

Family Handbook



2022

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Welcome to Manchester Early Learning Center (MELC) childcare programs. We are glad that you have chosen MELC to meet your family's childcare needs and we look forward to building a partnership together in caring for your child. Our programs serve children from preschool through high school. MELC childcare programs welcome children from all ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds, knowing that playing and developing together at a very young age is a basis for better understanding in the future.

Introduction

PHILOSOPHY

Focus on the Child

- All children benefit from the company of others, in opportunities that allow children to socialize with other children and adults. These interactions contribute to developing in each child a positive self-image.
- At MELC, a child's natural creativity is supported by activities in art, music, dance, and dramatic play, exploring each child's creative potential.

The Family

- MELC is a part of the child's extended family, working with families to provide the very best care for the child.
- Family involvement is encouraged in all that we do, and families are a valued part of our program of learning and care for the child.

The Environment

- All children learn best in an environment that respects their individual growth and development.
- This means an environment individualized to meet the needs of each child.
- MELC is physically and emotionally a safe place in which to develop a child's trusts in their world.

MISSION AND VISION

Mission Statement

MELC provides year-round, affordable, quality educational experiences for preschool and school-age children and their families.

Vision Statement

To be the premier Manchester area early learning center, promoting life-long success for children and families through partnerships with the community.

PROGRAM GOALS

MELC Core Values

At the center of MELC's core values are the families and children we serve by putting families and children first. Surrounding the children and families in the core values are four primary areas of focus to help us provide a consistent high-quality program. MELC staff members use these four areas to evaluate the programs offered, evaluate staff, prepare program goals, and guide our daily interactions with each other and the children and families.

Perform as a Strong Team

- Support each other
- Collective responsibility
- Effective communication

Be a Positive Role Model

- Positive attitude with an open mind
- Use good judgement
- Behave ethically

Create the Highest Quality Program

- Maintain a safe environment
- Provide fun, educational opportunities
- Ongoing professional development

Meaningful Connections

- Become part of each child's extended family
- Meet each child's individual needs
- Treat each child and family with respect

Operations

PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Ages Served: 3 to 5 years
Program Hours: 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Location: Main Office
80 Waddell Road
Manchester, CT 06040
Phone: (860) 647-9659
Fax: (860) 649-5790

SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAM

Ages Served: Kindergarten - 12th grade
Program Hours: Varies based in school schedule

Location(s): Manchester Public Schools and Odyssey Community School
Phone: (860) 647-9659
Fax: (860) 649-5790

PROGRAM CALENDAR

Annual closing calendar provided at enrollment and prior to the start of a new year. Please see the main office for a copy of the calendar.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY

Delayed Opening

If the Manchester Public Schools delay opening, then MELC Preschool will open at 8:00 a.m. and close at regular hours. MELC school-age programs would be closed for the morning program.

Early Closing

If the Manchester Public Schools dismiss early, there will be no after school program. MELC preschool will close at the discretion of the Executive Director. Early closing decisions will be based on the time and intensity of the weather to ensure the safety of the children, families, and staff.

Closing

If the Manchester Public Schools close, then MELC will be closed. In the event of one of the following situations, MELC will close its childcare programs:

- A program site does not meet licensing requirements (power outage).
- There are any weather-related emergencies.
- A state of emergency is declared.

In the event that we are unable to notify you, please stay tuned to local news stations for closing information.

Program

COMMUNICATION

Open Door Policy

MELC's childcare programs offer an "open door" to families at all times. We encourage you to come for a visit when your schedule permits. Family involvement enhances childcare programs and we welcome your continued support.

Daily Communication

Creating strong connections between home and school is very important to your child's success in our program. These strong home and school connections are built on daily communication with the teaching staff. During these conversations, both you and your child's teacher can share information including your child's day at school and home, as well as information on how your child is learning and developing in our program. During your orientation, you and your child's teacher will discuss the best method for communication (email, in-person, written notes, or telephone calls).

English as a Second Language

Your child's teacher will discuss with you languages spoken at home during your child's orientation. For families that speak a language other than English, you and your child's teacher will create a plan on how your home language will be used in your child's classroom. The teacher will also create a plan for translation resources if requested.

ATTENDANCE

Sign In/Out

Families are required to check in and check out with staff upon arrival to classroom. The child will be signed in and out of program through our online member tracking system (MTS).

If someone else is to pick up your child, please make sure that the person is an authorized pick-up individual. This individual would need a valid form of identification (driver's license or state ID card). Please be sure you notify the staff who will be picking up your child. No one under the age of 16 is able to be listed as an emergency contact person or able to sign your child out of any of our programs.

When picking up or dropping off your child, please bring all children in your vehicle into the center. No child under the age of 12 years old should be left unattended in vehicles. This is a legal concern that would require the staff to notify the Department of Children and Families. No vehicle should be left idling in the parking lot.

It is important for you to keep us updated on any changes to your emergency contact names and telephone numbers. Your child's teacher will also ask you throughout the school year to update this information to ensure that MELC has the most current emergency contact information on file.

Absences

If your child is going to be absent from the center, we ask that you call the main office to report the absence. If you know that your child will not be attending, please let us know in advance whenever possible. If your child is absent for over one week with no communication, your child's classroom teacher will try to make contact via phone call. If there is no follow up, a letter and/or e-mail will be

sent asking a meeting to be set up with the Director and classroom teacher with a deadline of one week. If there is no contact made after the deadline, a final letter and/or e-mail will be sent with the child's withdrawal date.

Late Pick-Up

If you are unable to pick your child up by the scheduled closing time of the program, you are required to notify the program. Families arriving after the stated closing time will be considered late.

The late pick-up fee is charged per site and follows this fee structure:

If you pick up between:	Your late pick-up fee is:
➤ 6:01 - 6:15 p.m.	\$10 per location
➤ 6:16 - 6:30 p.m.	\$30 per location
➤ 6:31 - 6:45 p.m.	\$50 per location
➤ 6:46 - 7:00 p.m.	\$70 per location

Late Pick-Up Procedures

If a family member does not contact the program 15 minutes after closing time, the staff will begin to make attempts to locate the family at home and work. If family members are unable to be reached, the staff will contact the emergency numbers listed in the child's file.

