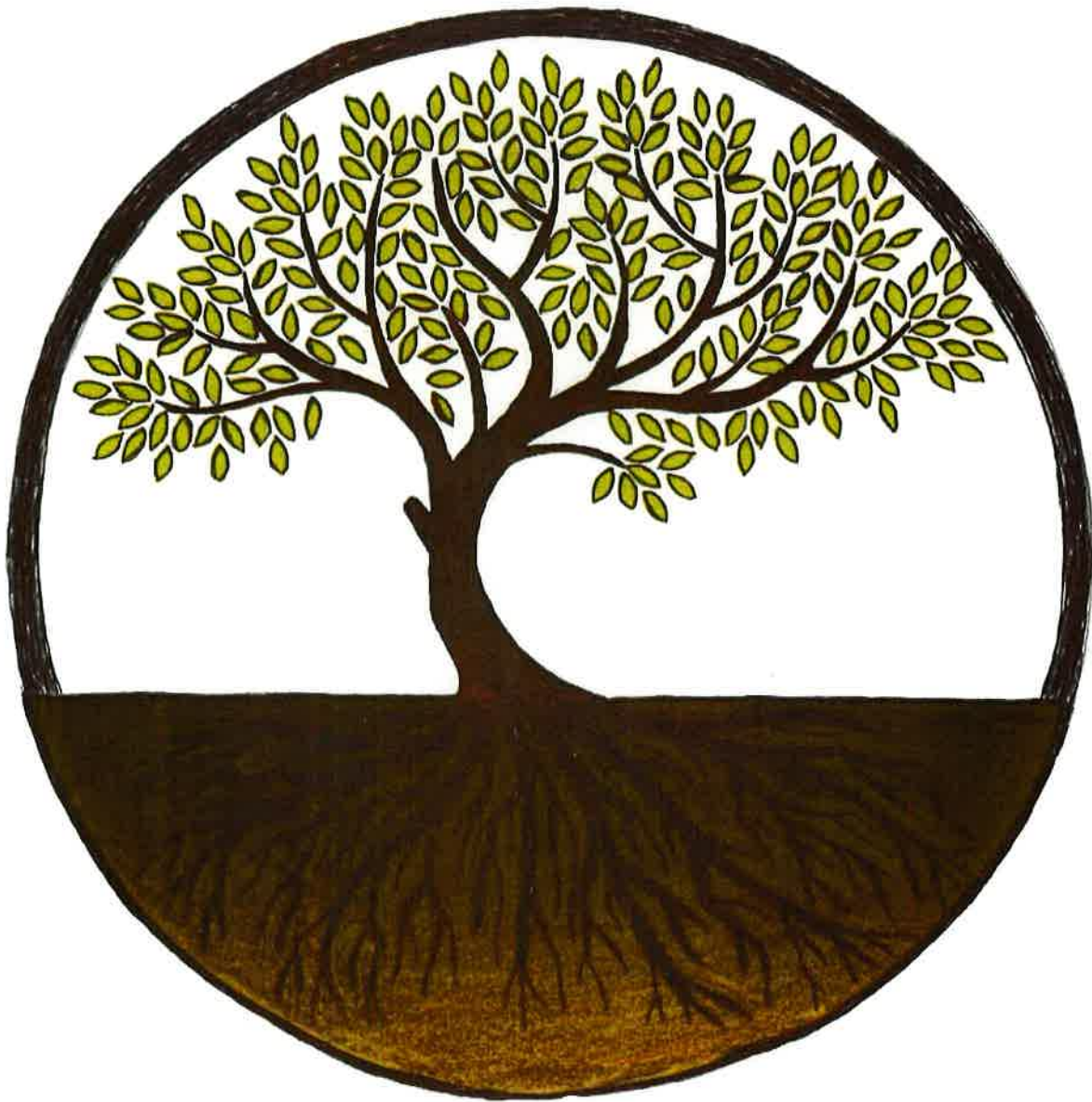


# The Growing Tree Child Care Center



5000 South 3<sup>rd</sup> Street

Whitehall PA 18052

610-264-1177

*Where strong family roots are planted and  
growing begins...*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to The Growing Tree Child Care Center. Thank you for choosing our Center to provide care for your child. We are proud to offer the kind of care that makes families feel like we are a second home!

The Growing Tree Child Care Center (referred to hereafter as "The Growing Tree" or the "Center"), and its predecessors, have been a Pennsylvania licensed facility since 1990. It is required that all licensed centers be inspected yearly by the Department of Human Services (hereafter "DHS"). At a minimum, we are required to follow state guidelines, however, we have chosen to participate in the Keystone STARS Program (*See Section on Keystone STARS*) which has health and safety standards that exceed Pennsylvania requirements.

This Family Handbook is designed with you in mind, to share important Center information and to outline Center policies. Please keep this Handbook in a safe place for referral by you any time you have a question on any Center policies or procedures.

We encourage families to take an active interest in their child's day and we have an "open door" policy for your discussions with us. Working together with families is important to us. Communication is key and we do our best to keep families informed. Your input, ideas and suggestions are always welcome!

We appreciate your faith and trust in us to provide care for your child and we are happy to welcome your family to our "***Growing Tree Family.***"

Jamie Polzer-Toth and Nicole Polzer-Grieco  
(Director) (Assistant Director)

## **II. CHILD CARE PHILOSOPHIES**

### **A. Our Mission**

Our mission is to provide a warm and nurturing environment that inspires children to learn and grow through developmentally appropriate experiences; to create strong family/child/staff connections; and to guide development of children's social and emotional intelligence in order to build a strong foundation for future success in life.

### **B. Our Philosophy**

Our Center believes in providing children of all abilities with a safe, child-centered environment. Using our knowledge of child development and developmentally appropriate practices, we focus on providing learning experiences based on children's interests and relevance to their lives. We believe strong family relationships are an integral part in helping children to feel safe to learn and to thrive. We recognize the value in having educated, dedicated teachers to guide social and emotional development so children realize their own self-worth and develop positive social interactions.

### **C. Partnership with Families/Family Engagement**

Our goal is to create strong bonds with children and their families. We want to work together to best meet the needs of the children in our care and provide families with the information they need for their children to be successful. To achieve this goal, we do the following:

- We ask for completion of a Getting to Know You Form. A meeting will be scheduled to get to know about each child's family environment to best meet their needs. (For example: language used at home, living arrangements, allergies etc.).
- Transition information, visitation schedules and Welcome Packets with information specific to each individual classroom.
- We invite parents to participate in classroom and Center-wide events.
- We work with families to meet social and emotional needs of children and families.
- We offer a transition meeting for Pre-K families whose child will go to Kindergarten.
- We educate and inform parents and staff of available support services for families.
- We offer resource books for parents in the office lending library.
- We conduct annual Parent Surveys for feedback.
- We offer 2 to 4 conferences per year (ASQ Developmental Screening, transition to new classroom, and two-yearly child progress reports).
- We communicate with families via REMIND (a communications program), daily reports (Infants through Toddler Two), dry erase boards for daily activities and updates (Preschool One through School Age Two), signage, monthly newsletter, calendar (Infants through Pre-K), and classroom transition information.
- We provide child progress reports twice a year with conferences offered.

#### **D. Discipline Practices**

We use positive guidance for misbehavior consistent with the age and developmental needs of the child. No child will be punished for failing to eat, failing to perform tasks, failing to participate in activities or for soiling themselves. Children are not punished by withholding food or emotional support. No staff member will hit, shake or use any other form of physical or emotional punishment for misbehaviors.

#### **E. Developmental Screenings**

Ages and Stages Developmental and Ages and Stages Social and Emotional screening tools are completed by families and teachers within forty-five (45) days of the start of care. Parents must sign a permission form to allow staff/teachers to complete these screenings upon enrollment. The screenings are reviewed by the director to identify any areas in which the child needs support. Parents are then offered a conference to discuss the screenings and to assist in decision-making for possible services and provide community resources to families, as needed.

Please let us know if help is needed to complete this screening form as we are happy to assist parents with this screening tool.

For School Age children, teachers use observations to complete an Observation Report within ninety (90) days of start date. This includes observation of social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. The observation is shared with parents and a conference offered. Upon signing, parents receive one copy and one copy is filed in the child's file. Any concerns will be addressed at the conference.

#### **F. Parental Code of Conduct**

There is a reasonable expectation that all adults entering our Center conduct themselves at all times in a respectful manner toward others including children, staff/teachers, and other parents.

Parents are expected to abide by the policies and procedures set forth in this Handbook for the safety of all children, families, and staff.

If adults present themselves as unable to safely take their child home, we will contact an alternate pick-up person as listed on the Emergency Contact Form. If an alternate is not available, due to our mandated reporting status, we are required to call Children and Youth Services. The Growing Tree shall, in its sole and exclusive determination, make such decision upon review of all available facts at the time of any such incident.

If a conflict should arise, we ask that you please contact the office immediately. We will make every effort to address any challenges and resolve conflicts, as soon as possible.

#### **G. Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is required of parents and families as well as Center staff. Family and staff information is confidential. Staff are instructed in the importance and practice of confidentiality. They are not permitted to share confidential information about other staff/teachers, children, or families. The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) prevents us from sharing information regarding sicknesses other than what has been diagnosed. We expect families to be respectful of the privacy of other families and our staff members.

### **III. LICENSING/STATE REGULATIONS**

#### **A. Licensing/Keystone STARS**

The Growing Tree is a Pennsylvania licensed facility. As with all licensed centers, inspections occur yearly by DHS. However, since 2010, our Center elected to participate in the Quality Rating and Improvement System Program (QRIS), the Keystone STARS.

