Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center

PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of the HSC Child Care program is to offer high-quality care and experiences to the children of HSC employees and community members.

Our role is to nurture, guide and encourage children so that each child can develop towards his or her potential. Much consideration is given to the different cultures and rates of development of each child so that a well-balanced program of developmentally appropriate experiences and activities can be offered to promote their individual intellectual, emotional, social and physical growth.

We believe that parents are their child's first teachers, and it is the goal of our staff to partner with parents to maintain open, daily communication so that they may effectively work together in meeting the needs of the child, family and organization.

MISSION

We will ensure exemplary care and high-quality growth experiences within the continuum of developmentally appropriate practice with sensitivity to families of diverse races, cultures, and languages.

We will seek out the involvement of the families we serve and strive to partner with parents in an effort to better meet the individual needs of their child and family.

We will anticipate and be responsive to the changing needs of our children, families and community by creating and offering innovative, affordable programs and services.

We will create a work environment and climate where employees are supported with the tools, training and resources needed to provide high quality experiences to our children and families, and will be afforded opportunities for personal and professional growth.

We will be, in all of the above, responsive and accountable to our children, families and community, for whose benefit we exist.
PROGRAM GOALS

1. To offer a variety of stimulating experiences that promotes learning through discovery and exploration.

2. To provide a supportive, caring and low-stress environment where positive self-concept and independence are fostered.

3. To promote a sense of respect for others and the environment through positive guidance, development of problem-solving skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, self-regulation and respect for materials and equipment.

4. To support and cultivate each child’s natural curiosity about the world in which they live.

5. To provide experiences which present opportunities to learn about and appreciate differences in ways that value and respect diversity.

6. To broaden the child’s understanding of his/her community and the world through experiences offered both in and out of the Center.

7. To monitor each child’s general condition for the day, including mood, health, appetite, etc. and respond to his/her individual needs as appropriate.

8. To demonstrate support to parents by maintaining open, honest communication, an open door policy and encouraging parent involvement in a variety of ways.

9. To assess each child’s individual development utilizing the Connecticut Preschool Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks and The Creative Curriculum and the corresponding assessment tools as a guide for planning and evaluating a program of activities and experiences which will generate positive outcomes.
ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

HISTORY OF OUR CENTER

The HSC Child Care Center began operation in 1989. In May of 1998, the program relocated into the new state-of-the-art facility where it exists today. The program is licensed by the State of Connecticut, Department of Public Health, Child Day Care Licensing Unit to provide full-day/full-year early childhood programs for a total of fifty-four children ranging from six weeks to five years of age.

In 1992, the HSC Child Care Center achieved accreditation by the National Academy for the Education of Young Children for meeting and maintaining the quality standards in early childhood education as established by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

OUR STAFF

Our carefully selected professional staff is dedicated to consistently offering high-quality care and experiences to the children enrolled in our infant, toddler and preschool classrooms. Primary teaching staffs are assigned to each classroom to ensure continuity of care. This allows the staff and families to develop strong relationships that will enable the staff to more effectively meet the individual needs of the child and family. The combined education and experience of our staff has provided them with the knowledge and skills that allow them to plan and implement creative, stimulating and developmentally appropriate activities for the children based on their unique and individual interests and needs. Their effort to create a warm, inviting and developmentally appropriate environment is evident in every classroom.

As required by NAEYC and the State of Connecticut Departments of Public Health and Education, each staff member must follow a plan for professional development. Both on-site and off-site opportunities to attend trainings, workshops and seminars are made available to staff to enhance their personal and professional development. In addition, a minimum of one staff member certified in the administration of First Aid, CPR and emergency medications is with each group at all times.

The program recognizes that providing staff with a wide variety of opportunities to participate in staff development experiences is critical to meeting the program’s goals for continuous quality improvement. Staffs are supported in their efforts to participate in trainings, workshops and college level courses that are relevant to the groups with which they work. The knowledge and experiences gained through these opportunities help them to create a rich learning environment and enhance the experiences provided to the children.

VOLUNTEERS & STUDENT VISITORS

The center welcomes volunteers in a variety of capacities. Volunteers may include parents or family members of children enrolled in the program; students completing volunteer hours for coursework; or community members looking for opportunities to give the gift of their time and a helping hand.

In addition, student nurses from area colleges and universities routinely visit the center as part of their hospital rotation. During these visits, students rotate through each classroom for periods of about 45 minutes and observe the children in each room so that they may gain a better perspective regarding how children develop.

Prior to entering a classroom, all volunteers are provided with an overview of the center’s health and safety practices and are supervised closely by the classroom staff during their visits. Volunteer opportunities are available on a one-time or multi-visit basis. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact the Director for more information.
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We apply an anti-biased approach to all areas of our program by helping children learn to respect and appreciate the diversity amongst us. We celebrate these differences through the involvement of families and open discussions that address rather than ignore stereotypes, gender biases and prejudices. Our enrollment is open to all children regardless of race, creed, disability, special need, socio-economic or ethnic background. We encourage families to share various aspects of their heritage through stories, songs, and recipes from their culture.

We strive to promote the inclusion of children with special needs. Our facility is fully handicapped accessible and our staff work closely with parents and supporting agencies (i.e. Birth to Three, public schools, etc.) to ensure that each child’s needs are met.

OPERATING SCHEDULE

DAYS AND HOURS OF OPERATION

The HSC Child Care Center is licensed to provide child care services during the following days and hours of operation:

Monday through Friday
6:30 AM* to 5:15 PM**

52 weeks per year

* Children may not be dropped off for care prior to 6:30 a.m. per DPH regulations.

** Parents must make arrangements for pick-up prior to 5:15 p.m. A late pick-up fee will be charged per child when children remain in care after 5:15 p.m. Please refer to the “Fees and Payments” for additional information regarding late pick-ups or extended hours of care.

HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

The Child Care Center will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

New Year’s Day          Memorial Day          Independence Day
Thanksgiving            Labor Day            Christmas Day

Christmas Eve closing at 3:00

Please note that fees are formulated taking these holiday closings into consideration, and weekly fees will not be adjusted for holiday or emergency closings.
EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

It is the policy of the Center not to close or delay opening due to inclement weather. In extreme situations when it is determined that an early closing is in the best interest of the children, families and staff, parents will be notified by staff via telephone to make arrangements for pick-up.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

The HSC Child Care Center is open to all children regardless of race, creed, or ethnic background. Parents are encouraged to tour the Center prior to enrolling their child to discuss our program’s philosophy, view the classrooms, meet staff and receive a general overview about how the program operates.

Once parents make the decision to enroll, parents must make arrangements for their child to visit his/her classroom and to meet teachers at least once prior to their first day of attendance. During this visit, parents will be provided with more specific information regarding classroom operations and procedures and their child will have the opportunity to explore their new environment. In an effort to ensure a smooth transition into the program, parents are provided the option to have their child attend on a part-time basis during the first week of enrollment and gradually ease into their full enrollment schedule. Parents must request this option if interested.

WAIT LIST & ACCEPTANCE

Families wishing to enroll a child for an anticipated date or for a schedule that is not immediately available can be added to our wait list by submitting a completed wait list form and non-refundable fee.

As it becomes available, space is offered on a first-come, first-served basis to those families on the wait list, taking the requested schedule and availability into consideration. Families declining a requested space at the time it is offered will be given the option to have their name removed from the waitlist or to have their name moved to the bottom of the wait list for future consideration.

Children and grandchildren of HSC employees are given priority for placement over community members. In addition, full-time will be given consideration over part-time enrollment, and clinical staff will be given priority over non-clinical staff.

Once a family has been notified that an enrollment space is available, all forms in the enrollment packet and a signed benefit election for tuition payment for employees or a non-refundable deposit for the first full week’s tuition for community members must be submitted to secure enrollment.

FORMS AND DOCUMENTATION

The following forms must be completed at the time of enrollment and updated at least yearly for all children enrolled per the State of CT Department of Public Health, Child Day Care Licensing Regulations and HSC policy:

- Enrollment Application
- Parent/Guardian Permissions (including Contacts for Emergency & Alternate Pick-up)
- Benefit Election Form (HSC Employees only)
- Child & Family Information Form (Provides information regarding family culture and needs)
- Parent Involvement Survey
- Handbook Acknowledgement
- Photo Release of Liability
- Copy of photo identification for all non-employee parents/guardians/individuals authorized to pick-up
- Child Health Record (ED 191) documenting immunizations and exam date within one year and including documentation of screening for TB
- Consent to post allergy/restrictions (as applicable)
- Please refer to the section relating to School Readiness for additional forms and documentation required for families with children enrolled in that program.
- Forms for the authorization to administer medications (as applicable).

