



PARENT HANDBOOK

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WELCOME

Welcome to Hunger Mountain Children's Center. We invite you to spend some time with our Parent Handbook. Use it to get to know Hunger Mountain Children's Center better and to think of questions for our teachers, families, and board members.

When you enroll your child, please sign and return the acknowledgment form at the end of this handbook.

MISSION

At Hunger Mountain Children's Center, our mission is to provide high-quality child care in a nurturing and safe environment where children have endless opportunities to explore their world.

PHILOSOPHY

- Children deserve to be treated and respected as individuals
- Children have individual needs that can be met creatively
- The environment must allow for hands-on experiences while encouraging children to feel safe and loved
- Children learn through exploration and it is essential to provide them with unique experiences that present a variety of learning opportunities
- Children should be encouraged to experiment with each activity, build their confidence, use their imaginations and expand their curiosity
- A teacher's role is to be a nurturing, respectful companion who supports a child as he or she develops at an individual pace
- A successful learning environment invites children of all origins to play together, learn from each other and develop their skills in an unhurried manner
- Teaching children to make good choices involves discipline and problem-solving, not corporal punishment
- Family is the root of a child's well-being

INTRODUCTION

Hunger Mountain Children's Center ("HMCC") is a private, non-profit child care center organized and licensed in 1978. Our present location: 123 South Main Street, Waterbury, Vermont.

HMCC's license is renewed annually based on state regulations administered by the Licensing Unit of the Child Care Division of the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services of the Vermont State Agency of Human Services. State regulations set forth minimum requirements. HMCC reserves the right to impose stronger guidelines, if appropriate.

Copies of those regulations are available at HMCC or from the licensing unit. Parents may contact the licensing unit at:

Child Development Division
Department of Children and Families
103 South Main Street
Waterbury, Vermont 05671-5500

1-802-241-3110

1-800-649-2642

http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child_care_licensing

A Board of Directors governs HMCC and may be comprised of parents and community members. An Executive Director, who manages and assists the teaching staff, runs the center on a daily basis and oversees all business and financial operations. The Executive Director is a non-voting member of the Board of Directors.

HMCC shall not exclude a child from admission for reason of race, creed, color, national origin, disability, gender or the child's parents' marital status, sexual orientation, political affiliation or religion. In the case of an acutely disabled child, the teachers may determine that the child has an aide while attending HMCC.

PROGRAMS and CURRICULUM

HMCC serves children ages 6 weeks through preschool. HMCC is licensed to care for up to 65 children daily. Families may choose a full-time or a part-time schedule based on space availability. HMCC is not staffed or licensed to accept children on a non-recurring or "drop-in" basis.

HMCC's programs are designed to promote:

- **Social skills:** opportunities for sharing, caring, and helping
- **Positive self-concepts:** encouraging children to draw pictures and tell stories about themselves and their families
- **Language and literacy:** reading books, singing songs, making conversation, story-telling, drawing

- **A sense of inquiry:** encouraging curiosity about the world through questions such as how things work, why things happen, etc.
- **Physical development:** in both indoor and outdoor settings, strengthening large and small muscles and encouraging eye-hand coordination, body awareness, rhythm and movement through finger plays, obstacle courses, puzzles, etc.
- **Sound health, safety, and nutritional practices in the daily routine:** hand washing, helping to prepare and serve food
- **Creative expression and appreciation for the arts:** creating art work as process rather than product, dance, movement, dramatic play, music, and materials that represent a variety of cultures
- **Respect for individual differences and cultural diversity:** recognizing and embracing each child's unique qualities; incorporating positive cultural experiences into daily activities

HMCC's programs provide the following:

- Individual, small-group and large-group activities
- Opportunities for success through open-ended activities (blocks, play dough, sand/water play) and praise for effort, not just results
- An environment of respect for individual and cultural diversity (acknowledging and respecting each child's unique qualities and integrating positive cultural experiences into daily activities)
- Opportunities for children to solve problems, initiate activities, experiment and gain mastery through experience

To ensure continuous learning and program improvement, the teachers and Executive Director conduct an annual program assessment.

At HMCC, programs are divided into several groups: infants 6 weeks to 11 months, young toddlers 12 months to 23 months, toddlers 2 to 3 years, young preschoolers 3 to 4 years and preschoolers 4 to 5 years. Each group has its own teachers and routine. While the goal is to have all children in the group on the same schedule, teachers and parents work together to develop an appropriate schedule designed to meet each child's needs, most specifically in the infant and toddler groups. Teachers will communicate with parents when they believe the child is ready for transition to the next group. Transitions are designed specifically for each child and teachers and parents work together to develop an appropriate schedule for this transition. Communication will remain open to ensure a smooth process. The following includes general descriptions of the daily programs and schedules for each group:

INFANT PROGRAM (Little Sprouts)

The Infant Program serves children between the ages of 6 weeks and 11 months. Teacher to child ratio may not exceed 1:4 and group size may not exceed 8 children. Children are fed snacks and meals provided by parents. Feeding schedules are arranged around individual needs and infants are allowed to nap whenever necessary.

