



Nurturing Growth Through Connections and Play

Parent Handbook

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<https://www.greaterconnections.org/>

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Family Letter

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Greater Connections Childhood Development Center (GCCDC). On behalf of our Greater Connections Childhood Development Center Board of Directors, Executive Director and staff members, we would like to welcome you and your family to our center. We know that choosing a childcare center for your family is one of the most important decisions you will make. We want to assure you that at GCCDC, your child will be safe and nurtured through connections and play.

GCCDC is designed with families in mind. You are welcome in the center at any time during the day to join your child for lunch, to observe your child in the classroom, or to speak with the teachers, center management, or other families. Our goal is to make our center a community that fosters relationships and connections.

Our teachers and center administrators are experienced in welcoming new families and will work with you to make the process seamless for your family. The following are some suggestions for easing the transition for you and your child:

- Visit the center with your child before his or her first day. On one of those visits, we encourage your child to explore his or her new classroom.
- Bring a family photograph for your child to look at during the day.
- Say goodbye to your child rather than sneaking out. Your child will recognize that although you are leaving, you will be back. Learning that you will come back strengthens trust and autonomy in the world.
- You are always welcome to call and check in to see how your child is doing.

Please feel free to share new ideas and suggestions. We value close communication between families and teachers. It has been our goal to create a handbook that will be able to answer the majority of the questions you may have regarding our programs. Please do not hesitate to call or drop by to discuss any further questions you may have. We look forward to getting to know you and providing a safe and nurturing environment for your child.

Sincerely,

Your Childcare Champions at GCCDC

Meet the Director



Hello! It is my pleasure to welcome you to the Greater Connections Childhood Development Center. I am so excited for our new center, as this is something I believe that our community has needed for a long time. I am very thankful to our Board of Directors, that I was chosen to be the Childcare Director and lead our center into the future. My vision is to facilitate a community child care center where connections and play will empower children to learn, grow and be self-sufficient, while supporting children's learning and development.

I am a native to southwest Iowa. I am a 1998 graduate of Lenox High School and continued my education at Buena Vista University, obtaining my Bachelor's of Arts Degree in Psychology and Human Services. I have worked with children and families in many roles - from being a Childcare Director at our local fitness center when it was a YMCA, to coordinating services for adults and children with disabilities, providing respite for children with disabilities, and being contracted by the Iowa Department of Human Services to provide In-Home Family Services for children and families. Within all my roles, caring for, empowering, and providing a safe environment for children has always been my favorite.

Studies show that birth to age three are the most important years in a child's development. I believe that a child's first and most influential teacher is you as their parent or primary care-giver. When you must be away from your child, we want to provide an environment that is safe, warm, loving and responsive. It is my vision to provide a child care environment that facilitates child development and provides each child with what they need to be successful.

I am committed to you and to our community to provide a program that exceeds expectations. We are a team in your child's care and I encourage an open-door policy when it comes to communication. Please contact me if you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns. Thank you for allowing us to provide care to your children. I look forward to getting to know your family.

Sincerely,

Melissa Zellmer
Executive Director, Greater Connections Childhood Development Center

Board Members

President –Amy Rieck *Chief Human Resources Officer, Greater Regional Health*

Vice President – Kristie Nixon *ECE/PAT Director, Southwestern Community College*

Secretary – Julie Lang *Head Start Director, MATURA Head Start*

Treasurer – Susan McNichols *Compliance Officer, First National Bank*

Member – Mindy Stalker *Executive Director, Union County Development Association*

Member – Callie Anderson *Principal, Creston Community School*

Member – Hannah Shady *Executive Director, LC Clinic and Pregnancy Resource Center*

Member – Amber Vicker *Production Manager, BUNN*

Purpose-

To provide a safe and nurturing environment for children to thrive.

Philosophy-

We at GCCDC, believe that our program and services offer developmentally appropriate curriculum and we strive to enhance social, emotional, physical and intellectual growth in young children. Our program fosters curiosity, creativity and self-esteem by taking into account children's abilities and interests. Child initiated and teacher supported play is an essential component of our program. We are committed to providing an environment that nurtures growth through connections and play.

Mission Statement

The mission of GCCDC is Nurturing Growth Through Connections and Play.

Equal Opportunity

GCCDC is an equal opportunity provider. In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Standards & Licensing

Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) – GCCDC is licensed by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. The center is required to be inspected and licensed annually by HHS. This license resembles the center's compliance with the State of Iowa's standards and procedures to ensure the health and safety of all children. GCCDC is licensed to care for 178 children at our location.

The State of Iowa designates all employees of GCCDC as mandatory reporters of child abuse and neglect. Employees are required to participate in the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services Mandatory Reporter Training upon hiring and again as mandated. Employees are required to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Health and Human Services for investigation. A copy of the law and toll-free number to report child abuse are posted in the center.

Iowa Quality for Kids (IQ4K)

IQ4K is Iowa's new quality and rating and improvement system. GCCDC participates in Iowa's IQ4K which is a voluntary child care rating system for child development homes, licensed child care centers and preschools, and child care programs that are operated by school districts. IQ4K was developed to raise the quality of child care in Iowa, to increase the number of children in high-quality care settings, and to educate parents about quality in child care.

Hours of Operation

GCCDC is open Monday-Friday 5:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. year round. We are closed for certain holidays or as necessary due to inclement weather, natural disasters, or another emergency situation. GCCDC recognizes these holidays as closed: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after, and Christmas Day. We close early on Christmas Eve and New Years Eve.

The center closes promptly at 6:30 p.m. A late fee will be billed to your next week's fee for \$1 per minute your child is at the center past 6:30 p.m. Please refer to your contract agreement for these important fee notifications. The Creston Police Department will be contacted for children left at the center for more than 30 minutes after closing time, if we are unable to contact you or the responsible parties you have given permission to pick up your child.

Snow days, late starts and cancellations, etc. will be announced on Brightwheel, KSIB, and our Facebook page. In the event that inclement weather prevents our staff from making it into work, thus preventing us from maintaining State required ratios, the center will notify parents as soon as possible that the center will be closing through Brightwheel.