The program collaborates with community agencies to ensure that children’s, health needs are met and screenings are conducted either on or off-site.

**SCHEDULES OF ATTENDANCE**

At the time of enrollment, parents request a schedule of attendance based on their work hours and travel time needed to get to and from the Center. These schedules should indicate the earliest time a child will be dropped off and the latest time a child will be picked up on a “regular basis.” Parents are expected to adhere closely to these schedules, as they are critical in assisting us in determining our staffing needs on a daily basis to maintain compliance with state regulations.

Full and part-time schedules are available as follows:

- **Full-time:** Up to 9.5 hours per day, 6:30 am to 5:15 pm, and 5 days per week
- **Part-time:** Up to 9.5 hours per day, 6:30 am to 5:15 pm, and 2-4 days per week
- **Half-Day:** (available to HSC employees only) 6:30 am to 11:45 am OR 12:00 pm to 5:15 pm, 2-5 days per week. Extended Day fees will be charged for children in care more than 9.5 hours per day.

Permanent changes to a schedule must be requested in writing a minimum of two weeks in advance.

**ADDITIONAL DAYS/HOURS OF CARE**

Employees and community members may request that their child attend an additional day that their child is not scheduled to attend. Requests for additional days must be submitted at least two business days in advance and will be approved on space/staffing availability basis.

Temporary changes (adding a day or HSC employees swapping a day for work-related reasons) may be requested by completing the Schedule Change Request form available in the file pockets outside the office. Approvals for all changes are granted on a space-available basis, and parents should never assume that a request will be granted. The following is given consideration when a request is received: staff availability; group size requirements; staff: child ratio requirements and account status.

Hourly rates are available to HSC employees needing additional hours of care on a day their child is not scheduled to attend. A minimum of 2 hours and a maximum of 4 hours can be requested on an hourly basis between the hours of 9:00am and 3:00pm. Additional hours of care must be requested, approved, and paid for in advance. Requests will be approved on a space/staffing available basis for work-related reasons. This option is not available to community members.

Requests for more than 4 hours of additional care would require a request for a half-day and as a result would be subject to the half-day scheduling options.
**REPORTING ABSENCES & CHANGES IN SCHEDULE**

In the event a child will arrive late or will not attend on a scheduled day due to illness or for any other reason, parents are expected to notify the Center of the late arrival or absence no later than 9:00 a.m. Parents are also asked to notify the Center in advance if their child will be picked up early or if there will be a change in who will pick-up their child. It is helpful when parents also notify the Center in advance if their child will not attend during holiday periods and/or an extended period due to vacation times so that staffing can be planned in accordance with the needs of the Center.

**Parents must call 860-612-6314 to report all absences and tardiness.** When leaving a message, it is important that parent’s provide a reason for the absence so that we may track patterns of illnesses in the center and notify families of possible exposure to potentially contagious conditions.

**ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

**DROP-OFF & PICK-UP PROCEDURES**

At no time should a parent or any other individual dropping off a child enter the building prior to 6:30 a.m. or if for any reason, only one staff member is on site. Children must be escorted into the building and to their classroom by a parent or other responsible adult at the time of arrival. For safety reasons, children should never be left unattended at the front door, in the foyer, the main hallway or in a classroom. Children must be in the presence of an adult at all times and should never be allowed to run ahead into the hallway or into a classroom. In addition, children should never be allowed to open and close doors at drop-off and pick-up time. Allowing children to open and close doors is a safety issue and may send children the message that it is acceptable for them to open doors at any time.

DPH requires that every child is signed in and out of the center on a daily basis. Please be sure to accurately document your child’s arrival and departure times on the Sign-in and out sheet, as these records are critical in ensuring your child’s well-being in the event of an emergency. Children will be released only to those individuals authorized by parents in writing. Individuals authorized to pick-up a child must be at least 18 years of age, and be able to present a photo ID. It is the responsibility of parents to ensure that individuals authorized to pick-up their child have the proper auto restraints in place to transport their child. Requests for individuals to pick up children are not accepted over the phone, however parents may fax or email written permission to the Child Care Center in certain situations. The permission must include the name and address of the person picking up and parent stating they give permission for their child to be released to that individual for that specific day. The statement must also be signed and dated by the parent.

If a court order exists stating that a parent or other individual is not permitted to pick-up a child or have access to a child, a copy of the court order must be on file in the center. If that individual should come to the center, the staff will contact the appropriate parent or legal guardian to make them aware of the situation.

**LATE PICK-UPS**

The child care center closes at 5:15 p.m. Parents or individuals arriving to pick up children at or after 5:15 p.m. will be considered a “Late for pick-up”.

Late pick-up fees will be assessed for each child remaining on site after 5:15 p.m. at a rate of $10.00 for every fifteen minutes or portion thereof. Families with 3 or more occurrences of late pick-up in one calendar year (regardless of the individual picking up) will be subject to a late pick-up fee of $15.00 for each child for every fifteen minutes or portion thereof for each additional occurrence of late pick-up.
PROGRAM INFORMATION

INFANT PROGRAM (6 weeks up to 15 months)

Our Infant Room is licensed for up to eight infants at one time with a staff: child ratio of at least one caregiver for every four children being maintained at all times. In the infant room, the focus of the staff is to meet the needs of each child on an individual basis. There are as many schedules as there are infants. Staffs work closely with parents to develop an individualized care plan for their child. Staffs follow each child’s personalized schedule for feeding, diapering, and sleeping to ensure their individual needs are met. In addition, based on each child’s development, staffs plan a variety of stimulating, developmentally appropriate activities to promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth. Infants are held for bottle feedings and are given one-to-one attention by staff during caregiving routines and during various play activities offered throughout the day.

PREVENTION OF SUDDEN INFANT DEATH SYNDROME (SIDS)

Infants under the age of twelve months, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, will be placed on their backs in cribs to sleep. If applicable, the physician’s order must be written and state the medical reason for placing the infant on his/her stomach for sleeping.) Pillows, quilts, bumpers, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys and other soft items are not allowed in cribs for infants younger than eight months.

BREAST FEEDING

A cozy, private area with a rocking chair is located in an area removed from the rest of the group in the Infant Room. This area is available for nursing mothers to breast-feed their children at any time and can also be utilized by mothers and fathers wishing to spend some quiet time with their child.

INFANT FOOD SAFETY

Parents are to provide pre-filled infant bottles on a daily basis. Staffs are not permitted to serve solid foods to infants less than six months of age or serve bottles containing solid foods to any child unless the child’s physician supplies written instructions and a medical reason for either of these practices. All bottles must be labeled by the parent with the child’s full name prior to placing them in the infant room refrigerator. Microwave ovens are not used in the Infant Room. Staff warm bottles and infant food in warm water and test the temperature of formula/milk/food prior to serving it to children. Please note that after one hour, staff will discard any formula or milk that is served but not completely consumed. Infant food will not be served from the jar. Food will be placed in a dish and uneaten food left in the dish will be discarded.

PARENTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM PLACING ANY TYPE OF MEDICATION IN THEIR CHILD’S INFANT FOOD OR BOTTLES AT ANY TIME.
ITEMS BROUGHT FROM HOME TO ENSURE THE COMFORT OF INFANTS:

- Sippy cup (when age appropriate)
- Empty bottles (as many as your child needs) If you are breast milk please bring in the bottles already made
- Factory sealed formula (if not breast feeding)
- Cereal, jar food as appropriate
- Nutritious lunch (as appropriate for older infants and precut into pieces no larger than 1/4 inch square child can safely handle)
- Plastic bibs (2 for Eating) Cloth bibs (2-4 for Drooling)
- Crib blankets (2) (light weight)
- Crib sheets (2 Port-A Crib Size)
- Diapers
- Diapering needs (powder, ointment, including written consents to apply)
- Sunscreen (6 months or older, including written consent to apply)
- Sun hat and/or sun glasses (optional)
- Wipes
- Pacifier (as applicable, to be left on site)
- 2 Complete changes of clothing (appropriate for the season)

Please label all belongings with child’s full first & last name to allow staff the ability to properly identify your child’s belongings. Parents are provided written reminders when the restocking of food or supplies is needed.

