



PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

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(860) 425-6566

Program Assistant Director
(860) 425-6536

Taftville & Griswold Education Mgr.
(860) 425-6584

New London & Groton Education Mgr.
(860) 425-6585

Taftville & Griswold Early Childhood Services Mgr.
(860) 425-6646

New London & Groton Early Childhood Services Mgr.
(860) 425-6593

Enrollment Mgr.
(860) 425-6537

Health Mgr.
(860) 425-6685

Taftville Building Site Mgr.
(860) 934-1021

Administrative Mgr.
(860) 425-6521

Groton Building Site Mgr.
(860) 448-6406 ext. 10

New London Building Site Mgr.
(860) 425-6631

Nutrition Supervisor & Registered Dietician
(860) 425-6530

Thames Valley Council for Community Action, Inc.
Little Learners Early Education Program
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THAMES VALLEY COUNCIL FOR COMMUNITY ACTION, INC. (TVCCA)

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of TVCCA is to increase self-sufficiency and economic security for low income individuals and families in Eastern Connecticut through a broad spectrum of community based collaborations, promoting community awareness, and providing comprehensive, quality services.

OUR VISION

Our Valued Employees: Our employees are our company. Each person will be encouraged to express opinions freely and show the company new and better ways to serve our customers. It is understood that some employees will use the company as their launching pad to other endeavors and that some will make TVCCA their career. While a member of the TVCCA Team, everyone will be expected to contribute to the success of our customers, programs, fellow employees and the agency.

Our Valued Customers: Our customers are the meaning of our existence. We must treat each customer with complete dignity and respect. We must be ever mindful of the fact that a customer chooses to walk through our door.

Our Valued Agency: Our agency is dedicated to serving the needs of our community. We will allocate all our resources to meeting current needs and anticipating future needs. Our agency will be governed by a board that understands and supports the agency's vision and will act as a resource to accomplish our goals.

OUR PREFERRED FUTURE

People are thriving. All people are valued, contributing and empowered members of our society. TVCCA is a respected, results-oriented, innovative (national) leader for anti-poverty solutions and a catalyst for community change. Communities and their leaders recognize the value of all people. Communities are healthy, thriving, safe and affordable places for ALL people to live, grow, and play.

OUR STRATEGIES

Agency Strategy: Become an innovative, respected and inspiring leader in building our community's capacity.

Education Strategy: Develop community and agency capacity to assure all people have the education and skills necessary to achieve future success.

Leadership Strategy: Build a diverse group of leaders from within the community who are committed to ending poverty.

Relationship Strategy: Build relationships across all sectors of the community to facilitate ending poverty.

Resource Strategy: Become an innovative, respected and inspiring leader in building our community's capacity.

TVCCA LITTLE LEARNERS EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAM

MISSION

To enrich the lives of those we serve by providing the best quality education and support; one child, one family at a time.

PURPOSE

The Little Learners Early Education program provides full day/full year, affordable, quality, comprehensive infant/toddler and preschool programs that serve children from ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Our programs are child-focused and increase the school readiness skills of young children. We provide a range of individualized services in the areas of education, medical, dental, nutrition and social services to children and their families. Parent involvement is an important part of our programs and is strongly encouraged.

PHILOSOPHY & GOALS:

- The philosophy of the Little Learners Early Education Program is to partner with families to provide affordable, comprehensive, quality childcare in an educational environment to all children ages 6 weeks to 5 years. Our centers are currently accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). This process looks at quality programming in an early childhood environment. Our philosophy is based on current Early Childhood Education research and data that supports many of our policies and practices. Our program utilizes The Creative Curriculum, a widely known and respected curriculum that aligns closely with The Connecticut Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS). The ELDS are the basis for planning, observing, and documenting children's progress. TS Gold is the assessment system used by the program which closely aligns with CT Early Learning Development Standards.
- In accordance with our program philosophy, the goals of the Little Learners Early Education Program are to:
- Promote social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language development of all children.
 - Work closely with families to support children's learning and development.
 - Allow for individual planning for each child using screening and assessment tools such as Brigance, DECA IT and TS Gold.
 - Value the family's influence as the children's primary educator.
 - Utilize a team approach that benefits from the skills of all center staff which maximizes success for children while preparing them to become life long learners.

- Individualize for all children through a variety of activities and teaching strategies that provide opportunities for children to be active learners.
- Learning Experience Plans will be developed that will include a topic of study, learning objectives, and parent activities based on the child's interests and strengths.
- Nutrition, family services, health, education, disabilities, mental health and parent engagement information, opportunities, resources and referrals will be offered on a continuous basis.

It is the sincerest hope of our program that our philosophy and goals will help families to raise healthy, happy and confident children as they begin their journey to become life-long learners.

SERVING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Our Early Childhood Services Managers work closely to support families and help them make the primary decision regarding needed services. Our collaborative partnerships with many community agencies ensure that the behavioral, social, health and educational needs of the children in our program are met. TVCCA has established outside support through agencies and Public School Systems which may provide the following for children in our program with suspected or diagnosed special needs:

- Classroom observations
- Speech and/or Language Evaluations
- Educational Evaluations (cognitive and academic)
- Physical Therapy Evaluation and Reports
- Occupational Therapy Evaluations and Reports
- Planning and Placement Team Meeting Minutes and Recommendations
- Individual Education Plan (IEP)
- Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- ECCP (Early Childhood Consultation Partnership)
- ECAT (Early Childhood Assessment Team)
- Communication with Little Learners Early Education Staff

All information provided is used to partner with families and agencies to plan appropriate experiences and nurture each child's growth while meeting their IEP or IFSP needs.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Children with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) may be provided services through Birth to Three (a fee for service based on income program) for children ages 6 months to 3 years. Birth to Three may provide services within the family home or in the child's classroom. Children ages 3 to 6 years with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) will be provided services by the public schools. Public schools may provide transportation for the child to access services. Services are provided at our Little Learners Centers whenever possible. In order to remain eligible in our program your child must be in attendance for a minimum of 1500 hours per year. See your family liaison for details. Classroom staff align the child's learning experience plan as closely as possible with the goals outlined on the IFSP or IEP. Please ensure your child's teachers receive a copy of your child's IFSP/IEP. Child Development staff and the Early Childhood Services Managers will be happy to support you through a PPT meeting.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Centers encourage family involvement. Research shows that children are more successful when parents are involved in their child's center or school. Involvement in your child's center is also an important step to developing open lines of communication between staff and parents. All of our facilities are locked for security purposes but parents will have immediate access to the facility. Activities provided by Little Learners Early Education program encourage the home school connection by providing families the opportunity to gain insight and valuable resources about their child and the program.

We provide a variety of ways to be engaged. All family engagement will be comprehensive and include:

*Supporting families in their role as their child's first educator *using a variety of communication methods *Strengthening learning at home *Involving families in decision making *Collaborating with the community

Some other ways families may become involved is through attending Family Advisory Meetings, center events, family conferences, contributing to center newsletters, completing "Partners in Learning" surveys, sharing their culture, participating in fundraisers, volunteering time, sharing a hobby or craft with parents and children or borrowing materials from our lending library, "Liking" the Program's Facebook page: facebook.com/TVCCALittleLearners, painting and hiding rocks as part of the Little Learners Rocks community [Little Learners Rocks](#) and joining the text alert system as a quick means of receiving communication from the program and keeping up-to-date with center activities.

Please mark your calendar with family engagement special events held throughout the year. A complete listing can be obtained from your child's teacher or on the Parent Information Board.

FAMILY ADVISORY COUNCILS

Family Advisory Councils have been established throughout our Program to support the Philosophy and Mission of the centers. Family advisory meetings are a monthly meetings where families of enrolled children are welcome to attend and be involved in decision making processes, assist in compiling program survey results, encourage broader family participation, take on leadership roles at meetings, contribute ideas for curriculum, plan special events and program fundraisers. By attending meetings and center events, families will get to know one another and support one another. Each Family Council elects the following positions: Chairperson, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. An agenda is submitted and minutes are taken at each Family Council Meeting. Families are surveyed regarding best days/times for meetings and dates are posted well in advance. Families who cannot attend a meeting are invited to submit items for the agenda by proxy. Families who cannot attend regular meetings are also welcome to be involved in the activities, projects, fundraising events, etc. of the Council. All families are encouraged to participate in any way they can.

