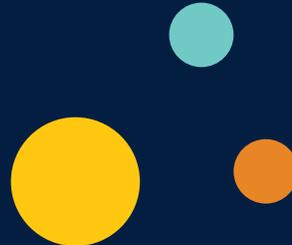


# Penn State Child Care Centers Family Handbook

THE CHILD CARE CENTER AT HORT WOODS | THE BENNETT FAMILY CENTER



**PennState**  
Human Resources



## **The Child Care Center at Hort Woods**

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## **The Bennett Family Center**

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# Welcome from Human Resources

Penn State Human Resources is proud to support the two on-campus child care centers. Utilizing an emergent curricula that incorporates play, exploration of the environment, and mixed-age grouping to build relationships with peers and instructors fosters a learning environment well suited for a university campus. Full-time teachers who are highly skilled and trained in fields such as human development and family studies, early childhood education, elementary education, and special education are brought together by a shared commitment to providing the best care and education for children and their families.

We hope this handbook serves as a resource for the families connected to the centers. It can be referred to for guidance around the administrative and logistical aspects of having a child or children enrolled in the centers. We also hope that it articulates the dedication to the mission, vision, and commitment to diversity and inclusion demonstrated by the centers' staff and instructors.

## Mission and Values Statement

### Mission

To provide a high-quality child care and education program for children of Penn State faculty, staff, and students, while supporting advancement in the field of early childhood education and child development through service, outreach, teaching, and research.

### Values

- Provide a model of high-quality early childhood programming for children, families, and the community.
- Support the professional development of early childhood practitioners through outreach and activities.
- Serve as a site for undergraduate training and education through observation projects and classroom participation.
- Serve as a site for faculty and student research on child development, early childhood education, and related topics.

# Diversity and Inclusion

## Diversity Statement

Penn State child care centers are committed to building and sustaining a welcoming community that supports the inclusion of all families, educators, and administrators. We are racially, culturally, and socio-economically diverse people from a variety of family structures from across the world, with varying abilities and talents. We are also committed to the recruitment and retention of diverse employees and families within our child care centers. We believe that the diversity of children, families, and educators enriches the educational experiences of all children.

As a program accredited with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and a part of the Penn State University (PSU) community we uphold all NAEYC standards and policy initiatives and the PSU Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (2021).

We work to uproot our own personal biases to bring to the surface any underlying belief systems that may get in the way of our ability to work effectively with individuals who may differ from us (Derman-Sparks; Olsen Edwards, 2017). We proactively affirm and include all children and their families based on age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, and genetic information or political ideas (Policy AD91).

Our curriculum exposes children to both the visible and non-visible diversity present within our world. Teachers facilitate children's development of self-awareness and positive social identities, expression of comfort and joy with human diversity, recognition of unfairness and how to take action with others or alone against prejudice and/or discriminatory actions.

Center educators implement additional anti-biased and age-appropriate approaches into their teaching practices with young children (Derman-Sparks; Olsen Edwards, 2017).

We believe that this commitment to diversity and inclusion involves ongoing courageous conversations and active engagement from children, parents, teachers, and administrators.

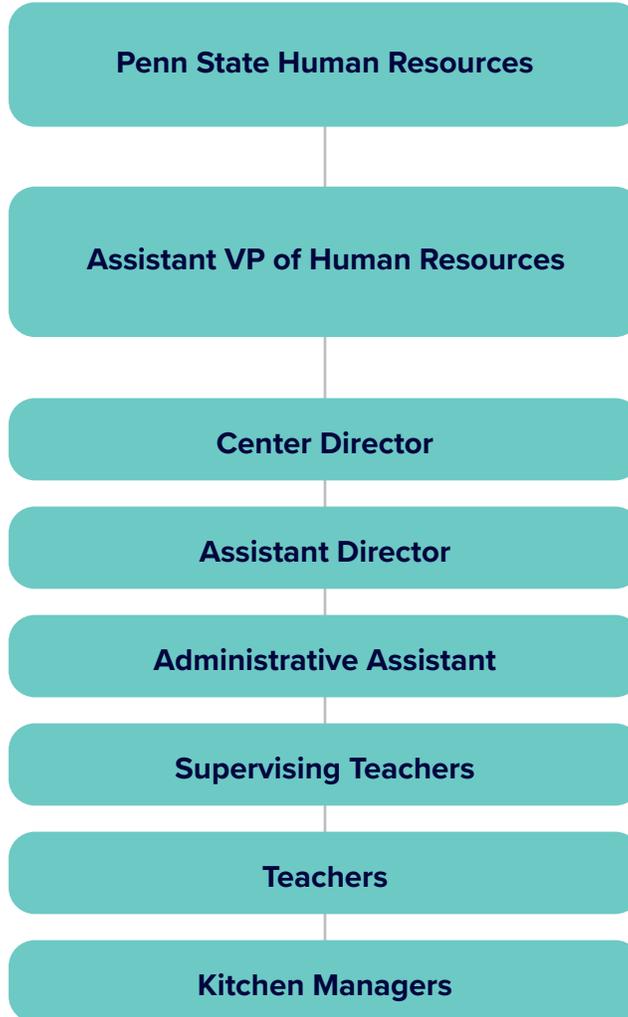
Further Reading:

Derman-Sparks, Louise; Olsen Edwards, Julie (2017). "[Living our Commitments: A Pledge to All Children and Families](#)." Anti-Biased Education. Child Care Exchange.

## Diversity and Inclusion Objectives

- Work to understand, respect, and accept people who are different from us.
- We will speak out about bias and prejudice when we encounter it and build an inclusive community where all feel welcomed and valued.
- We will create intentional and responsive anti-biased curriculum that is developmentally appropriate, provides multiple perspectives and helps children learn to reject stereotypes.

# Organizational Structure



# Center-Specific Information

## The Child Care Center at Hort Woods



Serves up to 180 children



Operates from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm,  
Monday - Friday



Mixed age group setting  
- 6 weeks to 3 years old  
- 3 years to 5 years old



Open all year



Our building is LEED Platinum Certified

The Child Care Center at Hort Woods opened in 2011 and serves up to 180 children ages 6 weeks to 5 years old. The center operates 7:30 am to 6 pm, Monday – Friday and is open all year. Unlike any other childcare center in the nation, the Child Care Center at Hort Woods was specifically designed to meet or exceed the highest level of sustainable building criteria, the USGBC’s LEED Platinum certification. The two-floor, 21,500 square-foot building features a brick, copper and painted aluminum exterior, and there are three natural, outdoor learning environments that were designed to accommodate the center’s varying age groups.

The first floor includes 5 classrooms for infants and toddlers, shared common spaces, a multi-purpose area, an atelier, a library, and outdoor patios. The second floor includes 5 classrooms for preschool children, family gathering areas, and library space. Hort Woods incorporates many sustainable features, such as natural ventilation, the use of recycled materials, composting in both the classroom and kitchen, and natural day lighting to help conserve energy. The building’s sustainable design intentionally focuses on educating the young children who attend the center about the importance of conserving natural resources. Hort Woods’ three playgrounds help young children get in touch with the natural environment. Features include a custom climber, pull-up bars, musical instruments, interactive water features, native plantings, and meandering pathways with special impact-absorbing surfacing material.

It is our belief that the education of young children should include innovative approaches to reconnecting children to nature through tangible links between sustainable design, curriculum, and children’s everyday experiences in nature.