Keystone STARS (Standards, Training/Professional Development, Assistance, Resources, and Support) is a quality rating system that promotes quality improvement in early learning programs and School Age child care. The STARS Program is a voluntary program that recognizes child care agencies that exceed minimum licensing standards. These agencies can receive a rating of one, two, three or four stars. Our rating is 4, which is the highest rating that can be received by DHS.

The program guides centers to achieve higher standards for health, safety, staff/teacher qualifications, education, environment, and management over and above what is required by DHS. By participating in the STARS Program, we offer families a higher quality of care for their child than many other centers in the area.

For more information on Keystone STARS and other organizations that promote quality care for children visit Pennsylvania's Promise for Children at [www.PAPromiseforchildren.com](http://www.PAPromiseforchildren.com).

#### **B. Staff/Teacher Hiring Qualifications and Training**

All staff/teachers working in child care must meet the following hiring qualifications set by DHS:

- Child Abuse Clearance
- Mandated Child Abuse Training (*See Mandated Reporting and Children's Rights*)
- Criminal Clearance
- FBI Fingerprinting Clearance
- Physical and TB test
- Pediatric CPR and First Aid Training
- NSOR Clearance (National Sex Offender Registry)
- Summer School Age staff take an annual Water Safety training course
- Emergency Preparedness Training
- DHS Fire Safety Training (Yearly)
- Ten (10) hours online training "Get Started in Center-Based Care."
- 1 hour Child Development training (Yearly)

In addition, Pennsylvania requires ten (12) hours of professional development each year and as a STAR Center, we require additional professional development training hours per year. These trainings are determined by Continuous Quality Improvement Planning based on the on-going needs of the Center overall as well as personal and professional development goals of staff.



### **C. Mandated Reporting and Children's Rights**

As Mandated Reporters, any staff who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse in the form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule or harsh, humiliating, or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect or exploitation by ANY ADULT, is required by law to report such allegation to the Office of Child Abuse Control immediately, while remaining anonymous.

In addition, we reserve the right to not release any child to a pick-up person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. In this instance, we contact a person listed on the Emergency Contact Form. However, if any other contact person is unavailable, we are required to call Children and Youth Services.

### **D. Nondiscrimination**

Admissions, the provision of services and referrals of clients will be made without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, national origin (including limited English proficiency), age or gender. The Growing Tree specifically complies with all governmental regulations, including, but not limited to, the Civil Rights Act, Title VII ("Title VII"), Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA") and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act ("ADEA").

Program services shall be made accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible method available. Pursuant to the ADA, The Growing Tree will offer a reasonable accommodation for a child if that child has a qualifying disability. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, provision of aides and the use of alternative service delivery locations. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

Any individual/child/student and/or parent who believes they have been discriminated against, may file a complaint of discrimination with the Department of Human Services, the PA Human Relations Commission, and/or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The address information is located on the Community Resources at the end of the Handbook.

### **E. Supervision Policy for Staff and Parents**

We have procedures in place for both staff and parents for best practice in safely supervising children. It is VITAL for parents to help by complying with the Center's supervision policy, as it affects their actions:

- STAFF use face/name recognition and counting of children as they move from place to place in the Center and outside or on a field trip.
- STAFF use child assignment lists each day to keep track of the children assigned to their classroom. This is handed off to PM staff when they come in.
- STAFF follow child/staff ratios per age group as per DHS regulations indoors and outside.
- STAFF initial Parent Memo daily to show they have read the communications regarding a child.
- PARENTS must sign their child in and out every day.
- PARENTS must contact us when their child is sick or will not be on the bus.

- PARENTS keep children with them and in sight at pick-up.
- PARENTS do not allow children to eat during a drop-off or pick-up (choking hazard).
- PARENTS provide up to date changes of contact information for Emergency Contact Forms.

These practices are set forth in more detail throughout the Handbook.

## F. Classrooms in the Center

The Growing Tree has nine (9) separate classrooms. Each room has a ratio based on the size of the room, and classroom teachers based on the number of children allowed in the classroom. Based on Pennsylvania state regulations for ratios of staff/teachers to students, our Center classrooms follows these ratios:

Classroom	Age	Ratio
Infant Room	6 weeks to 12 months	1:4
Walking Nursery	12 months to 18 months	1:5
Toddler One	18 months to 27 months	1:5
Toddler Two	27 months to 36 months	1:6
Preschool One	3 years to 3 1/2 years	1:10
Preschool Two	3 1/2 years to 4 years	1:10
Pre-K	4 years to 5 years	1:10
School Age One	Kindergarten to 1st grade	1:12
School Age Two	2nd grade to 11 years old	1:15

## G. Emergency Preparedness

The safety and welfare of all the children in the Center is always our number one priority. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will follow one of these protective safety procedures:

- Immediate evacuation on site - children are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the Center.
- In-house sheltering - sudden occurrence either weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate taking cover in the building to be the best immediate response.
- Evacuation - if total evacuation of the facility is necessary and there is a danger in the immediate area, children may be taken to a designated relocation facility: (1) First Presbyterian Church 3005 S. Front Street, Whitehall or (2) Hokendauqua Fire Company 3022 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Whitehall, PA 18052. The relocation facility will be determined by the danger/cause of relocation. Both facilities have shelter, water, heat, and bathroom facilities.
- Modified Operation - Channel 69 WFMZ News will have information on closings or delayed openings due to winter storms, utility interruptions, or building issues.
- As soon as possible, we will contact families via REMIND first or place calls to cell phones if we must take one of these protective actions. We also contact families when the situation is resolved, and it is safe for you to pick up your child.
- We ask families not to call us during the emergency, so phone lines are free to make calls out or gather important safety information.

- The Emergency Contact Form we have on file for your child is very important and must be accurate at all times. It will be used when your child is released in an emergency situation. Please ensure that only the persons you list on the form attempt to pick up your child. We urge you not to attempt to make different arrangements during an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

#### **IV. OPERATING INFORMATION**

##### **A. Hours of Operation**

The Center is open Monday through Friday from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM. The Center is closed on the following days:

New Year's Day  
4th of July  
Labor Day

Christmas Day  
Memorial Day  
Thanksgiving Day.

The Center will close early at 3:00 PM on New Year's Eve and 12:30 PM on Christmas Eve. We reserve the right to add additional days if needed, with advance notice to parents.

##### **B. Contact Information/Communications**

To speak with a teacher directly on any given day, the best time to call is during nap time. This is when the teacher is most available to talk, while not in direct care of children. This time frame is typically 1:30 PM - 3:00 PM. Otherwise, please call and leave a message and the teacher will make every effort to respond as quickly as possible. Feel free to contact the owners and director with any questions, concerns, or problems.

At the end of this Handbook you will find family and community resources which may be useful to you.

The Growing Tree Child Care Center  
3000 Third Street  
Whitehall, PA 18052  
Phone: 610-264-1177  
Fax: 610-264-7662  
Website: [growingtreechildcare.com](http://growingtreechildcare.com)

Jamie Polzer-Toth  
Email: [growingtree3@yahoo.com](mailto:growingtree3@yahoo.com)

Nicole Polzer-Grieco  
Email: [growingtree2019@yahoo.com](mailto:growingtree2019@yahoo.com)



### **C. Inclement Weather Closing**

We make every effort to open on days of inclement weather. We ask families to watch Channel 69 WFMZ News and/or look for a text via REMIND for communications regarding changes in opening/closing times due to weather. Also see the WFMZ posters by each exit.

### **D. Parent/Teacher Conferences**

The Growing Tree offers four (4) parent/teacher conferences each year: (i) upon completion of Ages and Stages questionnaires; (2) with classroom transitions; (3) with Winter Assessments; and (4) with Summer Assessments. Additional conferences can be held anytime at the request of parents, director, or lead teachers.

### **E. Building Security**

Our Center hosts thirty-one (31) cameras throughout the building, play yards and parking lot. These security cameras record and are monitored from the office.

For added security, families receive their own individual access code to enter the building at either of our two locked entrances. We ask your family code to be shared **ONLY** with the daily drop-off or pick-up adults and ask others to buzz in.

**PLEASE NOTE: CHILDREN ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TOUCH THE SECURITY ENTRANCE PAD. PLEASE DO NOT ALLOW YOUR CHILD TO KNOW OR ENTER YOUR CODE. DO NOT ALLOW UNKNOWN PERSONS TO ENTER THE BUILDING WITH YOU.**

### **F. Parking Lot**

For safety in our parking lot, we ask drivers to follow the guidelines below:

- Follow the arrows painted on the driveway to enter and exit the parking lot safely.
- Enter and exit the parking lot **SLOWLY**, being considerate and aware of other drivers and families getting into or out of their vehicles.
- **TURN OFF CAR ENGINES WHEN PARKED IN THE PARKING LOT.**
- The family parking lot is on the side of the building by the entrance and exit to the parking lot and by the wooden ramp. (Staff parking is along the wooden fence.)
- Please keep your child safe by closely supervising your child as you enter and exit the building. When leaving, supervise your child until safely at your vehicle.
- **DO NOT LET YOUR CHILD EXIT THE CLASSROOM WITHOUT YOU ON PICK-UP.** It is unsafe for children to run down a hallway or out the exit doors or gate without an adult.
- Children may want to eat from their lunchbox at pick-up. To avoid choking and dropped food, have your child **WAIT** to eat from their lunchbox until they are out of the building. *See Drop-Off/Pick-Up Section for more information.*

### **G. No Smoking**

Our Center and parking lot are **SMOKE FREE**. Smoking is not allowed in the building, in the parking lot or on the outside of the building at any time.