If no contact has been made with the family or emergency contacts within 30 minutes after the scheduled closing time of the program, the staff will notify the Director and then call the local police non-emergency number and ask for assistance in locating the family.

If still no contact has been made with the family, the staff will notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Care Line at 1-800-842-2288. A representative from DCF will come to the program and place the child in protective custody until the family can be notified.

Multiple Late Pick-ups

If a family is late three times within a 12-month period, the Director will initiate a discussion with the family regarding the stated policies. A verbal warning may be issued at this time. If a family exceeds this limit, the Director reserves the right to discontinue the family's use of the MELC's childcare services due to chronic lateness.

Withdrawal from Program

If you need to withdraw your child from the program, we request a two-week notice.

CURRICULUM

MELC's preschool program uses a nationally recognized developmental curriculum, The Creative Curriculum, which reflects the latest research on child development, learning, and effective teaching. This curriculum also allows teachers to make decisions about the education of children based on the knowledge they gain from forming relationships with each child and his/her family. It is aligned with the Connecticut Early Learning Development Standards and ensures that we are meeting the state standards for children birth through age five.

Our curriculum is based on objectives for development and learning in the following areas:

1. Cognition: making sense of the world, staying with something and working hard to solve problems

2. Social/Emotional: understanding his/herself, his/her feelings, and how to play with other people.
3. Physical Health: learning to take care of his/herself and to do things with his/her body and hands so that he/she grows strong and healthy.
4. Language and Literacy: communicating using his/her body, language, signs and written communication.
5. Creative Arts: enjoying music, dance and art and expressing his/her self in these ways
6. Mathematics: understanding numbers and how to use them, counting, patterns, measuring, and shapes
7. Science: understanding the world around us, including living things, the earth and space and energy
8. Social Studies: understanding the world and knowing about the people in it (starting with his/her family, then the community and world).

All MELC teaching staff are trained in the implementation and assessment of Creative Curriculum through college coursework or MELC sponsored training.

MELC's school - age program's offer activities that focus on academic support, healthy lifestyles / wellness, creative arts, STEM exploration, character development, leadership along with college and career readiness for our high school students.

ASSESSMENT (PRESCHOOL)

Assessment is a process of gathering information about your child's development and learning styles. MELC uses several different assessment tools to track your child's development and plan daily curriculum. All assessments are conducted in the child's classroom by his or her teachers. The assessments are performed during daily classroom activities. Children will not be assessed under special classroom situation (when the child is ill or during a special classroom event). On an ongoing basis, teachers will gather observations, photographs of interactions, work samples, etc. and input them into the children's portfolios. All this assessment data will be used to determine the child's progress and create a developmental profile that shows what the child knows and what he/she is able to do. In turn, this information can then be used to scaffold each child's learning.

After your child's first few weeks in program, you will be given a developmental screening tool to be completed at home with your child. Your child's teacher will also complete one with your child during program. This is a screening tool that provides families and teachers with information about the developmental status of their child across five developmental areas: communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social. This screening tool is intended to give a first glimpse into a child's development, so our teachers can best meet each child's individual needs.

Conferences

Our staff is always available to work with you in meeting the individual needs of your child. On a daily basis at drop off and pick up, you and your child's teacher will have an opportunity to share the happenings of your child's day. If you or your child's teacher find it helpful to discuss your child on a more formal basis, a conference can be arranged. Conferences are held once a year and families have the opportunity to sign up for a date/time that is convenient for them. At conferences, your child's teacher will review your child's portfolio and child profiles. These written reports will show family members what the child knows, what he/she is able to do, the next steps the teachers will take, and what strategies/extensions the families can do with the child at home. Prior to your child's conference, the teacher will send home a pre-conference form to gather your insight into your child's development and progress, as well as give you an opportunity to identify goals you would like to see your child work towards and ask any questions you may have.

Transition to Kindergarten

When children reach kindergarten age, another transition begins in preparing for this stage of school. MELC understands that this transition can be an exciting but nerve-wracking time for families and their child. As your child prepares to make this move, MELC offers support and resources to families to help make the transition as smooth and seamless as possible. Families are provided information about registering for public school, and MELC offers assistance to families in registering for kindergarten. Your child's teacher will help you and your child feel that they are ready for school. Classroom discussions and activities will focus around on the transition to kindergarten and what to expect when going to elementary school. If families would like their child's record transferred to their designated school for kindergarten, we require prior written consent from the child's parents/guardians.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Philosophy

MELC's approach to discipline is to help the child learn self-control within the environment. Discipline is viewed as a learning process. In our programs, this process is carried out by:

- Establishing roles and limits that are clearly defined and developmentally appropriate.
- Providing a learning environment where there is consistency and a daily routine of activity.
- Redirecting to refocus a child's attention and avoid unnecessary confrontations.

A positive approach is essential to reinforce a child's success. Appropriate discipline requires planning, setting clear limits, reasonable expectations, redirection and logical consequences. Staff shall not use physical punishment such as shaking or hitting, be neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. Staff will never use threats or derogatory remarks nor do they withhold or threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline. No child will be physically restrained. Families are asked to follow these same guidelines at home and must refrain from any form of physical or verbal punishment while at our program sites.

Guidance and Discipline

MELC teaching staff shares the philosophy that guidance and discipline are opportunities to support each child's development of positive problem-solving skills and self-control. We understand that children are constantly striving for independence and an understanding of their environment. Therefore, it is our responsibility to create a safe and consistent environment that will enable them to gain self-confidence, self-control and an understanding of his or her feelings. We believe guidance and discipline are part of a lifelong continuous growth process. Together we can foster each child's development in making appropriate choices for today and for their future. We believe that children should be encouraged to verbalize their feelings, frustrations and anger in a constructive manner. They should be encouraged to resolve problems and work out solutions with appropriate staff interaction (unless it's dangerous to do so). Our goal is to help the child learn from his/her experience, separate the action from the child and to always treat the child with respect. Our guidance and discipline goals are carried out by:

- Teachers who serve as role models for appropriate behavior: Our teaching staff sets examples and models ways for children to express their feelings and effectively problem-solve.

