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**Welcome to Early Explorer!**

Early Explorer’s handbook contains important information regarding our program. It is critical you read this handbook and keep it as a reference as long as your child is enrolled in our program. It will answer many of the questions you may have about our center.

# MISSION

Early Explorer seeks to [provide](http://earlyexplorerscenter.com/) quality, loving care for all children, laying a foundation for lifelong learning. We recognize the importance of balanced growth and provide many [opportunities](http://earlyexplorerscenter.com/) for mental, physical and emotional growth through a wide variety of creative experiences. Children are encouraged to learn, grow and explore at their own speed, and to participate in activities that integrate their interests and strengths. We are happy that you have chosen to include us in your child’s life!

# PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

We believe that all children are capable and competent learners, have unique learning styles, and learn at their own pace. Children learn best when they are involved in meaningful, purposeful activities that allow them to safely interact with their environment. Our goals are to create an environment where children are valued for their individual strengths and gifts, and where growth and learning are interconnected. Early Explorer staff is valued for their energy, knowledge and commitment to quality care. Our staff enjoys working with children and creating spaces for caring relationships and learning to occur. We value parents and families as advocates for their children and provide support for them in any way possible. With children and their families, we enthusiastically promote a hands-on, play-based approach in our curriculum. Together we realize that we are always learning and we value each moment of each day.

**ADMITTANCE/WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

After initial interview, parents must complete the following enrollment documents:

* Application
* Completed health appraisal
* Immunization record for each child
* Emergency cards (Child Information Cards)
* Licensing notebook acknowledgement
* Parent Contract

Parents who wish to withdraw their child from the program must give at least 2 weeks’ notice in written. If two weeks’ notice is not given, you will be billed for the reminder of the two-week period.

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# DAILY SCHEDULES

The schedule at Early Explorer is flexible enough to provide adaptability when necessary but structured enough to provide a predictable routine for the children. We want them to view our program as a safe and comforting place, where they know what to expect and when to expect it.   
  
A typical daily schedule at Early Explorer will include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 7:30am - 9:00am | Arrival/Free Choice/A.M Snack |
| 9:00am - 9:30am | Greeting Time/Circle time |
| 9:30am - 10:00am | Large Group/Planning Time |
| 10:00am -10:30am | Work Time |
| 10:30am - 11:00am | Recall/Small Group Time |
| 11:00am -11:45am | Outside Time |
| 11:45am-12:15pm | Wash Hands/Lunch |
| 12:15pm-12:30pm | Story Time/Get Ready for Rest Time |
| 12:30pm-2:00pm | Quiet/Resting Time |
| 2:00pm - 2:15pm | Wake Up/Going to potty/Wash Hand |
| 2:30pm - 3:00pm | P.M Snack |
| 3:00pm - 3:30pm | Large-Group Time/Planning Time |
| 3:30pm- 4:30pm | Work Time (Choice Time) |
| 4:30pm - 4:45pm | Outside Time |
| 4:45pm - 5:00pm | Recall Time |

# HOURS AND DAYS OF OPERATION

Early Explorer will be in operation Monday through Friday from 7:30 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., year-round. However, we will be closed on the following holidays:

Memorial Day

Independence Day

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Day & Day After

Christmas Eve until the day after New Year’s Day

Eid Al-fitr and Eid Al-adha (changes every year, center will provide an estimated date)

Summer break (tentative every year)

All regular fees will be charged for these holidays. If a holiday falls on a Saturday, we will be closed the previous Friday. If a holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed the Monday following.

# DAILY ACTIVITIES

Early Explorer will plan activities and provide children with a variety of experiences. Some of the activities will include:

* Language development: books, music, story time, finger plays, flannel board stories, cooking activities
* Large muscle skills: balls, hula hoops, bean bags, swinging, outdoor play
* Small muscle skills: arts/crafts, stringing beads, pegboards, blocks
* Creative expression: dramatic play, puppets, music/instruments, flannel board, blocks
* Self-help skills: assist with mealtime preparation, dress self for outdoors
* Literacy skills: books, story board, alphabet and writing games, print-rich environment

Play is a major component of our program. Materials, enough time and space will be provided for children to actively explore the world around them. Children will have an opportunity to use a variety of art materials, manipulative and housekeeping equipment to build new insights.

Children including infants and toddlers will go outdoors daily when weather permits. The children may be kept indoors during inclement weather.