SHOELESS ROOM

In an effort to minimize the amount of soil and debris on the floors and carpets of the infant room where children crawl and play, parents, staff and visitors are required to remove shoes worn outside the play area prior to entering.

WALKERS PROHIBITED

The use of walkers is prohibited in the child care center. Stationary “Exersaucers” are utilized to provide infants with the opportunity to sit up right.

TODDLER PROGRAM (1 and 2 year olds)

Prior to any child entering both toddler rooms, parents are asked to schedule a time to meet with the staff to discuss their child’s needs and orient them to the room. In the Toddler room, staffs strive to find a balance so that schedules are flexible enough to meet the individual needs of the children but still provide opportunities to introduce a bit of structure to the group and establish more consistent routines. Throughout the day, a wide variety of developmentally appropriate and stimulating experiences are offered to promote cognitive, physical, emotional and social growth. Activities are modified to meet each child’s interests, needs and development and are offered to the children on a small group, large group and one-on-one basis. They also begin to provide opportunities for children to develop some independence and to experience a bit more structure in their daily routines. In addition, each child is provided one-to-one attention by staff during care-giving routines and during a variety of play activities offered throughout the day.

Activities are planned to reflect the interests of the children on an individual basis and are modified to meet each child’s needs.
ITEMS BROUGHT FROM HOME TO ENSURE THE COMFORT OF TODDLERS:

- Sippy cups (3)
- Plastic bibs (2)
- Nutritious lunch in a labeled box or bag (precut food into pieces no larger than ¼ inch square child can safely handle)
- Nap blanket (bring home to launder weekly)
- Diapers
- Diapering needs (powder, ointment, etc. including written consent to apply)
- Wipes
- Sunscreen (including written consent to apply)
- Sun hat and/or sun glasses (optional)
- Pacifier (as applicable, to be left on site)
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste (only for children 2 years and older and is optional)
- 2 Complete changes of clothing (including socks and appropriate for the season)

Please label all belongings with child’s full first & last name to allow staff the ability to properly identify your child’s belongings. Parents are provided written reminders when the restocking of food or supplies is needed.

TODDLER FOOD SAFETY

Staffs do not offer toddlers foods that may present a risk of choking including but not limited to: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes, nuts; popcorn; raw peas; hard pretzels; chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole; round, hard (1/4 square).

PRESCHOOL & SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM (3, 4 and 5 YEAR OLDS)

The Preschool Program offers 3, 4 and 5 year old children experiences to promote future success in learning. Interest Centers are set up in classrooms so that small groups and individual children can explore a variety of materials related to math, science, creative art, music, technology and literacy (both reading and writing). Also offered are large-group activities and additional interest areas such as a block center, dramatic play area, library corner and outdoor play area. The staff encourages independence and self-regulation through teaching and role modeling concepts such as taking initiative and giving and taking direction in socially appropriate ways. As the children learn to understand others and express their ideas more effectively, their environment becomes larger and richer. Parents are encouraged to schedule a time to visit the room with their child prior to enrollment to become familiar with classroom operations and to allow the child to meet the teacher, children and explore the environment.

Currently our program can enroll up to 15 children in slots designated for the State Department of Education School Readiness Program. These slots are integrated into both of our preschool classrooms and are open to all 3 and 4 year old children meeting the school readiness eligibility requirements. The tuition fees for these slots are based on the DSS School Readiness sliding fee scale. Please refer to the “School Readiness Program” section of this handbook for additional information regarding eligibility and the guidelines for enrollment.

ITEMS BROUGHT FROM HOME TO ENSURE THE COMFORT OF PRESCHOOLERS:
- Small nap blanket (bring home to launder weekly)
- Small nap pillow (bring home to launder weekly)
- Small cuddly nap toy (optional)
- 2 complete changes of clothing (appropriate for the season)
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste (optional)
- Sunscreen (including written consent to apply)
- Sun hat and/or sun glasses (optional)
- Nutritious lunch in a labeled box or bag (precut food into pieces no larger than ½ inch square child can safely handle)

Please label all belongings with child’s full first & last name to allow staff the ability to properly identify your child’s belongings. Parents are provided written reminders when additional supplies are needed.

**PRESCHOOL FOOD SAFETY**

Staffs do not offer children under the age of 4 years foods that may present a risk of choking including but not limited to: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes, nuts; popcorn; raw peas; hard pretzels; chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole; round, hard, small, thick and sticky, smooth or slippery foods.

**TRANSITIONS BETWEEN CLASSROOMS**

Every effort will be made to ensure that all children remain with their teaching staff for a minimum of nine months prior to transitioning to a new classroom. When considering transitioning children from one classroom to another, factors including availability of space, the child’s individual development and the developmental appropriateness of the transition must be assessed. Once it is agreed that a transition will occur, plans are formulated that include parent meetings with the staff in the new room, visits by the child to the new room, and the sharing of pertinent information between the current and new staff. The final step of the process provides parents with a survey that will provide the staff and administration with valuable feedback regarding their experience throughout the transition process and the overall program.

**PRESCHOOL TRANSITIONS TO KINDERGARTEN**

Every effort will be made to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten by the preschool children. To help children prepare for the transition to kindergarten, staff will read books and plan activities to help alleviate any anxiety or apprehension the children may feel about the upcoming change. Staff is also available to assist the kindergarten staff with recent developmental assessments, portfolios and information that will prepare the children’s teacher for their arrival.

**TOILET LEARNING**

Children are not required to be fully toilet trained when enrolling in our preschool and school readiness programs. We believe that determining when a child is ready to begin toilet learning has less to do with a child’s age and more to do with their physical and emotional development. Typically, children may begin to show signs of readiness at some point between 2 ½ and 3 years of age. Some may show signs a little earlier, while others may show no interest until after the age of three. Staff will work closely with parents to determine if a child is showing signs of readiness for toilet learning and to ensure consistency between home and the center. It is important to remember that toilet learning requires children to be ready both psychologically and physically. A child who is showing signs of readiness will consistently stay dry for longer periods of time and is also consistently able to verbalize their toileting needs. The most important thing to remember is that children will learn to use the toilet when they are ready both physically and emotionally and that the process cannot be rushed and is different for every child. It is very normal for children to make progress and have periods of
regression. As long as both staff and parents continue to work together and to encourage the child in a positive manner, success is sure to come!

**NAPS**

All children scheduled to attend full-day are provided a nap period on a daily basis. Infants are offered naps on flexible schedules based on each child’s individual needs and are placed in their cribs on their backs for all naps. Toddlers and Preschoolers are offered naps on individual cots after lunch time. Children who do not sleep are encouraged to rest quietly and are then allowed to engage in quiet activities on their cots or at the classroom tables. Parents will be notified if children display disruptive behaviors during nap time so parents and staff can develop a plan to minimize the disruption for children who are resting.

Cots and cribs are labeled for individual children and are not shared unless sanitized between use. Parents are responsible for providing nap blankets (as well as sheets for infants) and bringing soiled items home to launder at least weekly or more often as needed.

**CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT**

The program’s foundation for learning is based on an emergent curriculum that relies heavily on the environment and the role of the teacher in part, as an observer. Emergent curriculum describes the ideas used for the basis of planning activities inspired by the children’s interests. Our Center utilizes The Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers, Connecticut’s Guidelines for the Development of Infant & Toddler Learning, and Connecticut's Preschool Curriculum Framework and Benchmarks for Children in Preschool Program developed by the Connecticut State Department of Education in conjunction with The Creative Curriculum for Preschool as guides for planning developmentally appropriate activities for each age group. We support The Creative Curriculum philosophy that young children learn best by doing. It is built on the theories of development that all children learn through active exploration of their environment, and therefore the environment plays a critical role in learning. The goal is to help children become independent, self-confident, inquisitive and enthusiastic learners. Each of these resources help the teachers to take a closer look at, identify and plan for each child’s unique abilities, interests and needs. Teachers assess each child’s ability and plan activities to challenge individual critical thinking skills. Utilizing The Creative Curriculum Assessment Tool and Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework, the progress of each child is monitored and this information is utilized to set goals to promote further development. Outcomes from these assessments are shared with parents both in writing and during developmental assessment meetings, which are conducted two times per year for infants and toddlers, and three times per year for preschoolers.