Daily Activities

- Singing and reading
- Music and art exploration
- Free play - tummy time, manipulatives, play gym
- Outside play - weather permitting
- Large motor experiences - ride on toys, sturdy things to pull up with
- Sensory experiences - a variety of surfaces offered
- Infant sign language
- Language development is encouraged by teacher/child interactions

Transition to the young toddler program generally begins around 11 months, depending on the child's development and other factors.

Key features of the transition include:

- Introduction of nap mat instead of crib
- Gradual introduction to cups
- Introduction to cow's milk, if desired
- Begin working on self-feeding

Classroom Philosophy

As early childhood educators we believe that we are responsible for providing infants with positive learning experiences. We strive to model respect, patience and care for children and adults that we come in contact with. Children have the right to have their needs met and receive the proper education while in our care.

Classroom Goal

To provide a safe and healthy environment for all and to create a positive environment where children can grow and learn.

YOUNG TODDLER PROGRAM (Busy Bees)

The Young Toddler Program serves children between the ages of 12 months and 23 months Teacher to child ratio may not exceed 1:4 and group size may not exceed 8

children. Children are offered snacks, provided by their parents, twice per day and eat lunch at approximately 11:45pm. Children begin nap at approximately 12:45pm and wake up at their leisure.

Daily Activities

- Singing and reading
- Music and art exploration
- Free play – blocks, dramatic play and manipulatives
- Outside play - weather permitting
- Sensory experiences - a variety of surfaces offered
- Language development is encouraged by teacher/child interactions

Transition to the toddler program generally begins around 23 months, depending on the child's development and other factors.

Classroom Philosophy

A loving and caring environment allows children to learn about themselves, their feelings, peers, community and environment. Children acquire thinking skills by doing and moving through a wide variety of experiences. Children should be encouraged to try new experiences and feelings in a loving, accepting atmosphere.

Classroom Goal

To have a safe and loving environment where children are free to learn and grow, and parents feel welcome and supported.

TODDLER PROGRAM (Wiggle Worms)

The Older Toddler Program serves children between the ages of 2 and 3 years. The group can accommodate up to ten children with two full-time teachers. Children are offered snacks, provided by their parents, twice per day and eat lunch at approximately 12:00pm. Children begin nap at approximately 12:45pm and wake up at their leisure.

Daily Activities

- Listening to and making music
- Exploring various materials and textures such as shaving cream, water, clay
- Reading
- Outside play - weather permitting
- Gross-motor play - running, jumping, hopping, skipping
- Circle time - singing and reading
- Creativity time - art, cutting, writing, painting, crafts

- Free play - blocks, manipulatives, dramatic play, puzzles

Classroom Philosophy

A loving and caring environment allows children to learn about themselves, their feelings, peers, community and environment. Children acquire thinking skills by doing and moving through a wide variety of experiences. Children should be encouraged to try new experiences and feelings in a loving, accepting atmosphere.

Classroom Goal

To have a safe and loving environment where children are free to learn and grow, and parents feel welcome and supported.

PREKIDERGARTEN PROGRAM (2 Levels Offered)

UNIVERSAL PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM

HMCC participates in Universal Preschool, a program that allows us to work hand in hand with local school districts and parents to provide a cohesive and consistent preschool program. Any child who is 3 or 4 as of September 1st may participate in Universal Preschool as long as their particular school district is approved through the Universal Prekindergarten Program (contact Executive Director for list of participating schools) – a portion of our overall preschool program. Funding is available for Universal Preschool students which results in discounted tuition for parents. Each school district dictates the amount of Universal Preschool slots available to HMCC on an annual basis. If the number of eligible children exceeds the number of spots available, priority will be given to four year olds and the eldest three year olds, unless a younger child is anticipated to have special needs.

Act 166, passed by the Vermont legislature in 2014, provides for publicly funded prekindergarten education for a minimum of 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually for all 3, 4 and 5 year-old children not enrolled in kindergarten. A statewide tuition rate has been proposed to provide for these universal preschool hours.

All public and private prekindergarten education programs must apply for pre-qualification status and HMCC is a pre-qualified program (license is posted in HMCC office and on the Agency of Education website). Parents will have the option of choosing a pre-qualified private provider, such as HMCC, or a pre-qualified public program. The minimum standards for pre-qualification are: four stars in Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), the program's curriculum must align with the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) and teachers in prekindergarten education program classrooms shall hold a valid Vermont Educator license with an

endorsement in either early childhood education or early childhood special education.