* Heavy rain
* Temperatures above 90 degrees F.
* Wind chills of 10 degrees F. or below for children age 2 and above.
* Wind chills of 20 degrees F. or below for children under age 2

**Infants and Toddlers** (children under two years of age) will have a flexible schedule which reflects the child's individual needs. They will be given individual attention including lots of time for talking. The body position of non-mobile infants and their location in the center will be changed frequently. Tummy time will be regularly provided throughout the day. Early Explorer will provide safe, open spaces for children who are crawling. Infants and toddlers will be encouraged to play with a wide variety of safe toys and objects.

**Preschoolers** will have access to appropriate materials and activities which will allow them to have ample time for large muscle activities and to participate in food preparation.

**Rest or naptime** is provided by our program State of Michigan requires that all children who are in a full day program have a quiet rest time. A crib is provided for each child less than one year of age. Children over the age of one year will sleep on a mat or cot; provided by the center. You may provide a sheet, blanket and pillow so your child is comfortable during rest time. These items will be sent home weekly to be laundered.

# CURRICULUM

The curriculum of Early Explorer center has been developed to meet the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and creative needs of the young children and families we serve. The classroom environment encourages the development of trust and independence by helping children gain a positive self-concept and ability to relate well with others.  
  
Our background in early childhood has shown us that young children learn best through play, and that play is an essential part of childhood. For these reasons, our curriculum is play-focused to give children the freedom to try out new ideas, practice developing skills, and imitate adult roles. In doing so, we support the development of social skills, friendship, and knowledge about our world and cultures. Children can develop readiness skills and form concepts through play, and gain a sense of mastery through their activities. Our center promotes the development of the whole child through play. The activities we use in the center reflect our commitment to provide a developmentally appropriate experience for all children.  
  
We believe that children learn through active hands on involvement with materials, equipment, and activities. During active play, a child’s mind, body, and emotions develop, and true learning takes place. We encourage children to be independent in basic care routines because these routines can provide as much opportunity for meaningful learning to occur as experiences planned in the interest areas of the classroom. Our goal is to provide a stimulating, sensitive environment that supports the child’s social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth.  
  
Children learn how to form positive, caring, cooperative relationships by interacting with children and adults. Through these interactions, children learn to get along with others. When a child experiences success in play and is encouraged to make choices, communicate thoughts and feelings in a positive way, and accept responsibility for actions, the child learns social skills that will last a lifetime. Early childhood play experiences effect learning and personal growth throughout life. Our objective is to assist families in the task of providing a strong foundation for their child’s future development.

# MEALS AND SNACKS

Early Explorer will follow USDA guidelines when planning our menus. No child will go without nourishment, drinks or water for longer than 3 hours. Early Explorers will offer the following snacks to all children in attendance at the times identified in the daily schedule.

* Breakfast
* A.M. snack
* P.M. snack

If your child has special dietary needs (medical condition or personal choice) or has food allergies, parents must notify the center in writing.

Weekly records of snacks will be posted in the center.

Children younger than 12 months must be served formula or breast milk unless written direction is on file from the child's health care professional. Parents should provide formula. All bottles and commercial baby food must be labeled with your child's first and last name, and date.

# SUPERVISION POLICY

A major responsibility of the staff is to ensure the health and safety of each child entrusted into our care. Staff members are alert to and educated about the safety needs of the child attending Early Explorer. We anticipate possible hazards and take the necessary and appropriate precautions to prevent hazards or injuries. At no time will a child be left unattended. Staff will supervise children at all times, including naptime. If a child becomes ill, they may be isolated in a section of the room not in use, but they will remain in the sight and hearing of a staff member.

Parents are required to bring their children into the center and to sign them in on the attendance sheet for the day. Any special messages, medications, pickup changes, etc. should be given to the staff member at this time so that any changes will be communicated and the proper care will be given to all children. At the time of pick up, parents are asked to make contact with the supervising staff member to make sure that their child is checked out for the day. This helps to ensure that all children are released to the proper adults; staff will check I.D. for persons they are unfamiliar with to be sure that parental consent has been given for grandparents, friends, or other family members to pick up children.

# PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are encouraged to participate whenever possible in activities at Early Explorer Center. Parents may wish to attend field trips, holiday celebrations, special lunches, or simply stop in to join their child for a period of time. Staff members are available to discuss a child’s progress or needs at any time. However, due to staff responsibilities and schedules, parents are asked to make appointments with staff when it is necessary to engage in any lengthy conversations about their child. Staff wants time to dedicate their focus on you and your child in these circumstances.

Please feel free to bring up any concerns when they occur. Often, they can be addressed when they are little problems, before they grow into a larger issue. Staff fully realize that you put your trust in us with your children and we want our relationship to be a positive one that supports your children!

