

## **Welcome to Early Year Child Development Center!**

At Early Years, we take our responsibility to care for children very seriously. These guidelines are intended to facilitate a safe and nurturing environment. This section of the employee handbook provides a general overview of procedures and guidelines for Early Years volunteers and staff members. Our policies are intended to create a safe environment for children, protecting children, you, and the mission of EYCDC. The following procedures have been adopted and will be strictly enforced. After you have carefully read this policy manual, please sign and return the agreement form located on the last page.

Sincerely,

Julie Brigante  
Owner, Director

## **Overview of the EYCDC Safety System**

Because we care for children and desire to protect them, EYCDC requires all staff members to complete 4 SAFETY STEPS before employment or volunteer work begins.

### **STEP ONE: Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training**

EYCDC policies and procedures require that volunteers and staff members avoid abusive behavior of any kind. Employees and volunteers are required to report any policy violations to a supervisor, Assistant Director, or Executive Director. Employees should have a basic understanding of the characteristics of sexual abusers and their behaviors in 'grooming' a child for sexual abuse. Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select a child, win the child's trust (and the trust of the child's parent or 'gatekeeper'), manipulate the child into sexual activity, and keep the child from disclosing the abuse.

To equip EYCDC volunteers and staff members with information necessary to protect a child from sexual abuse or maltreatment, EYCDC requires all staff members to complete the Protecting Vermont's Children through the Vermont Department of Children and Families.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training is required for all volunteers and staff members within one month of employment/ volunteering at EYCDC and renewed biannually.

### **STEP TWO: Screening Process**

Employees are required to complete the EYCDC Screening Process, which requires employees to:

- submit a resume
- complete a face-to-face interview
- provide 3 references to be checked.

### **STEP THREE: Policies & Procedures**

Staff members are required to review the policies contained in this manual and sign the last page indicating that the material has been read and understood and agrees to comply with policy requirements.

### **STEP FOUR: Criminal Background Check**

EYCDC requires that all volunteers, service providers, and staff members undergo a criminal background check. Depending upon position, fingerprinting may also be required.

**A teacher may not be left alone with children until EYCDC receives the results of a background check processed through the Child Development Division determining that the person does not have an abuse/ criminal history that precludes them from being present and/ or employed at Early Year Child Development Center.**

### **PARENT TRAINING**

Early Years Child Development Center will provide written materials to parents concerning sexual abuse and maltreatment prevention as well as web-based resources.

## **Child Safety Policy**

### **ABUSE TOLERANCE**

Early Years Child Development Center has zero tolerance for abuse in programs and activities. It is the responsibility of every staff member at EYCDC to act in the best interest of each child in every program.

In the event that volunteers or staff members observe any inappropriate behaviors (i.e. policy violations, neglectful supervision, poor role-modeling, etc.) or suspected abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual) it is their responsibility to immediately report the observations to a head-teacher, Assistant Director, or Executive Director.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIOUS OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS**

Early Years Child Development Center is committed to providing a safe, secure environment for children. To this end, any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported, in accordance with this policy and state law, to the Executive Director and the Police Department, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agencies.

An element of the safe environment referenced above includes the fostering of a culture of reporting relevant information to a supervisor or the Executive Director.

Because sexual abusers 'groom' children for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' a child for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to the Assistant Director or Executive Director.

## **ENFORCEMENT OF POLICIES**

Early Years administrators and teachers who supervise other staff members or volunteers are charged with the diligent enforcement of all Early Years policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal or disciplinary action. Final decisions related to policy violations will be the responsibility of the Executive Director or Personnel Committee.

## **Reporting Abuse or Suspicions of Abuse**

### **REPORTING VIOLATION OF POLICY**

In order to maintain a safe environment for our children, EYCDC staff members and volunteers must be aware of their individual responsibility to report any questionable circumstance, observation, act, omission, or situation that is a violation of these policies. All questions or concerns related to abuse of a child should be directed to a head-teacher, Assistant Director, or Executive Director.

### **CONSEQUENCES OF PROHIBITED OR HARMFUL ACT**

Any person accused of committing a prohibited act or any act considered to be harmful to a child will be immediately suspended from all child interaction and EYCDC activities. This suspension will continue during any investigation by law enforcement or a child protective agency.