## **H. Fundraising**

In order to replace or purchase classroom items and make building or outdoor repairs, we count on fundraisers to help with financing. We have several fundraisers each year including but not limited to, Gertrude Hawk, Pellman Pies, Country Meat Sticks, and hoagies/sandwiches. We are always open to new ideas for fundraisers!

We appreciate the efforts of all families who participate in these fundraisers to help with Center-wide improvements. On occasion, prizes may be offered for our highest sellers.

## **I. Fire Drills**

We are required to hold fire drills every sixty (60) days. These practice drills are discussed ahead of time with the children, to explain what will happen and why. They are performed in as low key of a manner as possible. Young children who are unable to distinguish between fantasy and reality may have anxiety from these practices. If you feel your child may feel anxious in this situation, please advise their teachers.

## **J. Babysitting**

While we do not provide a babysitting service outside our normal operating hours, we understand parents sometimes ask staff to babysit their children. This policy has been developed to clarify private arrangements between staff and parents.

The Growing Tree is not responsible for any private arrangements or agreements made between the staff member and families. We do ask staff members to inform us if they are babysitting or caring for a child that attends the Center outside of the facility.

- We do not have control over the conduct of staff outside of their position of employment and encourage parents to make their own checks as to the suitability of a staff member for babysitting.
- We do not take responsibility for any health and safety issues, conduct, grievances or any other claims arising out of the staff member's private arrangements outside of Center hours.
- The staff member involved in the private arrangement will not be covered by the Center's insurance while babysitting as a private arrangement.
- Babysitting arrangements outside of the Center must not interfere with the staff member's employment at the Center.

## **K. Field Trips**

Any field trips for Toddlers or Preschoolers require car seats to be put into the Center's twenty-two (22) passenger bus. The bus driver must have a CDL license. Family chaperones are often requested, however, we are not responsible for the safety and welfare of any chaperones who volunteer to drive their own vehicle on a field trip.

If a child is enrolled on the day of a trip but not going on the trip, alternative arrangements for care need to be made for the duration of the trip. Due to ratios and staffing, we cannot place a

child in another classroom during a field trip or other classroom activity. If the trip is on a day a child does not attend, families are welcome to drive themselves and join in the event.

#### **L. Transportation of Children**

The Growing Tree has a twenty-two (22) seat passenger bus for field trips, only. We do not transport children to or from any of the Whitehall Schools. It has seat belts and the bus driver has a CDL license to drive the bus. The Whitehall-Coplay School District has a bus stop in front of the Center, on the Center side of the street. The School District buses children to and from school. The Growing Tree staff take School Age children out to the bus stop in the morning and are there to greet them at the bus stop when school is over for the day.

#### **M. Volunteers**

Volunteers are allowed at the discretion of administration. Volunteer hours in classrooms are determined through discussion with the volunteer and administration. Volunteers are expected to follow Center policies and classroom rules. Termination of volunteer hours is at the discretion of administration. Volunteer clearances may be required from DHS.

#### **N. Donations**

Families often want to share their children's outgrown clothes and toys with the Center. We ask families to bring only clean, gently used clothes and toys, and toys with all the pieces. Avoid bringing stuffed animals unless they are new. If teachers do not need the donated items, they are offered to families on the large foyer's "**FREE STUFF**" bench. Donations of computer paper and recycleteria items are always welcome.

#### **O. Pets**

To bring a pet to the Center (i.e., for Share and Tell) please contact the office first due to sanitary and allergy issues.

### **V. REGISTRATION; ENROLLMENT; TUITION**

#### **A. Fees**

Registration fees are \$50.00 for one child and \$30.00 for each additional child, Payment of the registration fee is required to hold a space for up to two (2) weeks. To hold a space for more than two (2) weeks, the registration fee, plus the first week's tuition fee, are required. **This amount is non-refundable.**

The current Tuition Fee Schedule is attached to this Handbook.

**THE REGISTRATION FEE IS NON-REFUNDABLE AND WILL NOT BE REFUNDED UNLESS IN THE DISCRETION OF THE GROWING TREE, SUCH REFUND IS WARRANTED.**

#### **B. Payment Information**

Payments are to be made the **first day of your child's attendance** each week. Automatically include a late fee of \$5.00 per day on all late payments. If a check is returned for insufficient

funds or any other similar reason, a service charge will be incurred in the amount of Thirty Dollars (\$30.00).

A locked payment box is centrally located inside the double red doors at the side ramp. Payments should be placed in the box. You can also hand a payment to office personnel. PLEASE DO NOT give payments to staff/teachers or leave a tuition payment in your child's lunchbox or with your child's belongings.

Payment is required for all holidays if the holiday coincides with a day your child is normally scheduled to attend. If you choose to use one of your allotted vacation/sick days for a holiday, please notify the office in writing one (1) week in advance of such request.

The Growing Tree reserves the right to terminate service for a child if there has been continual non-payment. The Growing Tree will notify a parent twenty-four (24) hours in advance if services are being terminated for non-payment.

Make checks payable to "The Growing Tree Child Care Center" or if paying with cash, use a labeled envelope, with the child's name on it. We only accept checks or cash as payment...

We accept subsidized payments. Contact the office for assistance and information about applying and fees associated with subsidized payments.

### **C. Registration and Enrollment**

Our Center is open to children of all abilities, ages six (6) weeks to eleven (11) years old, provided we can meet the needs of the child. Enrollment is open to all and not restricted by race, creed, religious beliefs, disability or nationality as required by Title XX, Section 504, and Title VII. The Growing Tree complies with the requirements of Pennsylvania laws and statutes to its best interpretation. See *Nondiscrimination Section*.

We also accept children from local public school districts up to Pre-K. Children must attend Whitehall-Coplay School District during the school year for our before and after school care program. In the summer we accept students from all school districts on a full-time and part-time basis.

Enrollment availability is based on ratios and space in a classroom. We offer two-, three-, four- and five-day openings. Attending 5 days a week is full-time; 2, 3 or 4 days a week is considered part-time. Fees are day rates, NOT hourly rates.

Complete and accurate forms and paperwork is required by The Growing Tree. Specific paperwork is further described in this Handbook, but additional materials may be required in The Growing Tree's sole discretion. A copy of all forms and paperwork are kept in a permanent confidential file for each child. This file is the property of The Growing Tree and your access to it is guaranteed by law. We will gladly review the file with you at a scheduled conference, if requested. Personal records will not be released to any other person or institution without a parental consent form provided to the Center by the parent.

#### D. Enrollment Procedures/Forms to Return

Procedures and forms required for enrollment include:

- Payment of the nonrefundable registration fee, plus the first week's fee, when a space is being held for more than 2 weeks.
- Parents are required to update the Emergency Contact Form bi-annually. If there are any interim changes, parents are responsible for providing such updates. **All changes must be provided in writing.** A copy of the Emergency Contact Form is included with this Handbook. If this form is not submitted, enrollment may be delayed. **IT IS VITAL THAT WE HAVE UP-TO-DATE CONTACT INFORMATION FOR EACH CHILD. PLEASE SUBMIT ANY CHANGES TO EMERGENCY CONTACT FORMS, SUCH AS ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBERS, ETC., IN WRITING TO THE OFFICE ASAP.**
- A Child Health Appraisal Form is required and signed by a physician as follows:
  - Yearly for children ages one (1) to five (5)
  - Immunization updates for Infants to eighteen (18) months with each vaccination
  - Yearly for children up to five (5) years old following the immunization schedule recommended by American Academy of Pediatrics
  - Yearly updates for School Age children.
  - Proof of vaccination and flu shot. (If parents choose not to have their child get a vaccination or flu shot, parents must provide a waiver of liability for The Growing Tree, as The Growing Tree will not be responsible for any liability regarding any sickness associated with that child, or any child that the unvaccinated child infects. A copy of the Waiver of Liability and Indemnification is included with this Handbook.
- A Tuition Fee Agreement must be signed in advance and updated bi-annually. This will be kept on file at the Center.
- If applicable, an Infant Room Information Form must be completed
- An IEP Request Form must be completed and copy of IEP/IFSP must be provided. *See Section on IEP/IFSP.*
- An Allergy Form must be completed.
- A Photo/Video and Sunscreen Form must be completed
- The Ages and Stages Screening Permission Form must be completed
- The Acknowledgment Form at the back of this Handbook must signed.
- The Getting to Know Your Child Form must be completed. *See Registration/Enrollment Section.*
- A Tuition Fee Schedule must be signed.

Talk with your child in advance of starting about friends they will make, the teachers' names, things they will have to play with, and activities they will get to do.

Visit your child's classroom prior to your child's first day at least once to familiarize your child with the environment and to meet the teachers. A morning visit to the classroom with the child, just before start date, is required.

Specific items listed throughout this Handbook should be brought in on your child's first day.



## E. Attendance

**We ask that children arrive in their classrooms, ready to participate in their daily routine by 9:00 AM.** This helps children feel part of the group by allowing time for important peer interaction that happens at free play before the daily program begins. Our classrooms begin their circle time with academic component around 9:30 AM. This gives children time to adjust to the daily routine and is respectful of the classroom's routine and time frame for snack time, lunch time and nap time. Both parents and children need time to adjust to a new child care setting.

We require School Age families to notify us via phone call when their child will not be present on the bus before or after school on any given day.