VOLUNTEERING

We welcome volunteers in our Program. Families are welcome to volunteer at the Little Learners Early Education Centers at all times as long as it remains a positive and successful experience for you, your child, and the classroom. Volunteering is defined as: "anything other than routine drop off and pick-up of your child." All volunteers must sign in/out and adhere to all program policies and procedures including the center discipline policy. If you plan on volunteering in your child's classroom for an extended period of time, please feel free to speak to your child's teacher to complete a back ground check.

FAMILY CONFERENCES/EDUCATION VISITS

Family conferences are individual meetings that will be held twice a year. Your participation in family conferences is very important. The family conference is an opportunity to share progress and to partner with you to plan goals for your child. In addition, Education Visits are required and completed twice per year. These visits are a valuable exchange of information about the program and about your child. The first Education Visit takes place on site within your child's first week of enrollment (no later than 30 days after enrollment) and helps to establish a relationship of communication between the teaching staff and the child's parent or guardian. The second Education Visit is held in the summer to establish goals for the upcoming school year. However, if a concern arises in the meantime, please contact your child's classroom teacher to set up a convenient time to meet. Whenever possible a translator will be made available.

FAMILY LITERACY

Research has shown that families play an important role in helping children learn to read and write. Invest in your child's future by developing early literacy practices in your home. We encourage you to utilize the Parent Resource Lending Library at your child's center. The Lending library contains books/articles on parenting, budgeting, healthy eating, nutrition, recipe cards, etc. Classrooms also promote Families Read Every Day (FRED). Please borrow books to take home and read with your child. We will also provide you with information about your public library and encourage you to get a library card with your child. You can help reinforce the skills they are learning in school while making learning FUN! All families are welcome to join the many activities that our program offers throughout the year. Please speak with your child's teacher for more information.

HOME SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

Home school partnership initiatives are designed to establish two way communications between families and staff, to build collaborative relationships with families and to increase family and community support for our center activities. Ways to foster home school partnerships include: being a member of our Family Advisory Council, attending center events and/or our annual Family Fun Night, recording a book for your child to listen to during the day, contributing to the monthly Partners in Learning survey, attending family conferences, pointing out to your child the similarities in the center daily routine and your home routine, and volunteering in the classroom. Each month your child's classroom newsletter will update you on their activities so that you can incorporate these into your home time with your child. The Family Bulletin Board is a link between parents and classroom operations (home/school connections). On the board, you will see center policies, menus, interesting articles, TVCCA job availabilities and information of importance to you and your family. Please take a few minutes to read it each day.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILY EDUCATION

TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program has a variety of resources available on topics such as: parenting, how children develop, discipline and how to obtain economic assistance. Our staff will also provide you with information on program and community trainings offered for families including information about obtaining your GED, literacy tutoring, obtaining a library card, story hours, adult education, job training through American Jobs and learning English as a Second Language (ESL). Please speak to your child's teacher or Family Liaison if you would like any of this information. All agency job availabilities are posted at centers and on TVCCA's website (www.tvcca.org). Families are encouraged to apply for any position they feel they are qualified for.

CULTURAL AND LINGUISTIC NEEDS

Little Learners strives to recruit staff of the same cultural and linguistic background of the families we serve. Whenever possible, staff will assist in interpreting for families. TVCCA clients have the option to speak with an interpreter, when available, who will then assist the family in connecting with the appropriate program. TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program will utilize outside resources and/or our telephone relay system (CYRACOM) to help interpret for families as needed.

COMMUNICATION

We encourage you to share any concerns or news about your child, but please remember it is important to do so in private. Please discuss concerns or news out of children's hearing range. There may be times when staff will be unable to speak with you in private due to their responsibilities in the classroom. Simply write them a note and/or schedule an appointment for a more convenient time.

RESPECT

If parents' beliefs are incompatible with the program's policies, our goal is to seek common ground. Staff is available to discuss any concerns you may have. TVCCA recognizes that there will be differences in opinions and beliefs, but these must be communicated in a respectful manner at all times. Please note: all centers have a **zero tolerance policy** on profanity; physical aggression, threatening behavior and/or language. These actions will not be tolerated. Be mindful of your surroundings so not to alarm children. Talking on cell phones in our facilities is not permitted. Families must also abide by the rules established by our public school partners as we are guests in those locations. In the event that the above is disregarded you may be asked to leave the premises until a more calm discussion can take place. If adult's conduct violates our respect policy then they may no longer be permitted on TVCCA premises.

GRIEVANCE

If a problem arises at the center which you feel is not resolved by discussing it with your child's Head Teacher, please speak to your center's Site Manager/Education Manager. If after speaking with your Site Manager/Education Manager you feel the matter is still not resolved, please feel free to contact the Assistant Director of the TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program. Telephone extensions are listed at the beginning of this Parent Informational Guide.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is the respecting of rights and privacy of each family. To ensure confidentiality, TVCCA staff members will not speak with anyone other than the parent or legal guardian regarding concerns unless written permission is obtained. Confidentiality provides limits to ensure that records (education, health, social services, disability, etc.) are not made public or that information does not go to persons who may use it against the interest of the child or family. All persons who come in contact with Little Learners Early Education families are bound by this policy. TVCCA employees strictly adhere to this policy. All records are confidential and remain in a locked file cabinet. They are not to be shared with anyone outside of TVCCA staff except for funders, licensing agents, consultants and departmental authorities. To ensure that the confidentiality of records is maintained, the program will only release children's education records, annual physical & immunization records to parents with written permission. Requests for all other records pertaining to your child will not be released without a court order. Copies will be provided within a reasonable period of time. The first five (5) pages will be provided at no cost to the parent only one time. Any additional copies will be provided at a cost of \$.25 (25cents) per page, per side, payable in advance by money order or debit/credit card. This charge is to cover the costs of supplying the requested documents. Children's files are retained for at least two years from date of withdrawal, after such time files will be shredded.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

We serve as many children as permitted by license and funds including children with special needs, disabilities and diverse backgrounds. In accordance with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Code of Ethics, we abide by a policy that all families are afforded equal opportunities, without regard to any legal protective status including race, religion, color, physical or mental handicap, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, sex, ancestry and/or national origin, immigration status, preferred home language, religious beliefs or medical condition. Our program encourages diversity by recruiting and serving children that include a mix in the following categories: social, economic, age, gender and ethnic characteristics. We have open access for all children ages 6 weeks – 5 years.

RECRUITMENT

Efforts are made to achieve and maintain full enrollment at all times. Families are recruited by the following means: ads in local newspapers announcing our program, listings of centers in the education section of the newspaper, list of centers and current openings with Info Line, posting of flyers at local area businesses, posting of information on our website (www.tvcca.org), text messaging/e blasts services, and our Facebook page (facebook.com/TVCCALittleLearners). In addition, we attend community events to recruit new families and an applicant pool is maintained. All families are eligible to apply.

FUNDING SOURCES

The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Centers are funded by the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). Funding sources require that families submit proof of income and residency as required. Other collaborative funders include United Way, TVCCA Head Start, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Currently, we have several preschool classrooms that are Head Start Collaborative and require regular meetings with the family liaison to establish goals. All classrooms have family liaisons who provide additional services to the family. Our reimbursement from funders provides approximately 92% of total childcare expenses which include: program operation, equipment and administrative costs. The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides partial reimbursement for our food expenses at all childcare centers. Family fees are needed to pay for approximately 8% of expenses not covered by unit rate and food reimbursements.