New Family Orientation

Orientation for new and prospective families at GCCDC will be provided in person at the center. Each family will tour the facility, be introduced to the director and staff, and review enrollment paperwork to ensure it is completed correctly. The Director or designated staff will answer all questions you may have regarding our program. We ask that all new family orientations be scheduled during business hours and we look forward to sharing our facility and program with you.

Enrollment Process

The registration packet and registration/re-enrollment fees of \$30 will be due upon initial enrollment and again during the fall re-enrollment process each year. Enrollment fees are non-refundable and must accompany the registration packet and/or re-enrollment paperwork. For our families receiving Child Care Assistance, these fees are not covered by your contract.

Enrollment Paperwork/Records will be updated annually or when the family notifies the center of a change. (441 IAC 109.9)

- Enrollment Application
- Admission/Contract Agreement Form and Center Policies & Tuition Sheet
- Emergency Release Form
- Permission Statement/Consent to Treat Form
- CACFP Enrollment Form & Eligibility Application
- Food and Diet Modification Forms (if applicable)
- Health Statement / Annual Physical Exam
- Immunization Form
- Infant Needs & Services

We are required by HHS to obtain each child's individual Pediatrician and Dentist information during the enrollment process. If you choose to leave this section of the forms blank, we are now required to fill it in for you.

Enrollment Status Changes

We understand that schedules change and that every family's needs are different. We work diligently to accommodate every possible schedule. Please contact the center as soon as possible if you plan to bring your child other than their scheduled time. Prior consent will be needed in-case of emergency. Please notify the center as soon as possible if your child(ren) will not be attending that day.

You must contact the center by 8:30 a.m. if you plan to bring your child later than normally scheduled. If your child is scheduled to attend and you have not contacted the center, you may be turned away if the center has made other arrangements. For example, if you were scheduled to arrive at 8 am and do not arrive until 11 am, have not contacted the center prior to arriving, and staff has already been rearranged, there may not be space available at that time for you to leave your child.

Deletions from Enrollment

Any child who misses 5 days in a row without prior notification will be dis-enrolled. Enrollment fees previously paid will be forfeited and new enrollment fees will be required to re-enroll. Families leaving with a balance will be required to pay the balance in full, prior to returning to the center. Once your child stops attending, you will have one week to pick up his/her belongings after which time the remaining items will be donated to charity.

Drop In Enrollment

GCCDC does offer a drop in enrollment for families. This is an infrequent, last minute or emergency-based option for families. For example, if a child's normal child care provider is unavailable, or if you need to utilize full-time care for a week instead of part-time care. Drop in enrollment is not guaranteed, due to staff and ratio accountability. It is important that you contact the center at 782-7117 at least 24 hours in advance to secure your child a spot. Children who utilize drop in enrollment, must complete the same paperwork to ensure HHS standards.

Safety Policy

For the safety of the children in our care, during the enrollment process, parents must provide the names and contact numbers for all those persons permitted to pick up your child. Anyone listed in this section of the Identification & emergency information form, will be automatically allowed to pick up your child. If someone other than yourself is picking up your child, please let him or her know in advance that photo identification will be required to release your child to him or her. Please notify the center through the child care software or by calling the center to let the staff members know who will be picking up your child. Emergency contact forms will be updated every September or as needed to ensure that the necessary information is readily available at all times. For cases where the court system is involved in child custody arrangements, we must have a copy of the court documents on file at the center.

Surveillance Systems

To provide a safe learning environment for children, staff, and guests, they are monitored by digital surveillance systems. For safety purposes, the center is locked and all guests must request access to the office by buzzing and requesting access. Parents will have either a badge or app on their phone to enter the facility. Any visitor at the center will be required to sign in at the office and obtain a visitor badge to wear while in the center. Upon entering the building, visitors will be asked to present a government-issued identification such as a driver's license. If a parent or guardian for any reason does not have a United States government-issued identification, the center can use an acceptable form of identification.

A visitor's badge will not be necessary for those who visit our center to simply drop off an item at the office or pick up paperwork. All registered guests must log out before exiting the building.

Drop off/Pick Up Policy

Parents must check their child in and out on the attendance management system upon arrival and dismissal for the day. This is located inside the main doors. Parents will be asked to escort their

children to the classroom upon arrival, and pick up their child(ren) from their teacher upon dismissal. Parents will keep the children with them at all times so they are supervised.

The interior doors will be locked at all times for safety. In the event that an adult does not have a code to enter the building they will need to call 641-782-7117 to enter the main doors. In the event that a parent or an authorized person arrives at the center while intoxicated or impaired condition, staff will encourage the person to make alternative arrangements for child pick up, including attempting to contact another person on the authorized list. If the impaired person is a parent, we by law can not hold your child. As mandatory reporters, we are required to contact 911.

Tobacco-Free Facility

GCCDC is a tobacco-free campus. Smoking and the use of tobacco products, nicotine, electronic cigarettes and vaping is prohibited in the parking lots, inside the center, and the outdoor play areas. Research has linked “second-hand smoke” as contributing to a host of health problems. Infants and toddlers exposed passively to tobacco are at risk of developing bronchitis, pneumonia, asthma, upper-respiratory infections, ear infections and Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. Tobacco smoke can also make recovering from colds more difficult and can cause stuffy noses, headaches, eye irritations, loss of appetite, and fussiness. (411 IAC 109.10).

To ensure the safety of children, staff will not expose children to the use of the above products, and will not wear clothing that smells like smoke.

Supervision Policy

GCCDC will utilize active supervision at all times, requiring focused attention and intentional observations at all times. Teachers will enforce health and safety practices that ensure children are kept safe at all times, including in the classroom, outdoors, and field trips.

Indoors- Staff will engage in supervision practices by zoning the classroom. Zoning is a strategy used by teachers to organize the classroom environment. Staff will place themselves so that they can see and hear all of the children in their care.

Outdoors - Staff will carefully plan where they will position themselves in the environment. Staff will frequently scan and count the children continuously to know where everyone is and what they are doing. Staff will show awareness of the whole group even when working one on one with a child or a small group. Staff will communicate with others when transitioning to another area so that other staff members can supervise their area and activities.

