). Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in the center have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy.

### SMOKING

For the health of all Little Explorers Learning Center children and employees, smoking is prohibited anywhere on the property. Parents are prohibited from smoking in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Little Explorers Learning Center. Parents who are smoking in their cars must dispose of the cigarette prior to entering the parking lot.

### VIOLATIONS OF THE SAFETY

Parents are always required to follow all safety procedures. These procedures are designed not as mere inconveniences, but to protect the welfare and best interest of the children and employees of Little Explorers Learning Center. Please be particularly mindful of Little Explorers Learning Center Arrival Procedures. We need to be careful not to allow unauthorized individuals into the center. Holding the door open for the person following you may, in fact, be polite; however, that person may not be authorized to enter the premises. Security procedures are only as strong as the weakest person in our organizational chain. Be alert and mindful and immediately report any breaches to the staff.

### CONFRONTATIONAL INTERACTIONS WITH EMPLOYEES AND OTHER PARENTS

While it is understood that parents will not always agree with the employees of Little Explorers Learning Center or the parents of the other children, it is expected that all disagreement be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point and are strictly prohibited. All parties involved in a confrontational interaction may be dismissed from the program.

### VIOLATIONS OF THE CONFIDENTIALITY

Little Explorers Learning Center takes very seriously the responsibility of maintaining the confidentiality of all people associated with the center. Parents must understand the implications of this responsibility. Parents need to recognize that the Confidentiality Policy not only applies to their child or family, but all children, families and employees associated with Little Explorers Learning Center. Any parent who shares any information considered to be confidential will be in violation of the Confidentiality Policy.

### ANTI-IDLING:

Staff should not leave their vehicles idling when in the front and back parking lots. If a staff member notices a parent/guardian/authorized pick-up/ or visitor leaving their vehicle idling in the parking lot, employee should immediately notify an onsite supervisor so that supervisor may inform such person about the importance of reducing children's exposure to vehicle exhaust.

## SOCIAL MEDIA/PRIVACY POLICY:

At Little Explorers Learning Center (LELC), we enjoy sharing the wonderful things happening in our classrooms. Social media helps us keep families and the community connected; while also promoting the learning experiences your children enjoy each day.

### How We Use Social Media

- Posts may include classroom activities, center events, and general program updates.
- Photos or videos of children will **only** be shared if parents/guardians have signed a **Media Release Form**.
- We never share children's full names, addresses, or other personal identifying information.

### Protecting Privacy

- Your child's safety and privacy are our top priority.
- If you do not wish your child to appear in photos or videos, please let us know in writing, and we will honor your request.

### Communication with Families

- Social media is for program highlights and announcements, not for individual communication.
- If you have questions about your child, please use our official communication channels (Procure, phone, or email).

**Our Commitment:** We use social media responsibly to celebrate children's growth and to keep families connected. You can trust that your child's privacy and safety will always come first.

## COURT ORDERS EFFECTING ENROLLED CHILDREN:

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

In the absence of a court order, both parents should be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. Little Explorers Learning Center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself, where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Little Explorers Learning Center suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued.

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

## CHANGES TO AUTHORIZE PICK-UPS/GUARDIANS/PARENTS:

If you need to make changes to your child's authorized pick-ups by adding or removing, please request an Updated Pick-Up list from the office. Please note once you declared another person as the legal parent to the

child in your paperwork, the center will not remove any legal guardians or parent as an authorize pick-up without providing a custody agreement or a court order, regardless of one parent signed up the child and added other parent later. The center will not get involved in such family matters unless the other parent shows signs that the child may be in danger.

### **STAFF EMPLOYMENT BY CLIENT(S):**

The staff of Little Explorers Learning Center is prohibited from being employed by any client (current or former). Parents are prohibited from soliciting any staff member for the purpose of employment. Parents who employ Little Explorers Learning Center staff will have their services terminated. Employees who become employed by a current or former client of Little Explorers Learning Center will have their employment with Little Explorers Learning Center terminated.

Employment refers to any relationship outside of the center's services which involves an employee of Little Explorers Learning Center interacting with a current or former client of Little Explorers Learning Center. Such relationships include but are not limited to baby-sitting, house-sitting, mother's helper, nanny services, and carpooling regardless of whether those services are voluntary or paid.