## Philosophy Statement

Our program is based on the belief that the child is the most important teacher in our program. We value and celebrate each child's unique cultural, ethnic, and social-economic background. Through careful observation of their development and interests we assist them in the construction of knowledge. We are strongly committed to working with children and families. As early childhood educators, we believe it is critical for us to understand the needs and values of families so that we can best serve their children. Our work together, as families and educators, guides the curriculum for the child as an individual in our learning community. Our goal is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment by building a sense of community among families, children, and staff. It is the role of teachers, families, and students to nurture, to observe, to provoke learning opportunities, to provide appropriate materials and guidance, to share ideas and to continually reflect on the learning process.

Nature-based play is at the heart of our program and is reflected in our building and playground. Nature calms and inspires us, and promotes self-directed learning as children explore, notice and express curiosity about what they are seeing. When outside, we have observed that children simply play, which is the serious work of childhood. We believe open ended, outdoor exploration is the best way for children to develop and learn.

## Licensing and Accreditation Information

- Licensed through the [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services \(DHS\)](#)
- Nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- Maintains a STAR 4 quality rating through the [Keystone Stars Quality Rating System](#).
- Recognized through the state of Pennsylvania for implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS).
- Maintains LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Platinum certification awarded by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC).

## The Bennett Family Center



Serves up to 135 children



Operates from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm, Monday-Friday



Mixed age group setting  
- 6 weeks to 3 years old  
- 3 years to 5 years old  
- Kindergarten



Open all year



Offers Integrated Arts Kindergarten and Pre-K Counts

The Bennett Family Center opened its doors in February 2001. The newly constructed building was made possible by a generous gift from Edna Bennett Pierce (53). Her interest in and commitment to quality programming for young children has been actualized in the design of the building, which has a playful interior emphasizing light and openness. Outside, the playground offers ample space for gross motor play and opportunities for extending curriculum into an outdoor classroom.

While providing a mixed age group setting, The Bennett Family Center offers a family-like atmosphere through continuity of care for children and families. Sister classrooms offer an intimate setting, where each infant and toddler classroom (children ages 0-3) is connected to a preschool classroom (children ages 3-5). This increases familiarity with the children, families, and teachers between the classrooms to support smooth transitions.

The Bennett Family Center holds a private academic license to house a kindergarten classroom that is centrally located in the building. This Integrated Arts Kindergarten program was started in 2003 and educates 20 children each year. In the summer, the kindergarten space is converted to a summer camp for children who have completed kindergarten through the summer after their second-grade year with priority for summer enrollment given to current Bennett kindergarten families.

## Philosophy Statement

The Bennett Family Center's program is based on the belief that we are an extension of the family. We are strongly committed to working with children and families. As early childhood educators, we feel it is critical for us to understand your family needs and values so that we can best serve your child. Our goal is to provide a supportive and nurturing environment and to build a sense of community among parents, children, and staff.

Each child is regarded as a unique individual. We value and celebrate each child's unique cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic background. In consideration of the whole child, we strive to nourish the mind, body, and sense of self for continued growth. We believe sustainability is vital to the achievement of these goals and will strive to model a sustainable mindset for the children and prioritize related initiatives within our program. We strongly believe that a child's family is the first and most important teacher of their children.

We want to share our open-door policy with you; therefore, we welcome you and your interests and participation. We wish you and your family well in your busy lives. We thank you for sharing your family with us.

## Licensing and Accreditation Information

- Licensed through the [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services \(DHS\)](#).
- Nationally accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).
- Maintains a STAR 4 quality rating through the [Keystone Stars Quality Rating System](#).
- Holds [Pre-K Count Grant](#) through the [Office of Child Development and Early Learning \(OCDEL\)](#).
- Recognized through the state of Pennsylvania for implementing [Positive Behavior Intervention and Support \(PBIS\)](#) with fidelity at TIER 2.
- Maintains a private academic licensed kindergarten through the [Pennsylvania Department of Education](#).

# Curriculum Information

The centers follow an emergent curriculum affording teachers the opportunity to individualize curriculum to a high degree. It is our belief that a curriculum exists within each child, particular to their own development and culture. It also takes place in a group setting, thereby offering each of those individuals the opportunity to construct meaningful and informed questions to be challenged and supported by their peers and adults.

An emergent curriculum is one that builds upon the interest of children. Topics for study are captured from the talk of children, through community or family events, as well as the known interests of children (puddles, shadows, dinosaurs, etc.). Team planning is an essential component of the emergent curriculum. Teachers work together to formulate hypotheses about the possible directions of a project, the material needed, and possible parent and/or community support and involvement.

Our teacher's role is to;

- co-explore the learning experience with the children.
- provoke ideas, problem solving, and conflict.
- take ideas from the children and return them for future exploration.
- organize the classroom materials to be aesthetically pleasing.
- document children's progress: visual, videotape, tape recording, and portfolios.
- help children see the connection in learning and experiences.
- help children express their knowledge through representational work.
- have a dialogue about the projects with parents and other teachers.
- foster the connection between home, school, and community.

Curriculum Threads;

- can emerge from children's ideas and/or interests.
- can be provoked by teachers.
- should be long enough to develop over time, to discuss new ideas, to negotiate over, to induce conflicts, to revisit, to see progress, to see movement of ideas.
- should be concrete, personal from real experiences, important to children, should be "large" enough for diversity of ideas and rich in interpretive/representational expression.



## Relationships - The Foundation

Relationships are the foundation of our curriculum approach. They provide us with rich curriculum material. We learn how to make a new child and family feel welcome and how to say farewell to the child who is going off to kindergarten. We learn about friendship as children move from understanding and satisfying themselves to negotiating conflict with others. We learn about the cycle of life as we celebrate the birth of a new sibling and we share the grief when a life passes. We learn that people speak many languages, have many different abilities, and eat a wondrous variety of foods and that the world is large beyond our doors but also huge within. We learn how to share and take turns, how to listen and how to express. We support the first steps of our youngest friends and cheer the first solo ride of a “big kid” on a tricycle.

Relationships are curriculum.

## Environment - The Stage for Curriculum

The environment is the stage for learning and the wonderful settings at both the Child Care Center at Hort Woods and the Bennett Family Center provide many spaces where children learn. In every classroom, a child can find a place to be alone, with just a few friends, or gathered as a group. Educational materials are organized and accessible to children. They are developmentally appropriate for each age group and encourage wonder and creativity. Educators also strive to create classroom spaces that are reflective of the children, families, and adults who live and learn there.

## Field Trips and Excursions

The children at both centers participate in walks and walking field trips to sites on the Penn State University Park campus and in the surrounding State College community. In certain circumstances, children may be transported to and from their destination by bus. For field trips not on the University campus, and when any means of transportation other than walking needs to be used, families be notified one week in advance and will be asked to sign a special consent.

## Mixed-Age Model

The centers use the mixed age model for grouping children into home classrooms. In our settings, classrooms include children from a range of ages that span over multiple years, rather than grouping children of the same age in the same classroom. The infant/toddler classrooms are designed for children as young as 6 weeks to age 3 years and the preschool classrooms include children 3 to 5 years of age. The Bennett Family Center's Integrated Arts Kindergarten includes children who are 4 ½ to 6 years of age. While it is common for many centers to have mixed-age preschool classrooms, our centers' commitment to caring for infants and toddlers in mixed-aged groupings makes us unique. The work of Lillian Katz in this area has had a strong influence on our decision to practice mixed age groupings. We believe that children are both more secure, as well as appropriately challenged, in a place where they see a "neighborhood" community working together. Transitions to new classrooms are minimized and there are opportunities for prolonged relationships between children, families and educators

The Child Care Center at Hort Woods was designed with mixed aged grouping in mind. This is a practice that was established at the Penn State Child Development Lab and was continued when the Lab transitioned to the larger Hort Woods in July 2011.