- Creating an environment that is comfortable and safe for all children: Our programs offer a variety of age-appropriate toys and activities, which provide children with the opportunity to experiment with their world and socialize with their peers.
- Stating clear and concise rules: Children are better able to express themselves and successfully work within their environments when they are aware of what is expected and of their limits.
- Acknowledging and respecting each child's feelings: Teachers help children to express and understand their feelings, which enables them to recognize their feelings and express them in a positive manner.
- Using redirection to refocus the child's attention towards a more positive outcome: Redirection helps to avoid unnecessary confrontations while guiding children to make appropriate choices.
- Developing consistent and ongoing communication between teaching staff and families: Open lines of communication regarding each child's day will help the adults in the child's life better understand his/her stage of development. This shared knowledge will give the adults the information necessary to better meet the needs of each child.

Procedures

All staff will review and be familiar with MELC's Behavior Management Plan. To handle inappropriate / unacceptable behavior, MELC will use the following steps.

1. Behavior Reports will be completed for the following unacceptable behaviors:
 - A child who continuously interrupts the flow and continuity of the program and requires constant one – on – one attention.
 - A child inflicting physical or emotional harm on other children or staff.
 - A child who is consistently unable to follow the rules and expectations of the program.
 - A child / family who uses abusive language or threatens other children or staff members.
 - A child who continues to behave against MELC's childcare policies.
2. If a child receives three Behavior Reports within a four-month period or if the Program Manager / Head Teacher have concerns about developmental delays, separation anxiety, etc., the Program Manager will fill out a Referral Form and email it (with all supporting documentation) to their Director.
3. Within one week of receiving the Referral Form, the Director will observe the child and facilitate a meeting to agree on a Behavior Plan. The meeting will include the Program Manager / Head Teacher and any appropriate MELC / Board of Education staff or consultants. Program Managers / Head Teachers will be responsible for notifying families of the meeting and the intention to create the plan. Family members are invited to attend. Behavior Plans may include (but are not limited to) strategies to be implemented in the program / classrooms and requests of the family to seek referrals or outside support.
4. Within one week of the meeting the Director will provide the Program Manager / Head Teacher with a formal Behavior Plan. The Behavior Plan will address the function of the behavior and include positive behavioral supports. The Program Manager / Head Teacher will be responsible for communicating the Behavior Plan with the family and obtain a Family / guardian signature before beginning the plan.
5. Directors will conduct observations and meet with the Program Manager / Head Teacher within the first four weeks of the Behavior Plan's implementation.

6. If unacceptable behaviors continue after four weeks of consistently using the Behavior Plan, the Program Manager / Head Teacher will submit an email request for a meeting with their Director.
7. Within one week of the request, the Director will set up a meeting with the Program Manager / Head Teacher to discuss next steps.
8. Immediately following the meeting, the Director will draft a letter to families detailing next steps. The approved letter will be signed by the Program Manager / Head Teacher and delivered to the family.

MELC's goal is to limit or eliminate the use of suspension, expulsion, and other exclusionary measures. However, if at any point in the procedure, the Program Manager / Head Teacher feel as though a suspension is necessary while waiting for plans, meetings, etc., they may contact their Director and discuss this option. Suspensions will only be granted if children are inflicting physical or emotional harm on other children or consistently requiring staff to be one – on – one. Directors should immediately respond to suspensions requests by either: granting the suspension, offering strategic support or providing additional staff to assist.

If the above steps have been followed and the child continues to display unacceptable behaviors. Or, in the case of extreme behaviors, the Manchester Early Learning Center reserves the right to exclude children from the program. Exclusions must be approved by the Director of Operations. Whenever possible, MELC will provide assistance to the family in accessing services and alternative care placement.

If at any point in the procedure staff or families do not agree with any of the decisions made, they may email a request for a meeting with Director of Operations. The Director of Operations will schedule a meeting within 1 week of the request. That meeting will include the Program Manager / Head Teacher and Director.

MELC's Behavior Management Policy complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The staff at MELC understands that situations may arise where there may be a difference of opinion or difficulty experienced by families in our program. Our staff is committed to helping resolve these difficulties by providing a respectful and confidential protocol for all parties to follow.

1. Discuss the problem with your child's classroom teacher.
2. If the problem still exists, set up a meeting to discuss the problem with the Director.
3. If you feel the problem is not resolved, you may set up a meeting with the Director of Operations/Executive Director.

If issues remain unresolved, you may contact the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (450 Columbus Boulevard Suite 302, Hartford, CT 06103) at 1-800-282-6063 OR 1-860-500-4450.

In case of abuse/neglect or life threatening situations, contact the Department of Children and Families at 1-800-842-2288 and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood – Division of Licensing.

TOOTHBRUSHING (PRESCHOOL)

In order to encourage good oral hygiene, MELC staff will provide your child with a toothbrush and the opportunity to brush their teeth in the morning after eating breakfast. MELC will label each child's toothbrush and replace the toothbrush four times a year. Children will not use toothpaste.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Taking children outdoors is a healthy, integral part of our daily schedule and curriculum. Health experts agree on the importance of fresh air and exercise as a part of children's daily routine. Children benefit from active outdoor play to release energy and develop large muscle coordination. Your child will participate in routine outdoor play when the weather and air quality do not pose any health risks.

In the winter, the children will participate in routine outdoor play at the temperature of 32°F and above. When the temperature drops below 32°F and the conditions are not extreme, outdoor activity will be limited to approximately 15 minutes. At temperatures of 40° and below, children must be dressed in layers of warm, dry, loose fitting clothing. Gloves/mittens, hats, snow pants and boots are essential to provide the necessary protection. Please remember to label all of your child's clothing. On days when outdoor play is not possible, the children will be provided activities that provide use of large muscle coordination in the classroom.