LEVEL I (Explorers)

The first level of the Prekindergarten Program serves children between the ages of 3 and 4 years. Staff/Child ratio may not exceed 1:10 and group size may not exceed 20 children. Children are offered snacks, provided by their parents, twice per day and eat lunch at approximately 12:00pm. Children begin nap at approximately 1:00pm and wake up no later than 3:00pm.

Daily Schedule

- 7:00am-5:15pm – Full day students
- 8:00am-1:00pm – Universal Preschool students

Daily Activities

- Exploration stations - blocks, dramatic play, table top games, library, writing, art & sensory activities, math and/or science, and home living
- Greeting - good morning song and attendance
- Circle Time - theme for month, calendar, music, and story
- Project – art or cooking activity to practice & enhance thematic elements
- Outdoor play
- Lunch
- Nap/Rest time

Classroom Philosophy

Children learn best by exploring various interests during periods of uninterrupted play. Children develop knowledge and skills by making their own discoveries. Positive relationships with peers and teachers are essential to the learning process.

Classroom Goal

To nourish all facets of children’s development and help them to get along with others in an environment that encourages a positive self-image and independence.

LEVEL II (Forest Critters)

The second level of the Prekindergarten Program serves children between the ages of 4 and 5 years (DOB before September 1st). Teacher to child ratio may not exceed 1:10 and group size may not exceed 20 children. Children are offered snacks, provided by their parents, twice per day and eat lunch at approximately 12:00pm.

Daily Schedule

- 7:00am-5:15pm – Full day students
- 8:00am-1:00pm – Universal Preschool students

Daily Activities

- Exploration of Interest Stations – blocks, dramatic play, housekeeping, art, library, writing, computer and sensory table
- Greeting – Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag, sign “America”, “Good Morning Song” and attendance
- Circle Time – meeting time (discuss the theme), music/dance/song/finger play, calendar/weather, star of the week, story (theme topic)
- Art project
- Outdoor Play (twice per day, weather permitting) or Exploration Stations
- Lunch
- Story Time
- Small Group – literacy/reading/writing, math, science

Classroom Philosophy

The Golden Rule – “Do to others, as you would have them do to you”

Classroom Goal

“These are the things I will learn in preschool”:

1. Share everything
2. Play fair
3. Don't hit your friends
4. Put things back where you found them
5. CLEAN UP YOUR OWN MESS
6. Don't take things that aren't yours
7. Say you're SORRY when you HURT somebody
8. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you
9. Live a balanced life – learn, draw, paint, sing, dance, play and work everyday
10. When you go out into the world, watch out for traffic, hold hands and stick together
11. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the Styrofoam cup: the roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.
12. And then remember the Dick-and-Jane books and the first words you learned – the biggest word of all – LOOK”
 - Robert Fulghum

HMCC STAFF

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director sets the tone for HMCC, manages all financial and business operations, manages the teaching staff, interacts with parents, and works with children as much as possible. The Executive Director has at least a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or a related field, experience working with young children, and certification in first aid and CPR. State licensing regulations also require continuing education annually.

In addition, the Executive Director must have a virtually endless supply of energy, creativity and patience. The Executive Director wears many hats: business manager, supervisor, mediator, nurse, cheerleader, and spokesperson. A sense of humor and love of children are essential to the job.

The Executive Director oversees the center's financial and business operations, curriculum, communicates with parents, and works to supplement tuition income with fundraising and grants. The Executive Director also reaches out to the local community, working on issues of early childhood education, networking and spreading the word about HMCC's mission.

All paid staff and volunteers report to the Executive Director, who, in turn, reports to the Board of Directors. The Executive Director is also a non-voting member of the Board of Directors and its Executive Committee. Any concerns or questions regarding HMCC may be brought to the Executive Director. Any concerns regarding the Executive Director should be brought to the Board of Directors.

TEACHERS

HMCC hires the best-qualified teachers with degrees in early childhood education, a related field or an equivalent amount of education and experience. All teachers have training and experience in early childhood education. They receive additional training annually including first aid and CPR. Teachers also require boundless energy, patience, creativity, a sense of humor and a love of children.

Teacher to child ratios are 1:4 for children under 24 months old, 1:5 for children 2 years old, and 1:10 for children 3 years old and over. Teachers in each program work together closely and get to know each of the children in their class. Teachers can help parents with information and resources regarding child development, behavior, etc.