Field Trips - Staff will utilize the same plan as being outdoors. Staff will maintain the child to staff ratio for their age group plus one extra staff member.

Transitions- Providers will prepare children to move from one activity to another by providing verbal (5 minute until snack) and non-verbal cues (showing pictures of next activity) before transitions. Staff will have a plan for what each adult will be responsible for during the transition.

Rest Time- Children should be directly supervised by sight and sound at all times. This includes when children are going to sleep, sleeping, or in the process of waking up. One adult must be present in the room actively observing/supervising the children. There must be at least one qualified teaching staff at the facility at all times and be ready to return to the classroom if needed. Children under the age of 24 months will have 1 staff : 4 children ratio at all times.

Water Supervision at the Center - GCCDC provides water days for children 12 months and older. Each age group will be supervised at all times by staff while utilizing water tables and sprinklers

Center staff will provide touch supervision at all times, which means that staff will be within arm's length of the children at all times. Staff must remain in ratio at all times.

Swimming Pool Supervision - Swimming at Southern Prairie Fitness Center or Creston Community Pool may be utilized for preschool and school-age children when qualified lifeguards are on duty. The required ratio of staff to children in the water should be met without including the adults who are required for supervision outside the water. The supervising ratio in the water is 1 adult : 4 children for preschool age children and 1:6 for school age children (age 5 and in kindergarten - age 12). Adults should remain within arm's length providing "touch supervision". Ratios for outside the water will be 1 staff :6 children. Staff outside the water will be responsible for active supervision while zoning the water and doing constant face to name recognition. Communication with other staff must be continuous to ensure that all children are accounted for while in the water. To ensure the safety of our children, infants and toddlers will not utilize swimming pools while in our care.

Green Valley Lake Supervision - At times, our school age children (age 5 -12) will participate in field trips to Green Valley Lake. Zoning and outside field trip supervision will be utilized while on the field trip. At no time, will any of the children be allowed into the lake to swim or participate in water activities. If fishing is provided for the children, staff will maintain "touch supervision" while maintaining care within arm's length. While fishing ratios will be 1:6 with extra supervision to ensure safety.

Annual Physical Exam Policy

For any child under the age of five and not enrolled in kindergarten, GCCDC requires a physical examination upon enrollment. The child's physical must have been completed within the past 6 months and submitted within 30 days of enrollment. All physical exams must be completed by a licensed medical doctor, doctor of osteopathy, physician's assistant or advanced registered nurse practitioner. The state of health status form will be provided by the center or a copy of an annual physical will be done within the past 60 days of the child's anniversary date will be expected (411 IAC 109.10) Physical exams for children must completed annually at the child's well-child exam and provided to GCCDC.

Medical/Religious Exemptions

If a child of any person who is a member of a church or religious organization which has guidelines governing immunizations of medical treatment for disease that are contrary to the above rules an official statement from the church or organization shall be placed in the child's file. If a child has not been immunized, in the result of an illness outbreak these children may not be allowed to return to the center until verification with the Iowa Department of Public Health and/or Union County Public Health Agency.

Child Records

Student records are kept confidential. Only persons, including employees, who have a legitimate educational interest are allowed to access a student's records. Parents may access, request amendments to, and copy their child's records during regular office hours. Parents or guardians will be asked to sign a release of information form before information may be shared with other agencies.

Tuition & Fees

Tuition fees are based on the days your contracted agreement of which your child is scheduled to attend. We are enrollment based not attendance based, and parent fees reflect enrollment. Please be sure to sign your child in/out each day. Tuition invoices will be available in childcare software by Monday for that week of care. Payment is due on Mondays. We highly encourage families to utilize our auto pay option. Autopay helps families automatically pay balances on the due date. GCCDC will waive the processing fee. If you choose to not use auto pay you will sign a care payment agreement. If payments are not paid by 6:00 pm on Monday, they are considered late and a late fee of \$25.00 will be applied to your account. If an account is 14 days past due, child care services may be terminated if no payment plan is established with the director. Reinstatement of childcare services will be evaluated once payment is made in full. A re-registration fee of \$30 will be posted to your account.

Checks are to be made payable to GCCDC. A \$30 a fee will be charged for NSF checks returned by your bank. Two NSF checks will require cash or credit card for future payments.

Collection of Past Due Tuition

GCCDC will exercise every means necessary to collect all past due tuition and fees owed for child care services provided. These 'means' will include, but are not limited to, the use of an outside collection agency and the filing of a claim in Union County Small Claims Court. Any additional costs incurred by the Center while attempting to collect these fees (i.e.: certified mail, court costs, etc.) will be added to the past due amount.

Child Care Assistance

GCCDC participates in Child Care Assistance within the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. It is important for families to apply for Child Care Assistance (CCA) prior to enrollment at GCCDC. If you have applied for CCA and your approval is pending, you will be required to pay for your child's attendance until we receive your contract and are able to bill for the days attended. Once we receive payment and your account is up to date, you will be reimbursed for your out of pocket tuition expenses covered by your CCA contract.

Child Care Assistance Co-pays

Parents receiving Child Care Assistance (CCA) for their child's tuition and who have a 'co-pay' are responsible for payment based on your enrollment. An invoice will be generated with the amount due and any previous credit (or balance) you may have at the time. If your child uses more than the allotted units allowed by the State (CCA Contract), the fee for these 'extra' units will be added to your invoice. Co-pay balances will be subject to the same payment policy requirements as our private-pay families.

If there is a lapse in your coverage, you will be responsible for these charges until your contract is reinstated and this tuition will be due and payable following the same policy requirements as our private pay families.

Vacation Days

If a child is enrolled full-time or part-time for six months, children are eligible to earn vacation/sick days. A child attending full-time will be entitled to 5 consecutive days of vacation/sick per year. A child in attendance part-time will be entitled to 3 consecutive days of vacation/sick per year. Vacation days are forfeited at the end of the year if not used.