During summer months, the children will be spending more time outside and we ask that you send your child to school in sun protective clothing and provide sun block and insect repellent. All sunblock should provide UVB and UVA protection in SPF 15 or higher, and insect repellent should contain DEET. Your child's teacher will provide an authorization form for you to complete which will allow your child's teacher to apply both the insect repellent and sun block before outdoor play. Insect repellent will only be applied once a day and if or when local health or state authorities recommend its use due to high risk of insect born disease.

MEALS

Mealtimes are learning opportunities for children and should be a pleasant experience for all. During mealtime, all teaching staff sit with the children, have the children serve their own food, and engage in conversation. This positive experience helps children develop positive attitudes towards food and nutrition.

All meals at the preschool are provided by MELC, and all menu planning follows USDA nutritional guidelines. MELC serves a well-balanced breakfast at 8:30 am, lunch at 11:30 am, and an afternoon snack at 2:30 pm daily. Any special dietary concerns should be brought to the teacher's attention. We ask families to not bring in any food from home due to other children in the program who may have food allergies. School - age meals and snacks are offered through the Manchester Public School's Food Service Department.

For children with special dietary restrictions and food allergies, MELC assures all reasonable efforts will be practiced to avoid accidental exposure to allergen. As a safety precaution, all children with identified food allergies have their allergy information posted in his/her classroom and kitchen. Meals will be provided with necessary food restrictions.

REST TIME (PRESCHOOL)

As part of our daily schedule, children are given a rest period after lunch. Your child will remain in his or her classroom and be provided a cot to rest on. This time provides a much-needed break for your

child and helps them to rejuvenate for the afternoon program. The rest time is approximately two hours long. Not all children may need this amount of time, so non-napping children are provided with quiet activities to use on their cot. For rest time, please provide your child with a small blanket and a pillow. All blankets and pillowcases need to be laundered once a week, so your child's teacher will place those items in your child's cubby each Friday.

TOYS FROM HOME

MELC fosters the development of young children through the use of educational toys. The toys used at the center are chosen for the safety and age appropriate play that the materials encourage. The only toy permitted from home would be a soft comfort toy for naptime. MELC provides activities that are safe and developmentally appropriate for all children allowing them the freedom to explore and learn about their world.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are planned at the discretion of your child's Head Teacher. The field trips provide a great opportunity for children to observe nature and the world around them. The trips are planned to local areas of interest. Families are welcomed to attend; however, their own transportation must be provided.

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

We have carefully chosen qualified staff members that meet and exceed all necessary requirements according to the guidelines determined by the State of Connecticut and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Our creative and energetic staff looks forward to working with your child. Our child/staff ratios are consistently met with an 10 - to - 1 ratio.

PROGRAM EVALUATION / PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

MELC conducts program evaluation on an annual basis. Program evaluations include yearly observations conducted by administration, surveys, and data analysis. The findings are used to create goals for program improvement and guide decisions for professional development.

Registration

ENROLLMENT

Families are required to complete and return a registration packet prior to the child's enrollment. The following information must be completed:

- Registration Form
- Copy of Child's Birth Certificate
- Proof of Residency
- Early Childhood Health Assessment Form
- Emergency Action Plan, Asthma Action Plan, Medication Authorization (if applicable)
- Fee Calculation Form with income paperwork
- Care 4 Kids Application/Certificate
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Form
- Signed Statement of Family Handbook Received
- Signed Statement of Behavior Management Plan

Additional forms may be required.

ORIENTATION

All families are asked to participate in a general registration appointment. This meeting will help familiarize families with the center, policies, and procedures. After the registration appointment, families are asked to sign up for a classroom orientation visit with their child. This visit will allow your child to meet his/her classroom teacher and become familiar with the school's environment.

TUITION

Determination

All tuition schedules are based on family income and family size. For proof of income, families will provide the most recent federal or state tax return. If the tax return does not reflect the family's current circumstances, a month's worth of current paystubs for all working adults in the household may be provided.

All families will receive a yearly re-determination packet to complete to ensure proper fees are being charged. If any changes in family income or size occur, please submit updated documentation. Following re-determination or updates, tuition may change. This change will be reviewed with you and provided in writing 30 days prior.

To further reduce your tuition, MELC encourages all eligible families to apply for assistance from the Care 4 Kids program. MELC staff are available to assist you in the application process. For any family with a certificate from Care 4 Kids, the family fee will be determined by that program. Our sliding scale fee will not apply.

Payment

All tuition payments for the entire month are due by the first business day of the month. If there is an outstanding balance, your child will not be allowed to return to the program until this balance is paid in

full. A payment plan may be made with your child's teacher to work on paying off an outstanding balance.

Acceptable forms of payment are check, money order, credit card, debit card, or cash.

Credits and Refunds

Tuition credits and refunds are typically not given for absences. If you have a medical emergency or extenuating circumstance, adjustments may be made with approval by the Director.

Returned Check Fee

Returned checks to MELC for non-sufficient funds require a replacement check with an additional returned check fee. When the Business Manager is notified of a returned check, he/she will then report the returned check and discuss with you the steps to be taken. This process is completed within a 2-week time period. If a check is returned to MELC twice within a 6-month period, payment will need to be made in the form of credit card, debit card, or a money order.

EQUAL ACCESS POLICY

The Manchester Early Learning Center (MELC) MELC believes there is strength in diversity. We offer equal access to all programs and services and do not discriminate in admission, employment or in any other aspect of our programs and activities that the center operates based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, gender, religion, marital status, disability, political belief, military status or language differences. All childcare programs are inclusive and made available to children without regard to individual ability. Children requiring more individualized attention will have an Individual Care Plan (ICP) created from information shared by the family with staff. Every effort will be made to ensure each child's comfort, confidence, and success in our program.

Children with Special Needs

MELC believes in inclusion of all children in its programs. If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan, the MELC staff will assist families in implementing it, as appropriate, in our programming.

Occasionally the staff and family may conclude that a child requires additional types of diagnostic and support services beyond the scope of the MELC program related to her/his emotional, physical or psychological development. The staff will work to assist a family in identifying and obtaining services, as well as providing an appropriate program whenever possible.