# VOLUNTEERING

**Policy:**   
Early Explorer center may have volunteers and/or Early Childhood Education students working within the organization along with staff at some points throughout the year. At all times, all volunteers and students will be under the direction and supervision of Early Explorers staff.  
No child or children will be supervised by any person less than 18 years of age, or by someone who is not an employee of Early Explorer.  
  
No child will be supervised by someone who is not an agency approved participating parent of Early Explorer.

**Procedure:**   
All staff and volunteers are required to review the organization’s policies, procedures and practices regarding the supervision of volunteers, participating parents, and children at Early Explorer. All staff will annually review their roles and responsibilities when directly supervising and working with volunteers, participating parents and/or placement students in their classrooms.

The Director/Manager of Early Explorer is responsible for ensuring that volunteers, participating parents, and students are provided with an orientation to the organization, be appropriately trained, and supervised. Volunteers, participating parents, and students have a responsibility to contribute to their orientation by seeking information, asking questions and asking for assistance when needed. All volunteers, participating parents, and placement students must agree to follow all policies and procedures of Early Explorer, as well as the directions and guidelines provided by the staff of Early Explorer.

**Criminal Reference Checks:**  
All volunteers having direct contact with children in the childcare must have a satisfactory criminal reference check.

**Mandatory Orientation & Training:**   
Prior to volunteering at Early Explorer, all volunteers, participating parents, or students will have an orientation which will include a comprehensive discussion regarding Early Explorer childcare philosophy. Volunteers will be provided with a detailed orientation regarding their roles and responsibilities, and will be required to review and sign off on all policies and procedures prior to working with children for the first time and at least annually thereafter.   
All volunteers, participating parents, and placement students will have ongoing training through impromptu daily meetings and scheduled monthly staff meetings, and will be required to read all applicable memos and organizational updates.

**Record Retention:**

All records documenting that the volunteer, participating parent, and/or placement student has reviewed and signed off on all applicable policies and procedures will be kept on file at the center for two years.

**Confidentiality:**  
All volunteers, participating parents, and placement students must sign a confidentiality agreement. All volunteers, participating parent, and placement students are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information to which they are exposed to while at Early Explorer, involving staff, clients, or other volunteers and students.

**Discipline:**   
All volunteers, participating parents, and placement students who fail to adhere to the policies and procedures of Early Explorer may face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Early Explorer believes in fairness and openness, and is a place where volunteers, participating parents, and placement students can expect a commitment to resolving conflict and receiving constructive criticism. If disciplinary action is required, we will follow the same steps as our staff policies:

* Performance review
* Verbal warning
* Written warning
* Suspension
* Dismissal

# GUIDANCE/DISCIPLINE POLICY

Children's behavior will be guided by setting clear limits or rules for children. Early Explorer staff will talk with children about expected behaviors and model those behaviors consistently for them. Early Explorer will state positively what children can do, using specific terms (e.g., "you need to walk" rather than "don't run"). Undesirable behavior will be redirected to another activity. Children will be given a wide variety of age-appropriate activities to choose from and will be given the attention they need before they demand it. Behavior management will be for the purpose of helping children develop self-control, self-esteem and respect for the rights of others.

Early Explorer understands that there will be times when a child will become distraught, fussy or will cry. The first action in these situations will be an attempt to determine the cause of the distress. It may be related to a basic need such as hunger or comfort, or it may be that the child just needs some extra time and attention. Early Explorer understands that crying is normal, and that all babies will have times when it is difficult for them to stop crying. At these times, Early Explorer staff will stay calm and do whatever they can to soothe your child. However, there also may be times when Early Explorer staff may need your advice or assistance, and Early Explorer staff will not hesitate to call you if it is felt necessary.

A "take a break" may be used when other techniques have not been successful. A child may be removed from a situation that has gotten out of control before a child can hurt himself or others. Early Explorer staff will stay with the child and talk about what behavior was unacceptable, and what else s/he might have done or said instead. Early Explorer staff will have the child "take a break" near the others so the emphasis is on relax/cool down rather than isolation and punishment. When the child and staff feel s/he is ready to return to the group, a staff member will help the child transition back to the group.

Early Explorer staff recognizes that no single technique will work with children every time. If a child exhibits unacceptable behavior, staff will request a conference with parents to consider how to deal with the behavior. If the behavior continues, the next steps may include referrals to appropriate community resources, and/or discharge of the child from care.