ELIGIBILITY

TVCCA Little Learners “eligibility criteria” is used in conjunction with the income computation worksheet and family composition worksheet to determine eligibility for the program. Documentation of risk factors for enrollment are self-declared by the family. Funding requirements require us to prioritize children who are most at risk and meet all other eligibility requirements first.

Considerations for enrollment include the following:

- Families most at risk.
- Families whose income is under 75% of the State Median Income and/or 200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline and need full-time childcare (minimum thirty 30 hours weekly).
- Families enrolled in a training program and require a minimum of 30 hours of care weekly, during center operating hours.
- Some funding requires residency in the town in which the center is located.

All families who may be eligible, in accordance with their funding source, are encouraged to apply for the Care 4 Kids Program or pay full fee. TVCCA staff will assist you with this process. If approved for Care 4 Kids, you will be obligated to pay the weekly co-pay amount stated on your certificate. Applicant pool shall continue to be maintained.

PLACEMENT

It is the goal of TVCCA’s Little Learners Early Education Program to provide quality childcare services to children ages 6 weeks through 5 years. Children are grouped in separate classrooms based on age and development. Our infant rooms typically serve children ages 6 weeks – 18 months, our toddler rooms typically serve children 18 months – 3 years, and our preschool rooms serve children age 3 years – 5 years.

Little Learners management determines placement in a classroom based on funding, income, residency, age and development of the child. Upon enrollment we begin a provisional enrollment period of up to 30 days to evaluate whether the placement is appropriate for your child. If we feel the placement is not appropriate (i.e.: child is not ready for a full day program and/or can not meet the program’s attendance policies), we will work with you to transition your child to a more appropriate placement.

Cost of Care

FEE RATES

INFANT AND TODDLER CHILD CARE
PRESCHOOL CHILD

FULL WEEKLY FEE

\$444.23

\$288.46

This is the maximum allowable fee for subsidized childcare under our Office of Early Childhood CDC grant. This fee represents the value of the childcare service you are receiving. Our yearly cost for quality early childhood education is \$16,468.00 per child. Our funding sources subsidize much of this cost for you. If we do not have all required program paperwork you will be charged the above full weekly fee until such time as the paperwork is revised and a funded slot has been assigned to you. A \$25.00 registration fee is required per child by all families enrolling in the TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program. This fee is due at time of enrollment in the form of a money order, charge/ debit card payment.

FAMILY WEEKLY FEE POLICY:

The family weekly fee is determined using the Office of Early Childhood sliding fee scale. In order to determine a family’s fee, families are required to provide current Individual Income Tax Return or documentation verifying one month of current household income, birth certificate for the child enrolling and social security numbers for all household members. Current household income can include but is not limited to: income from work, alimony, worker’s compensation, self-employment, rental income, social security, dividends, interest, pensions, annuities and any public assistance. This information is used to project the family’s yearly income, which is applied to the sliding fee scale to calculate the weekly fee. Family size is determined using the family composition worksheet and must be reported accurately. TVCCA Enrollment Manager/Family Liaison will review your fee calculation with you, share the sliding fee scale used in calculating your fee and ask you to sign

your income computation worksheet. If you have any questions or concerns about how your fee is determined, please contact your Family Liaison and they will further review the fee determination process with you.

- Fees for childcare are due in advance and are payable weekly. No bill will be sent. All fees must be paid by money order, charge/debit card. Cash or personal checks will not be accepted. Be sure to clearly write your child's full name and "TVCCA Little Learners" on money order to ensure the fee is credited to the correct account.
- Fees are due on or before your child signs in on Monday
- Your weekly fee is the same amount every week. There are no credits or refunds given for holidays, scheduled closings, illness, inclement weather, early dismissals, vacations, unplanned emergencies, etc. Please contact your family liaison or enrollment manager if you have any questions regarding fee payment.
- If there is a hardship circumstance where fees are not able to be paid on Monday, the following steps are taken:
 1. The parent/guardian must contact the Family Liaison at the center
 2. The Family Liaison and parent/guardian will discuss options for payment as soon as possible
 3. A payment plan is agreed upon by both parties that will have any balance paid by the end of a four week period.
 - If payment plan is not adhered to, the child is not allowed to attend the center until fee is paid or the child may be withdrawn from the center.
- The Little Learners Early Education Program reserves the right to withdraw any child whose fees are overdue.
- All eligible families are encouraged to apply to the state child care subsidy program, Care 4 Kids. Family Liaisons will assist you in completing the Care 4 Kids application. If you are approved for a child care subsidy, you will be notified of your new fee.
- All fee information is kept confidential in a locked file in your child's center.
- Family Liaisons reserve the right to, at any time, request further income documentation such as copies of tax records, or further verification of household members such as a copy of a lease or rental agreement.
- If your child is enrolled in a School Readiness slot, and your residency town changes, your child may no longer be able to stay in this particular slot. We will look for other placement options for your child. Please let your Family Liaison know if your residency changes.
- A yearly statement for income tax purposes may be requested in January through your Family Liaison. We will prepare this statement within one week of such request. Please note this information takes time to compile.
- Children enrolled under the Preschool Development Grant will not be charged a family fee.

REPORTING CHANGES

Any increase/decrease in a family's work/training schedule or increase/decrease in income or family size must be reported **immediately** to the Family Liaisons. Your fee may change at this time. Failure to report a change in income or family size within 15 days of the date of the change may result in termination of childcare services.

In order to receive OEC/CDC subsidized care one (1) or both parents must be working or in an approved training program. In the event that either parent becomes unemployed or leaves a training program, immediate notice must be given to the Family Liaisons. At this time you will be issued an Employment Contract. If extenuating circumstances warrant a change to contracted hours, your Family Liaison will meet with you.

RE-DETERMINATION

Re-determinations are completed as required to determine fee amounts and eligibility for food reimbursement. Families will be notified to submit verification of income/ current employment if employed and any other required information approximately one month prior to re-determination period. If verification of all income is not submitted by the due date you will be charged the maximum allowable fee. If the documentation is not received within two weeks after the due date then your child may be withdrawn from the program.

Family Liaisons will review this documentation and calculate the projected yearly income which will be applied to the sliding fee scale to determine the family fee.

Any time you have questions or concerns about the re-determination process you may contact the Family Liaison who will review the fee process with you.

RE-ENROLLMENT

Families wishing to re-enroll their child after services have been terminated due to lack of fee payment must first pay their bill in full by money order or debit/credit card. When space becomes available, all necessary paperwork will need to be reviewed and completed by the parent and Family Liaison. Re-enrollment will require a new non-refundable registration fee and the first week fee payment before the child may attend childcare. Parents wishing to re-enroll a child after child care services have been terminated due to behavioral concerns must wait six (6) months before re-enrollment in any of our centers can be considered.

FAMILIES ENDING CHILD CARE SERVICES

We request a written notice from the family two (2) weeks before withdrawing a child from the Little Learners Early Education Program. This notice gives the staff time to prepare the children for their classmate's leaving, and will assist the child in leaving in a positive way. Proper notice gives other parents an opportunity to obtain our childcare service at the earliest possible time.

PARENT AUTHORIZATION FORM

Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC) requires all licensed childcare centers have Parent Authorization Forms which must be completed at enrollment. Notify your child's teacher if there is a change in your phone number and/or home information.

The Parent Authorization form must include one (1) emergency contact name and phone number in case a parent cannot be reached. Your child will not be able to attend without a valid and available emergency contact. Please be sure this person is aware you have listed them as your contact and they are available to pick up. All authorized emergency contacts must be at least 16 years of age. All authorized pick up persons must be available to pick up within one (1) hour's time of telephone call. For the safety of your child, monthly update forms must be filled out to verify the names and phone numbers are correct. Parents are responsible for informing their child's teacher of any changes in phone numbers or emergency contacts which may occur before the next monthly update form is completed. Staff will call to verify the emergency contact numbers. **Emergency contacts can only be added or changed in person, not over the phone or by written letter.** This policy is in place to protect the safety of your child. A child protection agency, such as the Department of Children and Families, may remove contacts and/or add additional contacts if this is part of the safety plan established by the child protection agency. When authorized emergency contacts are picking up your child, they must show valid picture identification and be permitted to receive and sign off on information from center staff.