Changes in attendance from full-time to part-time, from part-time to full-time or to add or drop days is based on availability in a classroom and must be sent to the Director or Assistant Director in writing.

**CHANGES NOT SUBMITTED IN WRITING MAY NOT ALLOW FOR AVAILABILITY IN THE CLASSROOM DESIRED. PLEASE GIVE THE GROWING TREE A MINIMUM OF TEN (10) DAY'S ADVANCE NOTICE TO ENSURE SUCH AVAILABILITY CAN BE ACCOMMODATED FOR YOUR CHILD. CHANGES ARE MADE WHENEVER POSSIBLE BUT BASED ON RATIOS, CHANGES CANNOT BE GUARANTEED.** As with all requests and communications, please include a contact number in case there are questions, or we need to contact you about your request. Giving as much advance notice as possible may increase the possibility of the change taking place.

**SPECIAL NOTE:** To make a temporary change in attendance, with a guarantee return to full-time attendance, for a maximum of up to eleven (11) consecutive weeks in the summer, there are three options to choose from:

- Option 1: Pay half the regular weekly fee and attend up to two (2) days each week (days TBD)
- Option 2: Pay for and attend three (3) days each week (days TBD)
- Option 3: Return to full-time after withdrawal for summer (or any time up to eleven (11) weeks), however, without the required payment to hold your child's space, return cannot be guaranteed. A registration fee of \$50.00 will be required to re-enroll your child back into the program.

## F. Vacation/Sick Days

Unpaid vacation/sick days allowed per "your" year are equal to the number of days your child attends each week. (Ex. weekly attendance of Monday, Wednesday, and Friday allows three (3) days' vacation per year.) New days are issued each year on the anniversary date of when your child started. Changes in attendance will affect the number of unpaid vacation/sick days allowed, accordingly.

Communicate with the office when using a vacation/sick unpaid day. This would be a day your child is not in attendance but otherwise scheduled to attend. These days do not accumulate or carry over to the next year.

We request a phone call any day your child is absent. We need a "return to care" note from a doctor when your child is out due to illness and has been seen by a doctor. Your child must be fever-free, diarrhea-free, and vomit-free for 24 hours with no medication in order to return back to care.

## **G. Withdrawal/Termination of Care**

The Growing Tree strives to work with children and families of our Center as a source of support and a family resource. When financial, social, emotional, or behavioral support systems are in place, follow through on the part of families is essential to success. Therefore, termination of care may result when there is lack of parental follow through when attempting to establish needed services for a child. Other reasons for termination include but are not limited to (i) our inability to meet the needs of a child despite reasonable steps taken through interventions, (ii) consistent non-payment of tuition, (iii) continuous late payments, and (iv) parent's non-compliance with Center policies.

We require a minimum of two (2) weeks' notice for withdrawal. During that time, charges for service will continue to accrue depending on the dates of withdrawal.

## **VI. ITEMS REQUIRED PER CLASSROOM**

### **A. Infant Room**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Diapers, wipes (unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Prepared bottles for the day
- Baby foods
- Pacifier
- Infant pain reliever
- Extra clothing in a diaper bag.
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS.
- All bottles will be sent home daily for sterilization purposes.

### **B. Walking Nursery**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Diapers, wipes (unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- Change of clothing to keep on-site
- Pillowcase holding a fitted crib sheet and a small blanket for nap

- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS.

**C. Toddler One**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Diapers, wipes (unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- A change of clothing to keep on-site
- A pillowcase holding a fitted crib sheet and a small blanket for nap
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS.

**D. Toddler Two**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Diapers, pull-ups, wipes (unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- A change of clothing to keep on-site (if potty training send several pairs of underwear and easy pull on pants to keep on-site)
- A pillowcase holding a fitted crib sheet and a small blanket for nap
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS.

**E. Preschool One**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Pull-ups, wipes (if needed and unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- A change of clothing to keep on-site (if potty training send several pairs of underwear and easy pull on pants to keep on-site)
- A pillowcase holding two small blankets for nap
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS.

**F. Preschool Two**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file

- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- A change of clothing to keep on-site
- A pillowcase holding two small blankets for nap
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS

**G. Pre-K**

- Updated physical form (please provide a new print out to us with each immunization)
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms required for child's file
- Diapers, wipes (unless utilizing our Cuties Diaper program)
- Children's pain reliever
- Soft sided thermal lunchbox
- A change of clothing to keep on-site
- A pillowcase holding two small blankets for nap
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS

**H. School Age One and Two**

- Updated physical form
- Emergency Contact Form and all completed forms needed for child's file,
- Children's Pain reliever
- Lunch in a soft thermal lunchbox as needed (during the summer ice packs, water bottles, and mobile lunches as we usually are not eating at the Center)
- A change of clothing to keep on-site
- LABEL EVERYTHING TO PREVENT LOSS

**VII. DROP-OFF/PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

**A. Drop-Off**

Parents are given a numerical code upon enrollment, to enter the building. See *Building Security*.

Follow the painted arrows that show the proper way in and out of the parking lot. See *Parking Lot*.

ALL children **MUST** be signed in each day on their classroom sign-in form.

Drop-off at 6:30 AM is in the Pre-K classroom - look for your child's sign-in there.

Children arriving later than 6:30 AM may be walked to their classroom and signed in, on their classroom sign-in sheet, if their teacher is present in the classroom.

ALL children, along with drop-off person, are required to WASH HANDS ON ARRIVAL. See *Medical; Health and Safety*.

Write any important information about your child that teachers need to know for that day, on the Parent Memo sheet provided on each classroom bulletin board for clear communication. (Families of babies do this on Infant Room sign-in sheet.)

Put your child's belongings in their cubby. Lunchboxes go in refrigerators.

A quick good-bye after hand washing together with a kiss, hug, and words to reassure your child you will be back for them, is the best approach to drop-off. Long lingering good-byes do not help an anxious child to be less anxious.

ALWAYS say good-bye and remind your child that you will be back; never sneak out.

We encourage parents to call and check on their child the first week. Parents may also call occasionally to check on how their child is doing during the day.

Children who cry at drop-off are soothed and distracted by activities and usually stop soon after the parent leaves. It is natural for a child who attends full-time to adjust more quickly than a child who attends part-time.

## **B. Pick-Up**

ALL children **MUST** be signed out on their classroom clipboard daily. The sign-out clipboard will be wherever your child is at pick-up. Pick-ups after 5:30 PM may be in the Pre-K Classroom and your sign-out sheet can be found there.

Children cannot be released to any person NOT listed on the Emergency Contact Form. If there is an unexpected situation and a person not listed on the Emergency Contact Form is required to pick up the child, the custodial parent must call in advance. All pick-up persons **MUST** provide a Photo ID at time of pick-up. If the custodial parent is not picking up the child a particular day but an authorized alternate person is picking up the child, the custodial parent must call the office in advance or write the instructions on the parent memo board each time an alternate authorized pick-up person will be picking up the child.

Children transported in vehicles must be buckled securely into car safety seats/seatbelts that meet state requirements. Parents must take whatever steps necessary to maintain and use car safety seats. If this requirement cannot be met at the time of pick-up, another person on the authorized pick-up list will be called.

Before leaving the Center, check your child's cubby and mailbox for personal items. Take home lunchbox and daily report (applicable for Infant through Toddler Rooms).

Check classroom whiteboard for new communications posted on doors/classroom.

DO NOT allow children to eat from lunchboxes while exiting the building.

DO NOT allow children to leave the classroom or building without an adult.

DO NOT allow children to wait outside a classroom, unattended.

Pick-up persons must be 18 years or older **AND** listed on the Emergency Contact Form in order to pick up your child.



A child will not be released to any person who appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or any condition that would endanger the safety of the child regardless of who that person is, including a parent. Children and Youth Services will be contacted if another authorized Emergency Contact person cannot be located.

Call the office on any unavoidably late pick-ups that may occur after our 6:00 PM. Consistently late pick-ups will incur a \$5.00 a minute late fee.

### **C. Custodial Parent/Court Orders.**

In order to legally prevent a non-custodial or unauthorized parent from picking up your child, a copy of the applicable Court Order must be on file, indicating the specifics of the custodial arrangement or PFA Order. Supply the office with Court paperwork immediately in the event of changes in custodial parental status.

## **VIII. PERSONAL BELONGINGS AND DRESS CODE**

### **A. Clothing/Cubbies**

Parents must label all clothing items that come into the Center with a Sharpie and your child's name/initials. Children should wear comfortable, washable, weather appropriate clothing each day. Shoes need to be rubber soled and closed-toed for safe, active outdoor play.

Provide a complete set of seasonal change of clothing in a large, labeled Ziploc bag.

Children will be assigned a specific cubby space. They are trained to store hats and mittens in the sleeve of their coats. Reinforce this routine at drop-off and at home, as it helps keep these items from being lost. If sharing a cubby or hanging near other coats, outerwear must fit into a bag (such as a reusable grocery bag) or backpack.

Check and empty cubbies and mailboxes each evening at pick-up.

### **B. Jewelry**

For safety reasons children with earrings under the age of 3 are required to wear earrings with screw-on type backs. Children should not wear bracelets or necklaces under the age of 5.

### **C. Lunchboxes**

Label lunchboxes with child's name on the top near the handle. Put in refrigerators at drop-off and check cubbies for the lunchbox at the end of the day. Check the refrigerator if your child's lunchbox is not in the cubby. Label all reusable containers with child's initials.