BACKGROUND CHECKS

HMCC requires at least three references and a state background check for all job

candidates. All employees must have no history of child abuse or criminal activity. The following persons may not operate, reside, be present at, or be employed at HMCC:

- Persons convicted of fraud, a felony, an offense involving violence, unlawful sexual activity, or other bodily injury to another person including, but not limited to, abuse, neglect, or sexual activity with a child
- A person found by a court to have abused, neglected or mistreated a child, elderly person, disabled person, or animal
- Adults or children who have had a report of abuse or neglect substantiated against them under Chapters 49 and 69 of Title 33 Vermont Statutes Annotated

Parents of children enrolled at HMCC who otherwise would be prohibited under the foregoing paragraphs, but are participating in prevention or parent education programs, may be present at HMCC as long as they are visually supervised at all times by the staff. Parents with a history of child abuse or criminal activity as defined above may be present to drop off and pick up their children and may participate in program activities, provided they are under continual visual supervision by the staff. They may not be left alone with children or counted in the teacher-child ratio.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

A Board of Directors governs HMCC and may be comprised of parents and community members. A list of current Board members is posted at HMCC. The Board meets monthly. All meetings are open to any parent or teacher who would like to attend. Meeting times, as well as the agenda for the meeting and minutes of previous meetings, are posted or filed at HMCC.

The Board has a maximum of 12 seats in addition to the Executive Director. Of those 12 Board seats, four are officer positions and are members of the Executive Committee. They are: president, vice president (optional), treasurer and secretary. The Executive Director is a de facto member of the Executive Committee. Elections to the Board are held in the fall with nominations to fill empty seats on the Board when a vacancy occurs.

The Board forms various committees throughout the year to work with the Board and staff on specific projects, such as a Budget Committee and Fundraising Committee. Committee members are not required to be on the Board.

Board responsibilities include:

- Hiring and evaluating the Executive Director

- Establishing and reviewing policies for HMCC regarding philosophy, programs, rates, operations, etc.
- Creating an annual budget with goals for spending on staffing, equipment, and supplies, etc. The Board's goal is to keep the corporation fiscally healthy and to review monthly financial reports.
- Supporting the Executive Director and the teachers with fundraising to supplement tuition income, seeking grants for programs, supplies, and activities
- Providing resources to the teachers to help meet HMCC's mission. These include volunteer hours on projects such as cleaning and organizing HMCC, recruiting staff, record-keeping and complying with state regulations.
- Working with the Waterbury community on topics of early childhood development and education

The Board welcomes questions and concerns, praise and criticism regarding HMCC's operation from families. Parents should contact any Board member or attend a regular meeting to discuss any questions they may have.

HOURS and SCHEDULE

HMCC is open weekdays from 7 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Parents may drop off as early as 7am but should arrive in the evening **no later than 5:15pm** to pick up their child. All staff should be ready to exit the building by 5:30pm.

HOLIDAYS

HMCC closes for the following holidays:

- New Year's Day (Jan. 1)
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day (July 4)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday
- Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and the following day
- New Year's Eve (closing at 2pm)

****If a holiday falls on a weekend, the corresponding Friday or Monday will be used****

IN-SERVICE DAYS

The staff schedules several in-service days and announces them at the beginning of the year. One of the in-service days is for teachers to attend the annual Vermont

Association for the Education of Young Children Conference, usually held the second Thursday and Friday of October. Other days are used for teachers to attend workshops, reorganize classrooms, and plan curriculum. Any additional in-service days will be determined by the Executive Director with Board approval. Where possible, parents would be given at least 30 days notice of additional closings.

CLOSINGS and DELAYS

HMCC makes every effort to be open. HMCC does not necessarily follow the public schools in closing due to inclement weather. The Executive Director and/or a member of the Executive Board will decide to close based in part on the State Police report.

The following are reasons HMCC would close:

- HMCC has no power, telephone and/or heat
- Child-teacher ratios don't meet state regulations
- Inclement weather

In the event HMCC does close or open late, the greeting on the HMCC answering machine will be changed by 6:30 a.m. In the event HMCC closes early, parents will receive an email and a phone call at least two hours prior to the closing time.

Parents **will be** charged tuition on a day HMCC is closed due to inclement weather. Parents **will be** charged if a child is kept home on a day HMCC remains open despite inclement weather.

PARENT VISITS and INVOLVEMENT

Parents are welcome to visit at any time during the day as long as their visit is not deemed disruptive or difficult for their child. Parents are encouraged to visit with their child in the early phases of their time in the classroom to ease the transition, if necessary. The parent and teacher can decide the length and duration of those initial visits. When a child moves into a new class, parents may be encouraged to spend some extra visiting time if it seems helpful.

There are also many other ways for parents to get involved at HMCC:

- HMCC welcomes parents in the classroom to share a talent, skill or hobby with the children
- Parents interested in helping as a substitute teacher should contact the Executive Director
- The Board and teachers organize several fundraising activities each year for which parents are asked to volunteer. The fundraisers are fun ways to get to

know parents and teachers. Volunteer time by parents and teachers also helps keep HMCC's expenses and tuition down.