The Bennett Family Center opened in 2001, when The Cedar Building Program transitioned to this new facility. The Cedar Building Program had mixed age preschool classrooms. When The Bennett Family Center opened, one half of the program practiced mixed age grouping and the other half of the program contained classrooms for each age. After evaluating mixed age grouping for a couple of years, the teachers began to see more advantages to this type of program model. It was then decided to transition all of the classrooms to the mixed age model.

There are many advantages to the mixed age model that have a positive impact on children and the care that they receive. One important factor is that ratios are kept lower than what is typical for older children. For example, our infant/toddler classrooms continue with 1 teacher for every 4 children until a child is 3 years of age. This can mean more one-on-one attention for each child. The mixed age model also allows for more consistent care and fewer transitions for the children. Curriculum lessons can be more individualized to better meet the needs of the children. Older children have the chance to be peer models for the younger children and have a chance to develop leadership skills. Younger children have a "sibling" to look up to and can gain support from them as well as teachers. This type of peer tutoring and cooperative learning benefits all children both academically and socially (Katz, Evangelou, & Hartman, 1990).

## Days of Operation

The Centers operate year around. In general, we follow the calendar for Penn State. However, there are some exceptions each year. Parents receive an [operating schedule](#) of scheduled holiday closures, in-service weeks/days, and other closed days each year. The monthly tuition rates already account for these scheduled closure days. The Centers do not reimburse for emergency closures.

## Enrollment

Center enrollment is open to children from six (6) weeks to kindergarten. The Bennett Family Center's Integrated Arts Kindergarten is open to children who will turn 5 years old by December 31 of the school year. The Bennett Family Center's summer camp enrollment is open to children who have completed kindergarten through the summer following their second-grade academic school year. Priority is given to families who are affiliated with Penn State as a student, staff, or faculty member.

### Wait List for Admission

The Child Care Center at Hort Woods and The Bennett Family Center maintain a wait list for families waiting for care. Parents can apply for enrollment of their child at a center by completing the application for Admission/Waitlist form and paying the wait list application fee. The centers will only charge one application fee per family. Families who already have a child enrolled at the center will not be charged the application fee.

Parents are expected to take the time to tour the center and ask questions before making a decision on enrollment. When you decide to enroll your child at one of the centers, you will need to complete the necessary paperwork. After a placement has been offered, initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed enrollment paperwork, signed fee agreement, and signed Parent Handbook receipt. A registration fee will be added to the first month's tuition. Registration fees are waived for families who received tuition subsidy and those attending the Pre-K Count program. There is an intake process that will start once you have committed to enrolling in one of the programs.

Please inform center administration if you require assistance translating forms, contracts, policies, or procedures.

## Children's Records

Every child's file must contain the following information:

- **Health Appraisal** – your child must have a submitted health appraisal along with immunization records within 30 days of enrollment. The parent is responsible for keeping the child's immunizations and screenings up to date.
- **Wait List Application** – we should have this on file from your original date of application.
- **Consent Forms** – Research, Walking Field Trips, Photograph/Video, topical creams/sunscreen
- **Fee Agreement Form**
- **Emergency Contact Form** – Families must supply the center, where enrolled, with emergency contacts for your child. Parents are the first contact in the event of any emergency, but you are required to provide additional contact persons with phone numbers and addresses, in the event that you cannot be reached. One of these individuals will need to live locally.
- **Developmental History** – This form takes time and thought but it is helpful to our educators to acquaint them with your family and particularly your child. This will be provided by your classroom.
- **Health Consent** – This form indicates that you are aware of our medication dispensing guidelines, outlines allergy and special medication conditions and/or needs.
- **CACFP Form** – In order for the Centers to participate in the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture) we must have completed forms from all families.
- **Listserv Form** – Permission for the center to add you to its listserv.
- **Parent Collaborative Group** – This form grants permission for your email to be shared with the classroom room parents to keep up to date on center-wide activities and possible

## Priority for Enrolling Siblings

The Centers will give priority to families who wish to enroll an additional child once they have already secured enrollment for another child. A wait list application is required in order to be considered for enrollment. Families should submit an application as soon as possible and classroom preferences will be taken into consideration. It is not a guarantee that you will receive placement on requested date or the requested classroom. If needed, families can choose to enroll at either Center if that placement better fits the needs of the family.

## Moving Between University Centers

This is considered an internal lateral move and parents in this situation are given priority. When a switch does occur, the following applies:

- A 4-week notice would be helpful to help the current center plan for future enrollment. There may be times when a 4-week notice is not possible and center directors at both centers will work with you to facilitate the transfer to the other campus Center.
- Families will be required to complete updated enrollment paperwork for the center that they will be transitioning to. A new developmental history is done as part of the intake into the new program.
- The Center's administrative assistant will be notified of the change so that billing can be updated.
- No registration fee is applied.

Continued enrollment at the Center is contingent upon the families', emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition.

## Tuition and Fees

The centers charge monthly tuition fees on a sliding scale based on household income, which is reviewed annually. In addition, we serve families that are eligible for subsidies. See the section on Subsidy and Assistance.

Fees are considered annually with increases effective July 1. Annual increases are decided by the University and approved by the Sr. VP for Finance and Business. We make every effort to contain costs while maintaining the highest standards of quality. We are aided in this effort with considerable support (both direct and indirect) provided to the centers each year by the university.

Tuition includes meals, special events and visitors to the program, and other program specific items. There is no tuition reimbursement given for vacations, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations including inclement weather, issues requiring a temporary shutdown of the facility, etc.

## Tuition Payments

Tuition is due by the 5th of the month of service.

- Tuition fees may be paid by check or money order made payable to The Pennsylvania State University.
- Check or money order payments should be dropped in the payment box at the Center.
- Families should include their account number written in the memo portion of their payment check.

## Late Payment Fee

Tuition payment is due in full by the 5th of the month of service with a 10-day grace period. A late fee will be attached to any payments not recorded at the Center by the 15th of each month. This late fee will appear on the next month's bill.

## Registration Fee

A non-refundable registration fee will be added to the first month's invoice. If your child enrolls or departs mid-month, tuition is prorated and calculated depending on the number of weeks/days left in the month. If your child's last day is after a scheduled Center closure, the prorated tuition will include the days of closure.

## Sliding Fee Scale

The Centers assess tuition fees on a sliding scale based on total adjusted gross household income (verification required). Questions about qualifying for the sliding fee scale should be directed to The Child Care Center at Hort Woods at (814) 863-0267 or The Bennett Family Center at (814) 865-4057. Parents/guardians do not need to be Penn State students, faculty, or staff to qualify for the sliding fee, however there are separate tuition rates for PSU affiliated families and those not affiliated with the University. Should a family's affiliation with Penn State University change while enrolled at the center, there will be a change to the appropriate tuition rate (for families whose initial enrollment is after July 1, 2023). Eligibility for the sliding fee is determined once per year, normally prior to enrollment and prior to signing a new contract for July of each year. In the event a family experiences a substantial drop in income, they have the option of going through the verification process again at any time. If verification upon initial enrollment or renewal of contract is not completed during requested time, you will be charged the highest rate.