### **VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY:**

To ensure the safety and security of all children, staff, parents, and visitors, as well as the security of our daycare facility, Little Explorers Learning Center is equipped with 24-hour video surveillance system. Security cameras are installed in all classrooms, hallways, outdoor play areas, and parking lots. LELC has reserved the right to conduct video surveillance of any portion of its premises at any time, the only exception being private areas such as restrooms and dressing areas. Video/security cameras will be positioned in appropriate places within and around our daycare center facility and used to help promote the safety and security of people and property.

[The following are just some of the many benefits of having security cameras installed in daycare centers.](#)

- \* Security cameras keep children & staff safe & are very effective deterrent of any crime.
- \* People tend to behave/perform better when there are security cameras around.
- \* Owners/Directors can better monitor the facility and supervise/observe staff's interactions with children.
- \* They provide peace of mind to our parents & staff.

***Because we respect the privacy of all children, parents, and staff in our daycare center, our 24-hour video surveillance system/ security cameras are for internal purposes only. It will be ONLY shared with staff for training purposes and with authorized authorities, when requested with a warrant. It will NOT be shared with parents or visitors.***

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY:**

Little Explorers Learning Center has an open-door policy. All parents always have access to their children. We encourage parents to participate in their children's activities when possible.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURE:**

We always aim to provide a high standard of care in all our services. Our customers' views are important to us and help to ensure our services are consistently meeting people's needs. If you are unhappy with any of our services, it is important that you let us know. If you would like to file a complaint, please speak to the director or assistant director.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSURE:**

If the center closes unexpectedly because of an “Act of God” or State of Emergency, no tuition fees will be charged to parents. However, if the center is open and you decide that it is in the best interest to keep your child at home, you will need to properly terminate your contract with the center by providing a two-week notice in writing. If we do not receive your notice of termination, you will be responsible to continue to pay for the weekly tuition. The center will not hold any spots for unpaid tuition.

## **COMMUNICATION POLICY:**

### **COMMUNICATION & PROCARE APP**

Little Explorers Learning Center uses the Procure app as the primary method of communication.

Through Procure, parents will receive:

- Daily updates (meals, activities, naps)
- Photos and videos
- Important announcements
- Billing and payment notifications

### **Parent Expectations:**

- Check Procure daily
- Maintain updated contact information
- Respond to urgent messages in a timely manner

This ensures consistent and effective communication between families and staff.

## **WITHDRAW:**

Little Explorers Learning Center reserves the right to terminate any agreements or contracts at any time for any sufficient reason, including but not limited to late payment, misbehavior, or unruliness of the child. The center’s staff will make every effort to give reasonable notice to allow parents time to obtain alternate childcare arrangements.

You also have the right to withdraw your child from the center at any time, for any reason. However, you must give the center a two weeks’ notice when canceling service. If the center is not given two weeks’ notice, you will be required to pay for the two weeks.

Following their last day’s enrollment, the parents and child are not permitted to re-enter the property without prior permission of the Director. A withdrawn child and his/her parent(s) are required to call and request an appointment with the Director if they wish to return to the property following the last day of enrollment at Little Explorers Learning Center. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Director. Your two-week notice must be provided in writing. Notifying through conversation will not be accepted. Your two-week notice will start the day that we receive it in writing.

# **APPENDIX A**

## **Communicable Disease Information**

### **Chicken Pox:**

**Symptoms:** Sudden onset of mild fever, sometimes vomiting. Eruptions appear within 24 hours in the form of small blisters on body, face and forehead. There may be a few skin lesions or many. Do not give aspirin.

**Incubation Period:** 13 to 21 days.

**Isolation of Case:** Until 7 days after appearance of skin rash. Highly contagious. After all sores have dried & crusted (usually 6 days).

### **German Measles (Rubella):**

**Symptoms:** Mild illness. Rash resembles (but less red than) measles

### **Measles (Rubeola):**

Scarlet fever. Swelling of lymph glands behind ear and neck.