### **D. Items from Home**

Toys from home are not permitted. Have your child leave the toy in the car to "wait" for them until they go home. The only exceptions would be for Show-N-Tell on specified days. Guns, swords, knives, or weapons of any type are not permitted at the Center.

NOTE: We cannot be responsible for an item/toy brought from home that may be lost or broken. However, we will put up a sign to help find a lost item.

## **IX. CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES AND PROCEDURES**

### **A. Holidays and Celebrations**

Holidays and birthdays may be celebrated with classroom "special snack weeks" or lunch time parties. Parents are permitted to supply birthday celebration treats or lunch. We ask families to check on classroom allergies before deciding what to send. **NEVER SEND ANYTHING WITH NUTS.**

Families may be invited to participate in holiday food celebrations through sign-ups sheets. If you have a cultural or religious restriction regarding your child's participation in these events, please notify the classroom teacher.

A few times a year we hold Center-wide family events. Examples of some events are Spooktacular, Halloween Parade, Summer Carnival, and Art Show. In addition, individual classrooms occasionally host family friendly activities. We encourage parents to participate in these events.

If you wish to bring in birthday treats, it must be discussed with your child's teacher in advance. They can give suggestions, if asked. Teachers prefer less messy items for the younger children.

For holiday celebrations there may be sign-up sheets for families to donate items for parties, special snack week, or lunches. Teachers appreciate parent participation for these events.

### **B. Technology/Electronic Device Use**

As a Keystone STAR facility, we follow recommendations for use from the Environmental Rating Scale which sets guidelines for best practices.

- Children under age of 12 months do not have screen time on any electronic devices (i.e. TV, videos, computer, iPad or cell phones).
- For children age 12-18 months, the "Your Baby Can Read" program is viewed through a DVD player.
- For Toddlers, age 2 to 3 years, group screen time is limited to ten (10) minutes use of an iPad if accompanied by the active involvement of the teachers. It may also be used to enhance learning on a topic the children are interested in learning about.
- For children, age 3 to 5 years, group screen time is limited to twenty (20) minutes and used in conjunction with active involvement with teachers or to enhance discussion of something they are learning about. Alternative choices are made available while a video or TV is used.

- Children using the computer or iPad on an individual basis in this age group are allowed twenty (20) minutes a day. Group and individual use are accumulative for the day and may not exceed twenty (20) minutes per child.
- School Age children are allowed thirty (30) minutes a day on the classroom computer. In a group setting School Age children can watch a G-rated movie as long as there are three alternative activities accessible as choices for the children not interested in the movie. The same applies to use of technology when researching or for an active group activity.

### **C. Extracurricular Programs**

There are outside services that come to the Center to provide a variety of optional programs to the children. Any fees associated with these programs are paid directly to the organization providing the service. These organizations include Soccer Shots (Spring and Fall), Parkettes (Winter), and Tech Stars (a year round, weekly computer program). These classes are open to children from ages 2 to 5. All personnel involved are required to provide the Center with appropriate clearances.

### **D. Potty Training**

Teachers and parents working together is the most effective way to potty train children. Developmentally, this begins with children in the Toddler Two classroom. Teachers have information in their Welcome Packet to aide in guiding families through potty training. We ask that parents who are interested in determining whether the time is right to start potty training, should discuss this with their child's teacher in Toddler Two.

During potty training or to help with independent toilet training skills, elastic waist-banded pants are a child's best friend.

Potty training children need several sets of underwear and bottoms. This is stored in the classroom. IF YOUR CHILD COMES HOME WEARING A "SPARE" SET OF CLOTHING FROM THE CLASSROOM, PLEASE LAUNDRY AND RETURN ASAP.

### **E. Biting**

Biting is most often a behavior that occurs with children under the age of three. We see it usually as a communication tool when the child doesn't yet have the ability to clearly communicate wants, needs, and frustrations. Very often it is a phase the child goes through. Habitual biting can sometimes be due to a developmental or environmental issue. We look at incident reports for the reason for biting, and take preventative measures in the classroom to prevent future biting. When biting occurs, we understand the frustration of the families of both the bitten child and the biter and we work to address the issues

Biting incidents are handled as follows:

- First, the bitten child is attended to immediately. They are removed from the area to provide comfort, TLC, and for examination of the bite.
- The bite is cleaned, and ice applied as needed, to prevent swelling.

- The parents of the bitten child will be informed of the incident along with documentation in the form of an incident report. Parents must sign the report and will receive a copy.
- If the skin is broken or the bite is severe, parents are contacted and asked to consider whether or not they wish to contact their pediatrician.
- Next, the child who bites is removed from the area of play to another area and communicated with that biting hurts and we need to be gentle. Teachers demonstrate what gentle and acceptable behavior looks like.
- The parents of the child who bites will be informed of the biting incident.
- Due to confidentiality, no parents will be told the names of other children involved.
- Resource material on biting may be given to parents of the child who bit and the bitten child (and maybe all families in the classroom) to better understand the biting behavior of Toddlers.

Parents of a habitual biter may be asked to attend a conference to develop strategies to be used at home and in the classroom to promote working together. If all steps have been taken to address biting behaviors, and it is in the best interest of the child and other children in the classroom, the child who bites may be removed from the Center either temporarily or permanently. The director will work with the parents to determine a contingency/transitional plan and provide referrals to child care services. Staff may use some of the following strategies to prevent biting incidents:

- Provide biting rings or wet, cold wash cloths for biting on to reduce teeth and gum sensitivity, satisfy biting needs and reduce the likelihood of biting others.
- Encourage use of simple words to communicate their wants and needs. Teach/role model words to use during a conflict.
- Stay close to children who are in a "biting phase" and be ready to intervene quickly before a biting incident occurs.
- Provide a generous variety and duplicates of toys that encourage children to stay involved and busy.
- Be aware that transitional times (moving from indoors to outdoors, getting ready for meals, nap time, or diapering time) and when a child is tired, hungry or overstimulated, may be times a child will tend to bite.
- Positively reinforce and redirect, verbally reinforce when children are playing cooperatively, sharing and being gentle and kind to peers.

## X. CLASSROOM SCHEDULES

### A. Nap/Rest Time

It is required that children from Walking Nursery up to and including Pre-K, have a 30 minute rest period each day. Infants follow their own nap schedules, and other age group rest periods begin after their lunch. Each child has their own mat which is sanitized daily. Except for the Infant Room, **all children need to have their own bedding which includes a pillowcase to hold two small blankets.** All items must be labeled for ease of identification. For sanitary reasons, this bedding is stored in labeled, white plastic bags. Bedding is placed in cubbies weekly for parents to take home to launder and then return the next day of attendance.

We provide and launder bedding for the Infant Room weekly, using scent free laundry detergent.

Rest time is encouraged by low level lighting and relaxing music or sound machines. If a child does not fall asleep after 30 minutes of resting, they can be given quiet toys, books etc., to interact with quietly during nap time. Most rest times last one and one-half hours.

## **B. Breakfast/Lunch/Snacks**

We are committed to providing healthy snack and beverage options in a positive environment so that your child can learn good eating habits and grow up strong. We do not offer lunch here at the center. Parents may bring breakfast on any day their child needs to eat it at the Center. Breakfast time is between 7:00 AM and 8:00 AM and is usually given in their classroom. We ask families to send a simple breakfast. If a child needs to eat our cereal, there is a \$1.00 charge to be paid at that time. NOTE: Each classroom has a microwave and a refrigerator.

Snacks are served each morning and afternoon. This includes 1 healthy food item and a choice of milk or water. Parents may include a specific snack for their child in their lunchbox if desired.

Allergies must be reported upon enrollment and the child's information is posted in classrooms for staff who need to be aware of this information. NOTE: Some classrooms may be marked PEANUT FREE due to an allergy. We ask families to be conscious of any restricted items for that classroom when packing lunches.

Lunch times vary slightly based on the ages of children in each classroom. We ask that parents pack nutritionally sound lunches and put lunchboxes into refrigerators on arrival and pick them up from cubbies at the end of the day. Check the refrigerator if the lunchbox is not in your child's cubby. Lunch packing suggestions are provided in a Welcome Packet provided on enrollment and with transitions. Please refer to that list for ideas on packing lunch. Because lunch is a busy time in each classroom, to help teachers feed a group of hungry children as quickly as possible, please note the following:

- Label lunchboxes (no paper bags, please) on the top, by the handle, with a Sharpie so it is easy to identify.
- Send heat-ups in labeled, reusable containers.
- Pre-cut your child's food into the size pieces necessary for safe eating.
- Do not send CANS that need opening with a can opener. Pop-tops are allowed.
- Do not send heat-ups that require adding water or take more than one step to heat up.
- Do not send soda, energy drinks or candy in your child's lunchbox.
- Pack a napkin every day. We provide cups, bowls, and utensils as needed.
- Send food your child likes to eat, even if it is the same every day. We know kids can be picky eaters.
- Send 3 or 4 choices each day for your child's lunch. One of these choices should be a nutritional main item that our teachers will encourage the child to eat first.
- Sweet or salty snack options will be offered 1x a week.



Our lunch time environment is family sit down style. Children may sit with their friends at a desired lunch table, but are sometimes moved if they are not eating and making unsafe choices with their friends. Staff sits down with the children at the tables and monitors the lunch time. Staff encourages small conversations, but does focus on the children chewing and swallowing their food and being able to eat in the time frame that is designated to them. Electronics are not used during this time and are limited in the classroom during the day. Staff will take professional development and informal education about nutrition.