DIVORCED or SEPARATED FAMILIES & CUSTODY ISSUES

It is the center's policy to handle situations of divorced and separated families in a way that supports the best interest of the child/ren. We are sensitive to each child's emotional needs and encourage parents who are in the process of separating or divorcing to notify their child/ren's teacher as soon as possible in order that the center may be informed of the child's home situation and any effects the situation may have on the child's well being.

Court orders and legal documents outlining child custody and visitation must be presented to your child's teacher and/or Family Liaison and must remain on file with the center in order for TVCCA to properly uphold them. The center cannot prevent a parent from picking up his or her child/ren unless a valid enforceable court order or legal document has been presented to and discussed with the Family Liaison and/or Head Teacher, and is on file with the center. Court ordered visitation should not be scheduled during center operating hours as this is disruptive and prevents the child from fully participating in the daily routine.

TVCCA will use their best effort to uphold court orders and legal documents regarding child custody and visitation. In the event a non-custodial parent arrives to pick-up his or her child/ren from the center, in violation of a court order or legal document on file with the center TVCCA staff will immediately telephone the police for assistance in enforcing the court order or legal document. TVCCA Little Learners reserves the right to refuse to honor an arrangement between the parents that differs from a court order or legal document.

ITEMS FROM HOME

TVCCA Little Learners does not take responsibility for broken or lost items including but not limited to: jewelry, clothing, glasses, car seats, etc. Toys from home are not allowed in our facilities. If the teacher identifies your child is having difficulties during transitions and/or nap time, she will speak with you to set up a plan. Families are asked to help children understand that objects brought in from home may become broken or lost. It is the parent's responsibility to see that their child brings nothing dangerous into the center. It is important that a positive bond be established between the child and teacher. TVCCA Little Learners reserves the right to hold any item that is perceived as potentially harmful.

DAILY ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Children will be required to attend the center with their parent/guardian for 1 hour prior to the child's first full day. Children's hours at Little Learners Early Education Program are determined by your child care schedule agreement. Center staff will monitor these hours. Staff is scheduled according to your contracted hours. Dropping off early or picking up late can significantly disrupt our group size and ratio. It is important that you adhere to your scheduled hours. Please see your child's Family Liaison to change contracted hours. A child coming in at inconsistent times disrupts the daily schedule. The latest time of arrival for the Little Learners Early Education Program is 9:00AM. **Contact must be made to the child's teacher if the child is going to be absent or late for the day.** Being consistently late will result in a meeting with TVCCA staff to determine if all

needs can be accommodated. All children enrolled in the Little Learners Early Education Program will be scheduled for full time care Monday thru Friday, with a minimum of 30 hours a week.

TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program centers are located on the South Eastern Area Transit (SEAT) bus line. Little Learners staff can provide a bus schedule if you need one. All of our centers are open year round Monday – Friday from 7:00AM – 5:00PM.

ARRIVAL

Having your child arrive on time helps to learn consistency and establish routines to better prepare them for public school. Staff will conduct a general health check upon arrival. In order to prevent the spread of disease, please take your child to wash their hands upon entering the classroom. Staff will conduct head lice checks on your child's first day of arrival each week and thereafter as needed.

A cubby will be assigned to your child for coats, change of clothes, etc. Please encourage your child to take care of their personal belongings.

It is the parent's responsibility to put sunscreen lotion on children prior to arriving at the center. Staff will re-apply lotion prior to afternoon outdoor play time. Parents must provide sunscreen and written permission to apply. See your child's teacher for paperwork.

Children may not be at the center before or after center operating hours other than for scheduled meetings.

A parent or a responsible adult must accompany the child into the center/classroom and sign the child in. Please complete all the appropriate spaces on the sign in form. This form is a legal document and crucial to ensure compliance with State of CT rules and regulations. When a child is picked up, put the full name and time of person signing child out.

- Please be aware that our centers are locked facilities. While it is polite to hold the door open for others, we ask that you do not do this at the center for safety reasons.
- Families are asked to leave coffee/drinks/food in the car when entering the center. No outside food, hot beverages, or soda/ice tea, etc. are allowed in the buildings when children are in attendance.
- Please remove sunglasses, hats and hoods when entering facilities.
- Talking on cell phones in the facilities is not permitted
- If you arrive after 9:00AM it is the parent/guardian's responsibility to transition your child into the group activity and ensure they are ready to begin their day. This may include sitting with your child while they have a meal.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Regular attendance is important for your child's on-going learning and to build strong school readiness skills. Our program's funding requirements require our program to maintain 85% attendance monthly. There are times, however, when an absence is necessary - such as when your child is sick. It is your responsibility to **call your child's classroom** before class begins to let the staff know that your child will be absent. If we do not hear from you on the second day of absence, you may receive a safety visit at your home. Once there have been 5 unexcused absences, or being consistently late, a meeting will take place with center staff to develop an attendance plan. Without improvement over the following months, your child may be withdrawn from the program.

ILLNESS RELATED ABSENCES

The Little Learners Early Education centers are not licensed to provide care for ill children, therefore children who are ill may not attend. You must call the center if your child is not attending. Staff will call you to inquire about the absence if you have not contacted the center. Any child absent due to illness for 4 consecutive center days, or more, needs a doctor's note to return to the center.

If your child has an illness or injury that will prevent them from attending the center for three or more weeks then they may be withdrawn and placed on the waiting list for the next available space.

If your child becomes sick while at the center, we will call you to pick up your child within one half (1/2) hour's time. If your child is due to attend public school that day, we will not send them to school. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the public school and the bus company regarding the absence. If you cannot be reached, your emergency contacts will be called. If no one on the parent authorization is available to pick up your child within the one (1) hour time frame, a meeting will be called with your child's teacher in which you will be required to provide alternate emergency contacts before your child will be allowed to return to the center. Parent must notify the center if child is diagnosed with any communicable disease and/or if your child has been given any medication before their arrival at the center.

DEPARTURE

At enrollment the parent/guardian gives the center a list of authorized responsible adults who can pick up their child. This list will be reviewed/updated monthly. At no time will children be released to anyone under the age of 16 years, unless they are the parent/legal guardians. Children will not be released to persons who are not listed on the Parent Authorization Form.

Verbal permission can not be granted. All authorized pick-up persons must be added to the Parent Authorization Form. Legally, the center must allow biological, non-custodial parents and legal guardians to pick up their child unless a certified copy of the court order specifying otherwise is on file at the center.

- Children can only attend the center during parent contracted hours.
- A parent or an authorized adult must sign the child out on a sign in/out sheet. A picture ID is required when picking up your child. Please make sure you and all authorized adults have ID on them for pick-up.
- Please keep the list of authorized adults updated.
- Important papers will be in your child's mailbox, please check daily before departing.
- Safety is the first priority for all children. TVCCA expects all adults who drop off and pick up children to be using an approved car restraint system. Cars cannot be left idling in parking lots, please remember, no child is to be left unattended in a vehicle.

LATE PICK UP

Procedure for child not picked up at agreed scheduled time when center is open.

At time of enrollment, parent/guardian signs an agreement for their child's childcare hours. The child must be picked up at the scheduled time on the agreement form. If parents do not contact the center in advance, the following steps will be taken when your child is not picked up at agreed upon pick up time:

- A late fee of one dollar (\$1.00) per minute, per child will be charged to the parent. Late fees begin immediately after contracted pick up time and are charged according to the center's clock. This fee must be paid by money order or debit/credit card on or before Monday when regular fees are due. Your child will not be able to attend the center if the fee is not paid on the first Monday after child was picked up late.
- Attempts to contact parents will be made within 15 minutes after scheduled pick up time.
- If parents cannot be reached, emergency contacts will be called to pick up the child.
- If you need to change your contracted time for the day, you must call the center prior to contracted pick up time to get approval from the person in charge. If your request can be honored, no late fee will be charged. Please keep in mind that these requests are approved for special circumstances only. Due to staff coverage, we may not always be able to honor these requests.
- Variations in contracted times will result in a meeting with the Enrollment Manager/Family Liaison and parent to discuss alternatives.