Curriculum

The GCCDC utilizes Creative Curriculum as a framework to support the growth of children in a way that is congruent with the program's philosophy. Learning experiences focus on all areas of development (cognitive, social-emotional, language and physical-motor) as well as content areas (science, math, social studies, etc.), are connected to one or more learning objectives, are developmentally appropriate, and can be modified or adapted to support each and every child. The planned learning experiences are responsive to the cultural, linguistic and the diversity of the children and families.

Daily Program

Because we are concerned about the well-being of the 'whole' child, we plan daily experiences to enhance the child's physical, mental, social and emotional development. In our curriculum, we provide for each child's individual group needs: opportunities for creative and expressive arts, music, science, literature, food experiences, mathematics and play.

Our staff members carefully plan each day's activities based on the developmental level of the children in the group. We believe in encouraging children to participate, in stimulating their curiosity, while following their interests and increasing their abilities and skills; however, we do not believe in pressuring or pushing children beyond their capabilities. Although each day is divided into different times, gathering and activity times will be used throughout the day. Daily schedules will be posted in the classroom area for each age group.

Incident Reports

Every procedure we follow is done to ensure the overall safety of your child while at the center, yet accidents do happen. All injuries will receive immediate attention and written documentation (Incident Report) will be provided upon the parent's arrival at the center. If the accident is serious in nature, you will immediately be contacted.

Field Trips

You will be notified in advance of all field trips. The notification will provide you with the date, times, places, additional costs and any additional information necessary for each field trip. A signed permission slip will be required from each child in order to participate. All children will be included in off-site field trips unless otherwise requested by parents.

Guiding Young Children

GCCDC consistently emphasizes basic respect for the individual child. Young children are striving for understanding, independence, and self-control. Children learn by exploring, experimenting, and testing the limits of their environment and experiencing the consequences of their behavior. In this way, they begin to understand how the world works, their own limits, and appropriate assertiveness. Children learn self-control and how the world works in a relaxed, positive atmosphere of support and understanding that recognizes the child's struggle toward independence. It is our mission to provide a safe environment that fosters meaningful and appropriate social, emotional and physical growth. At times, children need assistance and guidance while learning ways to interact appropriately with other children and caregivers. To this end, we have created Child Discipline and Child Behavior Policies.

Positive Guidance Strategies

Teachers will use developmentally appropriate, positive guidance strategies to support children. Guidance strategies used may vary from classroom as teachers respond to each child's individual temperament, development etc.

Positive guidance is an important aspect of our center. Positive guidance includes guidance techniques for respectful interactions between an adult and a child. These techniques promote developmentally appropriate social behaviors in children, as well as positive self-concept in the child. The following guidelines have been developed to create a positive caring environment where children feel successful, confident, and respected.

Teachers will foster cooperation by giving praise and positive reinforcement for acceptable behavior, giving children choices, modeling appropriate behavior and communication, and by making sure rules are simple and clearly understood by the children. The children will take part in creating the classroom rules. These expectations will be clearly communicated to children in a variety of ways (verbal communication, visual cues, modeling, etc).

Positive Guidance Guidelines:

- Give positive direction: Avoid the use of negative words such as “don’t”, “not” or “can’t” as much as possible. Think about what you want the child to do, and state your directions positively and accordingly and give the reason for your request: “That wall is getting too high, it might fall and hurt someone. Let’s start a new one over here.” Instead of, “Don’t put any more blocks there.”
- Redirect rather than suppress: Children have a right to their feelings. If they are angry, you might suggest a socially acceptable way to help them work out their feelings, such as, “We pound the clay.”
- Redirection is likely to be most effective when you suggest something that meets the need expressed in their behavior.
- Model appropriate behavior and communication: Children learn best through imitation. Modeling appropriate behavior and communication is a very important role of a teacher. When talking with children, use correct English and refrain from slang expressions.
- Encourage positive problem solving behaviors: Children sometimes need your help solving a problem. By encouraging behaviors such as cooperating, helping, and using nice words, you are helping children learn how to positively and successfully solve their problems.
- Use your voice as a teaching tool: Be quiet in manner and tone. Go to the child and speak quietly.
- Children are expected to use quiet voices inside the building, and you are to set a good example by doing the same.
- Using praise or disapproval: This should be consistently given for a definite type of behavior – friendly but firm. Avoid using shame or blame or giving the child a sense of guilt. Show disapproval of a child's actions, but never of the child. Be sure to tell the child what you like about what he does. The more problems a child has, the more he needs your love and understanding.
- Giving Choices: Give a child a choice only when you are willing for her to do what she chooses. “Do you want a turn on the swing?” may be used. “Do you want to wash your hands for a snack?” is not a choice and should not be stated as one.
- Avoid Competition: Avoid situations that encourage competition. Trying to be the first one through, or to ‘paint the best picture’ or race to put the toys away are poor procedures.

- Food as a Reward: Food is never used as an award for positive or negative behavior.

Challenging Behavior

Teachers address challenging behavior by:

- Assessing the function of the child's behavior
- Convening families and professionals to develop individualized plans to address behavior
- Using positive behavior support strategies

Every effort will be made to handle behavior problems positively and consistently. If unacceptable behavior persists and the staff has tried various approaches to the situation, a conference may be necessary. The conference may include the student, staff members, parent (s) or guardian, counselor, or director, depending on the severity of the situation. If problems still continue, the student may be referred to the Instructional Consultation Team. The Instructional Consultation Team may include an agency such as Green Valley AEA, Child Health Speciality Clinic, or other appropriate agency or additional support. Because safety within the program is our first priority, a family may need to find a more appropriate child care setting if the child's behavior is a danger to the safety and well-being of the other children and staff. We will work together to ensure this as smooth of transition as possible. Specialized one-to-one attention due to inappropriate behavior is not available at our center. Teaching staff will never use physical punishment.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS)

The GCCDC will implement the PBIS guidance strategies. These strategies place a focus on positive social-emotional development in young children.

Classroom Rules

- Be Safe
- Be Responsible
- Be Respectful

These are the basic, universal center rules. Each classroom will have expansions/specifics on these rules based on developmentally appropriate practice.