No referrals for diagnostic or support services are made without prior written consent from the family. Staff members will work with the family in implementing recommendations resulting from evaluations to support the child. Family confidentiality is maintained in all referrals. Referrals to agencies and persons who provide evaluations, child observations, family counseling, ESL classes, job training and other services that support families are made upon request.

All families should review MELC's Family Handbook. Families of children with special needs may submit a written request for a change to an MELC procedure to our Director of Operations via email. Requests will be reviewed with the Executive Director and families will receive a written response to their request within 10 business days.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Children's Records

A family may arrange with the teacher to see his/her child's file at any time. A family may add information to their child's file at any time. It is important to keep all information current in your child's record. Please inform your child's teacher if there are any changes such as contact or health information. When your child leaves MELC, you may request in writing that a copy of your child's record be transferred to you or another agency. Please note any request for your child's records given by parents or legal guardian will be honored, unless legal documents states otherwise.

Statement of Confidentiality

All the information on your child's registration forms, as well as any other information added to your child's file during his/her enrollment at MELC, shall be considered privileged and confidential. This information will be accessible only to the appropriate staff. Personnel from the State of Connecticut Childcare Licensing, MELC Nurse Consultant, School Readiness Liaison, and NAEYC Assessor will also have access to the files for licensing or accreditation purposes and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual records. If an outside agency should request information from your child's file, it will be released only after a Release of Information Form has been signed and dated by the family. A record of all such releases will be kept in your child's file.

Health and Safety

CHILDREN'S HEALTH RECORDS

All children are required to have a completed health summary physical examination form and all immunizations up-to-date at the time of registration. All immunizations will be required according to State of Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for Child Day Care Centers. An allowance of 14 days past the health assessment expiration date will be given to provide the center with an updated health assessment before mandated exclusion. The immunization requirements are patterned by the Center for Disease Control recommendations. All health forms and immunizations must be kept up-to-date thereafter. If immunizations are incomplete, enrollment is allowed once parents provide verification from a licensed health care practitioner that immunizations are complete or are in progress. If there is a medical or religious exemption, you must complete the Religious Exemption Form.

Physical examinations are valid for one year from the date of last exam. MELC's Nurse Consultant records expiration dates of all health records including dates of child's immunization. MELC's Nurse Consultant will send a note home as a reminder to have health assessment updated. Registration will not be accepted without a current medical physical and up-to-date immunization records.

SCREENINGS

MELC's Nurse Consultant provides an annual vision screening for all students and a hearing screening for four and five-year olds. The Nurse Consultant will contact you only if the vision or hearing results require further evaluation by a health care professional. Families are encouraged to contact the Nurse Consultant if they wish to be present during the testing or have any concerns about the testing. MELC partners with a community agency to provide dental visits onsite.

ILLNESS/EXCLUSION POLICY

Children in group childcare settings often become ill. It is not uncommon for children to have eight to ten illnesses a year. Illness of children in childcare is a difficult problem for staff and families. It is inconvenient for both the families who have to leave work or school and the staff trying to care for the child at the program site. Everyone shares a concern for the child's well being and will accommodate your child's needs. Families are strongly encouraged to arrange back-up childcare for those inevitable days when their child will be too ill to participate in our program.

The following are guidelines for exclusion from the program:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities
- The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff of the program can provide without compromising their ability to care for other children
- Behavior indicating pains or distress
- The child has symptoms of a communicable disease that if spread could be harmful to others such as:
 - Appears to be severely ill: lethargy, irritability, difficulty breathing, or has a quickly spreading rash
 - A forehead temperature of 100°F or higher
 - One or more episodes of vomiting or one or more episodes of diarrhea

- Rash with fever or behavior changes, exclusion from school will apply until a licensed health practitioner has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease
- Obvious symptoms of a communicable illness such as chickenpox, strep throat, impetigo, conjunctivitis with illness, or any vaccine preventable illness
- Severe nasal and chest congestion and a cough that interferes with daily activities
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Sores, wounds, or cuts, that have drainage and/or are red, warm, or tender

Exclusion for infestations (head lice, scabies, and pin worm) or ring worm (if area can be covered) may be postponed until the end of the school day. However once notified, families are encouraged to seek immediate medical evaluation because the child will not be allowed to return until 24 hours of prescribed medication has been completed.

In an effort to control the spread of contagious illness, MELC will require written verification of evaluation from a licensed health practitioner for:

- Rash with illness
- Rash considered contagious requiring prescription medication
- Very ill child with respiratory difficulties
- Suspected strep throat
- Severe diarrhea
- Hives

When an illness such as diarrhea, vomiting or fever requires exclusion, we ask that your child remain home until he/she has been symptom-free for 24 hours.

You must notify staff immediately if your child has been diagnosed with a communicable illness. If a child in the program is diagnosed with a communicable disease, a letter will be sent home to all families explaining the type of communicable disease to which your child was exposed to, signs and symptoms of the disease, mode of transmission, period of communicability, the control measures that our program is implementing, and what measures should be implemented at home.

When your child becomes ill in our program, we will remove him/her from the activity of the group and create a comfortable supervised space for him/her to rest away from the other children. Should your child be in extreme discomfort or believed to have a communicable illness and can no longer function in a group setting, we will contact you to pick-up your child immediately. Your child will be provided care separate from other children. If we are unable to reach you, we will contact the emergency numbers listed on your registration form. If we are unable to reach either you or any of your emergency contacts and emergent medical care is required, we will transport your child by ambulance to the nearest hospital for treatment. This policy is to reduce the transmission of illness and to provide a healthy environment for all the children.