Procedure for Child/ren not picked up at center closing time

Your child must be picked up before center's closing time. If circumstances arise that prevent you from arriving on time, please make arrangements for someone who is on your Parent Authorization Form to pick up your child before the center closes. If a child is still at the center after closing time, we will:

- Have two staff members remain with the child until child is picked up.
- Attempt to contact the parents at center's closing time.
- If parents cannot be reached, attempts to reach one of the emergency contact persons will be made. If the emergency contact person can be reached, arrangements will be made to have the child picked up.
- Parents will be charged a late fee of a dollar (\$1.00) per minute, per child based upon child's contracted pick up time. Late fees will be calculated by time on center clock. This fee must be paid by money order on or before Monday when regular weekly fees are due. Your child will not be able to attend center if fee is not paid on the first Monday after child was picked up late.
- If the parent and emergency contacts cannot be reached within one (1) hour after center's closing time, the following procedure will be implemented:
 1. The person in charge will notify the State Department of Children and Families (DCF) Careline at 1-800-842-2288, and the local police that a child was left at the center.
 2. At this time your child will be placed in the custody of the police or DCF.

Please note: The second time the child is picked up late a written warning will be issued informing the parent their child may be withdrawn. We will monitor your child's attendance/arrival & departure times on an ongoing basis.

CENTER DISCIPLINE

Positive Behavior Support (PBS) involves compassion and respect for children while helping a child understand that mistakes are a natural part of growing up. PBS helps children value themselves.

TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program uses developmentally appropriate discipline in our classrooms.

Developmentally appropriate discipline facilitates the development of children's self-esteem, teaches self-control, accountability for one's actions, uses conflicts as teaching moments and empowers children to solve their own conflicts. The purpose of discipline is to teach by example. Discipline is NOT the same as punishment. This means that adults serve as role

models, guiding and directing children toward acceptable behavior. The ultimate purpose of discipline is to help children achieve self-discipline.

Our Little Learners Program takes a proactive approach to discipline by incorporating the following strategies into our centers:

- Managing child behavior using techniques based on developmentally appropriate practices which include: positive guidance, redirection, and setting clear limits that encourage children to develop self control, self discipline and positive self esteem. Encouraging children to identify, accept and express their feelings. Staff will validate the children’s feelings before attempting to resolve conflict.
- Providing staff with training and knowledge about child development principles and reasonable expectations of children’s developing capabilities.
- Giving children real and valid choices, whenever possible.
- Creating a classroom atmosphere through example and attitude where it is natural and acceptable to express feelings. Reinforcing the “use of words” to express feelings to solve conflicts. Staff will provide children with the language needed to appropriately express themselves.
- Arranging the classroom environment and planning curriculum in an effort to prevent behavior issues.
- Maintaining a positive approach to classroom climate by telling children what to do rather than what not to do. Directions and suggestions will be made in the form of positive statements. For example: “You can throw the ball outside”. Directions and suggestions will be given in clear, consistent and simple statements delivered at children’s eye-level.
- Making simple rules necessary for a smooth and safe running classroom in cooperation with the children.
- Verbalize rules consistently to children and encouraging children to verbalize the rules.
- Speaking calmly and distinctly in short meaningful sentences when children are in conflict.
- Minimizing transitions where children have to wait without anything to do for any length of time.
- Continually supervising. No child shall be removed to an unsupervised area.
- Provide positive reinforcement for expected behaviors
- Children will be encouraged to think of solutions or alternatives for their own actions with guidance by staff

ACCEPTED METHODS OF DISCIPLINE

At times when a child’s behavior must be guided, we find the following methods to be appropriate:

- Children will be encouraged to become active participants in their own problem solving. They will be provided with opportunities to think of solutions or alternatives for their own actions, with guidance from staff.
- *Positive Redirection*- Direct the child from aimless, inappropriate behavior to more constructive, successful experiences.
- *Calm Down Time*- during calm down time, teachers will assist children with obtaining self control and composure. Children may be redirected to a quiet place in the classroom to calm down (i.e.: library area, cozy corner, etc.). The child decides how long he/she needs before they are ready to return to the group. The child will remain in the classroom and staff will invite the child back to the group when the child feels they are ready. Calm down time is not a punitive experience. It is an opportunity for the child to gain control of himself/herself, while being offered continuous positive support from staff. The objective is to preserve the child's self-esteem.
- For the protection and safety of all, it may be necessary for staff to physically intervene when a child is a danger to themselves or others. In these cases, staff will use the least restrictive methods required to ensure the safety of all involved.
{DPH Section 19a-79-3a.}

A Note about the Use of Time Out

The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program recognizes that many families utilize “Time Out” as a disciplinary tool in their homes, we find it to be an ineffective means of discipline in our Little Learners Early Education Centers. Our program works to keep young children involved in enjoyable activities that are developmentally appropriate, meeting their needs and focusing attention and energy on appropriate rather than inappropriate behaviors.

THE DISCIPLINE POLICY PROCESS WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING STEPS

- Staff will verbally tell the child that the behavior is not acceptable or appropriate and that you cannot allow him/her to hurt him/her self or others. The child will be reassured that the staff would never allow other children to hurt him/her either.
- If an injury occurs, parent/guardians will be given a written description of the incident.
- Parents may meet with center staff to discuss strategies to provide consistent discipline in the center and home.
- Removal of a child from the classroom is to be used in extreme cases when children are unable to control their anger or frustrations and are injuring themselves or others. Staff will use appropriate guidance and redirection to attempt to help de-escalate the behaviors. Staff are given additional supports through education and early childhood service management staffs as needed. Staff will assure the child that the staff wants to help him/her, but that we cannot allow him/her to hurt themselves or others.

- If severity of the incident warrants removal of the child, the parent/guardian will then be telephoned to pick up the child within a half-hour (1/2 hour) and remove him/her from the center for the remainder of the day. Every effort will be made to work with parents/guardians and children to achieve a successful school experience.
- If the severity/frequency/duration of the incident warrants removal of the child, a meeting date will be scheduled before your child may return to the center.
- If a consultant is recommended, the parent or guardian must give their permission for their child to be observed. A release form documenting this permission will be placed in the child's file. Consultants may offer help in a variety of ways including on site classroom observations, and consultation with parents and staff about any concerns. The goal of having a consultant is to help your child have a positive learning experience. Consultants and staff work closely with families to help support the child. If the consultant and/or the program staff feel they are unable to meet the needs of the child and/or family, the child will be withdrawn and families may be provided with additional resources.

Prohibited Discipline Techniques

TVCCA prohibits the following discipline techniques in accordance to the Office of Early Regulations:

“(B) Specifically prohibiting abusive, neglectful, physical, corporal, humiliating, or frightening punishment, and shall not tie or bind children and shall not physically restrain, except for the protection and safety of the child or others using least restrictive methods as appropriate. {DPH Section 19a-79-3a.}”

Physical Punishment – is never used under any circumstance

Verbal Communication – will never be embarrassing, threatening, frightening or degrading to the child. Instead, verbal communication with the children should enhance self-esteem.

No child shall be removed to an unsupervised area.

Volunteers/Visitors will be expected to adhere to Center Discipline policies.

Any infraction of the above will result in immediate removal of staff from the setting and an investigation will occur. Parents will be notified immediately.