Parents may bring breakfast on any day their child needs to eat it at the Center. Breakfast time is between 7:00 AM and 8:00 AM and is usually given in their classroom. We ask families to send a simple breakfast. If a child needs to eat our cereal, there is a \$1.00 charge to be paid at that time. NOTE: Each classroom has a microwave and a refrigerator.

### **C. Outdoor Play**

Outside play promotes imagination, social skills, and large motor development. The American Academy of Pediatrics has published findings that children incur less illnesses when they are allotted time to play outside in the fresh air.

The Growing Tree follows DHS recommendations of “weather permitting, children shall be taken outdoors daily.” This time is dependent on the age group of the children. Physically active play is important for the health and development of all children. Our program is committed to providing children with opportunities to move throughout the day. This is why are staff will continue to expand their education by taking professional development and receive informal education about physical activity.

#### Time

We provide children 2 to 5 years old (preschoolers) with at least 90 minutes of either indoor or outdoor play daily, and children 1 to 2 years old (toddlers) with at least 60 minutes. As weather allows, we strive to take children outside. We see the outdoors as an extension of the classroom, so children not only enjoy the outdoors through physical activity, but also through other learning sources. During heavy rain, icy conditions, poor air quality, or dangerous heat or cold, children will stay indoors, but get the same total amount of time. Throughout each day, we look for opportunities to keep children moving and limit the amount of time they are expected to remain seated. We will not remove children from physical activity for long periods of time to manage challenging behaviors.

We offer tummy time to non-crawling infants at least 4 times per day. As weather allows, we strive to take infants outside 1-2x per day or more so that they can enjoy the sights and sounds. To help infants build their strength and coordination, we limit the time that children will be seated in high chairs, swings, and Bumbo seats.

We ask that families support our efforts by dressing children appropriately for the weather. This includes closed-toed shoes and clothing that is comfortable and allows children to comfortably move. We also encourage our staff to dress appropriately and wear proper foot wear in order to engage with the children. In the Spring, Summer, and Fall months we also ask that each parent supplies the center with sunscreen for their child. This sunscreen needs to be labeled and will be applied to your child when we are going outside.

#### Equipment & Environment

We seek to provide a fun and challenging play space that encourages movement and learning. We provide a variety of play equipment (balls, basketball hoops, tricycles, scooters, and playground set), in good condition, both indoors and outdoors. Additionally, books and posters in our classrooms help to teach children about the importance of physical activity. Outdoor space has shaded areas and a drinking fountain so that children may take breaks from activity. Teachers encourage the children to participate in physical activity during free play, and adult led activities.

In addition, Keystone STARS has issued the following Position Statement in accordance with American Association of Pediatrics findings:

*Children are expected to go outside when the forecast temperature/wind chill are above 25 degrees, the forecast temperature/heat index is less than 90 degrees and there is no current air quality alert. It is understood that with these parameters there may be portions of some days that do not meet the conditions of weather permitting since forecasts are generally targeted to a point of time in the day.*

Parents are to dress their child according to the weather each day. Children are to wear safe rubber soled, closed-toed shoes for running and climbing, every day. Appropriate outerwear for winter includes hats, coats, gloves, and boots. The children learn to store gloves and hats in the sleeve of jackets for safe keeping, for ease of finding them when going outside, and to prevent loss or mix-up. We ask families to reinforce this routine at drop-off.

Teachers review with children outdoor safe play rules and how to play safely in the yard.

NOTE: Due to regulations for outdoor play requirements and ratios, we are unable to meet a request for a child to stay inside from outdoor play. We ask if a child is not well enough to participate in classroom routines that they be kept home for the day. The exception to this would require a written note from a physician.

**Sunscreen is required in the spring and summer. Please LABEL and hand in to the teachers directly.**

## **XI. CURRICULUM AND LEARNING**

### **A. Classroom Curriculum**

Each classroom's curriculum is implemented depending on the children's developmental stages using the philosophy, inspiration and guidance of the evidence based Creative Curriculum. Our goal is to provide a wide variety of experiences in developing the whole child physically, intellectually, emotionally, and socially, while keeping them active and engaged. Focus is on intentional teaching with teachers using children's interest to guide their planning, while building on prior learning and experiences. Through observations and assessments, whole group, small group and individualized instructions are planned to meet the needs of the children in our care.

Lesson plans, along with Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards that apply for each activity, are posted on classroom bulletin boards. This meets Keystone STARS requirements and provides the framework for a comprehensive curriculum.

Daily routines/schedules are age appropriate for each classroom. They are posted in each room and also given with classroom Welcome Packets.

Preschool One, Preschool Two and Pre-K offer Share-and-Tell each week. Participation helps children develop language skills and brings a sense of community to the classroom.

## **B. Individualized Education Program (IEP)/Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)**

Our enrollment families are asked to sign a form agreeing to allow the Center to have a copy of and attend meetings for any IEP/IFSP services their child may be receiving or will receive.

A referral for services may come from many sources including the initial ASQ screening, or classroom teacher observations and assessments. If a referral for support services is determined to be needed, the Center follows the following procedures:

- Teachers discuss concerns about a child with the director.
- An Ages and Stages screening is completed.
- After the screening is reviewed and discussed, the need for a parent conference and possible further action will be determined.
- ASQ results are discussed with family and referrals for appropriate support options are identified.
- Parents are given contacts and paperwork to initiate appropriate referrals.
- Follow-up includes teacher attendance at IEP meetings and copies of IEPs on site.

## **C. Positive Behavior Interventions and Support**

We know social skills and emotional awareness are key to success in school and life. Therefore, our Center is involved in a program called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (NIS). As a positive step toward preventing incidents of misbehaviors, suspension and expulsion, staff are trained in how to imbed this program into the daily curriculum. It is designed to teach and reinforce positive social and emotional behaviors by using consistent language and age-appropriate expectations, within all age groups throughout the Center. Through use of colored bees that signify the four key areas: Be Kind, Be Safe, Be Responsible, and Be Respectful, teachers recognize children's positive interactions verbally and with visual acknowledgment through posting bees on the corresponding hive. "NIS grams" are also sent home to share with families when their child has demonstrated a positive behavior.

Use of the resource Second Step teaches social skills and emotional awareness and is an important part of the daily classroom teaching.

## **D. Inclusion**

The Growing Tree welcomes children of all abilities by providing for each child's individual needs and strengths while making accommodations for challenges. Partnerships between families, professionals, and communities are an essential foundation for high quality inclusion. Many individuals and agencies must collaborate to ensure that successful inclusive opportunities are available. We believe that when we embrace children at a young age, so they experience acceptance early on, families experience affirmative expectations.

Children of all abilities have equal access to age-appropriate classroom materials, i.e., toys, learning centers, and activities indoor and outside. Our Center uses Universal Design (UD) theory to guide the arrangement of flexible learning environments. Children's access to learning opportunities is supported through a range and variety of learning experiences. Full participation for all children is supported by our physical environments to provide equitable opportunities to experience all activities. Use of assistive technology, daily activities to support IEP goals, strategies to develop a sense of belonging through play to foster social relationships, lesson planning to accommodate diverse learning abilities, progress monitoring to guide instruction, and use of structured, targeted approaches to provide intensive support when needed, are promoted for all children to fully participate in our program.

In order to support goals and strategies on children's IEPs and IFSPs within the classroom, we request parent permission for teachers to attend IEP meetings and have copies of updated IEPs and IFSPs. Teaching staff can then provide additional support and strategies needed in the classroom. Teaching staff are prepared to take relevant professional development trainings, participate in technical assistance, work together with therapists and collaborate in problem solving with families, administration and consultants in order to provide the best support possible for each child. We encourage families to request a conference at any time.

#### **E. Suspension and Expulsion**

Persistent classroom behavior challenges are discussed with the director and Behavior Incident Reports (BIR) are used to document and collect data. BIRs provide information that aids in understanding the cause of the behavior. A conference to discuss the data is key for working with families to best determine the type of intervention steps to be taken. In addition, a developmental screening, ASQ-SE and ASQ 2, may be used to help parents and teachers focus on specific support, strategies and services that will best serve the child.

Behaviors that require referral to an intervention organization, such as Early Intervention (EI), Intermediate Unit (IU), Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH), or Unconditional Child Care (UCC) will be discussed with families. Caregiver participation in application of IEPs and IFSPs within the classroom is important to meet the needs of the child.

For a child with an IFSP or IEP who is at risk of suspension/expulsion, the EI will be contacted in writing for assistance, to include any previously unidentified behavioral concerns in the IEP, before the child and family are asked to unenroll from our program.

If a child does not have an IEP/IFSP and is at risk for suspension/expulsion, the child's family will be referred to EI and may be referred to the ECMH before being asked to un-enroll from the program. Documentation of the referral will be maintained in the child's file. If a child is referred to EI, and is not found eligible for services, the EI program shall coordinate with local behavioral health partners and other community resources to assist families in our program in identifying services for which the child, family and/or program might be eligible.

Resources for caregivers and families of children who are facing behavioral challenges, including community resources regarding child development, social development and other topics are posted for families in each classroom, the office, the central bulletin board and at the end of this Handbook.

If the outlined steps are taken but not effective in solving the behavior problem, or if there is non-compliance by parents with Center efforts, the final step of suspension or expulsion will be decided by the director and administration.

#### **F. School Age After School/Summer Program**

We provide before and after school care, as well as all day care on days school is closed for Whitehall-Coplay School District students, for children in Kindergarten through age 11 (or finished 6th grade). There is a Whitehall-Coplay School District bus stop in front of our building, on our side of the street. Staff escort children to and from the bus stop.