EMERGENCY CARE PROCEDURES

For your child's safety and protection, there is at least one staff member in each classroom who is trained in Pediatric First Aid and CPR, including providing rescue breathing and managing a blocked airway. These requirements are in accordance with the State of Connecticut's regulations. For any child with a special health condition that would require CPR, a trained staff member would always be

present. In the event of an accident that creates a need for medical attention, we will proceed as follows:

- For immediate medical treatment, a staff member will call 911 and request emergency assistance. If necessary, your child will be transported to the nearest emergency center by the dispatched ambulance. Families will be contacted immediately. If families are unable to be reached, your emergency contacts will be called. Within 24 hours, the staff member will complete an incident report stating the details of the situation.
- If a less serious incident occurs, the trained staff member will administer First Aid on site. Families will be contacted and will receive an accident report stating the details of the injury.

WEATHER RELATED EMERGENCIES

In case of emergency, all parents/emergency contacts will be notified to pick up children. Our Late Pick-Up Procedures will be in effect after the designated dismissal time.

In the event of severe weather and children and staff are unable to leave the building, the staff and the children will sit away from the windows with their legs crossed and their heads between their knees until the weather subsides. The staff will call for assistance if required.

FIRE RELATED EMERGENCIES

Staff will call 911.

Children and staff will follow the approved fire evacuation plan. Fire alarm will ring. Head teacher and other staff members will line children up and take children's files as they evacuate the building. Head count of all children will be taken.

If necessary parents will be contacted as in a weather related emergency.

MEDICATION

MELC recommends that prescription medicine not be administered during the program day. The child's physician should be encouraged to prescribe medications in dosages that would avoid the need for the administration of this medicine during the hours that a child is in a school or a childcare program. If it is necessary to administer medication, the staff will do so only in accordance with state regulations and our policy. If your physician feels it is absolutely necessary for your child to receive medication during the program hours, the following procedures must be taken prior to our trained staff member administering the prescription/medication.

In the event that medication must be administered during the program, an Authorization to Administer Medication must be on file. This form must be filled out entirely and signed by the child's physician, family, and staff member. This applies to ALL over the counter medications including but not limited to medicated creams, cough drops, cold medications, fever/pain reducing medication, etc. "Over the counter" topical treatments such as sunscreen and skin lotions without medication require parental permission only.

Authorization Requirements

Medication Authorization forms must be filled out completely and signed by the child's physician and be on file at the childcare site. Medication forms and special care plans must be completed prior to

enrollment and kept current for continued enrollment. Authorization forms are available at the front desk or on the program's website. The authorization form must include the following information:

1. The name, address and date of birth of the child
2. The date the medication order was written
3. The medication or drug name, dose, and method of administration
4. The time the medication is to be administered
5. The dates the medication is to be started and ended
6. Relevant side effects and the authorized prescriber's plan for management if they occur
7. Notation if the medication is a controlled drug
8. A listing of any allergies, reactions to, or negative interactions with foods or drugs
9. Specific instructions from the authorized prescriber who orders the medication regarding how the medication is to be given.
10. The name, address and telephone number of the authorized prescriber ordering the drug
11. The authorized prescriber's signature and the family's signature
12. Name, address, telephone number, signature and relationship to the child, giving permission for the administration of the drug by the director, head teacher, or program staff
13. Permission for childcare provider to contact the prescriber or pharmacist for additional information about the medication.

Label Requirements

Label Requirement for all medication:

- All medication should be in a child resistant container and in original packaging
- Name of medication Strength of medication
- Expiration date
- child's name
- Directions for medication administration (dose, route, time)

Additional label requirement for medication from a pharmacy labeled by the pharmacist

- Date of prescription
- Pharmacy name
- Prescription number
- Pharmacy telephone number
- Physician's name

Storage Requirements

- Medication will be stored following label directions, in original child resistant safety container and inaccessible to children. All prescribed medication other than those prescribed as an emergent first line of defense shall be stored in a locked area. Equipment and medications that need to be accessed in an emergency shall be stored in a safe manner, inaccessible to children, to allow quick access in an emergency.
- All topical nonprescription medication will be stored in an "inaccessible" original container labeled with child's name and directions for administering.

Safety of Medication Administration

- All medications must be reviewed and approved by Nurse Consultant for clarity, feasibility and completeness. Your child will be excluded if the medication authorization, special health care plans, and medication are expired.
- MELC will not administer the first dosage of any medication. The first dosage of medication should be administered by the family in the home environment to evaluate the effectiveness and observe possible side effects.
- Controlled substances require special handling by staff as required by state law. A staff member trained in the administration of medication will meet individually with families to review the policy and procedure, doctor's orders, and create a special care plan for any controlled substances.
- All unused medication shall be returned to family or disposed of if not picked up within one week following the termination of the order.

HANDWASHING

Our programs are continuously monitored for health and safety standards. In order to prevent the illness of teachers and children, we engage in the following recommended childcare hygiene practices:

- Children are taught and assisted with proper handwashing techniques. The following steps should be followed when washing hands:
 1. Turn on water and wet hands.
 2. Add a small drop of liquid soap and vigorously rub hands together for 15 seconds.
 3. Rinse hands and leave water running.
 4. Dry hands with disposable towel and use another disposable towel to turn faucet off.
- Children and staff will wash their hands: after entering the classroom, after toileting, after blowing or wiping a nose or handling bodily fluids, after coughing on hand, before eating and serving snacks, before/after playing in water or sensory tables after playing in water shared by two or more people, after handling garbage, after cleaning and after handling a pet.
- Toys are washed and disinfected on a regular basis.
- Tables are sprayed with a sanitizing solution before and after lunches and snacks are served.
- Sleeping cots are disinfected weekly.
- All pillows and blankets need to be taken home on Fridays to be washed and then returned on Monday.

TOILETING (PRESCHOOL)

Upon enrollment, children are expected to be toilet trained. However, MELC recognizes that children may be at different stages of the toilet training process, so we will work with the children and families to be successful in our program. MELC has no diaper changing facilities and per state regulations cannot change a child in diapers. For children with special needs, an individual care plan that includes a safe diapering plan will be created. As accidents do occur, please send an extra set of labeled clothing (socks, underwear, and shirt) to be kept in your child's cubby for your child to change into. Please be sure to check your child's cubby daily for any soiled clothing items. MELC does not rinse or wash soiled clothes due to the risk of splashing and contamination of hands, sinks, and bathroom surfaces.