Any person found to have committed a prohibited act should be prohibited from future participation as a staff member or volunteer in all activities and programming that involves children at Early Years Child Development Center. Such conduct may also result in termination of employment from EYCDC.

Failure to report a prohibited act to the designated person is a violation of this policy and grounds for termination of employment. Volunteers who fail to report a prohibited act may be restricted from participation in any activities involving children EYCDC.

### **REPORTING SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE**

Staff members and volunteers at Robin's Nest are required to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect, or any inappropriate behavior of a colleague or co-worker to the Assistant Director or Executive Director.

Vermont law requires that any person having cause to believe a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect must make a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

A staff member or volunteer will immediately notify the Assistant Director or Executive Director. Together with the Executive Director or Assistant Director, the staff member or volunteers will make a report to the appropriate Vermont authorities. In no way does any provision in this policy discourage any staff member or volunteer from reporting a suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate Vermont authorities.

Staff members and volunteers are required to verbally report an incident described by a child to supervisory staff as soon as possible. After receiving a report from a staff member or volunteer, the Director will speak with the person or volunteer to whom the child spoke to in order to get detailed information about the entire conversation. The Executive Director will be notified as soon as reasonably possible.

### **RESPONSE TO REPORT OF ABUSE**

The Executive Director will take appropriate action on behalf of the Program when a report of abuse occurs.

Any report of inappropriate behaviors or suspicions of abuse will be taken seriously and will be reported in accordance with this policy to the Executive Director. If appropriate, a report will be made to the:

**Family Services Division of the Department of Children and Families:  
1-800-649-5289.**

**This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.**

### **WHEN A CHILD HAS BEEN VICTIMIZED**

If a staff member or volunteer has knowledge or a suspicion that a child is a victim of sexual abuse or other maltreatment, the information will be reported to supervisory staff and the appropriate authorities as outlined above.

In addition to notifying the appropriate authorities (if required), Robin's Nest Children's Center will provide the child or the child's parent/caregiver/guardian with information to allow the child (or parent, on the child's behalf) to obtain assistance and intervention, as well as available counseling options.

## **BATHROOM SUPERVISION AND ASSISTANCE GUIDELINE**

Because very young children may require complete assistance with their diapering/ bathroom, all staff members and volunteers will observe the following policies:

### **Diapering**

1. Changing diapers should be done in plain sight of other staff.
2. Diapers will be changed in accordance with the procedure outlined by the Vermont Licensing Regulations which are posted at each changing station.
3. Children will never be left unattended on changing tables.
4. Children should be re-diapered and re-clothed immediately upon the completion of changing their soiled diaper.
5. Children should be changed on changing stations only.

### **Toileting**

1. It is not the responsibility of EYCDC staff to toilet train children.
2. The main bathroom door will remain open at all times.
3. When children are assisted in a bathroom stall, the door will be left partially open.
4. Young children will never be left unattended in bathrooms.
5. Children should be assisted in straightening their clothing before returning to the room with other children.
6. "Accidents" should be handled by reassuring the child. Teachers will assist the child with changing into clean/ dry clothing. Extra clothing should be in each child's cubby, but RNCC can supply extras if there are none available.

## **MEDICATION**

Medication may be given to a child by a staff member only if that teacher has completed the Medication Administration course. The medication must be in the original packaging, including over-the-counter medication. The only exceptions to this policy are diaper ointment/medication and insect bite cream, after a parent information sheet is signed by a parent or guardian at enrollment. Parent/guardian signed medication permission will be kept on file along with staff signed medication administration records.

## **INTOXICANTS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from the use, possession, or being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, or any illegal drugs while in the facility while working with children at Early Years or any EYCDC activity where children are present. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing alcohol or any drugs to children.

## **TOBACCO**

EYCDC is a tobacco-free facility. EYCDC requires staff members and volunteers to refrain from the use or possession of tobacco products in the facility and while in the presence of children or their parents. EYCDC staff members and volunteers are prohibited from providing tobacco products to children.

## **NUDITY**

Staff members and volunteers at EYCDC should never be nude in the presence of children in their care.