For summer care, current students are asked to sign up for the all-day care that is needed and where there is availability, space is opened to students from all local school districts as well as the Whitehall-Coplay School District. This program includes swimming, swim lessons, field trips, in-house events, and theme week activities. In addition to weekly tuition, there are summer care fees for pool passes, swim lessons and activities/field trips.

We schedule a Parent Meeting at the Center for summer School Age care before Memorial Day for all families but specifically for the families new to summer care at The Growing Tree.

Our Center has two School Age classrooms, School Age One for grades K through 1<sup>st</sup> grade and School Age Two for grades 2<sup>nd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup>. Each classroom has the required two teacher ratio during the school year.

**NOTE: Students who are enrolled in before school ONLY are not enrolled on the after school roster. To abide by after school care ratios, if your child attends before school only, but needs all day care during the school year, you will need to contact the office in advance to see if space is available for care.**

If a School Age student is not enrolled during the summer, a return to care before/after school again is not guaranteed. A return to a school year space can be guaranteed by paying one-half of the weekly rate that is paid during the school year.

#### **G. Child Assessment**

In February and August, assessments are made on each child to determine where the child is currently in their development. The assessments are shared with families and an opportunity to meet for a conference is offered to discuss the child's progress developmentally, socially, and emotionally at the time of the assessment.

Children from the Infant Room through Toddler Two are assessed using the Ounce Scale. Children in Preschool One, Preschool Two and Pre-K are assessed with a Work Sampling/homegrown assessment.

Parents are asked sign the assessment upon review, indicate if they want a conference, and a copy of assessment is provided for them, if desired.

#### **H. Supporting Linguistically Diverse Children and Families**

The Growing Tree welcomes culturally and linguistically diverse families. We use music, songs, pictures, posters, labels, translation technology, communication devices, gestures, books, and



American Sign Language to represent the language and culture of non-English speaking children and to support language development and academic achievement.

We meet with families on enrollment and ask for a list of relevant words in a child's native language for use in helping communicate with the child for daily routines, words that are common in the child's vocabulary and any other words that staff would find helpful to know to enhance communication. We will seek an interpreter when needed.

We encourage families to feel free to share their traditions and holiday observances with their child's classroom. We welcome materials and visitors that would help children and staff appreciate a child's culture, even if English is not a second language, but the child is raised in a culture different from American.

### **I. Classroom Transitions/Transferring to Another Setting**

The Growing Tree has a procedure in place to ensure smooth transitions to new classrooms. Families receive notice from their child's teacher of the date their child will start visiting the next classroom and the date of the actual move, along with transition information. The children have two (2) weeks of visitations, with increasing lengths of time each day if they attend 3 to 5 days per week. For children who attend 2 days per week, there is a three (3) week visitation period with increasing lengths of time each day. Adjustments to this time frame may be made based on the child, the teacher's recommendations and the family's permission.

Families receive a Transition Packet to know what to expect during the transition along with an invitation to a transition conference at this time. Daily visitation notes are sent home to tell about the visit. A Welcome Packet with information about the new classroom is also given.

When a child moves to a new classroom within the Center, all observations, child portfolios, medical logs, emergency contacts, and belongings are given to the child's new classroom at the time the child is officially moved up.

Teachers who are receiving the new child will communicate with the teachers of the previous classroom to discuss the child's social and emotional development, areas of strength, allergies, parent preferences and any significant information that is beneficial for staff to know which will benefit the further development of the child.

Parents are encouraged to stop in to meet the new classroom teacher and acquaint themselves with the new classroom set-up (with their child) if possible.

Parents are removed from the previous classroom REMIND and invited to join the new classroom REMIND.

When an outside program or educational setting requests information for the transfer of a child's information, the request to do so must be submitted in writing, which may take up to two (2) weeks to process.

### **J. Pre-K Graduation**

Pre-K holds a graduation ceremony in June to commemorate the completion of Pre-K and the upcoming transition to Kindergarten. It is held outside in the early evening, with light refreshments served. Invitations are sent inviting all family members to attend.



## **K. Kindergarten Transition Meeting**

A transition meeting for children who will transition from Pre-K to Kindergarten is held in the spring. This meeting is geared for the adult family members of Whitehall-Coplay School District students. The goal of the meeting is to share information about the transition process taken by the Center and the School District to ensure the child's smooth transition to Kindergarten. Time is also allotted to address families' questions and concerns. Invitations are sent and the meeting is optional.

We recommend looking at [PAPROMISEFORCHILDREN.ORG](http://PAPROMISEFORCHILDREN.ORG) for two downloadable resources: [LEARNING IS EVERYWHERE](#) and [KINDERGARTEN HERE I COME](#) is available in English and Spanish, Click on "Watch Them Grow." There is also a link to sign up for the newsletter.

## **XII. MEDICAL; HEALTH AND SAFETY**

### **A. Daily Health Check**

Each day a classroom teacher conducts a health check of each child. This health check is conducted as soon as possible after the child enters the Center and whenever a change in the child's behavior or appearance is noted while that child is in care. The health check addresses:

- Reported or observed illness or injury affecting the child or family members since the last date of attendance
- Reported or observed changes in behavior of the child (such as lethargy or irritability) or in the appearance of the child from the previous day at home or the previous day's attendance at the Center
- Skin rashes, impetigo, itching or scratching of the skin, itching, or scratching of the scalp, or the presence of one or more live crawling lice
- A temperature check if the child appears sick
- Other signs or symptoms of illness and injury (such as drainage from eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, cuts/lacerations, pain, or feeling ill).

The teachers gather information necessary to complete the daily health check by direct observation of the child, by asking the parent where applicable and by conversation with the child.

### **B. Routine Procedures**

The Growing Tree follows DHS regulations, Keystone STAR guidelines and Caring for our Children Manual for best practices regarding health of the children. We have required procedures in place for BOTH STAFF and PARENTS to follow:

- STAFF take attendance daily and do a daily health check.
- STAFF reinforce hand washing on arrival, before and after snack, when coming in from outdoors, after blowing noses, after using bathroom facilities and before and after using water or other items in the sensory tables.

- STAFF clean individual mats after nap each day.
- STAFF disinfect bathrooms each day.
- STAFF use "soiled toy" bins to remove mouthed toys to prevent sharing germs.
- STAFF clean toys daily and vacuum daily.
- STAFF disinfect tables before snack and lunch.
- STAFF post illness signs/share fact sheets on communicable illnesses.
- PARENTS provide Center with yearly physicals and immunization updates
- PARENTS provide "return to care" notes from physicians and communicable illness diagnosis information
- PARENTS provide current and updated information of their child's allergies
- PARENTS wash hands on arrival with their child daily; sing the hand washing song
- PARENTS launder nap items each week
- PARENTS dress children appropriately for the weather and safe indoor and outdoor play
- PARENTS provide a backpack or small tote bag to store jackets separately from others in order to meet STAR standards.
- PARENTS supply medications according to Medication Administration guidelines

### **C. Sickness**

We follow the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and Caring for Our Children for our sickness policy. The AAP has identified three key criteria for children who become ill and do not require immediate medical attention. The child will be sent home if the illness:

- Prevents the child from participating comfortably in all activities
- Results in a need for care that is greater than staff members can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- Poses a risk of spread of harmful disease to others.

Precautions against the spread of contagious illness are necessary in child care. A child who is not feeling well at drop-off is likely to have an unhappy day, have less resistance to germs and possibly spread something to other children. We ask parents to help us limit exposure by following the sickness policy mandated by the state outlined below.

If your child exhibits any of the following at the Center (or home) exclusion from care is needed:

- Fever of 100 degrees or above
- Diarrhea more than once in a 24 hour period
- Vomiting more than once in a 24 hour period
- Eyes that have a discharge, are red, itchy, and irritated
- Infected or suspicious patches of skin (scabies, impetigo)
- Consistent complaint of earache
- Nits or lice in the hair

Parents will be notified of the need to pick up their child in any of these instances. A "BLUE NOTE" is signed by the pick-up person confirming the length of time for exclusion. Children who

are sick enough to stay home or be sent home, but do not go to the doctor, must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to the Center. In the case of a Coronavirus infection, the child must be quarantined for a period of (ten) 10 days before returning to the Center. Additionally, if anyone in the child's household has been diagnosed with a Coronavirus infection, The Growing Tree must be notified immediately, and the child shall be required to quarantine for a period of (ten) 10 days.

**SPECIAL NOTE: WHEN TAKING YOUR CHILD TO THE DOCTOR FOR AN ILLNESS WE REQUIRE A RETURN TO CARE NOTE FROM THE PHYSICIAN UPON THEIR RETURN.** You may call your physician to fax a note to us if necessary (Fax – 610-264-7662).

**D. Communicable Diseases**

Below are listed potentially serious communicable illnesses that must be reported to us within 24 hours of diagnosis, in cooperation with our health policy and the Department of Health:

<u>RESPIRATORY</u>	<u>CONTACT ILLNESS</u>	<u>GASTROINTESTINAL</u>
Chicken pox	Impetigo	Giardia Lamblia*
German Measles*	Lice	Hepatitis A *
Hemophilus Influenza*	Scabies	Salmonella
Coronavirus*	Meningococcus	Shigella*
Measles*	Tuberculosis*	
Mumps*	Strep Throat	
Whooping Cough*		
COVID 19*		

\*illnesses that we are required to report to Department of Health

**E. Hand Washing**

**We are not permitted to use hand sanitizer for proper hand washing. Please do not send hand sanitizer in with your child.**

Every person MUST wash their hands when entering the classroom. Parents should bring their child to the sink to wash their hands every day, as part of the drop-off routine.