## Age-Related Fee Changes

Children who turn three years old transition to the preschool classroom on or after their third birthday. If your child's birthday falls on or before the 15th of the month in which there is a fee change, you will be charged the preschool tuition rate for the month. If your child's birthday falls on the 16th or after, you will be charged the infant/toddler tuition rate for the month.

## Tuition Discount for Multiple Children Enrolled

Families with more than one child enrolled will receive a tuition discount for their **oldest** child of one sliding scale level lower than their verified rate. This discount goes into effect the month that the sibling starts care. Should a family enroll more than two children, the discount of one level lower than the verified rate will be applied to the tuition of the oldest children. This discount excludes kindergarten and summer camp tuition.

## Diaper/Wipe Program Fee

The Center can provide diapers and wipes for your child(ren) at a monthly fee. A monthly fee per child will be added to your tuition which will be indicated on a separate line on your tuition bill. This charge will not be pro-rated based upon the start or end date of enrollment. The fee will be added onto each month's tuition bill until the family provides a four-week written notice of withdrawal from the provision of diapers and wipes to the Center administration. The charge will be removed from the following month's tuition bill. The withdrawal forms will be located at the front desk.

## Late Pick Up Fee

Families are required to pick up their child from the center by 6 p.m. each day. If you arrive after 6 p.m., you will be charged a \$10 late pick up fee. An additional \$10 will be charged every 15 minutes that you are late picking up. These charges will be added to your next monthly bill. Should families become consistently late, you will be required to meet with the center director, and it may result in termination of care.

# Subsidy and Assistance

Subsidies are available to offset the cost of monthly child care payments for those who may qualify under a variety of programs. The Penn State Child Care Centers currently accept CCAMPIS (subsidy available to Penn State student-parents), Child Care Works (subsidy through the state), and Child Care Aware (subsidy available to current military families).

Parents of a subsidized child must complete all required paperwork on time to continue enrollment at the centers. Parents of subsidized children are also required to sign a fee agreement, agreeing to be personally responsible for the payment of tuition, in the event they become ineligible to receive child care subsidies. A registration fee will not be charged to the families who are receiving subsidy for care.

## **CCAMPIS – Child Care Assistance Means Parents in School – Assistance for Penn State Student-Parents**

Penn State Human Resources administers a student-parent child care subsidy program. Questions about qualifying should be directed to the Subsidy Coordinator – Child Care Services, Human Resources at 814-863-3731 or [subsidy@psu.edu](mailto:subsidy@psu.edu). At least one parent must be a Penn State student in a full-time degree seeking program and all parents/guardians in the household must be attending school or working at least part-time. Eligibility for subsidy is based on total household income (verification required). Eligibility is re-determined at the start of each semester. More information can be found on the [child care subsidy webpage](#).

## **Child Care Works - State Subsidy**

State child care subsidies through the Child Care Works may be available for low-income families through the Early Learning Resource Center, Region 8., (814-231-1352 or 1-888-440-2247). General information is available from the [Pennsylvania Department of Human Services website](#).

## **Child Care Aware of America – Military Subsidy**

Child Care Aware® of America partners with the United States Military and Department of Defense to serve and support their families through the Fee Assistance and Respite Child Care Programs. Specific information for each branch and the different programs available on the [Child Care Aware website](#).

## **Pre-K Counts Program (The Bennett Family Center ONLY)**

For children 3-5 (3 by August 31 of the school year), The Bennett Family Center offers this tuition-free [state-funded program](#) to qualifying families from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. during the “school year” (late August - Late May/early June) with the option to pay a fee for extended care for the hours between 7:30 a.m.-8:30 a.m. and 4:00 - 6:00 p.m. Also, Pre-K Counts families have the option to stay for the summer and pay tuition/possibly utilize subsidy.

# Leave of Absence and Withdrawal

## Leave of Absence

Situations sometimes arise that create a need for a child to withdraw from the programs temporarily and rejoin later. A leave of absence is available if a child will be away from the Center **at least for a 12-week period**.

It is the responsibility of the family to request a leave of absence form and submit the completed form at least four weeks prior to the child's last day of care. If less than a four-week notice is given, families will be responsible to pay the balance of a four-week period.

Children who are on a leave of absence approved by center administration will be given **priority for no longer than 1 year**. The Centers cannot guarantee that a space will be available as soon as the child is ready to return. The only way to ensure that a space will be reserved is to continue to pay for it while the child is absent. If the classroom is nearing capacity prior to a child's anticipated return, the child's family will be notified and given the option of resuming payment for a full-time space or remaining on leave. Families returning from leave have the option of re-enrolling in whichever center has a space at the desired time. If a return placement is offered and the family declines, the child is no longer given priority. At that time, they can submit a new application to be on the wait list.

## Withdrawal

A Withdraw from Care Form must be completed and turned in at the front desk four weeks prior to your child's last day at the Center. If notice is not given, final bills will include an additional four-week period charge following the final day of attendance.

# Research and Mentoring

## Research

All research conducted through either center must meet the approval of the Office of Research Protections. Children involved in University research is also addressed in University research policy RP03, The Use of Human Participants in Research. In addition, projects undergo an internal approval that includes the directors of each Center.

Once approved, parents receive information about the project along with informed consent forms. Children give their consent as well; they are never forced or coerced to participate.

Research projects are scheduled to minimize interference with regular classroom activities. Educators introduce the researchers and assure the children that they are permitted to participate and to leave the classroom if this is necessary. The researchers must provide copies of all required clearances as well as participate in Penn State's Mandated Reporter Training. Researchers visit the classroom to acquaint themselves with the children before they begin their project. Supporting research enables the centers to contribute to the study of human development. Parent cooperation in these endeavors is essential and greatly appreciated.

## Mentoring

An important function of the centers is to mentor future professionals and to demonstrate best practices for quality child care and early childhood education. Classroom observation times provide an opportunity for students from a variety of classes to observe high-quality child care and early education programs in action. As students progress through their coursework, opportunities for internships and student teaching are available. Visitors from public schools, community child care programs, and other universities may observe our classrooms.

# Confidentiality

Within the Center, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of the Center, Penn State Human Resources and other professional affiliates of the program who have a "need to know" in order to most appropriately and safely care for your child. Licensing authorities must also be provided access to child files and such organizations also have confidentiality obligations. All staff members have access to a child's records for the sake of consultations and development of program response to the child's individual needs. The child's parent/legal guardian has access to the child's records unless limited by law. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and other health related information of anyone associated with the Center. Please see [University Policy AD53](#) for more information on privacy.



Outside of the Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent/legal guardian of the child has given express written consent, except where otherwise permitted by law. Only with written permission can we release the results of a child's records to another agency, school, or individual. That release can only be valid for a period of up to one year. Release forms can be provided by the administrative staff. Parents/legal guardians will be provided with a document detailing the information that is to be shared outside of the center persons with whom the information will be shared, and the reason(s) for sharing the information. As part of the Pennsylvania Keystone STARS and the Pre-K Counts program, our teachers report final assessment results to the Early Learning Network. A document explaining this accompanies the enrollment packet.

You may observe children at our center with various needs or who exhibit behavior that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child's privacy. Employees of the Center are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you.