- Joining the Board of Directors or a committee helps parents become involved in HMCC's projects

FUNDRAISING POLICY

Since fundraising is a key part of the financial health of the center, and helps keep tuition low, we need all families to help. Each year, the fundraising committee will set a goal based on the budget, organizational need and what we think is possible to raise and then discuss it with the board for approval. A Family Fundraising Goal will then be set based on the number of families enrolled at the center. We will communicate that goal to families as a per-family goal and encourage them to help us raise that amount through participation in events, seeking donations from others, or making their own personal gifts.

ENROLLMENT-FEES-WITHDRAWAL

ENROLLMENT

To enroll a child, parents complete an application packet. If space is not available, the child will be placed on a waiting list. If space is available, parents complete an Enrollment Packer with include the following:

- Enrollment Agreement
- Child Information Form
- Emergency/Medical Form
- Immunization Certificate
- Statement of Understanding
- Other forms necessitated by the Vermont Licensing Unit

Parents are asked to keep all information in their child's record up to date such as medical information and immunization records, emergency contact numbers, changes of address, etc.

DEPOSITS

Upon enrollment, parents are required to pay a deposit in the amount of two-week's tuition. This deposit will be applied to their child's last weeks of enrollment at HMCC. Deposits are forfeited if a child is withdrawn without prior written notice of at least two weeks or if the account is not paid in full (deducting the deposit) before the child leaves HMCC.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Parents are required to pay for days contracted even when their child does not attend HMCC, including HMCC closings (scheduled holidays, scheduled in-service days, and weather, power and heat related closings). Any late payments result in a \$10 fee. A child may not attend HMCC after two days of non-payment.

BILLING

Billing occurs on a monthly basis, with the option to pay weekly, bi-weekly, monthly or bi-monthly. Parents should contact the Executive Director regarding any billing questions or problems.

VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Parents are required to pay for vacations and holidays if they fall on days their child is enrolled. For staffing purposes, parents are asked to notify HMCC two weeks prior to taking a vacation.

SCHEDULE CHANGES

When a family needs to change a child's schedule, HMCC requests two weeks written notice. If a spot is available in that age group, the Executive Director will grant the request.

HMCC will not guarantee or "hold spots" for families who wish to drop days, for any length of time, and then return to their normal schedule. HMCC is a business and it is imperative that any open spots are filled immediately to operate successfully. For instance, if a full time child wishes to drop from 5 days to 3 days during the summer, the only way to guarantee or "hold the spot" for the fall enrollment would be to pay the full 5 day tuition during the summer. The child is not required to attend all 5 days, but regular tuition will be billed. The same holds true for a child dropping from 4 or 3 days down to 3 or 2.

ADD A DAY POLICY

Families who attend four days or less a week may request to add an additional day if needed. The additional day will cost 1.5 times the daily rate. Parents will be required to request an additional day in writing no less than two weeks prior to the day needed. Any request not made in writing will be denied. HMCC will review the request and make a decision based on availability of space and staffing. Parents will be notified within one week of the request.

If an additional day is consistently requested, it is at the discretion of the Executive Director to ask the family to become full time or pick up the extra day permanently. For example, if a family has requested an extra day two or more times per quarter, HMCC will ask the family to add this day permanently.

If the family declines to become full time or add the additional day permanently, HMCC reserves the right to deny any future requests.

FEES

The Board of Directors reviews fees and rates each year. A schedule of current fees is posted in the office and is available from the Executive Director. All fees are subject to change upon approval of the Board of Directors. Families will be provided 30 days notice of any change in fees.

SUPPLY FEES

At the beginning of September and June of each year, a fee of \$25 per child is charged to each family to help cover the cost of supplies.

LATE FEES

For each child picked up after 5:15 p.m., there is an automatic late fee charged to the child's account. The first time a child is picked up late per year, the fee is \$5.00 for each 5 minute interval. Intervals of 1-4 minutes are rounded up to the next highest 5-minute interval. Any additional times a child is picked up late per year, the fee is \$10.00 for each 5-minute interval. The beginning of our Fiscal Year (September 1) marks a new year. Parents are responsible for notifying HMCC of emergencies and making arrangements to pick up the child on time. **Please arrive at HMCC no later than 5:15pm** to pick up your child. Staff has other commitments and need to leave by 5:30 each evening. We ask that you be respectful and be on time.

WITHDRAWAL

A written (or emailed), dated notice of intent to withdraw must be submitted to the Executive Director at least two weeks prior to withdrawal from HMCC. Without written notice, parents forfeit their deposit.

DAILY ROUTINE

ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE

Please notify HMCC by 9:00am on a day that the child will be absent or late.

Upon arrival, please assist the child with clothing and belongings. State regulations require that children wash their hands with soap and water upon arrival at HMCC.