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD FROM HARM

MELC recognizes the concerns parents have regarding potential abuse and neglect while their children are in the care of others. We have taken a number of steps to promote the safety and protection of your child at MELC.

All MELC staff are required to complete a pre-employment background check. In the classrooms, staff/child ratios are maintained at all times. Teaching staff are never left alone with a child. Each staff member is trained in appropriate disciplinary techniques. Teaching staff never use physical punishment such as shaking or hitting, or engage in psychological abuse or coercion. Teaching staff never use threats or derogatory remarks nor do they withhold or threaten to withhold food as a form of discipline.

The core of the MELC's philosophy is respect for all children, and all actions toward children are held to the highest standards. The policy below outlines what steps need to be taken if teaching staff suspect a child is in danger at home and/or in our program. This policy is based on Federal and State laws that outline procedures for reporting abuse and neglect.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

Children need a safe, nurturing environment to grow and learn. If children's minimum needs for good nutrition, medical care, clean and appropriate clothes, shelter, appropriate discipline, intellectual stimulation, and a feeling of importance are not met, they cannot positively grow and learn.

Connecticut state laws make it mandatory to file a report with the state authorities if abuse or neglect is suspected (not necessarily proven).

Abuse of a child is defined as: non-accidental physical injuries inflicted upon him/her, or the child has injuries which are at variance with the history given of them, or is in a condition, which is the result of maltreatment, such as, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.

Neglect is defined as: a child who has been abandoned, is being denied proper care and attention physically, educationally, emotionally or morally, or is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to his well-being.

If our staff suspects that a child in a parent or guardian's care is being, or has been, abused or neglected, it is the staff's responsibility to call the Department of Children and Families Care Line at 1-800-842-2288 within 12 hours and then report this to the Center's Executive Director. A written follow up report will also be completed within 24 hours. If the victim of abuse and/or neglect requires medical services, steps will be taken to provide those services. All staff members reporting abuse and neglect are protected from discrimination or retaliation.

OUR STAFF HAS BEEN INSTRUCTED TO REPORT SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE. FAILURE TO DO SO MAY RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY ACTION UP TO AND INCLUDING TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT.

Should you have difficulty in providing for your child's emotional and physical needs, you are encouraged to ask for help. Our staff can help you in finding community resources that can offer assistance to your family.

At any point during your child's enrollment should you have any concerns about your child's care or safety, we encourage you to speak immediately to the Area Director.

Reporting A Staff Member of Suspected Abuse

In a case of a MELC staff being suspected of abuse, the Executive Director and/or their designee will notify the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Office of Early Childhood (OEC), and the Family or guardian immediately. This will commence an investigation in conjunction with the local police if required by law. The Executive Director may authorize other individuals such as members of the Board of Directors to conduct an internal investigation of the allegations, but the lead investigative agency will be the Department of Children and Families or the local police. During the DCF investigation, the employee will be removed from the classroom setting.

Once all investigations are complete, the Executive Director and/or their designee will inform the employee of the investigation findings and appropriate actions will be taken by the agency. All records and documentation will be maintained in a confidential and locked location.

MELC's primary responsibility is to ensure the safety of the children in our care. During the orientation process, new staff will be trained on the responsibilities of being a mandated reporter. Throughout the staff member's employment, other training on the topic of abuse and neglect will be offered.

PHOTOGRAPHS

At enrollment, families are asked to provide consent for child to be used in photographs. Consent must be given for children to be included in newspaper editorials and pictures connected with MELC.

SMOKING

Smoking is not permitted on any MELC property.

BUILDING ACCESS

Exterior doors in our preschool facility will be locked at all times. Anyone wishing to gain access to the building will be required to buzz in at each building's main entrance. Similar procedures are in place at all school-age sites, although entrances used vary by site.

Family Involvement

MELC's childcare programs offer an "open door" to families at all times. We encourage you to come for a visit when your schedule permits. Family involvement enhances childcare programs and we welcome your continued support.

We also embrace the idea that families are a child's first and primary educator. The education process is viewed as a cooperative effort between the family and the program. Therefore, we have put in place opportunities for parents and extended family members to become involved in our program.

FAMILY BULLETIN BOARDS

Each classroom displays a bulletin board where you will find information on the daily schedule of activities, menus, newsletters, and other policy updates. Reminders and important notices will be put in your child's cubby, so please be sure to check the cubby on a daily basis. The bulletin board highlights information of interest to families, such as upcoming program events, family workshops and meetings, and articles on parenting.

FAMILY NEWSLETTERS

Every month, each classroom sends home a newsletter to keep families informed about the program's activities, events, reminders, and policy changes. In addition, in the back of this handbook, we have included a referral chart of services available to you and your family.

FAMILY EVENTS

The program will hold family events and workshops throughout the year. This is a great time for families to meet other families and teaching staff in a relaxed and social environment. Such activities may include field trips, picnics, and special events. We extend an invitation to all families to help in the planning and implementation of these events.

FAMILY WORKSHOPS

To help answer many of the challenging questions that come with raising children (such as child development, managing behaviors and effective discipline, sibling rivalry, nutrition, budgeting, etc.) MELC will provide information on local workshops being held. We also have access to many community resources to connect families with and would be happy to hear feedback from families on any types of workshops they would be interested in participating in.

FAMILY ADVISORY MEETING

During the year, MELC will host meetings where families will be asked to attend and share feedback on their experience in the program. Information from these meetings will be used to set improvement goals for the organization.

Referral Chart

COUNSELING SERVICES

Community Child Guidance Clinic, Inc. (CCGCINC)

To assist and support children with emotional and behavioral issues by providing a special education day school and a system of child and family-focused mental health services.

Website: <https://www.ccginc.org/>

Phone: (860) 643-2101

Address: 317 North Main Street, Manchester, Connecticut 06042

Mary's Place

Our purpose is to provide an atmosphere of trust in which children and families who are grieving a death share their experiences, receive support and find comfort. We are able to do this through peer support groups, education and training.