PROTECTIVE SERVICE REFERRAL

The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program encourages and supports a loving and caring family life. Every child has the right to a safe and healthy home, parents with good parenting skills, and to have their basic needs met (sufficient food, clothing, shelter etc.). All Little Learners Early Education Staff and their consultants are mandated reporters to the Department of Children and Family (DCF). If a staff member has reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect, they are legally bound to report this to DCF. Please understand that a call to DCF is always based on the facts presented to us and is never made to place judgment on a family's home environment. This policy is in place to protect the safety of every child who comes under TVCCA Little Learners care. It is our priority to continue to work with families after a report is made in order to support families through the process. We will make every attempt, when possible, to notify families when reports are made. Parents are asked to notify the center immediately of incidents occurring at home causing any physical injury or emotional stress to your child. This information helps us support your child.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Children may be withdrawn from our program for the following reasons:

- When a child is unable to successfully function within a group of children.
- If his/her behavior is a danger to him/herself, other children or staff.
- If his/her behavior causes continuous and significant disruptions to the daily operations of the Little Learners Program.
- If the Little Learners Program cannot best meet the needs of the child or family.
- If the parent does not abide by the fee policy.
- Excessive tardiness/absenteeism
- If the parent no longer meets the program policies/procedures or enrollment priorities.
- If the parent misrepresents or withholds information required by the funding source or TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program.
- If the parent does not contact the center, either by telephone, in writing or in person the child will be withdrawn from the center one week after the last day in attendance. All personal items will be discarded after one week.
- Failure to abide by the Respect Policy when communicating with TVCCA Little Learners Early Education staff may result in the immediate withdrawal of your child/ren.
- Failure to provide updated medical and/or emergency contact information

This list is not all-inclusive. There may be other reasons for withdrawal. It is the center staff's responsibility to notify the parent or guardian if a problem should arise. Appropriate TVCCA staff will notify the parent/guardian verbally and in writing of the withdrawal. If possible, up to two weeks of childcare will be provided to allow parents or guardians to make other

arrangements. The written notice will include the effective date of withdrawal, any referrals and the reason for the withdrawal. A copy of the written notification will be placed in the child's file.

TVCCA MANAGEMENT PLANS

Every child with a diagnosed health condition (such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, seizure disorder, etc.) must have a TVCCA Management Plan completed and signed by the child's doctor, and parent/guardian in order to begin attending our program. This plan must include the care to be given to your child in an emergency, and will need to be updated yearly with their annual physical. Every effort will be made to accommodate all management plans. It may take several days to get appropriate forms completed by all parties and correct food substitutions ordered. This may delay your child's ability to attend.

GENERAL HEALTH/SAFETY & HYGIENE INFORMATION

TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program is committed to providing a safe environment for children and staff. All staff and visitors are expected to follow OSHA regulations - and wear gloves in any situation where they come into contact with any bodily fluids. For health and safety purposes, anyone entering the childcare center must have on shoes and a shirt.

- A notice is posted to inform families if a child/staff member attending the center has a communicable disease. The notice informs parents to watch for symptoms and gives directions for what to do if their child gets the illness.
- Outdoor play is an important part of our curriculum. If your child is not well enough to fully participate in the daily routine, including outdoor play, please do not send them to school.
- While we recognize the importance of fresh air and outdoor play for children, we will take precautions to protect children from extreme weather conditions (i.e.: air pollution alerts, extreme cold, heat index at or above 90°F.)

TVCCA has a Health Manager, Health Liaison and contracts with local agencies for nurse consultants to visit our facilities to do general health observations as well as health records check. They will call a pediatrician to obtain medical information if need be.

- TVCCA contracts with local agencies for dental services to visit our facilities twice per year to do dental screenings.
- Nutrition, hearing, vision and educational screenings are all done on site by TVCCA staff or a contracted agency. You will be notified in writing if a referral to your doctor is required for follow up.
- No plastic bags are allowed in centers. Children's clothing must be brought in something other than a plastic bag (i.e.: backpack, paper bag, etc).
- It is recommended that children do not wear jewelry in our centers.
- If you do not have medical insurance for your child, your Family Liaison will assist you in applying for HUSKY health insurance for your family.

PHYSICAL FORMS

The Office of Early Childhood requires that all children attending licensed childcare centers have a complete and current (within one (1) year from date of physical) physical form signed by a physician, physician's assistant or advanced practice registered nurse. The physical must be on form ED 191 (CT Early Childhood Health Assessment Record) and on file before your child attends the Little Learners Early Education Program. The child's current physical form must include date of birth, date of exam, general health and any known medical or emotional illness that would pose a risk to other children or affect the child's ability to participate safely in a childcare program. All required immunizations /screenings including TB test/assessment for children over 3 years of age must be documented by month, day and year. We follow Connecticut's EPSDT schedule which requires a blood lead level at 9-12 months and again at 24 months. We need the result of the test done in order to be in compliance. Per OEC, the pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV, PCV7, and Prevnar), influenza and Hepatitis A vaccines are required immunizations for enrolled children. Diagnosed problems such as allergies, asthma, diabetes, seizure disorder, special dietary needs, dental problems, hearing or vision impairments, chronic illness, developmental variations or history of contagious disease will require an individualized health plan. The health manager/nurse consultant tracks health records for accuracy and expiration dates. If you do not have a primary care physician (medical home) for your child please contact the Health Manager who will assist you in obtaining a medical home for your child.

- Children must have a physical annually. Parents must submit the physical form, (ED 191) or proof of scheduled appointment to take place no more than three (3) weeks after expiration of current physical.
- Immunization records for infant and toddlers six (6) weeks to three (3) years must be kept current. Documentation of immunizations by a physician, physician's assistant or advanced practice registered nurse must be submitted to center when immunizations are received.
- Physical notices and/or text messages will be sent as a courtesy reminder. However, up to date physicals and immunizations are the responsibility of the parents. We will consult with our Health Manager and/or nurse for clarification if questions arise.
- A parent's failure to comply with the health requirements is cause for suspension and/or termination of childcare services.

MEDICATION

TVCCA Child Development staff will administer medication to children for whom a plan has been made. Staff is certified to administer oral, topical and inhalant medications as well as Epi-pen injectable medication. We will need the following before any medication can be given:

- You will be asked to read and sign a TVCCA Medication Policy (and a TVCCA inhalation policy if your child needs medication for asthma)
- Your child's doctor will need to complete and sign an Authorization for the Administration of Medication.
- You will need to bring the medication to the center and show staff how to properly administer it. The doctor's Authorization for Administration of Medication must match exactly the prescription label on the medication.
- We can not give the first dose of any medication to your child in case there are any side effects.
- Each time a child is placed on antibiotics by a physician, they cannot attend the center until a full 24 hours after the initial dose of medication has been given; this is due to possible allergic reactions or side effects that may occur at any time. Please remember children are not to be dropped off after 9AM.

We do ask that you please work with your child's doctor to see if a dose schedule can be made that does not involve the hours the child is in the center. For more information, please read the TVCCA Child Development Medication Policies.

INJURED CHILD

In the case of an accident, the center is responsible for administering First Aid/CPR. The parent and/or ambulance will be called for emergencies requiring a doctor's care. In case of emergency, the parent will be contacted to pick up the child. If the parent cannot be reached, the emergency contacts will be called.

You will receive an accident form for any injury that does occur. If an accident warrants, staff will notify you of the injury and let you make the decision to seek medical attention.

BITING POLICY

It is important to keep in mind that biting is a natural developmental phase that many children go through and punishment does not work to change the child's behavior. It is our program's goal to provide information, modeling, and support and make referrals, when necessary, so that the child can modify their behavior and experience success.

See your child's teacher for the full policy and/or to answer any questions you may have.

DIAPERING

All infant and toddler diapers will be changed or checked at least once every two hours, more frequently if necessary. If a child is sleeping or outside at the time of the next scheduled diaper change, they will be changed as soon as they wake up or come inside. Staff will change children's clothing as necessary.

TOILET TRAINING PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

We believe that each child is an individual who has their own style and pace of learning. It is our philosophy to support and encourage children to be successful. If your child is not yet toilet trained or at the end stages of toilet training, we will work with you to develop an appropriate plan for your child.

This toilet training policy does not apply to children with documented disabilities that hamper toilet training. In these instances documentation is required from your doctor indicating what accommodations need to be made. An individual plan will be made according to the child's abilities, parent's suggestions and professional recommendations.