Foster Independence

One of the goals of our center is to encourage the children's independence in performing age appropriate tasks.

- Give the children time and freedom: Children need this time and freedom to discover how to use the equipment, materials, and toys.
- Avoid jumping right in to do it for the child: If the child needs assistance, first give verbal directions or ask helpful questions. Giving the minimal amount of "adult hands-on" help gives the child a chance to use his/her own skills and abilities. This becomes especially important with dressing skills and toileting skills.
- Encourage and praise: It is a time to learn, and as teachers, you will need to encourage and praise even the smallest effort. You will need lots of patience; allow children time to do things for themselves.

Policies

Bully Prevention Policy

At GCCDC, we take bullying and its impact seriously. Bullying behavior is unacceptable in any form and is not tolerated in our center, whether from a child or an adult. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumors, attacking someone physically or verbally and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Staff and parents will be made aware of the center's position on bullying. When adults respond quickly and consistently to bullying behavior, they send the message that it is not acceptable. Research shows this can stop bullying behavior over time. Parents, staff and other community adults can help prevent bullying by talking about it and building a safe environment.

Oral Health Policy

Good oral health is important for all children and promoting good dental health begins in early childhood. Child care providers can help children learn how to care for their teeth and encourage good dental hygiene.

Center Staff will hold babies when feeding them from a bottle. Children will not be allowed to go to sleep with a sippy cup or bottle while in care. Children will be given healthy foods like fruits and vegetables, milk products such as cheese and yogurt and whole grain breads and cereals following the CACFP program requirements. Children will be offered tap water throughout the day, limiting the amount of juice and added sugars. Children will be offered a drink of water after meals and snacks to assist with mouth-washing.

We are required by HHS to obtain each child's individual dentist information during the enrollment process. The center has a plan for handling dental emergencies by contacting your dental contact and the parent to ensure the tooth/teeth are saved and following the dentist's directions.

Biting Policy

GCCDC's perspective on biting: Biting occurs in infants' toddlers and sometimes in preschoolers. When it happens, it can be scary and frustrating for children, parents and teachers. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, simple sensory exploration, imitation, cause and effect, crowding, attention seeking, frustration, and communication. Proactively understanding the developmental stages of children and recognizing their needs can prevent biting behaviors. Employees will quickly and calmly intervene or respond to biting incidents by treating/cleaning the bite according to first aid procedures taught in certification classes and showing concern and support to the child that was bitten. Staff should address the child who did the biting in a firm, calm voice that it is not acceptable to bite and then discuss different strategies that can be used the next time instead of biting. Any injury report should be filled out for the child that was bitten and a copy sent home for the parent to sign and return.

The director, with assistance from the teacher, will assess the supervision, the context, and the environment in which the biting occurred. Children bite to fulfill a need or cope with a challenge. It is the Center staff's responsibility to observe the child and to determine the child's needs that are not being met. Staff should observe and document the behaviors and context (where, when, how, who) that occurs before and after the biting incident. Using these observations, staff should look for patterns

and potential solutions. Knowing the triggers for biting can help staff to be proactive in preventing biting incidents from occurring. When informing parents that their child has been bitten or bit another child, the staff will maintain the confidentiality of the other child.

Clothing

Please dress your child in comfortable play clothes and shoes. These need to be clothes that he/she does not need to worry about getting dirty because we believe in children gaining independence and autonomy as they develop, children toilet learning are encouraged to wear comfortable clothing that can be easily managed for bathroom needs. Please keep in mind that children will be given the opportunity to participate in a variety of hands-on, messy activities such as painting, sand/water table play, and outside play time. We try to go outside every day that the temperature allows. During winter months, coats, mittens, hats, snow pants and boots are needed. Children should wear clothing that protects them from the sun in the summer and moisture during wet weather. We will provide aprons and paint shirts during art activities so that clothes are protected however children are by nature experimenters so clothing may become dirty even with aprons on. In anticipation of these items when clothes do become wet or soiled and we request at least one change of clothing to be kept in their cubby. The change of clothes should include pants/shorts, shirts, socks, and underwear. Clothing needing to be laundered will be sent home with a request to return them or others the next day.

In order to prevent lost items of clothing, we ask that clothing be labeled with your child's name. When these items are not labeled, it is difficult for us to know who the owner is because most of the children wear similar sizes and styles of clothing. We will notify you when activities such as water-play require special clothing.

Diaper Supplies

It is the responsibility of each family to provide the necessary diaper supplies (diapers, wipes, creams, powders, etc.) to ensure that our caregivers are able to keep your child clean/dry while in our care. While we do keep a limited supply of extras on hand however, it is imperative that supplies be maintained for each child. If diapers or wipes are borrowed for your child, they will be 'replaced' when new supplies are brought in. Please be sure to watch your child's daily report on Brightwheel for notes about the status of these supplies.

Per our medication guidelines, we are not allowed to administer topical ointments without a written physician's note. This includes diaper cream. If you utilize diaper cream, please contact your child's physician for an order.

Rest/Nap Periods

All children not yet enrolled in school will be offered a rest time to allow your child's brain to process everything learned throughout the day. A good rest contributes to a child's physical and mental growth by allowing the child to emotionally physically and emotionally unwind. We will provide a crib, cot and/or mat for each child. We will also provide a sheet and blanket for each child which will be laundered at the center weekly, or more often if soiled or wet. If your child has a special blanket/lovey that he/she would like to bring to the center, please let your child's caregiver know as these items will also need to be laundered weekly, either at home or at the center. Greater Connections Childhood Development Center observes rest time from 5:30 am – 6:30 am and from 12 pm – 2 pm for any child over the age of one.

Please note: Due to HHS Licensing regulations and best practice, children under the age of 1 will be placed on their backs to sleep and are not permitted to sleep with a blanket.