It is recommended to wash your child's hands at pick-up prior to leaving the Center.

**Staff MUST wash their own hands at the following times:**

- Upon arrival in room
- Before and after changing a diaper
- After blowing a child's nose
- Before feeding children
- After coming in from the playground

**Staff MUST wash/supervise children washing hands at the following times:**

- After diaper changing or using the toilet
- Before eating meals and snacks
- After coming in from the playground

- After child blows nose
- Before and after play in the sensory table

**Proper hand washing technique:**

- Wet hands with water
- Apply soap
- Vigorously rub hands to create lather
- Scrub hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. (Sing 1st verse of Row, Row, Row Your Boat). Include area between fingers, under and around nail bed, and backs of hands.
- Leave the water running.
- Dry hands with a paper towel
- Turn off faucet with paper towel
- Dispose of paper towel in trash can.

Reinforcing this procedure at home is beneficial to help children learn healthy habits.

**F. Classroom Cleaning**

We follow a cleaning and sanitizing protocol per DHS regulations, STAR and Caring for our Children Manual:

- STAFF clean individual mats after nap each day.
- STAFF disinfect bathrooms each day with bleach and water solution made daily.
- STAFF use "soiled toy" bins to remove mouthed toys to prevent sharing germs.
- STAFF wash and sanitize toys daily and vacuum daily.
- STAFF disinfect tables before snack time and lunch.
- STAFF wash all soft items on a weekly basis.

**G. Medication Administration**

Each child has their own Medication Log in an individual file for confidentiality reasons. Parents complete this form when prescription or over-the-counter medications are to be given while the child is at the Center.

The circumstances under which we can administer medication:

- Topical medications such as non-medicated diaper creams, insect repellents, and sunscreen
- Over-the-counter medicines for pain or allergies including acetaminophen and ibuprofen
- Long-term medications that are administered daily for children with chronic health conditions that are managed with medication.
- Controlled substances, such as psychotropic medications
- Emergency medications for children with health conditions that may become life-threatening such as asthma, diabetes, and severe allergies.
- One-time medications to prevent conditions such as febrile seizures.

The circumstances under which we **cannot** administer medication:

- No authorization from parent and/or prescribing health professional
- Over-the-counter cough and cold medication without a doctor's note
- Administering a new medication for the first time while child is in our care
- If the instructions are unclear or the supplies needed to measure doses or administer the medication are not available or not in good working condition
- The medication has expired
- If a staff person or their backup who has been trained to give that particular medication is not present (in the case of training for medications that require specific skills to administer properly, such as inhalers, injections, or feeding tubes/ports).
- We cannot administer folk or homemade remedy medications or treatments.
- Administration of medication prescribed for one child in the family may not be given to another.

Guided by state regulations and Caring for Our Children, we follow these steps regarding medication administration. Medications MUST:

- Be in the original prescription container, with child's name, date filled, doctor's name, pharmacy and phone number, dosage and relevant warnings on it.
- Be accompanied with each child's own measuring spoon
- Be handed directly to a staff member for proper storage. DO NOT put medications in cubbies or lunchboxes.
- Be signed in on each child's own individual Medication Log.

To complete child's Medication Log sign-in sheet include:

- Your child's name
- The name of the medication
- The date(s) and times the medication is to be given
- The dose or amount of medication to be given
- How the medication is to be administered
- The expiration date of the medication
- Any potential side effects

In addition, illnesses are tracked on illness tracking logs for each classroom.

Signs are posted for families to know when certain contagious illnesses have been diagnosed within a classroom. Fact sheets may be distributed, also.

No prescription or non-prescription (over-the-counter) medication will be given to any child without written orders from a prescribing health professional and written permission from a parent. The exception is non-prescription sunscreen and insect repellent which require parental consent but do not require instructions from a prescribing health professional.

#### **H. Special Action Health Care Plans to Accommodate Children's Needs**

The Growing Tree requires Special Action Health Care Plans to meet a child's special health accommodations that require medical intervention. These Action Plans are based on Caring for Our Children and are completed by physicians and parents and kept in each child's Medication Log, within the classrooms, for referral. The Action Plans address such concerns as special needs accommodations, asthma, EpiPens, peanut allergies, medical needs and medication administration for these and food allergies.

Physicians must complete an Action Plan for any medical intervention plan that must be in place when a child is enrolled or when a need is recognized. It must include detailed information such as the signs of need, what to give and how much, steps to take if first steps are not adequate to alleviate the issue, what follow up should be. Action Plans need a doctor's signature.

Ask the office for an Action Plan form to complete for staff that best meets your child's non-medical need.

### **I. Allergies**

It is vital that the Center be informed and up-to-date on allergy information. Parents are to include the child's allergies on the Emergency Contact Form, upon enrollment or as soon as an allergy is identified. An Action Plan from a physician is needed for any allergy or condition which requires medical interventions or special accommodations in the classroom. A copy of the Action Plan is kept within the classroom, in the child's Medication Log file, so teachers have immediate access to it as needed.

EpiPens must be stored in their original box, labeled with your child's name. The expiration dates on the EpiPen and box must match. Expired EpiPens need to be replaced immediately. An Action Plan from your doctor is required if your child has an EpiPen in the classroom.

Signs are posted within a classroom for any child in the room who has an allergy alert. Please abide by them when packing your child's lunch (i.e., a peanut allergy).

Individual allergy signs are posted for each child, in their classrooms, along with the photo of the child, to let all staff in the room know which child has an allergy. Individual signs are posted for family preferences. For example: a preference their child not be given any substances with gelatin, Action Plans are not needed for a cultural or non-medical family request.

### **J. Emergency and Non-Emergency Care**

It is vital that each child's Emergency Contact information be kept up to date. We request that changes IN WRITING be given to the office as soon as any changes are made. Please inform us, also, IN WRITING of any allergies discovered that were not included on initial enrollment information.

In the case of a need for emergency medical attention, the following steps will be taken:

- Immediate first aid will be given to the child.
- Calls will be made to parents or emergency contacts.
- The child's physician will be called.
- The child will be taken to Lehigh Valley Hospital Cedar Crest Emergency Room unless otherwise indicated based on child's Emergency Contact Form. A staff



member will accompany the child to the ER and stay until a family member arrives.

For any non-emergency injuries parents are provided with:

- An incident report to be read and signed by parents
- NOTE: DHS permits centers to only clean a scrape/cut with soap and water and use of icepacks.
- A copy of the incident report is given to parents and a copy is placed in child's individual file.
- Parents may be called on a non-emergency injury, depending on the location and type of injury. Head or facial bumps, and bites are reasons for calls.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

### **Child Care Information Services of Lehigh County**

Community Services for Children  
1520 Hanover Avenue  
Allentown, PA 18109  
610-437-6000  
Dial TOT-INFO: 610-868-4636

### **Child Care Information Services, Inc. of Northampton County**

2200 West Broad Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18018  
610-419-4500

### **Unconditional Child Care**

2200 West Broad Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18018  
610-419-4500

### **Caring Foundation Blue Chip of PA**

1-800-KIDS-101 (5437)

### **Aetna US Health Care CHIP of PA (Known as CHIP/CHIP)**

1-800-822-2447

### **Healthy Beginnings**

Lehigh County: 610-821-6509  
Northampton County: 610-250-1700

### **WIC - Women, Infants and Children Program**

Allentown: Casa Guadalupe  
143 Linden Street  
Allentown, PA 18102  
610-435-5673

Bethlehem: WIC Bethlehem  
520 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18015  
610-691-6491

### **Lehigh Valley WIC Clinic**

824 Hamilton Street  
Allentown, PA 18101  
610-432-3455

### **Lehigh County Assistance Office (Department of Public Welfare)**

101 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street  
Allentown, PA 18101  
610-821-6509

**Northampton County Assistance Office (DPA)**

201 Larry Holmes Drive  
P.O. Box 10  
Easton, PA 18042  
810-250-1700

**Welfare Help Line**

1-800-692-7462

**Community Services for Children**

1520 Hanover Avenue  
Allentown, PA 18109  
610-437-6000

CSC provides a variety of direct services to children & families: Early Head Start, Head Start, Even Start, Family Library, Wellness Programs and Safe Start.

**Family & Counseling Services of Lehigh Valley**

Allentown: 411 Walnut Street  
Allentown, PA 18102  
610-435-9651

Bethlehem: 52 East Broad Street  
Bethlehem, PA 18018  
Call Allentown office

Nazareth: Broad & Prospect Streets  
Nazareth, PA 18064  
Call Allentown office

**Turning Point of the Lehigh Valley**

P.O. Box 5355 (mailing address)  
Bethlehem, PA 18015  
610-867-6477  
610-437-3369 (Hotline)

**For more information on the EITC, visit [www.irs.gov/eitc](http://www.irs.gov/eitc) or call 1-800-TAX-1040**

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of The Growing Tree Child Care Center Handbook (the "Handbook"). I agree to read it thoroughly, including the statements in the foreword describing the purpose and effect of the Handbook.

I agree that if there is any policy or provision in the Handbook that I do not understand, I will seek clarification from The Growing Tree Child Care Center.

I understand that this Handbook states The Growing Tree Child Care Center's policies and practices in effect on the date of publication. I understand that these policies and procedures are continually evaluated and may be amended, modified or terminated at any time.