In the event that your child is not successful in toileting, a meeting will be held with parents/guardians and appropriate staff to devise a plan that adheres to this policy and the success of the child. Staff will provide any needed resources to parents/guardians to facilitate successful, independent toileting.

PROGRAM TRANSITIONS

For children already enrolled in a Little Learners Toddler Classroom:

The transition from a toddler slot to a preschool slot cannot be guaranteed once your child turns three. If we are unable to accommodate your child's transition to preschool you will be given several options to choose from. If space is available at one of our other sites in a preschool classroom you will have the option to transfer your child to that site. TVCCA Little Learners will request a waiver from the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) for your child to remain in the toddler classroom after your child's third birthday if no preschool slot is available. Please be aware that you will continue to pay the infant/toddler fee rate until the child is placed in a preschool classroom.

For currently enrolled children in the TVCCA Little Learners Program – Prior to age three of the child, a transition plan will be developed by parents and the family liaison to foster a smooth transition into our preschool classrooms. Toddler Room teachers will dedicate a period of time to introduce children to their new preschool classroom and teachers. Once a currently enrolled child begins in a preschool classroom, and is not fully toilet trained, a plan will be put in place with the

parent/guardian to work on this. For more information please see your child's teacher. TVCCA Little Learners staff and parents will utilize transition strategies in order to help the child make a successful adjustment.

For children beginning childcare in a Little Learners Classroom:

Center transitions welcome your family into the Little Learners program. Transition is a very important aspect of the program as it continues to build upon the partnership between your family and staff. A time will be scheduled to visit the center for approximately 1hour with your child. This will be an opportunity for you and your child to become familiar with the classroom and staff. This visit will help your child in becoming comfortable with their new surroundings.

Kindergarten Transitions:

In efforts to collaborate with the local schools and other early childhood providers, a kindergarten transition card/report has been developed for TVCCA Child Development Programs. Kindergarten transition cards/report are a system that allows TVCCA Little Learners to share vital information with local kindergarten programs. Sharing this information, based off of assessments using Teaching Strategies Gold which aligns with the CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS), will enhance the smooth transition of children from our program to their kindergarten class.

Other orientation activities for children and families to prepare them for the transition to kindergarten will be provided, include:

- Parents attending an orientation/transition conference held at the TVCCA Child Development program's sites with local public school staff. Kindergarten registration packets will be available on site for this activity whenever possible.
- TVCCA staff may participate in planning and attending a transition event with the public school system.
- Families are given kindergarten transition information and are encouraged to take part in the kindergarten registration process at their local elementary school.
- Kindergarten Readiness Skills handouts are distributed at transition conferences.

Children transitioning to kindergarten will be given notice prior to the end of the program year of their child's final day. This gives the program adequate time to prepare our younger children who will begin transitioning into the new school year.

NAPPING

We recognize that a period of rest is an important part of your child's day. Infant classroom's children sleep on demand. As your child approaches their first birthday staff will discuss with you the transition from a crib to a cot and napping one time a day at school. Preschool classrooms will encourage all children to rest quietly on their cots. If children are not sleepers, or find resting difficult, they will be offered a quiet activity after a maximum of 30 minutes. Staff will begin the process of waking up preschool children no later than 2:30p.m.

For children that sleep on a cot, families may provide snug fitting crib sheets and bedding for their child's use. All bedding must be brought home weekly to be laundered.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

Safe sleep and napping practices reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) and the spread of contagious diseases. In order to maintain safe sleep practices, we follow the State of CT Department of Public Health policies/procedures. Please see your child's teacher for this information

TOOTHBRUSHING

The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program promotes healthy dental hygiene. Children ages 12 months and older will be offered an opportunity every day to practice their dental hygiene skills. Children under 12 months will have their gums/teeth cleaned with gauze once daily. Children ages 12 months – 3 years will be assisted using a toddler toothbrush, wet with water only, to gently brush their teeth. At 3 years of age, each child will be taught to brush his/her own teeth with a smear of toothpaste on a child-size toothbrush. This will be done under staff supervision once daily. Only toothpaste with fluoride and ADA seals will be used. The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program will provide your child with toothpaste and toothbrushes.

CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable, casual clothing while in our facilities. We will be doing lots of hands on and sometimes messy projects including but not limited to, physical activities. Staff will make all efforts to ensure your child's clothing will not get stained.

- Parents must supply, *at all times*, an additional set of clothing labeled (in permanent ink) with their child's name.
- Dress your child according to the weather. In winter, make sure he/she wears boots, hat & mittens, as we go outside when weather permits.
- For safety reasons, our program requires children to wear closed toe, closed back or heel strapped shoes. (i.e.: no flip flops, crocs or croc like shoes).
- We do not recommend children wearing jewelry in our centers; however if jewelry is worn, it needs to be kept to a minimum. Earrings must be small (studs or small hoops no larger in diameter than a dime) with screw type backing.

- The center is not held responsible for any lost or stolen items.
- It is the family's responsibility to supply bibs for their infant children.

Please be aware that all infant classrooms are shoeless classrooms. Be sure to use the booties provided to cover your feet prior to entering these classrooms.

BOTTLE FEEDING/NURSING MOTHERS

Infants shall be held for all bottle feedings or until the child can sit in a high chair and can independently hold their own bottle. A written statement specifying the formula and the feeding schedule shall be obtained from parents. No infant food or bottles will be microwaved for warming. Please be aware that per CACFP and USDA regulations, and for the safety of your child, infant formula will/can not be mixed with infant cereal/rice etc. in the child's bottle. For breastfeeding mothers, we will do everything possible to provide accommodations if you wish to come to the center to feed your child. Any unused portions of formula/breast milk shall be discarded after 1 hour.

A family not choosing TVCCA Little Learners provided formula will need to provide their child's center with enough prepared bottles for an entire day. Families using TVCCA Little Learners formula will need to bring in enough clean empty bottles for an entire day. All bottles must have the child's name visibly written on each bottle. If parent arrives at center without enough bottles and/or formula for the entire day, the child cannot stay until the correct amount of formula is provided. Glass bottles are not permitted for safety reasons.

NUTRITION

Nutrition is an important part of good health. Proper nutrition is also an important part of a quality Child Development Program. At the time of enrollment, families will complete a nutrition questionnaire that is reviewed by the agency dietician. Following review of the form, families will be provided with information tailored to their child's nutritional needs and habits. Children need well-balanced meals in order to meet their daily energy needs as well as to help them build strong bodies and minds. Through the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), you can be assured that your child is being offered balanced, nutritious meals that meet the recommended serving size for children this age which is 2/3 of their daily nutritional needs. All meals eaten by the children are prepared, served, and stored in accordance with the USDA and CACFP guidelines. All children enrolled in the Little Learner's Program follow menus that are approved by registered dietitians. TVCCA policy states that all children must follow the center's menus for their age group as written. Upon enrollment and yearly thereafter you are required to complete a CACFP application, and religion/medical restriction forms, if applicable. This form is used to determine the reimbursement for meals. In addition to the application, families are given a letter about the CACFP program, the income guidelines used to determine meal reimbursement, a statement about the program (Building for the Future) and information about Woman Infants, and Children (WIC). Information is also posted on the bulletin board in each center. Copies of this information will be made available to you upon request.

Due to the number of food allergies and/or restrictions, it is our program's policy that no food is to be brought into our centers without prior approval from the CACFP manager. Infants may bring in prepared formula/breast milk only (see bottle feeding policy). In the event your child has a food allergy/restriction, you must notify staff immediately so that we can give you the proper paperwork for your physician to fill out. Substitutions will be made once the paperwork and food plan are in place. Your child may not be able to attend until all required forms, food plan and food substitutions are in place. If your child cannot eat certain foods due to religion or medical reasons, please see your center's Family Liaison for the proper paperwork. Once the form is complete and in place, proper substitutions will be made. All of the meals must follow patterns set by the CACFP dietary guidelines. Please see the Parent Bulletin Board where menus are posted. If you would like a copy of the menu, please ask your child's teacher. Our centers provide breakfast, lunch, and snack every day for all children.* Food will not be served other than scheduled meal times, see a teacher for these times. Children should not arrive to the center with any food of their own to eat. This excludes infants who are still on formula/breast milk. No child will leave the center while eating food from the center. Staff and children eat together in a relaxed family style way, practicing good manners. Children are encouraged to taste everything, but are not forced to eat what they do not like. Food is not used as a punishment or reward. If your child arrives to the center after mealtime and has not eaten, the expectation is that the parent/guardian will sit with the child while they eat.