Children must be signed in and out on the attendance sheet on a daily basis. In the event of any emergency, attendance sheets are used to determine if all children are safely out of the building. Please deliver the child to a teacher before leaving HMCC. If

drop-off time is particularly difficult for a child, the parent and teacher should work to ease that transition.

A child may only leave HMCC with a legal guardian, unless an HMCC teacher is notified otherwise. If the parents are legal guardians then a child shall be released to either parent unless there is a court order which prohibits release to a particular parent. A copy of the court order shall be at HMCC.

A child shall be released only to persons authorized by the legal guardian. When a person authorized to pick up a child is unknown to the teachers their identity must be verified prior to releasing the child. When an emergency request is made by a parent for the child to be picked up by someone not listed on the release authorization, there is a system to verify the identity of both the caller and the person being authorized to pick up the child. Teachers document emergency calls and information regarding the identity of the person authorized to pick up the child.

CLOTHING and EQUIPMENT

- Each child has a cubby for outerwear and other supplies they will need for outdoors
- Clothes should be appropriate for the weather and messy activities
- Comfortable shoes for walking and climbing are essential. Sneakers are best. If a child wears other types of shoes, HMCC asks that the child have an extra pair of sneakers for outdoor activities.
- During winter, children need a warm jacket and snow pants or a snowsuit, mittens and boots, and a warm hat for outdoor play. Children must have shoes for indoor wear.
- In summer, children are asked to bring a swimsuit or an appropriate change of clothes and a towel for playing in the wading pools/sprinklers. HMCC does not supply sunscreen and insect repellent. Parents should send sunscreen and insect repellent in labeled containers.
- Bins for spare clothes are kept at HMCC for each child. Parents are asked to keep TWO full changes of clothing in those bins (shirts, pants, underwear, and socks). Please label clothing with the child's name.
- Soiled clothes are bagged in plastic and placed in a child's cubby. Parents are asked to take them home for laundering as soon as possible.
- Any misplaced clothing items are put in the "Lost But Found" bin in the entryway
- For children using diapers, parents are required to provide diapers, wipes, and ointment, if necessary. Please check supplies weekly.
- All children who nap need to bring a crib-sized sheet to cover vinyl floor mats and a blanket. They also may have a small pillow and/or a soft cuddly toy.
- Parents are asked to take home nap sheets and blankets for weekly washing

TOYS and BOOKS

With the exception of nap items, children are discouraged from bringing toys from home. Parents should check with their child's teacher before leaving any toy at HMCC. Teachers occasionally designate specific times for sharing items from home, including toys.

Children may bring age-appropriate books to share with their group during circle time. Parents are asked to please label any books from home.

MEALS and SNACKS

- All classes are served a morning and afternoon snack provided by parents
- HMCC provides milk, which is always offered, water is also available
- Children may not bring candy or gum in their lunches and other sweets should be limited
- Children who attend through lunch time are asked to bring their lunch from home. HMCC asks that parents refrain from sending items that need heating or special preparation. If lunch contains any perishable items, please include an ice pack to prevent spoiling.
- Parents should inform the Executive Director and their child's teacher of any food allergies their child may have.
- Celebrations of birthdays are fun for everyone. HMCC welcomes treats for children's birthdays or special events in children's lives. Please let your child's teacher know about the upcoming celebration several days in advance.

NAP and QUIET TIME

Nap and quiet time is an opportunity for all children to relax. To help children rest, teachers dim lights and play soft music. Teachers provide children who do not rest with quiet activities such as books or puzzles.

To avoid disrupting other resting children, parents who need to pick up their children during naptime should make arrangements with their child's teacher.

FIELD TRIPS

At enrollment, parents complete a form allowing teachers to take children on local field trips, such as walks. Other field trips involving vehicular transportation require specific permission slips.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

HMCC celebrates all holidays and welcomes families to share their celebrations.

COMMUNICATION

Teacher-parent communication is essential for program consistency. Here are some ways HMCC strives to keep open the lines of communication:

- Email is used to issue announcements, information, monthly newsletters, monthly statements, and updates. This helps to keep paper usage to a minimum. If you do not have access to email, please contact the Executive Director and paper copies can be made.
- Each class has its own method of communication. Please check with your child's teacher for details.
- Parents are encouraged to explore their child's environment during drop-off and pick-up. Teachers post announcements in their classrooms about topics being discussed.
- Parent/teacher conferences are conducted twice annually for preschool or at the request of either the teacher or the parent for all ages. Parents may schedule a meeting to discuss their child's progress.
- Minutes from the Board of Directors' meetings are filed in the HMCC office.
- A school wide newsletter is distributed each month.
- A special note: It is common for preschoolers to discuss topics of gender, sexuality, body parts and functions. When appropriate, teachers answer questions directly using correct terms. They inform parents of any sensitive discussions either verbally so such conversations may continue at home.