## **Mandated Reporting of Suspecting Child Abuse and/or Neglect**

The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. The employees of the Center are mandated reporters, under this law. The employees of the Center are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior or condition prior to making a report. Per University Policy AD 72, Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, all Penn State employees and authorized adults are required to complete the University's Building a Safe Penn State: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse training annually.

Mandated reporters, including the staff of the Centers, are generally immune from liability for making reports made to Child Protective Services, cooperating with or consulting with an investigation relating to a report, testifying in a proceeding relating to child abuse, or engaging in other action authorized by Section 6318 of this law, provided the reporter was acting in good faith.

## **Parents/Legal Guardians Right to Immediate Access**

Parents/Legal Guardians of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at the Center, as provided by law.

In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, official Mediation Document or Protection from Abuse Order) The Center must be provided with a Certified Copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s)/legal guardian(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents/legal guardians are afforded shared/ joint custody by order of the court, both parents/legal guardians must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order.

**In the absence of a court order** on file at the center, both parents/legal guardians shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law. The center cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent/legal guardian by request of the other parent/legal guardian, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent/legal guardian does not want the other parent/legal guardian to have access to their child, the center suggests that the parent/legal guardian keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's/legal guardians' right to immediate access. The center staff will contact the local police should a conflict arise. Once presented with a court order, the center is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees will not be able at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Court Order to be violated.

Visitors are asked to schedule appointments with the Center staff. An employee of the Center will always accompany visitors, throughout the Center.

## **Dismissal from Care**

The Center aims to help children grow and thrive in a safe and stimulating setting that is respectful of them, their parents/guardians, and our staff. We also comply with all relevant laws including the Americans with Disabilities Act. We make every effort to work with families to address concerns that arise which may compromise our ability to successfully reach these goals. In the rare event that attempts to work with families to resolve concerns and issues fail, we reserve the right to terminate care. We will give a minimum of two weeks' notice of termination, unless the safety and welfare of parents/legal guardians, children, staff and/or the integrity and professional standing of the Center is in immediate jeopardy.

## Reasons for Termination

Termination of a family's contract with the Center may result from, but is not limited to the following:

- Nonpayment of fees. Parents/guardians will receive communication from the program Director and Administrative Assistant if invoices have not been paid by the fifteenth day of the month of service. Parents/guardians will be notified that care will be terminated two weeks after the notification if the fee has not been paid in full or other arrangements made.
- Failure to comply with state licensing regulations as stated in Pennsylvania Code Title 55. Public Welfare, Chapter 3270. Child Day Care centers. Noncompliance includes but is not limited to providing required paperwork for the file (e.g. current health appraisals and updated emergency contact information).
- Failure to comply with program policies of the Center as stated in the family handbook and the enrollment forms for the child's participation in the program, which are provided to families when they enroll.
- Refusal to follow up on a referral for professional services recommended by the program (e.g. recommendation for developmental and/or behavioral evaluation/consultation).

## Arrival and Departure

### Arrival

The program opens at 7:30 a.m. Upon arrival at the Center, the parent(s)/ adult(s) dropping the child off must use their swipe card or Penn State digital ID on their phone to scan entrance into the building. Please make sure to keep your card/digital ID with you as you will need it to enter the building as well as re-entry from playground pick up. Parents/adults dropping the child off **MUST** sign the child into care on the sign-in sheet located in your child's classroom. Children are required to be escorted by their parent or the adult dropping them off, to their designated classroom. Children are required by regulation to be supervised at all times while in the child care facility. Our program has adopted a center-wide expectation of children needing to be "within an arm's reach" of an adult at all times. Please help your child to learn this expectation when you are with your child in the building each day.

If there is the need for a child to be given medication during school hours, the parents/legal guardians **MUST** alert educators and sign in medication that follows the medication policy found in the Health and Safety section of the handbook.

Parents are required to notify the child's teacher or Center Director of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. Examples of this may include: early pick up, alternative pick up person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the child care providers should be aware of to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

## Departure

The Center closes at 6:00 p.m. Parents or other authorized adults are required to sign their child out of care on the sign-out sheet located in the child's classroom. Once a parent signs their child out, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on the premises. Our program has adopted a center-wide expectation of children needing to be "within an arm's reach" of an adult at all times. Please help your child to learn this expectation when you are with your child in the building each day. We support a comfortable departure time, one that enables parents to greet their children, talk briefly with teachers, and gather clothing and materials from the classroom. Please plan to arrive before closing time in order to assure that the process does not keep our dedicated teaching staff over their scheduled time. Should you feel it necessary to have an in-depth discussion or meeting, it is most appropriate to schedule the meeting for a later date because the teacher is responsible for supervising the remaining children in the classroom.

## Notification of Absence

Parents/legal guardians are asked to inform the center by 9:00 a.m. if a child will not be at the center on a scheduled day. This will enable the center to maintain appropriate ratios and help the classroom teachers plan for the day more effectively.

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center personnel not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our staff to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center employees, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. The center will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality.

## Alternate/Emergency Pick Up

At enrollment, parents/legal guardians will be presented with an Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form. Parents/legal guardians are encouraged to include on this form any and all persons who, in the course of events, may be asked to pick-up their child from the center. In an emergency the child's custodial parents/legal guardians will be called first. If they cannot be reached, center employees will call the persons listed on this form until someone can be reached. Families are required to supply the center with one additional LOCAL contact persons with phone numbers and addresses, in the event that a parent cannot be reached.

Should the staff contact a parent/legal guardian, and the parent/legal guardian is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent/legal guardian to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the emergency list. Failure of the parent/legal guardian to pick up their child or arrange for a child to be picked up by someone else within one hour will result in a call to Police Services by a Center staff member.

Parents/legal guardians do not need to be listed on the Emergency Contact form. The nature of the parental/legal guardian relationship affords the parents/legal guardian (in the absence of a court order indicating otherwise) the right to pick up their child.

Parents/legal guardians will be asked to determine which persons (if any) on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form have the right to act “In Loco Parentis.” In Loco Parentis status affords the pick-up person the right to discuss confidential information about the child’s day including but not limited to, incident/accident reports, and behavior issues. In the absence of this designation, the people on the Emergency/Alternate Pick up form are only afforded the right to pick up the child. Staff are not permitted to discuss the child’s day with them.

The persons on the Emergency/Alternate pick-up form will be required to provide a Government issued photo ID, prior to the Center staff releasing the child.

All changes and/or additions to the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form must be made in writing and be dated and signed at the front desk. Only custodial parents/legal guardians have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

## **Emergency and Safety Information**

### **Emergency Closing and Inclement Weather Information**

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing in the following ways:

A text message of any delay or closing at University Park will be sent to all cell phones of faculty, staff, and students who enrolled in the PSUTXT service at [psualert.psu.edu/psualert](http://psualert.psu.edu/psualert).

A message will be sent via the center’s listserv and will be posted to the WJAC television station.

In the event of a two-hour delay, or campus opening at 10:00 a.m., the centers will open at 10:00 a.m. The teachers will arrive shortly before opening to prep classrooms, however, the classrooms will be unable to accept children until 10:00 a.m. In the event of any early dismissal on campus, the center will follow the guidelines set forth by the University and close at the same time the campus closes. An allowance of up to 30 minutes can be used to accommodate situations when a family is off campus and may need to commute to retrieve a child. We do ask that families communicate this need to the center. Should the staff be unable to reach the parents, the people listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the call of the pick-up location should the children need to be evacuated from the child care center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

If the University declares a full day campus closure, the centers will also be closed.