**Schedule of Assessment Meetings (Parent-Teacher Conferences) by Classroom**

**Infants – November & May**

**Toddler A- November & May**

**Toddler B- November & May**

**Preschool A- December, March & June**

**Preschool B- December, March & June**
Sign-ups for conferences will be posted in advance. Parents are encouraged to sign up early to ensure their scheduling needs can be accommodated. Phone conferences are also available.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Weather permitting, outdoor play is an everyday activity for the children in the center. All children will be expected to participate in outdoor play activities. Requests for children to remain indoors during outdoor activities cannot be accommodated due to staffing restrictions; therefore, parents are encouraged to keep children home if they feel they are not well enough to participate in all indoor and outdoor play activities.

To ensure each child’s comfort during outdoor play, parents are asked to provide season-appropriate clothing. During the winter months, children should have the following on site: boots, mittens/gloves, warm jacket, snow pants, warm socks and a hat. During the summer months, children should have swim suits, water shoes and a towel. A sun hat or baseball cap is also a good idea for extra protection from the sun. During the spring and fall when temperatures can be unpredictable, it is recommended that children have a sweatshirt or light jacket available on-site daily.

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES

FIELD TRIPS

In an effort to provide the children with a wide variety of experiences, the program will on occasion offer field trips to various places that may present educational, social or cultural experiences to the children. Children will participate in field trips as developmentally appropriate. Transportation for field trips is provided by the HSC bus or may be contracted through a private transportation company. Laws regarding the use of child restraints will be followed for the specific type of vehicle when transporting children off site. Parents are invited to chaperone field trips throughout the year.

ON-SITE ACTIVITIES

The program offers on-site enrichment activities to the children. These activities may include visits and presentations by Nature Centers, musicians, various community helpers (e.g., a firefighter, police officer, dentist, doctor, etc.). Parents are always welcome to participate in these on-site activities and/or even present an activity to the children that may relate to their own culture, profession or interests.

STORYTELLING

On a monthly basis, a storyteller from the New Britain Public Library rotates through the classrooms and shares stories, songs, finger plays, puppets and felt stories with the children. Books that help to support learning in the classroom are also provided for staff to use during the month. Family and community members are also encouraged to come in and read books to the children at any time.

OTHER EXPERIENCES

The children often participate in nature walks on the hospital grounds, visit the on-site goldfish pond, greenhouse, and go for walks through the administrative areas of the hospital. Special activities are also planned for families and are often scheduled in the hospital Conference Center or cafeteria, in which large groups can come together to share in educational and or social experiences.
CARING AND SHARING PROGRAM

The Caring and Sharing Enrichment Program is a voluntary collaborative program designed to promote all areas of development of children on the Pediatric Unit and the Child Care Center and provides the children the opportunity to increase diversity awareness and gain a greater understanding and appreciation for accepting differences. On occasion, children from the pediatric unit will also visit the center or with parental consent, small groups of children from the child care center interact and play with the children on the pediatric unit in the pediatric common area or on site at the center. This program operates at various times based on staffing and health issues both in the center and pediatric unit.

FAMILY LITERACY LENDING LIBRARIES

In order to support each family’s efforts in promoting their child’s development, each classroom has a lending library available for families. Families are able to sign-out a variety of backpacks filled with books, props and activities that can be shared at home. A number of backpacks are available in Spanish, while others include math and science learning experiences. These backpacks offer opportunities for children and families to work together to build important skills and spend quality time together!

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Our staff is trained to understand the multiple underlying causes of children’s challenging behaviors and develop approaches to meet a child’s individual needs.

It is the policy of the center not to tolerate any child being subjected to any form of corporal, humiliating emotional or physical neglect, abuse or punishment by a staff person, parent or other individual. Any such occurrences will be reported to the State of Connecticut Department of Children and Families.

A supportive, interesting classroom environment and supportive relationships are key factors in preventing many challenging behaviors. In situations where challenging behaviors are exhibited, the staff will guide the child in an effort to develop self-regulation and respect for others. This may be accomplished by encouraging children to problem solve and to use appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication to resolve conflicts. With younger children, strategies may also include redirecting a child’s focus from one activity or area to another to eliminate the conditions that may have prompted the behavior. Serious challenging behaviors and/or repeated behaviors will be documented on a Social Behavior Report and will be shared with the parents.

It is important that parents communicate any information that may directly impact a child’s physical or emotional well-being and may result in changes in behavior. Situations such as changes in the household environment or members; loss of a pet, friend or relative; and child and/or family health issues, illness, hunger or fatigue may trigger subtle or dramatic changes in a child’s behavior. Sharing this type of information with staff in advance will assist them in understanding the potential reasons for unusual or disruptive behavior, and they will be better able to meet the needs of the child. When patterns of unusual or challenging behaviors develop, parents are notified so that they may partner with the staff to develop strategies and goals that may promote positive change and successful outcomes.

In situations when a child may place him/herself or others at immediate risk of physical or emotional harm, the child will be moved away from the group so he/she can have some quiet time in an area
closely supervised by staff. Staff will provide guidance to help the child gain the skills to self-regulate their behavior with the goal of rejoining the group without posing a risk to others or causing disruption to the group. Staff will inform parents when a child exhibits potentially harmful or repeated inappropriate behaviors including behaviors characterized as inappropriate language, physically and emotionally threatening or bullying and will collaborate with parents to try and determine the cause for such behaviors and to problem solve ways that the behaviors can be minimized and/or eliminated. With parental consent, outside consultants may be utilized to provide both the parents and staff with support in regards to effectively dealing with challenging behaviors. In instances when unpredictable and/or extreme potentially harmful behaviors occur it may be determined that it would be in the best interest of the child, other children, or program for the child’s enrollment to be discontinued.

MEALS

Proper nutrition is key in the development of young children. We encourage healthy food choices so that children get the nutrition they need to get through their activity-filled day. The hospital’s food services department provides morning and afternoon snacks (including milk or juice) and milk for lunch. Whole milk is provided for children under the age of two years and 2% milk is provided for children over two years of age.

It is each family’s responsibility to supply their child with a nutritious lunch. There is a refrigerator in every classroom and a microwave in each of the toddler and preschool classrooms for the storage and heating of lunches.

All toddler and preschool lunches and snacks are served family style at regularly established times (refer to the daily schedule posted in each class) and are served at least two hours, but not more than three hours, apart. During our family style meals and snacks, staffs sit with the children and act as role models as they encourage children to try new foods. In addition, staffs provide assistance to children as they develop skills in the pouring and scooping of their own servings of food and beverages.

Breakfast is not offered as part of the daily program in the toddler and preschool classrooms. Staff mornings are filled with activity as they greet arriving parents and children, prepare for the day’s activities and supervise children playing. As a result, staff is limited in their ability to also supervise meal service during this busy time. Therefore, only parents dropping off their child prior to 8:00 a.m. may opt to bring in breakfast for their child to consume upon arrival. Any child arriving at 8:00 a.m. or after should be offered breakfast prior to their arrival.

At any given time, there are several children enrolled with peanut allergies throughout our center. In an effort to reduce the risk of accidental exposure to these children, it is important that families refrain from sending peanut butter, peanuts, and products containing peanuts as part of any child’s breakfast or lunch. Every effort will be made to maintain a peanut-free center and accommodations will be made to ensure the safety of children with allergies. Although striving to be peanut-free may be difficult for children who do not have allergies, it does present an opportunity for parents and staff to teach children about our appreciating differences and how each of us has our own special needs.

LUNCH

Please utilize the following guidelines when preparing lunches for children:

- If the meal needs to be heated, please place the food in a microwavable safe container labeled with child’s full name.
Frozen meals or meals requiring preparation (i.e. EZ-Mac) are not allowed due to the length of time required for preparation and/or heating.

Please prepare food so that it is ready to eat according to individual child’s preferences, (e.g., peel fruit, cut into slices, remove crusts, and cut into age-appropriate bite-sized pieces, etc.)

Good nutrition is promoted during all meals. Please avoid sending in sweets & treats. Parents should refrain from placing any type of candy, gum and soda in a child’s lunch at any time. Please reserve these treats for home.

Children are provided with the opportunity to make choices during lunch. Staff will encourage children to choose healthy foods first, with less nutritious choices to be eaten after healthy choices have been consumed. Children’s food consumption will be noted on the daily sheets and shared with parents in each classroom on a daily basis.

Untouched foods will go back in their containers and sent home so that parents will know what foods their child consumes and meals can be varied accordingly.

Any items not intended for consumption the same day as brought into the Center and are stored in the refrigerator or food cabinet must be labeled with the child’s full name and date.

Staff will not serve foods that may present a choking hazard or are not appropriate. The food in question will be placed in the child’s lunch box and sent home. In some cases, the parent may be called and requested to provide a suitable alternative if the child’s lunch does not contain other options.