DISCIPLINE

HMCC teachers work to establish positive relationships with children, and encourage them to be responsible for their behavior. Teachers encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem, and cooperation. Children are always encouraged to talk to their teachers and participate in problem solving. Discipline at HMCC is instructive and consistent. Discipline is an attitude that allows children to learn acceptable behaviors.

Discipline never involves verbal abuse, such as belittling a child, name-calling or swearing at a child. State law forbids any form of corporal punishment, such as spanking, hitting, or any type of action that would injure or bruise, such as yanking or grabbing a child. Teachers may not use restraints to restrict a child's movement, nor should punishment involve withholding food, water or toilet use.

Instead, teachers use a variety of techniques to establish firm classroom rules. They include:

- Expecting social behavior that is appropriate to each child's level of development and tailoring guidance to that level
- Positive reinforcement: praising appropriate behaviors
- Redirection
- Planning ahead to prevent problems
- Active listening: responding to a child with, "I hear what you are saying..." "It sounds like..." "I understand that..."
- Encouraging children to use their words to express their feelings
- Consistency with consequences
- Modifying the environment to set limits: various play areas are established in the classrooms

HMCC makes every effort to work with children and their families to ensure that all are receiving the best child care HMCC can provide. HMCC can serve children best when made aware of any critical changes in children's lives (death of a pet or family member, divorce or separation, etc). HMCC respects the privacy of all families and considers all shared information as confidential unless otherwise notified.

When a child exhibits a problem behavior, teachers take the following steps:

1. The child is spoken to about the problem. The teacher explains the inappropriate behavior and offers choices for appropriate behavior.
2. The teacher assesses the group, classroom environment, and teaching style. The teacher makes changes accordingly with the support of the Executive Director and fellow teachers. The teacher discusses the situation with the child's parents.
3. If the behavior continues, the teacher removes the child from the group for calm-down time. The child is not permitted back into the group until the behavior has stopped. A behavioral report is filled out if the situation is of concern. Parents are required to sign the report and are urged to discuss possible resolutions with the teachers.
4. If behavior continues and the child is unmanageable, the parent is called to pick up the child. If this occurs twice in one week, a meeting must be scheduled with the child's teacher, parents and the Executive Director. Together they discuss the problem, establish expectations and a plan of action, and schedule a follow-up meeting, if necessary. This meeting is documented.
5. State licensing regulations are a final guideline. Section III, subsection C, number 9 applies to both adults and children. It states:

"A person shall be prohibited from the facility when his/her presence or behavior disrupts the program, distracts the staff from their responsibilities, intimidates or promotes fear among the children, or when there is reason to believe that his/her action or behavior will present children in care with risk of harm."

HEALTH POLICIES

A child must be in good health and free of any communicable disease to attend HMCC. Parents should inform teachers of any mild illness (ear infections, colds, allergy symptoms, etc.) when dropping a child off so teachers may be sensitive to the condition.

State regulations require that children must wash hands:

- Upon arrival
- Before eating
- Before using water tables
- After using the toilet or having their diaper changed
- After handling animals
- After playing outside

IMMUNIZATIONS

A child must have the following immunizations: polio, diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus (DPT), measles, and rubella. Written verification must be supplied to HMCC. Exemptions may be made for the following reasons: religious or moral rights (a statement from the parents must be included in the child's record) or medical contraindications (a doctor's statement must be included). Children who have been exempted may be asked to stay home should any outbreaks occur.

Parents are asked to update HMCC on any changes in health information, such as allergies, medication, new immunizations, etc.

WHEN A CHILD IS SENT HOME

HMCC strictly follows the state regulations relative to medical reasons for a child being sent home. Some reasons for a child being sent home are: diarrhea, vomiting, discharge from the nose that is constant and opaque, unexplained rash, any kind of parasite, fever of 100 degrees or more, communicable disease, constant coughing, or behavior that leads the teacher to believe that the child is ill. For example, if a child is sent home with a temperature of 100 degrees or more, s/he can only return 24 hours after the temperature has returned to below 100 degrees **without** the aid of fever reducing medication. For instance, if a child's temperature is consistently below 100 degrees (**without** the aid of fever reducing medication) at 3:00pm on Monday, s/he can attend HMCC at 3:00pm or later on Tuesday.

HMCC will make an effort to be accommodating in the event of sudden illness, but asks that parents have a plan for pick up and for care of sick children who are unable to attend HMCC.

HMCC reserves the right to refuse service to any child if, in the opinion of the staff, the child is too sick to be at HMCC or poses a health threat to the other children.

RETURNING AFTER ILLNESS

To return to HMCC after illness, a child must be symptom-free or the parents must have had communication with a doctor. A child must be well enough to take part in outdoor activities.