## **Alternate Safe Location**

It is always possible for emergency situations to occur which force the Center to close temporarily. Such emergencies include temporary loss of heat, water, or electrical service. Because these situations are likely to arise with little warning, parents are encouraged to make arrangements in advance for alternate care.

Should the administration of the center or any emergency services personnel determine the building which houses the child care center to be too dangerous to be occupied, the staff and children will be taken to an alternative safe location. Our center has a primary meeting place, a relocation site, and a shelter in place protocol. Once the children are assembled in the safest environment possible, the staff will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. The Emergency Plan is reviewed annually for accuracy and changes are submitted to both the Centre County and Penn State Emergency Management agencies and the educators and staff are offered an Emergency Plan training upon hire and then annually each year.

Much of the information that is needed to implement an Emergency Plan is treated as sensitive. Parts of the plan will not be released to the general public, however, as a parent you are able to review the entire plan in the facility.

## **Fire and Emergency Drills**

Fire and emergency drills are held at the centers in accordance with NAEYC and the Department of Human Services regulations. At times, families, staff, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the best way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans.

During a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation, parents may not sign children into or out of the program. Parents must wait until the drill is complete and children have returned to the building to sign their child into the program. Parents may feel free to wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete.

Parents wishing to sign their child out of the program during a fire/emergency drill or real fire/emergency situation are expected to have patience with the staff as they are trying to maintain order during an often hectic and dangerous situation. If the center is during a fire/emergency drill, parents will be required to wait until the drill is completed and the staff and children are returned to the building to sign their child out of the program. If the center is having a real fire/emergency situation, parents will be asked to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all staff and children and gives the staff permission to release children. Once again, it is important for parents and staff to work together, remain calm, and cooperate with the fire/emergency personnel and center administration during these important and critical situations.

## Parking Lot Safety

Safety is always a priority at the Center. In fact, we teach the children that safety is a priority every day as part of our PBIS initiatives. Safety begins in the parking lot before entering the building and continues when we leave the building at the end of the day.

Please know that we need every person to support this initiative by following these simple rules for parking lot safety at the Center:

- Enter and exit the parking lot slowly, being aware that at any time a child could unexpectedly run or walk into the driveway.
- Turn off your car and never let it idle while dropping off and picking up your child(ren). Idling vehicles are not only unsafe but are also a major cause of air pollution.
- Use your flashers when parked in the drop-off and pick-up spaces in front of the building.
- Children should hold an adult's hand while entering and exiting the building.
- Per Pennsylvania law, all children must be properly buckled into an approved car seat, at all times, when a vehicle is in motion. Failure to comply with this regulation is a reportable offense in Pennsylvania.

## Toys from Home

Due to the risk of damage, sharing issues, and loss, children are not permitted to bring in toys from home, unless specifically requested by the classroom teacher for use as part of the curriculum. Parents are responsible for enforcing this policy with their child. Parents are encouraged to consult the classroom teacher should they find their child is having difficulty with this policy. Children in classrooms with nap/rest time are permitted to include with their bedding supplies, one plush/non-musical toy with which to nap/rest. This toy is to be placed with the bedding supplies and use of it will only be allowed at nap/rest time. All toys brought in for use as part of the curriculum, and/or for nap/rest time will be inspected by classroom staff for safety and appropriateness and may be prohibited at the sole discretion of the staff should they deem it unsafe or inappropriate.

# Screen Time for Children

Our Center follows the guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics as well as Keystone STARS and NAEYC for screen time use by children.

Standards regarding the use of digital materials are below:

- No screen time for children under the age of 2 except in cases where the use is permitted due to appropriate assistive technologies and/or curriculum and assessment documentation.
- Allow children to explore digital materials in the context of human interactions, with an adult as mediator and co-player. As with shared book reading, use shared technology time as an opportunity to talk with children, use new vocabulary, and model appropriate use.
- Avoid passive screen time. Electronic media materials used to support and extend classroom interests, themes, and activities are permitted pending they follow the appropriate guidelines for time limits.
- Use technology as an active and engaging tool when appropriate to provide infants and toddlers with access to images of their families and friends, animals and objects in the environment, and a wide range of diverse images of people and things they might not otherwise encounter.
- Incorporate assistive technologies as appropriate for children with special needs and/or developmental delays. Time limits do not apply to children with disabilities using electronic media assistive devices.
- Make digital audio or video files to document children's progress as part of the assessment process.
- Preschool children can be allowed a maximum of 15 minutes per week of screen time which includes all of the above-mentioned uses of screen-based technologies.

# Health and Wellness Information

## Health and Illness

Our medical policy is designed to reduce the spread of infectious illness in the classrooms, to protect children from accidents as much as possible, and to respond appropriately in the event of a medical emergency.

The control and prevention of infectious diseases in childcare depends on communication between parents, caregivers, health departments, and primary health care providers.

When the Center staff has a concern about your child's health, they will give you a call to discuss symptoms and determine a course of action. Depending on the specific case, this may or may not mean that a parent/guardian will be expected to pick up their child immediately.

Illness is always an issue in child care settings. While we understand the needs of working and student parents/guardians, we must protect enrolled children from contagion. We try to be guided by common sense, while following state regulations on exclusion, and ask you to join us in working to ensure a healthy Center for all children.

Every day, our teachers conduct an informal health check of each child. This health check is conducted as soon as possible after the child enters the child care facility and whenever a change occurs while that child is in care.

The health check addresses each child's health to determine recent illness or injury to the child or family. This helps reduce the transmission of communicable diseases and enables teachers to plan for necessary care while the child is at the Center.

Your child should be well enough to participate in all scheduled activities, as we are unable to provide additional teacher coverage for ill or mildly ill children. If it is deemed necessary for a child to be excluded from a classroom until a parent arrives there is space in the Director and Assistant Director's offices. Every effort is made to spend time outdoors with all children (including infants) daily. Please keep this in mind if your child is ill as we will not be able to keep classrooms from going outside due to illness.

Parents are required to follow the Medication Policy if a child must receive medication during the day. The information below must be recorded:

- Name of Medication
- Dose of medication
- How often the medication should be administered
- Conditions for use
- Precautions to follow

## Health Appraisals

Completed health appraisals are due in the Center office no later than 30 days after initial enrollment or after your child's update is due. It is strongly encouraged to have the initial form completed and turned into the center at the in-take meeting. As per State regulations the initial health appraisal;

- For an infant, it must be dated no more than 3 months prior to the first day of attendance at the Center.
- Young toddlers must be dated no more than 6 months prior to the first day of attendance at the Center.
- Older toddlers or preschool must be dated no more than 1 year prior to the first day of attendance at the Center.

The Center will provide a reminder when your child is due for a well baby exam.

Failure to provide required health appraisals may constitute grounds for termination of care.

Well Baby Exams: Regular health appraisals must be maintained in your child's permanent file.

- Approved forms from the state are available at the Center. Schedules for health appraisals are 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, & 24 months, and every year subsequent to their second birthday.
- A doctor's written notice is required if there is a delay in any scheduled immunizations. In addition, if your doctor chooses to skip any of the health appraisals times, a written notice is required for your child's file.
- The Center requests vaccinations based upon the Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommended immunization schedule. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning and the state of Pennsylvania permit written exemptions for part, or all immunizations based upon a religious or medical exemption. The Centers will require a signed exemption form and/or physician's written statement when required.