Staff will work with parents to resolve mealtime concerns or issues.

SNACKS

Our snack menu has been developed by the Child Care Center’s Nutrition Consultant in accordance with the USDA nutritional guidelines for children and HSC Food Services Department. The amount of snack, juice, and milk served will be limited to the serving portions suggested for meeting USDA recommended serving size guidelines for each age group. Our snack menu rotates on a four-week cycle and is posted near the Parent Information Board in the main entrance. If a child has a restriction or allergy to any food, parents must bring it to the attention of the staff immediately. The center reserves the right to serve foods that on occasion the kitchen will substitute for snack items not readily available.

Please keep in mind that all food brought into the center to be shared must be store bought, in its original, unopened package or must be a whole fruit or vegetable.

HEALTH INFORMATION

CHILDREN’S HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION RECORDS

In accordance with the State of CT Child Day Care Licensing regulations, an up-to-date record of required immunizations and documentation of a yearly physical exam must be documented on the Early Childhood Health Assessment form and on file for each child enrolled in the center. Parents are notified 90, 60 and 30 days prior to the expiration date of their child’s last exam to provide parents with ample time to schedule an appointment so that an updated health record can be obtained. To ensure the health and safety of all children, children with health forms that are not current will not be permitted to attend the center per DPH Regulations.

INFLUENZA VACCINES
In accordance with DPH, by January 1 of each year, children aged 6–59 months attending a child day care centers are required to receive at least one dose of influenza vaccine between September 1 and December 31 of the preceding year. If children are vaccinated during August with the upcoming seasonal flu vaccine, these vaccinations will be accepted and count toward the mandate requirement.

All children aged 6–59 months who have not received vaccination against influenza previously shall receive 2 doses of vaccine the first influenza season that they are vaccinated.

Children enrolling between January 1 and March 31 shall receive influenza vaccine prior to daycare entry. Children enrolling after March 31 during any given year are not mandated to meet the influenza vaccine requirement until the following January, as the influenza season has generally passed by this date and vaccine may no longer be available.

**ROLE OF THE HEALTH CONSULTANT**

The Health Consultant for the center is an R.N. on staff on the Pediatric Unit at Hospital for Special Care. The Health Consultant conducts weekly on-site visits and is available to assist staff in evaluating and addressing any health and developmental concerns exhibited by the children. The Health Consultant also reviews all child health records to ensure they meet DPH requirements, assists in identifying any health issues that need to be shared with staff and notifies parents of impending due dates for health information. The Nurse Consultant may be contacted to evaluate an illness or injury of a child. Every effort will be made to contact parents in the event if it is determined that an evaluation of the child by the Nurse Consultant is needed.

**ACCIDENTS/INJURIES/INCIDENTS**

In the event of a non-life-threatening injury, parents will be notified by phone or at pick-up time, depending on the severity of the injury (i.e., bite vs. knee scrape). Only First-Aid trained and Certified staff is permitted to administer first aid. All injuries, accidents and incidents requiring even minimal first aid treatment are documented on a Child Accident/Incident Report. The parent/guardian is responsible for reading and signing this report to ensure that they have been made aware of the injury and treatment if applicable.

**ILLNESS & EXCLUSION**

The center posts notices on the classroom doors and in the foyer informing parents when their child may have been exposed to a potentially contagious condition as well as the signs and symptoms a child may exhibit if they have been infected.

Should a child exhibit symptoms that may indicate a contagious condition, he/she should not attend the center until such time there is no longer a risk of exposure to the other children and staff. These symptoms may include, but are not limited to, diarrhea, vomiting, dis-colored nasal discharge, fever of 101º F or higher and/or undiagnosed rashes and conditions. Some of the contagious illnesses that may require exclusion include but are not limited to viral and bacterial infections; conjunctivitis; scabies; chicken pox; strep throat; roseola; ringworm; fifth disease and coxsackie’s virus. Children who are ill and/or are exhibiting potentially contagious symptoms may return to the center after being symptom free and fever free without the administration of a fever-reducing medication or other medications that may mask symptoms for a full 24 hours from the time of the last occurrence; has received appropriate treatment; does not require one-on-one care; and/or has a written medical clearance from the child’s pediatrician stating he or she is no longer contagious.

Should symptoms develop while a child is in our care, the Director of Child Care, or designee, will evaluate the child to determine if further evaluation is needed by the Nurse Consultant or child’s physician. Once the child is evaluated, the parent will be informed of the outcome. If it is determined that the child’s symptoms do not present a risk, the child will continue to be monitored by staff. If the condition worsens, or presents immediate risk of spread of infection to the staff and other children, the parents will be contacted to make arrangements for the pick-up of their child. Parents are asked to pick-up their child within one-hour from the time the call is received. During this time, the child will be
provided a cot to rest on in a quiet, supervised area away from the group. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed as emergency contacts for the child will be contacted.

At times children may not exhibit symptoms regarding the risk of spreading infection however, the child is unable to function in a group setting and participate fully in program activities. In situations where a child continuously requires a high level of one-on-one care, the parent will be notified and may be asked to pick up the child in order for the child to receive the care he or she needs.

Although we strive for consistency, illnesses must be addressed on a case-by-case basis taking many factors into consideration. All children in attendance must be well enough to participate fully in all indoor and outdoor activities. Parents having questions or needing clarification regarding the exclusion policy, may speak with the Director or the Nurse Consultant.

**INFECTION CONTROL**

In an effort to minimize the spread of infections, the staff is extremely conscientious regarding the use of universal precautions including disinfecting the classrooms, including all toys and equipment, and ensuring that proper hand-washing procedures and diaper changing procedures are followed for the children and staff. Parents, children and visitors are also required to wash their hands entering a classroom.

**ALLERGIES AND RESTRICTIONS**

Food-related and non-food related allergies and restrictions must be shared in writing at the time of enrollment or when they are discovered. A copy of the snack menu is posted in each classroom and is also provided to all parents so that parents can review the snack menu carefully and inform staff of those foods that should not be served to their child. The center will provide appropriate snack substitutes for children with allergies documented by a physician. Parents are responsible for providing snack substitutions for children having restrictions that are not documented by a physician. Parents are asked to provide consent to post allergy and restriction information in the classroom so that it provides staff with immediate access to this information.

**MEDICATIONS**

In accordance with our current DPH Child Day Care License and HSC Child Care Center Policies, certified staff may administer the following medications with a current (within one year) authorization form signed by the parent:

- Non-prescription topical ointments & creams (free of antibiotic or steroidal components)
- Medicated powders
- Teething gel
- Lip balm

Certified staff may administer emergency medications with current written authorization from the parent and the child’s physician, which must include a written plan for administration:

- Epi-pen auto-injector and/or Benadryl
- Inhaler (on an emergency basis only)
- Nebulizer

Parents are responsible for informing the center, in writing, of any changes regarding their child’s prescription(s) and administration. It is also the responsibility of the parent to ensure that prescription
medications on site are in their original, container with the prescription label, are current and are replaced prior to their expiration.

No other prescription or over-the-counter medications of any type will be administered by staff, including but not limited to: Tylenol, oral antibiotics, cough medications, allergy medications, eye drops, prescription creams and ointments, and non-prescription creams and ointments containing antibiotic or steroidal components.

It is imperative that medications NEVER be left in diaper bags, lunch boxes, back packs or placed in a child’s food, drink or bottle and brought into the center. This presents a serious risk to the other children.

**ORAL HEALTH PRACTICES**

All children over the age of one year participate in oral health routines on a daily basis. Parents are asked to provide a toothbrush so that children can brush their teeth after lunch. Toothpaste will not be used for children under two years of age. Toothpaste for children over the age of two years is optional and is provided by the parent. Only brands of toothpaste that have been previously used by that child at home should be provided to ensure there will be no adverse reaction. Toothbrushes and toothpaste should be clearly labeled with each child’s first and last name. The program has established a collaborative agreement with the Special Care Dental Clinic and the New Britain Oral Health Collaborative to ensure that all children have access to dental screenings and services.

**SAFETY INFORMATION**

**EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS**

Written Emergency Plans for life-threatening, non-life threatening, fire and other emergencies are posted in every classroom. In addition, an emergency evacuation plan is posted in every area of the center indicating the primary and secondary escape routes in the event of an emergency.