Safe Sleep Policy

Safe Sleep practices aim to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and sudden unexpected death (SUID) that could occur during all sleep. All center staff who care for infants will follow these required safe sleep practices as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics:

- Infants up to twelve months of age should be placed for sleep on their back for every nap or sleep time unless the infant's primary care provider has completed a signed waiver indicating that the child requires an alternate sleep position. The waiver must include an expiration date.
- Infants under the age of 4 months that roll will be gently rolled back to their backs during sleep.
- Infants should be placed for sleep in safe sleep environments; which includes: a firm crib mattress covered by a tight-fitting sheet in a safety-approved crib. Blankets and swaddling is not allowed in the crib. No other items should be in a crib occupied by an infant except for a pacifier.
- If an infant is to fall asleep in any other place than the crib, the child will be immediately picked up and placed on their back in the crib.
- The temperature of the room will be monitored and children will be monitored for overheating
- Infants will be directly observed by sight and sound at all times, including when they are going to sleep, are sleeping, or in the process of going to sleep.

Each child will have their own crib and it will be labeled with the child's name and age. All crib sheets will be changed and washed weekly. Crib sheets that have been soiled will be changed immediately.

Children will be observed by staff when arriving at the center and remove any hazards the child may be wearing. For the safety of the children, this includes bibs and hoodies, and pacifier clips with strings attached. Safe sleep policies will be communicated to parents at family orientation, as well as provided in this handbook and posted at the center. Staff will be trained upon hire and this policy will be reviewed yearly or as needed by the center director.

Strangulation Prevention Policy

To prevent strangulation, GCCDC follows the following guidelines:

- String and cords long enough to encircle a child's neck will not be accessible.
- Window blinds and draperies will not have looped cords. Tension or tie-down devices will be installed as appropriate to hold cords tight.
- Dramatic play items with handles or straps will be removed or shortened. Ties, scarves, necklaces, and boas for dramatic play will only be used by children under the age of three when directly supervised.
- Pacifiers attached to strings/ribbon will not be used. For the safety of the infant, bibs and hoodies will be removed. Bibs are only allowed at meal/snack time and with supervision.
- Parents will be asked to remove hood and neck strings from all children's clothing. Staff are required to remove neck strings from children's clothing if they come to the program with them still intact.

Emergency Procedures

While at GCCDC, your child's physical and emotional safety and well-being will be our first priority in any situation. In case of an emergency, the staff will follow the Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan posted in their classroom. In case of evacuation, emergency phone numbers will be taken and parents/guardians will be contacted. Each classroom practices monthly tornado and fire drills.

It is therefore absolutely critical that we have current information in your child's file at all times. Please let those persons, whom you may have designated as authorized to pick up your child in your absence, know that they may be contacted by the center in the event of an emergency to pick up your child. A photo ID will be required when picking up children from the center.

Fire Drills

Fire Drills will be held once a month. The director will activate fire alarms. Childcare providers and children will stop what they are doing and go to the exits. The children are to go out of the building to the designated area. Once in the designated areas, the director or designated staff will participate in a name to face check for all students enrolled that day.

In an actual fire situation, we will transport the children to the Life Support Center at Southwestern Community College (SWCC) Providers and children will return to the center once the all-clear has been given by the Creston Fire Department. If an all-clear is not able to be given within a reasonable time frame, parents will be contacted through Brightwheel with procedures to pick up their children.

Tornado Drills

Tornado drills will be held once a month. Children and caregivers are to go immediately to the designated storm shelter, which is the 5 – 9 year old classroom and the 10 – 12 year old classroom. All children who are physically able are to sit on their knees with heads down and both hands over their heads.

IN AN ACTUAL TORNADO SITUATION, IF OUR NEIGHBORHOOD IS HIT AND SERVICES ARE LOST, WE WILL ATTEMPT TO TRANSPORT THE CHILDREN TO THE LIFE SUPPORT CENTER AT SWCC.

Important things to remember during a Fire or Tornado Drill:

- Childcare providers must take their attendance chart so all children can be accounted for. A name to face check will be documented.
- Childcare providers should be the last one out of the room to make sure no one is left behind. The Bathroom should also be checked.
- It is extremely important for our providers to remain calm. Some of the children will be frightened and a calm exterior on the part of the caregiver will help.
- Childcare providers must wait until the office gives the "all clear" before the children are taken back to the room.

Power outages

- For short periods of time, keep the children in a safe room. The emergency lights will come on.
- If after communication with Alliant Energy, it is deemed necessary to leave the building (no lights or heat), we will notify parents through Brightwheel that the center will close early.
- For remaining children not picked up, we will transport them to the Life Support Center at SWCC.

Water Shortage

- Short term water shortage, children and providers will remain at the center.
- After communication with City Water Works and it is deemed necessary to close the center, we will contact parents via Brightwheel.
- If needed we will transport children to the Life Support Center at SWCC. We will contact parents via Brightwheel on pick up procedures.

Bomb Threats

Child Care Staff will evacuate children to the parking lot. As a group, we will then transport the children to the life support center at SWCC. The director will call 911 and follow all recommendations of the Creston Police Department.

Evacuation Policy for Children with Disabilities and Infants –

During emergency evacuations, infants will be placed in a crib by their childcare provider and wheeled out to the designated location. Children with physical disabilities will either be wheeled out or carried by the provider depending upon need.

Missing Child Policy

Our program counts heads and does face to name recognition before and after every transition, upon arrival and at dismissal. If a child is ever lost or abducted, we will gather all remaining students and dial 911. We will provide the authorities with as much information as possible and then immediately notify the parents.

Illness Policy

At this time, GCCDC is not licensed to care for mildly-ill or ill children. Please keep your child at home if they exhibit any of the symptoms listed below. Please inform us that your child will not be here for the day before 8:30 a.m.

Children should not be brought to the center with obvious symptoms of illness such as a fever , sore throat, ear ache, cough and/or runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rash, crusty eyes, etc.

A fever is defined as:

- For an infant or child older than 2 months, a fever is a temperature that is above 101 degrees F by any method.
- For infants younger than 2 months of age a fever is a temperature above 100.4 degrees F by any method.

Parents should contact the center when their child has a communicable disease such as COVID-19, measles, mumps, chicken pox, strep throat, etc. as we are required to post this information for other parents/guardians.