Parents are asked to notify HMCC if a child has been diagnosed with a contagious condition such as head lice, measles, chicken pox, etc. Parents also must present a doctor's note when the child returns. When a child has chicken pox, HMCC requires that the child must have had them for at least seven days and be crusted-over before returning to HMCC.

Doctors usually advise parents that their child can return to child care 24 hours after their temperature has returned to normal without the assistance of any fever reducing medicine. HMCC will follow this policy and not allow children to return unless they have been fever free for 24 hours prior to drop off.

MEDICATIONS

Parents are asked to make every effort to administer all medications outside HMCC. If this is not possible, the parent must fill out an HMCC medication form so a teacher may administer medication.

Vermont State Regulations require the following concerning medications:

PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

- All medications shall be inaccessible to children.
- Written parental permission shall be obtained before administering medication, stating the name of the medication, the potential side effects, dosage, the date and time to be given, how the medication is to be given (mouth, ear), and whether or not prescription medication is given to a child. The permission form specifies medication that needs to be given.
- HMCC shall keep a record of all prescribed medications given. The date, name of medication, dosage, time given and identity of the teacher who gave the medication shall be included in this record. These records shall be kept for one year.
- All medications given shall be in their original containers, clearly labeled with child's name, dosage, medication name and schedule.

NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

- Written parental permission shall be obtained before non-prescription oral medication is given to a child. Parents shall be notified before non-prescription oral medications are given.
- Written general permission shall be obtained from parents prior to the application of non-prescription ointments, creams, sunscreen, insect repellent, and other topically applied ointment and lotion. Such general permission shall be updated annually.

CHILD ABUSE

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

State law requires HMCC staff to report any suspected incidents of child abuse and/or neglect within 24 hours of either receiving a report of, or suspicion of, abuse. Reports are made to the Agency of Human Services, Department of Children and Families office in Waterbury (1-800-649-5285).

PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE

HMCC recognizes that parenting can be very challenging. The teachers and Executive Director are available to offer guidance and can direct parents to community resources such as counseling, outreach programs and resources such as the Parent's Stress Line and Home Companion Resource (802-229-5724), Vermont 211 (800-727-3687), and Prevent Child Abuse Vermont (802-229-5724 OR 1-800-CHILDREN).

HMCC also takes its responsibility for child safety very seriously. To that end, it has policies in place to safeguard all children in its care. They include:

- An open-door rule whereby parents are always welcome to visit their children during the day and observe in the classrooms
- Background checks on all staff upon hire, and annually by the State of Vermont
- Not permitting staff to be alone with a child in a closed room
- Training teachers to listen to what children say and to recognize clues that a child might be in danger
- Procedures for staff to follow should there be any question of inappropriate conduct

ILLEGAL DRUG, SMOKING and ALCOHOL POLICY

Illegal drugs, smoking and alcoholic beverages are prohibited at HMCC and at any HMCC function.

GRIEVANCES

HMCC makes every effort to keep the lines of communication open. Parents are strongly encouraged to discuss questions and concerns about their child with the child's teacher. If concerns continue, the teacher, parents and Teaching Director will schedule a meeting to talk about possible solutions. There will be a follow-up meeting scheduled to ensure that the problem has been addressed, and that the appropriate actions were made to rectify the situation. If a parent is not satisfied with the outcome, the matter may be brought to the Board of Directors for further discussion.

HMCC continuously looks for ways to improve in order to provide the highest quality of child care. HMCC is always open to suggestions and feedback. Parents should feel free to contact a teacher, the Executive Director or a member of the Board if they wish to express a concern about HMCC. Parent concerns will be documented and if need be, addressed at the next Board meeting.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All requests for information should go through the Executive Director. Any personal information relating to the families enrolled at HMCC shall remain in confidence and shall only be released by written consent of those involved.

GOVERNING REGULATIONS

Because HMCC is licensed by the State of Vermont, any issue that is not specifically addressed by the provisions of this handbook shall be resolved pursuant to the provisions of the Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations, issued by the State of Vermont, Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, Child Care Services Division, effective February 12, 2001, as amended.

THANK YOU

Thank you for taking the time to read the HMCC Parent Handbook. We hope it has given you a good idea of how we strive to provide quality child care. If you have questions about any section of this handbook, please feel free to talk with the Executive Director or a Board member about them.

Please sign and date the following form and return it to the Executive Director. By signing, you acknowledge that you have read all of the policies and procedures contained in this handbook and you agree to follow them while your child is enrolled.

Thank you for your support in helping HMCC provide quality child care.

Sincerely,
HMCC Staff and Board of Directors

PARENT HANDBOOK
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I, _____, having enrolled my child/children
_____ in an HMCC program, have
read the HMCC Parent Handbook and agree to adhere to the policies and procedures
listed within as long as my child/children attend(s) HMCC.

Signature: _____ Date: _____