Emergency Evacuation Drills (also referred to as fire drills) are conducted monthly to ensure that all staff and children are prepared to evacuate quickly and safely in the event of a true emergency. These drills are unannounced and are planned and coordinated by the Director of Child Care and hospital security personnel. In the event of a power outage, the center is equipped with a generator that will automatically restore power. In the event of an emergency evacuation, the Conference Center on the lower level of the hospital is our designated alternative shelter.

**SAFE ENVIRONMENT**

It is the policy of the Hospital not to tolerate threats, threatening verbal or physical behavior, or acts of violence against or involving the children, parents, employees, volunteers or visitors of the child care center and Hospital. This includes any act that may harass, interfere with or disrupt an individual or group, or may create an intimidating, offensive or hostile environment. Such conduct by a parent, family member, volunteer, visitor or person affiliated with a family having a child enrolled in the child care center may result in immediate termination of enrollment for that family.

Any individual who feels he or she has been threatened or has witnessed threatening behavior against another person should not hesitate to immediately inform the Director, any staff member of the child care center or Hospital for Special Care Security Services.
BADGE ACCESS

Parents are issued an access badge at the time of enrollment. This badge provides parents with access to the center during normal operating hours. For security reasons, parents are not to loan their badge to anyone at any time. Individuals without badges who need access to the center must ring the doorbell and a staff member will give them access. Any individual who is not familiar to the staff and who is requesting to enter the building to pick-up a child will be requested to present photo identification and must have written consent from the parent in order for that child to be released.

Badge Request for Non-Employee

Any individual who is not an HSC employee and is requesting a badge for access to the childcare center for the purpose of picking up/dropping off children must present photo identification prior to the badge being issued, and a copy will be placed in the child’s file. Individuals required to provide photo identification include spouses, friends and family members of employees, and all community members. A photocopy of the identification provided will be kept on file. Parents are asked not to allow anyone to enter the building who is unfamiliar and does not have a badge. Please notify a staff member immediately so that identification can be requested to determine if the individual is authorized to enter the building.

PARENTAL COMPLIANCE WITH DPH REGULATIONS AND HSC CHILD CARE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The center is responsible for the health and safety of all children regardless if a parent is on site. DPH regulations, NAEYC criteria and HSC Child Care Center policies, procedures and practices must be adhered to at all times by the staff, parents, children and/or other individuals visiting, dropping off or picking up a child at the center. This includes, but is not limited to, the proper supervision of children both indoors and out (including following classroom and playground rules and during family functions), maintaining ratios and appropriate group size, children not being allowed to open classroom or entry doors at any time and behavior management policies are adhered to. (please refer to the Behavior Management on page 11 in this handbook).

*Parental presence does not exempt any child, sibling, parent, family member or visitor from complying with the center’s policies, procedures and practices.*

FEES AND PAYMENTS

Tuition payments received by employees and community members will not be prorated for any reason including, but not limited to, holidays, vacations, illness or non-attendance for personal reasons.

TUITION INCREASES

Tuition rates are reviewed on a regular basis and are subject to change in accordance with program needs. Parents will be provided with a minimum of thirty days’ notice when program tuition rates will change for any reason.
TUITION PAYMENTS FOR HSC EMPLOYEES

Eligibility for the employee tuition rate requires employees to complete a benefit election form for tuition to be paid through payroll deduction. Employees opting not to pay tuition through payroll deduction will be required to pay the community member rate. Information regarding pre-tax tuition deductions may be obtained from the child care office staff. Employees with per diem status are not eligible to make tuition payments through payroll deduction.

TUITION PAYMENTS FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS & DIRECT PAY EMPLOYEES

Tuition is due bi-weekly, on the Monday prior to each tuition cycle. Parents are provided a schedule of tuition due dates prior to the start of each calendar year. Payments in the form of check or money order made payable to HSC are accepted. Non-payment of tuition for 2 or more weeks may result in termination from the program. Payments made by check can be placed in the payment box located on the wall outside the office.

LATE PAYMENT FEE

Late payment fees in the amount of $10.00 per week will be assessed on all accounts with payments past due, including payments for regular bi-weekly tuition, tuition due for additional days/hours of care, late pick-up fees, and tuition due as a result of a missed/incorrect payroll deduction. Late payment fees will accrue on a weekly basis until the total amount due, including the late payment fees, is paid in full or unless a mutually agreeable payment arrangement has been made.

LATE PICK-UP FEE

Please refer to “Late Pick-Up” Under Arrival and Departure on page 7.

EXTENDED DAY FEE

Extended day fees will be due for children who are in attendance beyond 9.5 hours per day. Payment for extended day fees will be due at the time regular tuition payments are due.

TUITION REFUND

Tuition refunds will not be issued to employees or community members for absences or withdrawal unless payments exceed the tuition due as required by the program policy for withdrawal.

PAYMENT OF FEES FOR LATE PAYMENTS, LATE PICK-UP & ADDITIONAL DAYS OR HOURS OF CARE

Payments for requested and approved additional days/hours of care must be made in advance. Payments for late pick-up must be made within 5 business days of the occurrence. Payments in the form of a check or money order made payable to HSC are accepted for late payment and late pick-up fees. Non-payment of late payment fees, late pick-up fees and/or fees for additional days/hours of care may result in termination from the program. Schedule changes and requests for additional days/hours of care will not be approved for any family with outstanding fees.
RETURNED CHECKS

A fee will be charged for checks returned due to insufficient funds or for any other reason. Accounts with 2 or more returned checks will require that all future payments be made by bank check or money order.

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE

Assistance may be available for families meeting income eligibility through the State of CT Child Care Assistance Program (Care 4 Kids). Office staff are available to aid families in accessing the Care4Kids program and will also assist families in the application and re-determination process as needed. Families may contact the Center office or go to www.ctcare4kids.com to obtain information about this program.

SIBLING DISCOUNT

A sibling discount will be offered to employee families with two (2) or more children attending the HSC Child Care Programs on the same schedule. A 10% reduction will be applied to the tuition fee of the oldest child enrolled. Families paying a reduced fee in the School Readiness Program and/or participating in the Care4Kids Child Care Assistance program are not eligible for the sibling discount. Sibling Discounts will be applied only for weeks that both children attend the same number of days and hours.

COMMUNICATION

Mailboxes - Each family has an assigned mailbox in their child’s classroom where they may obtain notes, newsletters and other important information about their child and the program. Parents are responsible for checking mailboxes daily to ensure this information is received.

Newsletters - Monthly newsletters and calendars are published at the beginning of each month to keep parents & staff well informed of the Center’s recent and upcoming activities. Additional flyers and memos are distributed when information needs to be shared during the month.

Daily Sheets – Infant and Toddler parents are provided with a daily record indicating when their child ate and how much, naps, diaper changes, use of the toilet, and any other comments about their child’s day. Preschool parents are also provided with a daily sheet that indicates how their child ate, napped, and the types of activities offered during the day. Parents are encouraged to share information about their child with staff at drop-off time to ensure a smooth transition from home to the Center.

Classroom Communication Boards (Preschool) - Parents are provided with an outline of activities the children in that class participated in during the day.

Curriculum Board - Staff post weekly lesson plans at the beginning of each week so that parents may view the activities planned for the week; utilize this information to reinforce concepts with their child at home; and help promote discussions between the parent and child about their child’s day. In addition to the activities, goals and objectives are also documented to help give parents a better understanding of how each of the activities will meet the educational, emotional, physical and social needs of the group.

Parent Information Board - The Center Parent Information Board is located in the foyer as you enter the building. This board displays copies of recent newsletters and notices, resources, snack menus, and informational flyers.
Program Information Board - The Program Information Board is also located in the foyer as you enter the building. This board displays the center's licenses, approvals and certification, policies as well as the process for sharing a complaint or concern.

E-mail - Parents with access to e-mail during the day who would like to utilize this form of communication with the Center should be sure to include their e-mail address with their enrollment information. Please refer to the Center Contact Information List provided in the enrollment packet for specific information regarding e-mailing center staff. Parents should keep in mind that classroom staffs do not have regular access to e-mail.

Telephone & FAX - Parents are welcome to call the Center at any time. However, please understand that staff must make supervising the children their priority and may not be readily available to accept a call from parents. In that case, please leave a voice mail and the staff in your child's classroom will get back to you at their earliest opportunity. If a matter needs to be discussed immediately, please call the office where staff can assist you. The number for the direct fax line to the Center is (860) 827-4870. Feel free to utilize this line to transmit information to the Center as appropriate.