Actions that may be psychologically, emotionally or physically painful, discomforting, dangerous or potentially injurious are prohibited. Prohibited actions include spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, slapping, twisting, throwing or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment on the child; verbal abuse, threats or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family; physical restraint, binding or tying the child to restrict the child's movement; enclosing the child in a confined space such as a closet, locked room, box or similar cubicle; withholding or forcing meals, snacks or naps; actions that are cruel, aversive, humiliating or frightening to the child; or punishing a child for lapses in toilet training. These forms of punishment will never be used, even at a parent's request.

# ACCIDENTS/EMERGENCIES

Fire drills shall be practiced with the children every month, and completion of the practices will be documented. In addition, tornado drills shall be practiced during the tornado season which is April through October.

**In case of an emergency that would require an evacuation,** children will be evacuated through the nearest safe exit. The attendance form and list of phone numbers for parents and emergency contacts will be taken along to ensure that all children are accounted for and all families are notified.

**In the event of a tornado warning,** the children will be taken to the kitchen and/or bathroom(s). Blankets and a portable radio and flashlight, with extra batteries for both, are kept in the tornado shelter area at all times. The attendance form and emergency contact information will be brought along. An emergency backpack containing books, water, crackers, and small toys will also accompany the children.

In the event of a lost child, Early Explorer staff will check all areas of the center. If the child cannot be found, the child's parents and/or emergency contact and the police will be notified immediately.

If the center should lose the use of heat, water or electricity before the center opens, Early Explorer will close the center for the day, notifying parents as soon as possible.

If the center should lose the use of heat, water or electricity while children are in attendance, Early Explorer staff will call parents to notify them of the situation, and ask them to pick up their children as soon as possible. Early Explorer staff will make every effort to make children as comfortable as possible, and to follow our typical routine as much as possible.

In the event that local schools close due to severe weather, the center will close. Please note that parents are still responsible for tuition for all closings due to severe weather.

# MANAGEMENT OF ILLNESSES

Early Explorer provides children with a clean and healthy environment. However, we realize that children become ill from time to time. If this is your child’s first group care experience, it is possible that they may experience more frequent illnesses at the beginning of their time here, particularly during cold and flu season. We observe all children as they enter the center to quickly assess their general health. We ask that you do not bring a sick child to the center. For the well-being of all, they will be sent home! Please also plan ahead and have a back-up care plan in place if you are not able to take time off from work.

# Child Illness/Injury

Children who are ill are not to be brought to the center. The following are examples of children who are ill:

* A temperature of 100 degrees F. or higher
* Vomiting or diarrhea that has occurred more than once in the past 24 hours
* A contagious disease such as chicken pox, strep throat or pink eye
* An unidentified rash
* Has not been on a prescribed medication for at least 24 hours or continues to have symptoms of illness
* Has a constant, thick, colored nasal discharge and cough

If a child should become ill while at the center, parents will be contacted immediately. Sick children will be isolated within sight or hearing of a staff member and will be made as comfortable as possible. Children should be picked up within 2 hours. If the child is not picked up within 2 hours, the emergency contact person on the child's enrollment form will be called.

Children may return to the center when they are symptom free, have been appropriately treated or have been given medical approval to return to child care. Early Explorer staff will follow procedures on personal cleanliness and communicable diseases in accordance with licensing rules and the guidelines for exclusion of children from child care as adapted from the Division of Public Health.

Early Explorer staff will report all communicable diseases, when required, to the local health department and to parents of all enrolled children. Parents of all enrolled children will be notified when their child has been exposed to an illness.

Early Explorer staff will provide care for mildly ill children. This means Early Explorer staff may care for children who have a common, temporary illness that is non-progressive in nature and is not considered a communicable disease. For example, children with a cold or upper respiratory illness may be cared for. However, children who are in the contagious stages of a communicable disease such as chicken pox, pink eye, strep throat, etc. may not be in care until the appropriate period of communicability has passed.

Superficial injuries will be washed with soap and water and covered with a bandage or treated with ice. Parents will be told about the minor injury when the child is picked up at the center or delivered to the parent or other authorized person. An injury report form will also be completed by Early Explorer as soon as possible after treating the injury.

Early Explorer has received training in first aid and will follow standard emergency medical procedures for treating injuries. A head injury will be treated as a serious injury, and parents will be notified as soon as possible. Early Explorer staff have current certification in infant and child cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

If there is a need for emergency medical treatment, 911 will be called and the child will be taken to the hospital. Should an ambulance be needed, parents will be responsible for any costs. Parents will be contacted as soon as possible after contacting 911. If possible, Early Explorer staff will ask that your child be taken to the emergency medical facility that you designated on the child enrollment form.

All medication administered, accidents or injuries occurring during the time the child is in Early Explorer’s care, marked changes in behavior or appearance and any observation of injuries to a child's body received outside of care will be entered into the center medical logbook. As a licensed child care provider, Early Explorer staff is required to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local authorities.