Nutrition education is a part of the children's daily curriculum as well as being offered a monthly nutrition/cooking activity to participate in. Children participate in meals/snacks by serving themselves and cleaning up after meals, promoting independence and self-help skills. Every week children participate in nutrition activities, such as cooking activities, reading and learning about food, field trips to local markets or physical fitness activities. Parents are provided with monthly nutrition activities/articles as well as discussing at family advisory meetings nutrition and physical activities that can be done at home. We have a registered dietician on staff to meet with parents at any time to discuss nutrition concerns.

**Please note: the Groton Little Learners Early Education Centers' parents/guardians must provide their children with healthy, nutritious, cold lunches daily. Nutritious morning and afternoon snacks will be provided by the program.*

SCHEDULED CLOSINGS

Please see the yearly calendar at the back of the handbook for all scheduled closings. There will be a limited number of times throughout the year that TVCCA will need to close for trainings and facility repairs. We will make every effort to give parents 30 days notice. There could be times throughout the year that your center may have emergency closings. The program will use our texting system to alert parents to any unscheduled days closed, excluding weather related closings (see below).

INCLEMENT WEATHER

If the public school system in the town that your child's Little Learner's center is located in closes, your child's center will also be closed. If the public school in the town of your child's Little Learner's center has a delayed opening, then your child's center will open at 9:00AM. When the public school closes early, your child's center will close at 1:00PM. The Norwich/Taftville centers follow the Norwich Public Schools, The New London center follow the New London Public Schools, the Griswold center follows the Griswold public school system and the Groton center follows the Groton Public Schools. When ever possible, centers will not follow the public school system when the closings are not due to inclement weather. EX: One school closes for water problems, TVCCA would not close. If school systems close due to no heat, TVCCA facilities will not close. TVCCA facilities will not close if the public school systems close for weather of extreme heat or cold. In the event that your town's public school has a scheduled day off, we will post a notice in advance on the center's door informing you of the alternate school system to advise for cancellations.

Center Safety

Ensuring the safety of our children, staff and families is our first priority. As required by OEC, all child development staff are fingerprinted and undergo a criminal background check. For safety, all staff are issued a photo ID badge. All visitors will be required to sign in to the building and will be issued a visitor's pass. If a staff member needs to call you from a personal cell phone during an emergency, the call will come across as blocked. All of our facilities are locked at all times. While it is polite to hold the door for others, we ask that you do not do this as it presents a safety concern. If the person unlocking the door does not recognize you they may require a picture ID, as well as the reason you are at the facility before allowing you into the building. Please be sure that everyone who is picking up your child knows your child's first and last name.

Safety Drills

As part of our safety plan, we will be practicing monthly lock down/fire drills with your children. It is our belief that if we do this on a consistent basis, it helps children feel safe and know what to expect in the event an emergency occurs. No one is allowed in the building during a lockdown drill. In the event of a lock down drill, parents should find the nearest safe zone (hiding place) in or out of the building of to ensure their safety.

TVCCA DISASTER PLAN

TVCCA works with local officials to design an emergency plan in case of a bio-terrorism, chemical or nuclear disaster. The Norwich and Griswold communities are considered "safe zones", therefore evacuation is not recommended. Unless directed by local officials to evacuate, the above mentioned facilities will be staying in their buildings.

TVCCA's "Emergency Evacuation Instructions" are posted on the licensing bulletin boards in all of our centers for your review. If you would like a copy of the plan, please feel free to ask the staff for a copy. If you have any questions, please feel free to talk to your child's teacher.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The TVCCA Little Learners Early Education Program adheres to the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards which provide the benchmarks for creating high quality places for children to grow and learn. Staff develops alongside their supervisor a written professional development plan that outlines professional goals towards increasing their knowledge and expertise in early childhood practice. Children benefit from having teachers who have received high levels of formal early childhood education, and continue to receive specialized training in topics related to best practices in early care and education throughout their careers as early childhood educators. Teachers, who are provided with opportunities for continuing their professional development, are more likely to experience higher levels of self-esteem, confidence, and commitment to providing the highest quality educational experiences to children. The more opportunities that early childhood education professionals have for their own continued learning and development, the better equipped they become for creating purposeful curriculum, environments, and experiences in early childhood settings. Additionally, ongoing professional development prepares our staff to be successful teachers now, as well as a better prepared workforce for the future of early childhood education. TVCCA believes that providing staff with the most up to date training/information on early childhood topics strengthens their ability to care for child.

PARTNERSHIPS

- TVCCA Little Learners uses a computer management system to track all client case notes in an effort to coordinate resources and eliminate duplication of services. TVCCA uses its own HSI system which enables any family receiving services to have access to all the social services that our agency provides along with case managers who assist families in navigation the Department of Social Services system for needed family support services. All resource and referral documentation is in our computer management system. All information provided from the above is used in partnership with families and agencies to plan appropriate experiences in order to nurture each child's growth.
- Parent Partnerships play an important role in identifying and referring families to needed services. The identification and referral process is accomplished using a variety of methods. It is important for staff to offer alternatives that best suit the needs of each individual parent. TVCCA Little Learners Early Education classrooms work closely to support families and help them make the primary decision regarding needed services. Collaborative partnerships with many community agencies ensure that the behavioral, social, health and educational needs of the children in our program are met. TVCCA has established outside support through agencies and public school systems that may provide support for both suspected and diagnosed children in our program. Every effort is made for joint training and information sharing with the public school system to ensure a collaborative relationship.
- All Little Learners collaborative agreements are put into writing and clearly outline expectations of all parties. All collaborative agreements are reviewed annually, or as needed. We are committed to maintaining open lines of communication with all of our collaborative partners. In the event that our program is involved in unsatisfactory contracts/collaborations, we will make every effort to communicate our dissatisfaction with that partner. We will open dialog in an effort to come to a mutually agreed upon solution to the cause of our dissatisfaction. If a mutually agreed upon solution cannot be reached, TVCCA Little Learners will terminate the contracts.

EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

To ensure program quality, staff and families collect information on quality from many sources, and engage in a reflective process to assess the effectiveness of the program as measured by NAEYC, SDE evaluation measures, and program measures. The process begins in March of each year and includes completing training surveys, monthly "Partners in Learning" surveys and NAEYC family surveys. Results are compiled, shared and tallied with families and assessed each spring. Family Handbooks are also evaluated by program staff and families during the month of May at family advisory meetings, administrative meetings, Head Teacher meetings and Classroom Team meetings. Families and staff are encouraged to give feedback/suggestions/propose changes for any of the program's policies or procedures. All feedback is then reviewed by the program administrators.

The CT ELDS (Connecticut Early Learning and Developmental Standards), which aligns with the "Connecticut Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (PCF/PAF)" are used as the basis for planning learning experiences, observing and documenting child progress, and implementing teaching strategies. Our curriculum aligns with the standards and benchmarks outlined in the PCF/PAF. The Little Learners Program generates outcome reports from the program's curriculum. These reports enable the administration to identify areas of strength as well as areas for growth in the children's social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language development. It is from this information that the administration prepares a training plan for the next program year, which will address areas for growth or change within the program. This information can be shared at local council meetings and semi-annual Education Advisory meetings. It is also shared with the TVCCA Board of Directors, funding sources and families upon request.

*This handbook is a general outline of our policies and procedures and is not all inclusive.