Parent Meetings – Group parent meetings and individual assessment meetings are offered to parents at various times throughout the year. Parents are encouraged to request meetings with the staff and/or Director at any time should questions or concerns arise regarding their child. Please refer to the Parent Involvement section of this handbook for more information about parent meetings..

Arrival and Departure Communication - Keep in mind that arrival and departure times present valuable opportunities for parents to communicate with the staff. If possible, please allow for a few minutes to connect with your child’s teacher at arrival and departure times to discuss your child’s day and to promote smooth transitions between home and the Center.

Confidentiality – Center staff will maintain confidentiality and will respect each family's right to privacy in accordance with the HSC Confidentiality Statement, HIPPA and the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. All information obtained from parents will be kept in confidence and information in child files will be stored in the Child Care Center office and will be made available only to individuals who have consent by the parent or legal guardian for access to records, parents or legal guardians and regulatory authorities on request.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are viewed as their child’s first teachers and play a key role in their child’s development. In an effort to promote positive collaborative relationships between the family and center, parent involvement is encouraged and welcomed. Involvement comes in many forms and may include:

Parent/Staff Forum - Meetings are held for parents and staff to collaborate regarding program issues such as the planning of supplemental educational and social activities for the children and parents, fundraising efforts and to discuss program concerns and goals.

Family Functions - Several times a year, functions are planned in which parents, siblings, and grandparents can participate. Family Activities may include sing-a-longs, crafts, performances, luncheons, ice cream socials, storytelling, play dates, picnics, and an annual Family luncheon. These activities provide the staff and families with opportunities to interact get to know and support each other.

Fundraising - In an effort to supplement the educational and social experiences for the children and families, fundraisers are held to generate funds to help offset costs and make these activities possible. Some examples of past fundraisers include book fairs, bake sales and candle sales.
Participation in fundraising activities is optional; however, we greatly appreciate the support from and staff in reaching our goals.

**Parent Volunteers** - Parents may volunteer their time in the classroom reading stories, assisting with a special program or activity, or sharing a special talent, skill, or information regarding their job or culture. In addition, parents may volunteer as chaperones on field trips and assist with organizing activities. The program is open to learning new ways parents can be involved!

**Assessment Meetings & Parent/Teacher Conferences** - Parents are given the opportunity to discuss their child’s development with their child’s teacher during meetings conducted at least twice a year. During these meetings, the child’s teacher shares a written summary of the child’s progress in mastering developmentally appropriate skills. Parents are encouraged to provide feedback to enable staff to better meet their child’s individual needs. Should a parent decline the invitation to one of these meetings, the parent is provided with a copy of the written assessment. Additional meetings may be requested by parents or staff at any time as needed.

**Transition Meetings** - Transition meetings are offered to parents prior to their child’s transition into another classroom. The staff in the room into which the child is transitioning conducts the meeting. This meeting provides staff and parents the opportunity to become familiar with each other, open the door to communication, help staff learn more about the child, and allows staff to share classroom practices, schedules and expectations with the parent.

**Open Door Policy** - The Center has an open door policy for families with children enrolled in the Center. For security reasons, any individual not having children enrolled must make an appointment to schedule a tour. Visits by individuals other than the parent/guardian must be approved by the parent/guardian in advance. The parent/guardian must notify the center in advance of the impending visit. On rare occasions, a visit from a family member may cause a child distress and/or may be disruptive to the class routines and/or separation may be difficult for a child. Family members are encouraged to consult with the staff to assess the outcome of visits and to ensure that visits are a positive experience for everyone.

**Continuous Quality Improvement** – Parents and staff are invited to participate in a variety of surveys to provide feedback for continuous quality improvement. Family and Staff annual program surveys are conducted annually. The results of these surveys are analyzed to determine how improvements can be made to better meet the needs of the children and families and the results are shared with the parents and staff in a written summary. Transition or exit surveys are conducted with parents when children transition from one classroom to another or are withdrawn from the program. All surveys are confidential and anonymous.

**Parent Education** – During the year, information regarding on-site and off-site trainings, workshops and parent education opportunities is available for parents. Child Care is provided for onsite activities. Parents are encouraged to share their needs and suggestions for educational activities.
ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES, POLICIES AND IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Nap belongings (infant sheets/blankets and toddler & preschool blankets) are to be brought home at the end of each week, laundered, and returned on the first day a child attends the next week.
- Please be sure to label all children’s personal belongings brought into the Center.
- Plastic bags of any type should not to be used to store children’s belongings in their cubbies or mailboxes. Vinyl or canvas bags or backpacks may be used.
- At various times, staff may include Sharing Time (a.k.a. Show & Tell) as part of the classroom activities. Children are given the opportunity to bring in something from home to share at group time during a designated week. A schedule noting each child’s assigned Sharing Day will be provided by the classroom staff. Toys that promote violence or aggressive play are not permitted at any time. (For example, superheroes, swords, guns, etc…) Toys from home (with the exception of appropriate nap toys) are not permitted at any other time.
- Celebrations (i.e. birthdays, welcoming new siblings) are welcome; however, please check with your child’s teacher to find out if any child in the class has food allergies or dietary restrictions. The staff in each classroom can offer suggestions regarding nutritious, safe options that can be provided. Please keep in mind that all food brought into the center to be shared must be store bought, in its original, unopened package or must be a whole fruit or vegetable.
- Cars must never be left running and unattended in the parking lot for any reason.
- Cell phone use is prohibited in the Center.
- Children under the age of 12 should never be left unattended in vehicles at any time as per Connecticut State Law.
- SMOKING is NOT allowed in the center or on HSC grounds of the center at any time by staff, parents or visitors.
- The center is not responsible for damage or loss to infant and child car seats and other personal items left in the foyer and other common areas of the center.
- Staff are not permitted to provide private child care/babysitting services to any family with children enrolled in any of the HSC Child Care Programs. Parents requesting staff to provide these services may be subject to disenrollment.
- Children will be protected from harmful chemicals and fumes in areas that have been recently painted, carpeted, tiled or otherwise renovated. All renovations will occur during off hours when the children and staff are not present and the HSC maintenance staff will ensure that the area is well ventilated prior to the return of the children and staff.

DISCONTINUED ENROLLMENT

The Center follows established guidelines to evaluate if the continued enrollment of a child is in the best interests of that child, the other children, the staff and the program.

This procedure includes observations, written documentation of the concerns, and input by the classroom staff, parents, Director of Child Care, and consultants as appropriate. Every effort will be made to set goals, make modifications, utilize resources and outside agencies as appropriate, provide recommendations for referrals, and offer feedback to promote positive outcomes and the continued enrollment of the child.

Considerations for disenrollment may include, but are not limited to, behaviors that may cause concern for the physical or emotional wellbeing of the child, other children or staff; non-payment of tuition and/or other fees as per policy; failure to provide up-to-date health and enrollment information as required by DPH; failure to maintain compliance with School Readiness requirements.
The program reserves the right to discontinue enrollment without notice if it is determined that there is a potential for risk of physical or emotional harm to the child, other children and/or staff or if tuition payments are two or more weeks in arrears. If immediate disenrollment is not required, the parent/guardian will be provided a minimum of two weeks’ notice and resources for finding alternate care.

**VOLUNTARY WITHDRAWAL**

A minimum of two weeks’ written notice is required when withdrawing a child from the program for any reason. Payment for these two weeks is required regardless of attendance. It is the responsibility of the employee to sign the benefit election form to discontinue deductions in accordance with the effective date of withdrawal.

**COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Individual child and classroom concerns should first be directed to the classroom teacher.

If an issue or concern discussed with the classroom teacher is not resolved or if for any reason the parent is not comfortable discussing the issue with the classroom staff, the concern should be brought directly to the Director of Child Care.

If the problem or issue is still not resolved, it may be brought to the attention of the Vice President of Human Resource.

If the matter is still not resolved or in the case of an emergency, parents should contact the State of CT, Department of Public Health Child Day Care Licensing Unit at 1-800-282-6063.

In cases of suspected abuse or neglect, parents should contact the State of CT, Department of Children and Families at 1-800-842-2288.

All matters discussed between the parents and staff will be kept confidential and shared with others as appropriate on a need to know basis only.

**HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

This handbook serves as an overview of the policies and guidelines for enrollment in the Child Care Center and is not all-inclusive. Should you have a question regarding any policy, procedure or guideline, please bring it to the attention of the Director of Child Care so that it may be addressed.