## Communicable Diseases

The Center follows the health/communicable disease policies developed based on the guidance provided from American Academy of Pediatrics, Center for Disease Control and Office of Child Development and Early Learning.

We will temporarily exclude a child or send the child home as soon as possible if any of the following individual conditions exist:

1. A fever of 100.0-degree Fahrenheit
2. A combination of symptoms and behavioral changes indicating possible severe illness, including:
  - Lethargy that is more than expected tiredness,
  - Lack of responsiveness,
  - Uncontrolled coughing,
  - Inexplicable irritability or persistent crying;
  - Difficult breathing,
  - Quickly spreading rash,
  - Other unusual signs for the child.
3. Diarrhea is defined by stools that are more frequent or less formed than usual for a child and not associated with changes in diet or medication. Exclusion is required for:
  - All diapered children whose stool is not contained in the diaper.
  - All diapered children if stool frequency exceeds 2 or more than typical for a child and is unrelated to medication/diet changes.
  - All children if the stool contains blood or mucus.
  - All toilet trained children if is causing ‘accidents.’

Readmission after diarrhea can occur when diapered children have their stool contained by the diaper (even if the stools remain loose) and when toilet-trained children are not having “accidents.” Children with diarrhea illness of infectious origin generally may be allowed to return to child care once the diarrhea resolves, except for children with diarrhea caused by *Salmonella typhi*, *Shigella* or *E. coli* O157:H7.

4. Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools.
5. Vomiting illness (one episode of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines that the cause of the vomiting is not contagious, and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
6. Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs or symptoms.
7. Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider or health department official determines that the child is noninfectious.
8. Rash with fever or behavioral changes or rapidly spreading until a physician determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.
9. Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge), exclusion shall be required only if the health authority recommends it.

Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The Center requires a child to remain at home during the first 24 hours of antibiotic treatment for any contagious illness (ear infections and tick bites are not contagious although they are treated with antibiotics and do not require remaining out for 24 hours).

The following are among those conditions categorized as “highly contagious.” Information about duration of exclusion for specific illnesses will be provided by the Center Director.

- Pediculosis (head lice)
- Scabies
- Tuberculosis
- Impetigo
- Strep throat or other streptococcal infection
- Varicella-Zoster (Chickenpox)  
(requires absence from childcare until all pox is dry and crusted over)
- Pertussis
- Mumps
- Hepatitis A Virus
- Measles
- Rubella
- Unspecified respiratory tract illness
- Shingles (herpes zoster)
- Herpes simplex
- COVID-19

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center personnel not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our staff to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a “need to know” basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center employees, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. The center will take all measures necessary to protect your child’s confidentiality.

## Notification of Highly Contagious Illness

When children in the Center have been exposed to one of the above “highly contagious” illnesses, families will be notified via posting or email of an information fact sheet on the illness. The fact sheet includes information on symptoms, course of disease, treatment, etc. The Centers will take all measures necessary to protect your child’s confidentiality.

## Accidents and Emergencies

Protecting the safety of the children in our facility is extremely important. Part of our education plan includes teaching and explaining safety rules to your child. In addition, the Center maintains a high ratio of adults to children in order to closely monitor various activities in the classroom and on the playground. The staff constantly monitors the facility to remedy unsafe conditions and parents are also asked to alert us to hazards or concerns that they observe. In spite of all of our efforts, accidents do happen, in part because the curiosity and vigorous activity of young children make them injury prone.

Our teachers are trained in adult and pediatric first-aid, CPR, and AED.

In case of a medical emergency, your child’s teacher will call 911 immediately prior to any attempt to contact the parents or the Directors. Staff will then contact parents and the Director. If the parents are unavailable, and the emergency requires emergency transport, the child’s teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance to Mt. Nittany Medical Center.

Parents can meet emergency vehicles at the hospital if they are unable to get to the Center in time to accompany their child in an emergency vehicle. The teacher will bring a copy of the child’s emergency form containing any known medical issues or allergies as well as any medications that are administered at the Center.

Parents are responsible for any expenses that arise from accidents or medical emergencies that occur at the center. It is expected that children enrolled in the Center will be covered by a family health insurance policy.

In the event of a minor injury requiring basic cleaning and first aid treatment, you will be notified by an incident report form. Copies of this form are distributed to:

- The parent (original copy)
- The child’s file in the center
- Penn State Office of Risk Management (when requested)

In the event of an injury requiring hospitalization or medical attention by a professional such as a pediatrician or dentist for an injury that occurred at the center, additional information must be documented. The Department of Human Services is notified, and a copy is sent to the local office. Upon release from the hospital, or following an appointment with a doctor/specialist, a copy of the child’s discharge papers needs to be returned to the center for the child’s file.

## Allergies and Intolerances

*Due to the enrollment of children in our program with peanut allergies and life-threatening anaphylaxis reactions to peanuts and tree nuts (almond, Brazil nut, cashew, filbert/hazel nut, hickory nut, pecan, pine nut, pistachio, macadamia, and walnut), we maintain a nut-free program. Please support this effort to keep our children safe by refraining from bringing in any food product or items containing peanuts or tree nuts. If you have any questions, please contact the center director.*

*For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the “Authorization for Emergency Care for Children with Severe Allergies” form, detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be filled out by the child’s physician and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every twelve months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician’s orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child’s allergy. This form can be obtained by request from the center administrator team.*

*The center staff and parents will develop a “food allergy action plan” for children identified as having severe food allergies and will post the plan in the child’s regular classroom and in the regular food preparation areas.*

*Members of center staff will be trained in common emergency response such as administration of the EpiPen.*

*Parents/guardians are encouraged to assist in training the center staff to avoid and manage allergic reactions and emergencies related to their child’s individual situation.*

*At conference time, parents/guardians and center staff will review and update the treatment strategy for a child with severe food allergies/intolerances.*

*Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein.*

## Meal Times

Learning takes place during every part of our day, especially during meal times. Children improve their fine motor skills, learn how to eat in response to hunger, gain independence, and practice social skills, among many other skills. Breakfast, lunch and afternoon snack are served every day of operation and are included in our monthly tuition. The centers participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which is a federal program that provides reimbursement to the centers for nutritious meals and snacks for eligible enrolled children. Because of this reimbursement, centers are required to provide family-style meals that contain whole grains, are nutritionally balanced and meet serving size recommendations. The centers prefer and will make every effort to accommodate necessary substitutions due to food allergies and other special dietary needs (such as a vegetarian diet, food sensitivity or parent preference). Additional documentation from a physician may be required. A monthly menu is shared with families in advance.

Infant feeding is based on each infant’s individual feeding schedule and follows the CACFP guidelines. The centers provide infant rice and oatmeal cereal. In addition, we provide Stage1 baby food. Families can provide breastmilk, infant formula, or choose the center provided formula. At 8 months of age, we can serve your child “cut” or “chunk” table foods. Our educators will engage in continued conversations with you to determine what foods from our menu are appropriate to serve. Families can provide components of the infant’s meals until one year of age. By 1 year, all children should be transitioned to our center’s menu. If it is suggested that your child receive cereal prior to 4 months, or table foods prior to 8 months, a pediatrician’s note will be required.