## **ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS WITH CHILDREN**

EYCDC recognizes that meeting program objectives may occasionally require that staff members interact with children on an individual basis. Volunteers shall never be alone with children. If alone with a child, the door should remain open; the door gate may be locked to keep children in the classroom. If the door must be closed (i.e. to dampen the sound of the vacuum), the door's window curtains must be open. Staff, administrators, parents, and guests are welcome to walk into any classroom unannounced. It is prohibited to lock any classroom door while a child is in the room (with the exception of an emergency classroom lockdown).

## **PARENTAL CONTACT**

A parent/ guardian will be contacted if their child becomes ill while in the care of Early Years Child Development Center. The parent will take home an illness report upon departure describing the illness and the steps to take before the child may return. An accident report will be completed for each injury. Severe injuries may additionally necessitate a phone call. The Director must be notified of any severe injuries that occur while a child is at EYCDC.

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

As a parent-directed center, parents are invited to participate in EYCDC activities (reading a story to a small group, playing violin at circle time). While a parent is at EYCDC, that parent is responsible for their child's safety. No parent, unless a staff member, shall ever be left alone with any children other than their own unless that person is determined to be a pick-up person/ emergency contact as stated on the child's enrollment paperwork.

## **PHYSICAL CONTACT**

Early Years Child Development Center is committed to protecting the children in our care. EYCDC has implemented a physical contact policy that will promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting children. Physical contact in any form should not

give even the appearance of wrongdoing. The personal behavior of staff members or volunteers must foster trust at all times – personal conduct must be above reproach. The following guidelines are to be carefully followed by anyone working in Early Years programs:

1. Hugging, pats on the back, and other forms of appropriate physical affection between staff members or volunteers and children are important for a child's development and are generally suitable at EYCDC.
2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the child's age. Inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection are forbidden. Any inappropriate touching and inappropriate displays of affection should be immediately reported to the Executive Director or Assistant Director immediately.
3. Do not force any physical contact, touch, or affection upon a reluctant child. A child's preference not to be touched must be respected.

### **RELEASE OF CHILDREN**

At the end of the program day or activity, teachers are responsible for releasing children in their care only to parents, legal guardians, or other persons designated in writing by parents or legal guardians.

In the event that a staff member is uncertain of the propriety of releasing a child, he/she should immediately locate or contact their immediate supervisor or Executive Director.

### **SEXUALLY ORIENTED CONVERSATIONS**

Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from engaging in any sexually-oriented conversations with children. Staff members and volunteers are not permitted to discuss any inappropriate or explicit information about their own personal relationships, dating, or sexual activities with any child in the program. This provision includes the use of cellular phones, text messages, e-mail, instant messaging, and online chat rooms.

### **POSSESSION OF SEXUALLY ORIENTED MATERIALS**

EYCDC staff members and volunteers are prohibited from possessing any sexually oriented materials (magazines, cards, videos, films, etc.) on EYCDC property or in the presence of children. If any such materials are purportedly necessary for classroom instruction, they must be approved in advance by the Executive Director.

### **INTERNET/ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

No computer, tablet, or phone at or related to Early Years Child Development Center is to be used by staff members, volunteers, or children to engage in computer chat room discussions or visit pornographic or sexually inappropriate websites. Violation of this policy will lead to discipline from the Executive Director. Any questions about the

inappropriate use of computers or the suitability of a particular website should be discussed with the Executive Director.

**VERBAL INTERACTIONS**

Verbal interactions between staff members or volunteers and children should be positive and uplifting. EYCDC staff members and volunteers should strive to keep verbal interactions encouraging, constructive, and mindful of their mission to provide nurturing care to children. Staff members and volunteers are expected to refrain from swearing in the presence of children or the use of any violent, or sexually-oriented language.

**Policies and Procedures  
Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement**

I have received and read a copy of Early Years Child Development Center’s Safety Policies and Procedures Manual and understand the importance of the matters set forth within the manual. I agree to follow and abide by these guidelines during my service at EYCDC. Further, I understand that the manual may be modified at any time and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated at any time by EYCDC. Finally, I understand that it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which are created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted. I hereby acknowledge receipt of this policies and procedures manual.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer’s name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer’s signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to remain attached to the My Program Safety Policies]

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Staff Member or Volunteer's signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

[This page to be signed, detached, and delivered to the Executive Director]