Parents are required to sign and return the HSC Child Care Center Parent Handbook Acknowledgement form at the time of enrollment and annually thereafter to indicate that they have reviewed this handbook and agree to comply with its policies, procedures and practices. This form is included in the enrollment packet.
ADDITIONAL POLICIES AND GUIDELINES
SDE SCHOOL READINESS PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

School Readiness Legislation, Connecticut General Status 10-16o through 10-16u, outlines the framework for the establishment of school readiness programs that provide high quality education and care.

The Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center is pleased to participate in the New Britain School Readiness Program giving all 3 and 4 year old children residing in New Britain access to our quality program on a full-day/full-year basis. This section of the handbook is designed to be a supplement to The Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center Parent Handbook to provide parents with children enrolled in School Readiness with the information and guidelines for that program. Parents enrolling in HSC School Readiness slots must complete all Center enrollment paperwork and are obligated to read and agree to all the policies, procedures and conditions set forth in our Parent Handbook.

ENROLLMENT

Enrollment in the HSC Child Care Center and School Readiness Program is open to all children regardless of race, creed, ethnic or cultural background. Requirements for eligibility include that the family must live in New Britain and the child is enrolled and on a full day/full year basis.

Participation in the HSC School Readiness Program will require parents/guardians to provide the Center with additional information that may not be asked of families enrolling in our Center who do not participate in the School Readiness Program. This information includes but is not limited to: family income verification, the child's social security number and birth certificate, health & nutrition information, parent education and training needs, referrals for social services and proof of residency. During the enrollment process, parent/guardians are asked to complete a Family Information Questionnaire that will help the program to identify areas in which the child and family are in need of support and/or services. Families are encouraged to bring their needs to the attention of the staff so they may be addressed at any time.

The center collaborates with the community a number of community agencies to ensure that these needs are met and families are able to secure services and/or assistance with access to the families' literacy education/training needs, adult education programs, job training and public library services. In addition, assistance will be provided to families in accessing on-going well-child care, immunizations, health, dental and nutritional screenings. Some of these services may be provided on site by the program’s consultants and/or collaborating agencies. For services not offered on site, the program will assist families in accessing these services in the community.

Families who do not currently have health insurance will be referred to the HUSKY PLAN. Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center will provide assistance to families in obtaining information and applying for HUSKY.
ELIGIBILITY

Both the legal parent/guardian and the child enrolled in the School Readiness Program must be legal residents of New Britain. Families moving out of New Britain will no longer be eligible to maintain enrollment. Our program’s School Readiness slots are intended for families in need of care on a full-day and full year basis due to parent work schedules. Priority for enrollment will be given to families in need of full-day, full-year care.

ATTENDANCE

The Hospital for Special Care has been approved to provide full day/full year School Readiness slots. Children enrolled in School Readiness must be in attendance a minimum of 6 hours/day, 5 days/week for 50 weeks per year. Attendance is critical for children's success in our program and it is the responsibility of the program to ensure that slots are utilized in a manner that most effectively uses funding while serving the families that are in need of full day/full year care. Children not in attendance a minimum of 6 hours/day, 5 days/week for 50 weeks per year may be dis-enrolled in the program.

If a child is going to be out for any reason, parent/guardian must call our office by 9:00 am to notify the staff of the absence. If the parent/guardian does not report the absence by 9:00 am, the classroom teacher may call to inquire about the whereabouts of the child.

If a child is absent for two (2) days without a phone call from the parent, the Director or designee will attempt to contact the parent/guardian via telephone. If after three (3) days the Director or designee is not able to reach a parent/guardian, a letter will be sent home informing the family that they are required to contact the center immediately to discuss the child’s absence and continued enrollment. If a child is absent for ten (10) consecutive school days with no contact from the parent/guardian or response to program’s attempts to make contact, the child’s School Readiness slot will be forfeited and assigned to another eligible family from the wait list. The family will be notified via certified letter that the enrollment space has been forfeited.

If a child has had extensive sick days, the parent/guardian will be required to provide a note from the child’s health care provider indicating the reason and length of time the child is required to be excluded from care.

Three (3) occurrences of absences of three (3) consecutive days or more without medical documentation being provided will result in forfeiture of the School Readiness slot. After the third occurrence, the family will be provided with two (2) weeks’ notice of disenrollment.

Regardless if the parent notifies the center of absences, and/or if a note from the health care provider is received, excessive absences for any reason may result in termination from the program and the slot will be assigned to another eligible family on the waitlist.
**FEES**

The parent share of tuition fees is calculated on a sliding scale based on the School Readiness Income Guidelines established by the State of Connecticut Department of Social Services. Parents must provide the program with income verification so that the fee can be calculated. There will be no tuition costs for the School Readiness child other than the sliding fee amount; however parents with children enrolled in School Readiness are required to pay late payment and late pick-up fees as applicable. Parents approved for child care assistance through the Care4Kids program will be required to pay the family share fee calculated by Care4Kids in lieu of the sliding fee amount.

Parents are provided with a copy of the DSS sliding fee scale guidelines whenever fees are calculated. Fees calculated will be reviewed with the parent and the parent will provide a signature acknowledging they have received a copy of the fee calculation form. Fees will be calculated as follows:

1. For families whose incomes are less than 75% of the state’s median income (SMI) guideline, fees will be based solely on the School Readiness Fee Schedule.

2. For families whose incomes are greater than 75% of the state’s median income (SMI) guideline, SR fees will be based on 12% of the family’s income, with an amount not to exceed the program’s cost of care.

3. For families receiving TFA cash assistance who have no earned income, there will be no fee assessed whether for the family or for a child in the family that is using the School Readiness supported slot.

**FEE RE-DETERMINATION**

In order to maintain enrollment in the School Readiness Program, family income must be verified and fees re-determined a minimum of every six months. (Re-determination of fees for families receiving TFA will be conducted a minimum of every three (3) months.)

Parents are provided with a written reminder of the re-determination approximately 3 weeks prior to the date due. This notice will outline the process as well as a list of the documentation that will be required to complete the process. Please note that any change in family income or household size may affect the parent share of the established child-care fee. Parents will receive written verification of how the new fee was determined.

All enrollment, income and fee information obtained will be kept in confidence. All staff having access to this information will maintain confidentiality and will respect each family’s right to privacy in accordance with the HSC Confidentiality Statement and the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
**FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

The Hospital for Special Care Child Care Center is committed to developing effective strategies to involve all families in the education of their children. In addition to the family involvement opportunities outlined in our Parent Handbook, HSC will use six partnership standards defined in the *Guide to Using the Position Statement on School-Family-Community Partnerships in Early Care and Education Programs* as a guide for planning family involvement opportunities. These standards are defined as parenting, communication, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Our program’s governing body is defined in our program as the Parent/Staff Forum. This forum involves parents in collaborating ideas regarding program issues such as the planning of supplemental educational and social activities for the children and parents as well as fundraising efforts. In addition, HSC will create a School Readiness Parent/Staff Forum. All parents are encouraged to participate in this forum and provide input for decision making for the program. Meetings will be held a minimum of two times per academic year and the purpose of these meetings will be to identify parent training needs and interests, plan field trips and special events for the program, and conduct program evaluation. *For more specific family events & activities, please refer to the “Parent Involvement” section in our Parent Handbook.*

**ASSISTANCE for FAMILIES**

In an effort to support both the child and family needs, families are provided with resources and support in accessing programs and services including but not limited to, adult education, job training and public library services. The center has established collaborative agreements with a variety of community agencies in an effort to coordinate services. Families are encouraged to discuss their needs in a confidential meeting with the staff at any time.

**CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

*All families wishing to enroll a child in the School Readiness program and meet eligibility are expected to apply for Child Care Assistance through the State Child Care Assistance Program (Care4Kids).* Staff is available to aid families in accessing the Care4Kids program and will also assist families in the application and re-determination process as needed. Families may contact the Center office or go to [www.ctcare4kids.com](http://www.ctcare4kids.com) to obtain information about this program. *Once approved, it is the responsibility of the parent to continue their approval status to ensure there is no disruption in the receipt of childcare assistance funds. Families that do not cooperate fully with the Care4Kids application process may be subject to discontinued enrollment in the School Readiness program.*

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

At least annually, School Readiness parents will be asked to complete a program survey that will identify whether each child and family’s needs are being met. The input provided is a valuable tool in the overall assessment of the program and allows staff to set goals for continuous quality improvement. Parents are also encouraged to participate in assisting in the survey distribution, tallying process and review of the results.