## Medication Administration

When it becomes necessary for your child to take medication, we encourage you to attempt to dispense the medication on a schedule that does not include the period of time your child is in the Center. If this is not possible, the guidelines below will be followed:

The Center will only dispense over the counter and/or prescription medication that is in original, labeled containers, and is accompanied by a doctor's note with explicit dosage and administration instructions. The Center will only give medication to the child for whom the doctor's note is written and for whom the medication container is labeled. One doctor's note per course of treatment is required. If a child, for example, is to be given a course of antibiotics for 10 days, the doctor's note must identify the dates that the medication is to be given.

Parents are required to complete a Medication Form each day that medication is to be dispensed. Medication Forms can be found in your child's classroom. All Medication Forms, doctor's notes, and medications are to remain in the Center over the course of treatment.

The Center will dispense over the counter, fever reducing/pain medication (ex. Children's Tylenol, Children's Motrin) on an as needed basis, with a doctor's note detailing the recommended reasons for administration and appropriate dosage. The doctor's note for medication on an as needed basis must be updated every six (6) months. Parents are required to supply the fever reducing/pain medication in its original container and clearly labeled with their child's name. (One note and bottle of fever reducing/pain medication is required per child.) Prior to administering fever reducing/pain medication, staff will contact a parent or person listed on emergency contact form, if a parent cannot be reached, to inform them of our need to administer the medication. Staff will also inform the parent or emergency contact person if it is necessary for the child to be picked up due to illness. Refer to the policy listed above regarding picking up ill children.

If prescription medication is not properly labeled by a pharmacist, it will be given back to the parent and medication will not be administered until the correct labeled prescription is obtained. It will be the responsibility of staff to check expiration dates on medication monthly.

In the event your child is prescribed an Epi-Pen or AUVI-Q, the Center requires that the parent supply **two (2) EpiPens or AUVI-Q's** to be left at the Center.

# Negotiating and Resolving Difficulties

When a concern arises parents/legal guardians are asked to contact administrative staff (director/assistant directors) to schedule a meeting with all parties to discuss resolution. Should an agreeable resolution not be reached parents/legal guardians will be provided with the Center's grievance policy and procedures upon request.

If there is a difficulty or difference in interactions between families and program staff, the following process should be followed:

If a family has a concern, they should first discuss it with the supervising teacher of the child's class. If the supervising teacher and family cannot resolve the concern together and to the satisfaction of both, the matter should be brought to the attention of the building administration. A conference involving the supervising teacher, family, and administrators may be arranged at this time. If a resolution is not reached, the matter will then be brought to the attention of the senior leadership of HR operations for their consideration.

If at any time while present in the building an adult displays disruptive behavior such as verbal abuse, harassment, or threats to staff/children/or other families they will be asked to leave the premises immediately. In a case where it is deemed necessary, University police will be informed of the incident and the name of the adult(s) involved. The Center will then follow any directives issued by University police. Access will be denied to any adult that poses a risk to children, staff, or other adults at the facility.

## Parent/Teacher Conferences and Child Assessments

Early childhood assessment is integral to the philosophy and curriculum of our program. During the "intake" meeting, when you enroll your child, we will use the developmental history to inform planning. We consider this important meeting as the first assessment of your child's development so that we can continue to meet the developmental needs of your child and challenge him or her to new levels.

A child's individual growth and timing of development is valued. A variety of open-ended and developmentally appropriate opportunities and materials are made available to children throughout that day. These opportunities are selected based on a teacher's daily observations and interactions with the children. These opportunities or activities encompass the appropriate developmental domains including physical, social, emotional, and cognitive areas of development and are offered in the context of both the individual child, the class, and school community.

The teaching staff will use a variety of tools to support their observations and recommendations for continued growth and these will be shared with you during parent/teacher conferences. Our staff utilize a research-based assessment tool, Teaching Strategies GOLD, which follows a child's development and learning along a continuum from infancy through the preschool years. The centers also use the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional 2 as screening tools for development.

Assessment is a collaborative process and begins as soon as you enroll your child with our program. At each parent/teacher conference we will make curriculum decisions based on the material shared and after gathering your input.

## **Guidance Policy and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports**

The Centers have developed practices, approaches and curriculum to promote children's social-emotional and behavioral health. Through building strong, supportive and nurturing relationships with children and families along with following the guiding principles of the PBIS model (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports) we work to eliminate expulsion, suspension and other exclusionary strategies and practices when challenging behaviors present in the classroom environment.

Our Center wide practice of PBIS establishes age-appropriate expectations promoted by nurturing, high-quality environments. Each Center has created their own Center-wide expectations.

The Child Care Center at Hort Woods supports three Center-wide expectations of:

**We are SAFE,**  
**We are HELPFUL,**  
**We are RESPECTFUL.**

The Bennett Family Center supports two center-wide expectations of:

**Be SAFE.**  
**Be RESPECTFUL.**

Each Center has established a PBIS team comprised of educators, administrators, and community consultants. The team's expertise is used to support classroom data collection, create individualized strategies and supports, set goals for children and educators, and provide a framework for behavioral support plans when challenging behaviors present with consistency and frequency. Some of the strategies used include, but are not limited to, giving more attention to the positive behaviors than the negative, using predictable schedules, establishing routines within routines, directly teaching behavioral expectations, and intentionally teaching peer-related social skills. The classroom educators and administration will partner with families throughout this process. Asking families to partner with us in the behavior process allows the family to contribute valuable information and allows staff to build a positive relationship with the family. The center will provide the time necessary to honor the process of data collecting and developmentally appropriate goal setting for children. Meetings will take place to review data collection and goals. The team will continue to have meetings on a regular basis until the long-term goal is reached. The center can provide a list of available resources for families needing outside services. When all resources have been exhausted, the Center may recommend that the family seek care that would better serve their child's needs.

At no point is it acceptable for there to be harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited: corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment; punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training; humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child (this also includes the use of abusive or profane language); subjecting the child to any type of malicious coercion; isolating the child alone in a confined space; requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods for the child's age.

In a case where imminent danger exists to any child (such as standing/running onto a roadway, trying to climb over the playground fence, or trying to cause physical harm to another person, etc.) staff may offer physical guidance. Families will be notified anytime physical guidance is offered in these urgent situations. Educators follow guidelines regarding physical guidance that have been developed by the Youth Programs Compliance Unit.

The Center reserves the right to suspend or terminate care if it is determined that the program is unable to reasonably accommodate a child's needs.

## **Parent Collaborative Group**

Penn State Child Care Centers are committed to building and sustaining a welcoming community that includes all families, educators, and administrators. We seek active engagement and involvement from families and value contributions to the program.

Each Center has a parent group, which is a collaborative partnership of families, center educators, and administrators. The group typically meets monthly during the academic year, though flexible based upon center events and needs. Meetings and events are held during mutually convenient times and location for families, Center educators, and administrators.

Members of the parent group include a parent chair (or co-chairs), a secretary, room parents, the Director, Assistant Director and teacher representatives. Volunteer co-chairs serve one-year terms. All families, Center educators, and administration are invited to participate as much as possible. The Parent Group serves in an advisory capacity to enhance the mission of the Centers. Initiatives undertaken by parent group members may include:

- Planning events with a focus on building an inclusive community
- Fundraising to support Center initiatives
- Modeling a collaborative approach that creates a safe place for all families and Center employees to share their thoughts, opinions, and ideas with intention to strengthen the overall program for children and families
- Sharing interests and subject area expertise in order to help the center fulfill its mission, vision, values, and goals
- Recruiting a diverse group of families to participate in meetings and Center activities

Center administration will work with the parent chair or co-chairs to ensure that all parent group activities comply with relevant University policies.