Website: <https://www.marysplacect.org/>

Email: info@marysplacect.org

Phone: (860) 688-9621

Address: 6 Poquonock Ave, Windsor, CT 06095, USA

EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Connecticut Works (CT DEPT. OF LABOR)

Services include employment leads and information, resumes, training, testing, unemployment compensation.

Website: <https://www.ctdol.state.ct.us/>

Email: dol.webhelp@ct.gov

Phone: 860-263-6000

Address: 200 Folly Brook Boulevard, Wethersfield, CT 06109

Manchester Area Conferences of Churches (MACC) Job Readiness Program

Assists people in developing job search skills and guides them in job placement, interviews, and on-the-job support.

Website: <https://macc-ct.org/>

Phone: (860) 647-8003

Address: 466 Main Street, Manchester, CT

Marc, Inc.

MARC, Inc. provides the opportunity for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to live meaningful lives of independence, choice, inclusion, and continuous personal growth.

Website: <https://www.marcct.org/>

Email: info@marcct.org

Phone: 1-860-646-5718

Address: 151 Sheldon Rd Manchester, CT 06042

FAMILY/PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT SERVICES

ECHN Family Development Center

Provides programs that help families develop their strengths, parenting skills and confidence.

Website: <https://www.echn.org/services/parenting/family-development-programs/>

Phone: 860.533.2990

Family Resource Centers

Providing support of the school-family-community partnership, by providing a broad base of educational and supportive programs. Located at eight of the elementary schools and Bennet Academy.

Website: <https://www.mpspride.org/Page/644>

Phone: 860-645-6041

KIDSAFE CT

A private, non-profit dedicated to the early intervention, prevention, and treatment of child abuse and neglect. Services include: supervised visitations, parent education, parent aide and reunification services, foster and adoptive supportive services, and 24 hour on-call emergency service for clients.

Website: <https://kidsafect.org/>

Phone: 860-872-1918

Address: 19 Elm Street, Rockville, CT 06066

Manchester Adult Education

Provides free adult education classes including English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

Website: <https://www.manchesteradulted.org/>

Phone: 860-647-5075

Address: 555 Main Street, Manchester, CT 06040

Manchester Recreation Division

Provides comprehensive programs of recreational opportunities for all ages, ability levels, and provides safe, attractive, well maintained, well managed parks and recreation facilities

Website: <https://recreation.townofmanchester.org/>

Phone: 860-647-3084

Address: 41 Center St, Manchester, CT 06040

National Alliance for Mental Illness – CT

Provides support to improve the quality of life for individuals living with mental illness, as well as their families and loved ones.

Website: <https://namict.org/>

Email: admin@namict.org

Phone: (860) 882-0236

Address: 1030 New Britain Ave, Suite 201, West Hartford, CT 06110

National Parent Helpline

Provides support 24 hours a day for parents

Website: <https://www.nationalparenthelpline.org/>

Phone: 1-855-427-2736

Youth Service Bureau

Provides a variety of no-cost programs and services to develop responsible individuals who make positive contributions to the community.

Website: <https://ysb.townofmanchester.org/>

Phone: 860-647-5235

HEALTH/NUTRITION SERVICES

CT Healthy Start

A voluntary program offered free of charge to families seeking health care insurance, connection to health care providers, and referrals to community resources.

Website: <http://www.cthealthchannel.org/ct-healthy-start/>

Phone: (860) 757-4817

East Hartford Community Health Care

A community health clinic that provides services (such as checkups, treatment, pregnancy care, immunizations, prescription medicine and mental and substance abuse) under a sliding scale.

Website: <https://www.firstchc.org/>

Email: contactus@firstchc.org

Phone: (860) 528-1359

Address: 94 Connecticut Blvd, East Hartford, CT 06108

First Choice Health Center

A health care center offering wide range of services (including primary, pediatrics, women's health, dental, behavioral health, etc.).

Website: <https://www.firstchc.org/>

Email: contactus@firstchc.org

Phone: (860) 528-1359

Address: 94 Connecticut Blvd, East Hartford, CT 06108

Hartford Interval House

Free and confidential services for victims of domestic violence.

Website: <https://intervalhousect.org/>

Phone: 888.774.2900

HUSKY Health Insurance

Provides free or low-cost health insurance to families.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/husky>

Phone: 1-877-284-8759

Address: 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105

Manchester Area Conferences of Churches (MACC) Job Readiness Program

Provides access to emergency shelter, soup kitchen, emergency food pantry, clothing bank, jobs program and human needs fund.

Website: <https://macc-ct.org/>

Phone: (860) 647-8003

Address: 466 Main Street, Manchester, CT

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Provides assistance to eligible individuals and families afford the cost of food at supermarkets, grocery stores and farmers' markets

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/dss/SNAP/Supplemental-Nutrition-Assistance-Program---SNAP>

Phone: 1-855-626-6632

Address: 699 Middle Turnpike East Manchester, CT 06040

Vernon Community Health Center

A community health clinic that provides services under a sliding scale.

Phone: 860-896-1616

Address: 3 Prospect St, Vernon Rockville, CT 06066

WIC (Women, Infant, and Children)

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program that serves to safeguard the health of women, infants, and children up to age 5.

Website: <https://portal.ct.gov/dph/WIC/WIC>

Email: ctwic@ct.gov

Phone: 1 (800) 741-2142

Address: 410 Capitol Avenue, MS #11 WIC Hartford, CT 06106

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Manchester Preschool Center

Provides assessments/referrals for children with special needs through the Board of Education Special Education department.

Website: <https://www.mpspride.org/preschool>

Email: afuini@mpspride.org

Phone: (860) 647-3502

Address: 60 Washington Street, Manchester, CT 06040

Manchester Public Schools Welcome Center

Provides information on registration process for MPS.

Website: <https://www.mpspride.org/domain/63>

Phone: 860-645-6041

Address: 555 Main Street Manchester, CT 06040

Connecticut Birth-to-Three System

Provides early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, ages' birth up to age 3, and their families.

Website: <https://www.birth23.org/>

Phone: 1-800-505-7000

Address: 151 Sheldon Rd Manchester, CT 06042