# Medications

Early Explorer staff will administer medications if authorized to do so by parents/guardians. Prescriptive and non-prescriptive medication will only be given to children if parents have completed the authorization form provided. All medicine must be in its original container bearing the label with the child's name, dosage and administration directions. Early Explorer staff will not exceed the age-related dosage on the label of any medication without a written doctor's authorization. Blanket authorizations, such as dispensing Tylenol at the director’s discretion, are not allowed.

Prior to applying sunscreen or insect repellant to a child, Early Explorer will obtain a written authorization from the child’s parent. The authorization shall include the brand and the ingredient strength.

# FIELD TRIPS/TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN

Early Explorer staff transports children with the help of parents, on occasional field trips. You will be notified in advance of the date, time and destination of any field trip requiring transportation, and approved car seats will be used for all children.

Children will never be left unattended in a vehicle.

Whenever children are being transported while in the care of an Early Explorer staff, a written attendance checklist will accompany staff to make sure that all children are accounted for by name and sight at each transition, inclusive of each time a vehicle is exited. If Early Explorers is transferring the children to another responsible adult, staff will be sure the adult acknowledges the transfer before leaving the child. Early Explorer will obtain the driving record of any person who will be transporting children.

# TUITION/FEES AND PAYMENT POLICY

Fees are to be paid in advance on Mondays for the following week's services. If there will be a third party payment, as from an employer or the county, a special payment schedule will be arranged and detailed in the contract. Parents will be responsible for any specified co-payments or unpaid amounts.

A full-time rate is offered for children who will be in care for 6 hours or more, 5 days per week, or a combination (e.g., 8 hours a day for 4 days a week).

There will be an extra fee assessed for late payment or late pick up of a child.

There will be no reductions for additional children from one family. Early Explorer staff is limited in the number of children that it may care for at one time, according to the state licensing ratios.

No refunds will be given for days when children do not attend due to illness or other reasons.

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**PARENT CONTRACT**

As of (date), Early Explorer Childcare Center and

(Name of parent or legal guardian), enter into a contract for child care services for the following named child:

Child's Name Date of Birth

Medical Conditions (if any)

Parent's Address

Phone Number or

Email Address

*According to the following days and times:*

Mon. Tues. Wed. Thurs. Fri.

*In the following group:*

Infants\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Older Toddler\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Preschool\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Weekly pricing for $\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ weekly or monthly (circle one).

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ certify that I have gained full understanding and acknowledgement of the contract. I have read through the important highlights of the contract and was informed about all the rules and regulations pertaining to the center. I have gained full knowledge in the curriculum, classroom schedule, nutritional guidelines, illness and accidental management, tuition, fees and payment policy.

**I have read and understand the policies and procedures outlined in this**

**handbook.**

**I agree to abide by all policies and procedures including payment of tuition**

**following the tuition schedule outlined in the handbook.**

**I understand that the program must follow the guidelines and rules as**

**outlined for Early Explorer Childcare Center and Michigan Child Care Licensing.**

This center maintains a licensing notebook of all licensing inspection reports, special investigation reports and all related corrective action plans. The notebook will be available to parents for review during regular business hours. Licensing inspection and special investigation reports from at least the past two years are available on the Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing website at [**www.michipan.pov/michildcare**](http://www.michipan.pov/michildcare)**.**

**Parents/Legal Guardians**

Parent Signature 1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Names 1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature 2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Printed Names 2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child

**Early Explorer Childcare Center**

Signature

Printed Name Date

**Early Explorer Childcare Center**

# ADDITIONAL PROVISIONS AGREED TO BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

**PROVISIONS**

The center shall have no responsibility for failure to provide neither requested medication nor adverse reactions which are caused directly from the administration of medication.

You are required to supply court documentation if a biological parent is not allowed to pick up or have child contact at Early Explorer Childcare Center.

There is no refund or exchanging days due to school closings, holidays, illness, doctor visits, family emergencies or any other absence.

Payments may be made by cash or check, made payable to Early Explorer Childcare Center.

Explorer Childcare Center closes at 5:00 p.m. sharp! There is a late pick-up fee of $2.00 fee for each minute of additional time. If no contact has been made to pick up a child by 6:45 p.m., the Washtenaw County Sheriff Department will be called to pick up the child.

Early Explorer Childcare Center reserves the right to terminate childcare at any time. Such reasons may include but are not limited to: nonpayment of services, lack of cooperation from parent/guardian when working through a behavior problem, or disciplining in any way children other than your own while at the center.

Signature Date