Children should remain away from the center until the child is no longer contagious to his/her peers and/or childcare providers. Children need to be fever free for 24 hours, from the time that the fever broke, and without fever reducing medicines, prior to returning. A child with loose bowel movements will be sent home after the third occurrence.

All precautions will be taken to stop the spread of infection. To ensure the health and safety of all children as well as staff, a child with a contagious or short-term illness may not attend while showing symptoms. If the child care provider determines that the child has a contagious illness, they will contact the parent or designated adult to pick up the child. Please notify staff if your child is ill, especially if the illness is contagious. Please inform staff of any health or safety needs of your child

that the program may be required to address. In order to ensure the health and safety of all children and center staff, Greater Connections Childhood Development Center will follow Iowa Department of Public Health Guidelines and [Exclusion Criteria](#).

Medication Policy

GCCD encourages parents and physicians to schedule medications outside of center hours whenever possible. However, in order to meet the needs of our families for those circumstances in which it is necessary to administer medication while at the center; GCCD Center will strictly adhere to the following Medication Policy. The medication authorization forms for handling medications at the center are available at the office and a copy is also included in this handbook.

Medication must be dispensed by designated staff only. Staff dispensing medication will have taken a Medication Administration or other medication approved course or education approved by the Iowa Department of Health and Human Services. Designated staff is responsible for documenting the medication on the authorization form and medication administration record (MAR). It is important that the designated staff document in our childcare management software.

Prescription medication will only be administered when delivered to the center in the original prescription container, labeled by the pharmacist with the child's name, physician's name, and name of the medication and dosage instructions. Medication can not be transported back and forth between the child care center and the child's home. Parent's must request two bottles of medication from the pharmacy, one for home and one for their center. Leftover medications will be disposed of by returning to Medicap Pharmacy in Creston Iowa and cannot be returned to the parent.

For children under the age of two: Many times, fever reducing and pain relieving medications, state on the packaging proper dose instructions which read: "Please consult a physician". In this case we are required to have a physician's note which states the child's correct dosage (age/weight) in order for us to be able to administer the medication when scheduled.

Over the counter medications will only be administered by following the label instructions. We are unable to dispense over the counter medications on an 'as needed basis'. GCCDC must have a physician's note to administer over the counter medications. This includes diaper cream.

Children with special needs or chronic conditions will be assessed individually with the parent and physician. Such special needs would include, but are not be limited to, the use of inhalers, or ADD/ADHD medications. Children requiring nebulizers will be assisted if they are unable to hold it themselves. Further training may be required before we can give insulin or injectable medications.

The designated staff responsible for dispensing medication will not give any formula, juice or breast milk with medication added to it.

Lice Policy

If your child is found to have lice while at the center, parents will be notified. It is highly recommended that families pick up their child in order to begin the lice treatment process. Treatment should be started before returning to the center the next day.

The Iowa Department of Public Health recommends a 14-day treatment process. They are safe and not costly. The treatment days are scheduled to interrupt the lifecycle of the insect. A **nit comb** should be used to comb the hair and can be bought at most pharmacies.

- Day 1- Use an over-the-counter medicated head-lice shampoo containing pyrethrin or permethrin. Read and follow all directions on the shampoo.
- Day 2- COMB hair carefully for 15 minutes from the scalp to the end of the hair. Do not wash hair today.
- Days 3-9- Wash the hair using your regular shampoo. Rinse. Apply hair conditioner to make the hair slippery. COMB the hair the entire length from the scalp to end of hair. Wipe the comb between each stroke with a paper towel, which removes any lice or nits. Keep hair wet while combing. COMB all hair for at least 15 minutes.
- Day 10- Use an over-the-counter medicated head-lice shampoo (to kill any lice that hatched since the previous medication use). Read and follow all directions on the shampoo.
- Day 11- COMB hair carefully for at least 15 minutes from the scalp to the end of the hair. Do not wash hair today.
- Days 12-14- Wash the hair using your regular shampoo. Rinse. Apply hair conditioner to make the hair slippery. COMB the hair the entire length from the scalp to the end of the hair. Wipe the comb between each stroke with a paper towel, which removes any lice or nits. Keep hair wet while combing. COMB all hair for at least 15 minutes.

If you have further questions or want more information please visit this website: [CDC guidance on lice and their care](#)

Nutrition Policy

GCCDC participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Each family will be required to fill out CACFP forms. This includes the Eligibility forms even if you choose not to disclose your income or if you believe that you are not eligible for 'free or reduced' status; (upon enrollment and then again, each September for the CACFP's new fiscal year) in order for us to comply with the program's guidelines. We will follow the nutritional guidelines set forth by the program.

For children through age 4, early morning snack will be at 6:30 am, breakfast at 8:30 am, lunch at 11:30 am and afternoon snack at 2:30 pm. School Age Children will have an afternoon snack upon arrival at 3:30 pm. Real cups, plates, bowls, forks and spoons will be used. The children will be encouraged to taste all different items during each meal period but will not be forced to eat. Menus will be posted in the center entryway and any changes to the menu will be clearly marked.

CACFP does not allow us to claim meals for reimbursement that include food brought from home for any child over the age of one to accommodate personal preferences.

Scheduled Meals and Snacks

Early Morning Snack:	6:30 am to 6:45 am
Breakfast:	8:30 am to 9:00 am
Lunch:	11:30 am to 12:00 pm
Afternoon Snack:	2:30 pm to 3:00 pm
School Age Snack:	3:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Infants

Infants are also included in the CACFP program and the center will provide Parents Choice Formulas, Rice & Oatmeal Cereals and developmentally appropriate baby foods. Breast feeding is also welcome here at our center! Please be sure to let the Infant Room caregivers know how we may support you

during this process. Parents of infants will also have the option to use formula and food items brought from home instead of those provided by the Center.

In the event that a child runs out of his/her formula while at the center, the caregivers will use the Parent's Choice Brand as back up.

Allergies

A copy of the physician's food allergy statement must be on file with the center. (411 IAC 101.9)

If your child has food allergies or requires a special diet for medical or cultural/religious restrictions please let us know during the enrollment process and a Diet Modification Form will be provided.