**Incubation Period:** 14 to 21 days.

**Isolation of Case:** 5-7 days after onset of rash.

**Symptoms:** Cold, runny nose, redness of eyes, sensitivity to light, coughs or fever. This is the most infectious stage of the disease. After 3 days, a dark rash appears, first behind the ears, then on neck and face, becoming generalized.

**Incubation Period:** 10 to 12 days.

**Isolation of Case:** 4 days from appearance of rash.

### **Mumps:**

**Symptoms:** Swelling and pain in one or both glands, fever 101 to 104 degrees, headache, earache, sore throat, pain when swallowing, tiredness, muscle & joint aches, poor appetite and vomiting.

**Incubation Period:** 16 to 18 days.

**Isolation of Case:** 4 days after onset of symptoms.

### **Whooping Cough (Pertussis)**

### **Roseola:**

**Symptoms:** Cough, which develops into sharp, rapid, repetitive coughing. Extremely contagious; may be quite severe.

**Incubation Period:** 7 to 10 days (usually not exceeding 21 days).

**Isolation of Case:** Up to 14 days after treatment begins.

**Symptoms:** High fever followed by rash 12-24 hours after fever has gone. Rare before 6 months and after 3 years.

**Incubation Period:** Not known (Estimated 5-15 days).

**Isolation of Case:** None.

**Fifth Disease ("Slapped Cheek" Fever):**

**Symptoms:** On the face, rash is intensely red with a slapped cheek appearance. Face rash fades and a pink lace-like rash appear on arms, legs, and trunk. No itching; no blisters.

**Incubation Period:** 4 to 20 days before rash.

**Isolation of Case:** No isolation. No treatment.

**Strep Infections (Respiratory):**

**Symptoms:** Headache, vomiting, sore throat, fever (maybe high or slight), rash (may appear within 24-48 hours). The rash may be slight or transient or there may be no rash.

**Incubation Period:** 1 to 3 days.

**Hepatitis A:**

**Isolation of Case:** 24 hours after start of antibiotics and cessation of fever.

**Symptoms:** Viral infection of the liver. Symptoms can vary in loss of appetite, nausea, fever, abdominal pain. Transmitted through stools of infected person, contaminated hands, and being swallowed.

**Incubation Period:** 15 to 30 days.

**Isolation of Case:** Notify Health Department. Use careful hand washing to prevent spreading. Vaccine now available.

**Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis) Bacterial or Viral:**

**Symptoms:** Redness, yellow discharge, swelling of lids. Easily spread to others. Clear discharge may indicate allergies.

**Incubation Period:** 24 to 72 hours.

**Isolation of Case:** 24 hours after treatment has begun.

**Impetigo Contagiosa (Staph or Strep Infection)**

**Ringworm (Capitis):**

**Symptoms:** Scattered blistering or pustular lesions, which become crusted. Commonly found on the face, arms, or scattered over the body.

**Incubation Period:** Undetermined, but probably 2 to 5 days.

**Isolation of Case:** 24 hours after treatment has begun.

**Symptoms:** Fungal infection of scalp or body. Flat, spreading, ring-shaped lesions, red on edge and clear in center. When they occur in scalp, hair tends to break off, leaving bald spot.

**Incubation Period:** None.

**Isolation of Case:** Exclusion until condition is healed or, if single lesion, same as impetigo.

**Scabies:**

**Symptoms:** Skin infection caused by mites. Spread through direct skin contact and shared bedding. Symptoms include Itchy bumps, scratch-like lines under skin around hands, wrist, and between fingers.

**Incubation Period:** 2 to 6 weeks without previous exposure.

**Isolation of Case:** Exclusion until treatment is completed.

**Hand, Foot & Mouth Disease (Coxsackie Virus):**

**Symptoms:** A viral rash. Mild fever, small painful sores in mouth and throat, rash on palms or hands, soles of feet and legs may be noted.

**Incubation Period:** 3 - 7 days.

**Isolation of Case:** Until temperature normal for 24 hours.

**Head Lice (Tinea Corporis):**

**Symptoms:** "Itchy scalp" caused by insect (louse). Eggs (nits) appear as tiny gray-white pearls glued to hair, especially around neck and behind ears.

**Incubation Period:** Immediate

**Isolation of Case:** Exclude until treated with recommended shampoo. Remove all nits before returning to school.