Special Diet

If your child requires a special diet because of a medical reason, a written copy of the diet, including instructions by a licensed physician or healthcare provider must be submitted to the Director and shared with the kitchen. (411IAC 109.15). If special foods are needed that the center does not typically have on hand, parents may be asked to provide them for their child.

Snack for Special Occasions

On special occasions, such as birthdays and holidays, parents may wish to provide special treats to share. If this is the case, please tell your child's caregiver in advance. Special treats must be store bought. Cookies and miniature cupcakes are easy to handle and are considered by children as a special treat. (Please note that many children have common food allergies to milk, soy, peanut, tree nut and wheat.) Please refer to your child's teacher for any classroom allergies (411 IAC 109.15).

Please Note: Candy and gum are not permitted to be brought into GCCDC. These items will be held at the office until the child leaves. Questions about food or the food program should be directed to the Director.

CACFP Discrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

- 1) *Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;*

- 2) Fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- 3) Email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Children with Special Care Needs

While we are not a 'special needs' Center, we will make every effort to provide an environment that is able to meet the individual needs of all of our students regardless of limited disabilities (following ADA rules). Each child will be evaluated as to whether we can provide him/her with an adequate environment to meet his/her needs.

All children will be included in all activities to support their social skills and self-esteem as well as help all children and families become understanding and accepting of differences. Meeting each child's needs is our center's goal, seeking to provide quality care for each unique individual. This will be accomplished in partnership with parents and possibly outside support (AEA) to assess needs, develop and implement goals, and continue to communicate on a regular basis. We have an early childhood consultant from AEA. We are unable to provide one on one care for children.

Open Communication/Open Door Policies

During these important and formative years, open communication between home and center are of the utmost importance. Every effort will be made to have primary childcare providers with your child for the majority of his/her day while in our care so that you can discuss your child's day during the drop off and/or pick up processes. Each room is also equipped with child care software so that parents may message throughout the day to check on their child. You may call the center at any time to check on your child.

The only time a parent's right to visit GCCDC will be revoked is with a court order (Iowa Code 232.69 and 411 IAC 109.5)

The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) (or another public agency authorized by DHHS to assume such responsibilities), shall have the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit center records without prior consent. The center shall make provisions for private interviews with any child(ren) or staff members, and for the examination of all records relating to center operations. HHS will also have the authority to observe the physical condition of the child(ren), including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect or inappropriate placement.

Playground Equipment Stability and Fall Surfacing and Inspection

Our outdoor playground included equipment that is properly installed, maintained and age-appropriate. Staff is trained on playground safety measures upon hire and reviewed as needed. All equipment is safely anchored and installed to the manufacturer's directions. Fall surfacing is maintained according to Caring For Our Children standards. Daily checks for a safe play space are completed before children enter the space and monthly routine inspections completed to look for missing or broken parts, protrusions, rust and chipping paint, sharp edges, cracks, wear, debris, garbage, insect nests, and fall surfacing depth. If there are any safety hazards present the playground may be closed off until it is repaired or hazards removed.

Toys from Home

GCCDC requests that toys aren't brought from home as they can become lost or broken. The center provides many developmentally appropriate materials for all age groups.

On special occasions a child may bring a toy or object for 'show and tell' activities. These items will be stored in the child's cubby until 'share' time and then returned afterwards. The Center will not be responsible for lost or damaged items.

We respectfully ask that at no time should toy guns or weapons be brought to the Center.

Technology Policy

The internet is a great resource for research, communication and extending programming ideas and interests. Computer use within our daycare aims to encourage children to solve problems and use logical reasoning, leading children to make decisions and choices and assisting them to use computer software competently. Children will be supervised at all times and following the guidelines below:

- Programs must be carefully selected and be suitable to the needs and development levels of each child using/watching various types of technology or media.
- Technology is used to assist in expanding the content of the daily program and current affairs.
- Programs are chosen that are engaging and age-appropriate to children.
- The use of TV and watching DVD's may be used on special occasions and must have prior director approval.
- Programs depicting violence e.g. graphic news reports/videos will not be shown. TV programs or videos will only be shown that have positive messages about relationships, family and life.
- All content will be socially and culturally considerate and appropriate.
- Only quality, developmentally appropriate interactive media will be used. Children will be taught healthy concepts for digital use and citizenships as our children are "growing up digital."

Timeframes for "Screen Time"

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends avoiding screen time for children younger than 24 months. The AAP also recommends limiting screen use for preschool children, ages 2 to 5, to just one hour a day of high quality programming. Children ages 5 to 12 should be limited to less than two hours a day of screen time. We understand that screen time may be a part of children's daily life at home, therefore it is our goal to limit screen time in our program to only being utilized sporadically and only to assist teachers in their daily lesson plans and as a specific learning tool.

Ethics and Confidentiality

Center staff will adhere to the National Association for the Education of Young Children's Code of Ethical Conduct. Information about a child will only be shared with that child's parents/guardians. Each staff person will sign a statement to document that they will abide by the NAEYC's Code of Ethical Conduct.

Fundraising

GCCDC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation and all donations are tax deductible. All of our center programs are funded through tuition revenue, grant writing and fundraising. Our fundraising revenue is generally earmarked for special projects and each year we sponsor numerous fundraisers.

Grievance Policy

Open and honest communication between families and the GCCDC program is an essential component of a high quality early childhood program. We want you to be confident that your child is being well cared for and is having a quality experience. If there is ever a time you have a concern regarding your child, we want to encourage you to address your concern to your child’s teacher. If additional help is needed, either party may ask for assistance from the director. If not resolved either party may ask for assistance from the Board of Directors. It is the goal of the Board to resolve complaints at the lowest organizational level.

If you have a concern regarding some aspect of the program or policy, please contact the Director who is the program administrator for the center. As part of our program assessment, in the spring of each year, we will offer each family the opportunity to provide written input which will help us evaluate our program. This information helps us to assess how the program is meeting the needs of families and children, as well as to identify strengths and weaknesses.

I agree with the policies and procedures that are set forth in the GCCDC handbook.

Parent Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Director Signature: _____ **Date:** _____