



# Early Childhood Education

JCC Child Care Program and  
School for the Early Years

## Family Handbook

2017-18





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## **Section 1 - Welcome & Licensing Information**

### **Welcome to the JCC Early Childhood Education Program**

We are pleased that you have chosen our program. We look forward to working with you and your child during the school year. Caring for your child is at once a privilege and a responsibility which we are proud to share with your family.

Please read through your handbook. It should help familiarize you with most of our routines and policies.

### **Eligibility**

Admission into the JCC's ECE and SACC programs is open to all who endorse the JCC's mission. The JCC shall not discriminate because of race, color, gender, age, veteran status, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, as well as any other characteristic protected by law.

### **Statement of Goal**

The goal of the JCC ECE Program is to provide our children with an environment which fosters each child's self-image, curiosity about the world and ability to live up to his potential. Our intent is not to teach a selection of specific skills in preparation for the academic work of the elementary school; rather, it is to instill in the children an image of themselves as capable learners. It is to provide them with an environment rich in possibilities for child-initiated, child-directed, teacher-supported learning through active exploration and play.

The JCC ECE Program is particularly designed to offer new freedoms and opportunities to explore beyond the family and the home, while at the same time providing the secure and nurturing environment that is essential for the healthy development of every young child.

The best preparation for the academic work of the years ahead is provided by an early program which boosts the child's self-confidence and ability to learn, reinforces his natural desire to learn and to know, and broadens the child's understanding of her needs as both an individual and as a member of a group. The most important learning is not an accumulation of facts and skills, but rather the strengthening of an ability to reason and think independently. An early childhood program can be the perfect environment for the beginning of this process.

### **Licensing Information**

The JCC School for the Early Years is licensed through the Pennsylvania Board of Private Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. The Child Care Program is licensed through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. Both programs, School and Child Care, are accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children. The JCC is also a Keystone Stars Level 4 and Pre-K Counts site. Please feel free to ask for information on any standards or regulations set by any of the above agencies and organizations.

### **Pre-K Counts**

The JCC is a Pre-K Counts site. The Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts program is based on quality learning standards adopted for pre-kindergarten by the State Board of Education. The program provides families with a choice of quality pre-kindergarten options in a school, child care center, Head Start, or nursery school setting. It increases access to quality pre-kindergarten to children and families throughout the commonwealth with a priority in at-risk communities.

The Pre-K Counts program is intended to prepare children for a successful transition into kindergarten. Your child's regular attendance is important to preparation for kindergarten. We

recognize that young children in group settings are susceptible to illness and that your child may miss some days of school due to illness. In addition to illness, there may be other legitimate reasons for absences. However, absences that total more than 20 days, cumulatively, over the school year, are grounds to drop your child's enrollment from the Pre-K Counts program. The Pre-K Counts instructional day begins at 9:00 AM. Please make sure your child arrives at the JCC no later than 8:55 AM so that he will be ready to join his group by 9:00 AM. Please call to leave a message for your child's teachers if your child will be late or absent.

After 10 days of absence, the JCC will send an e-mail or letter reminding parents about the Pre-K Counts attendance policy. If a child is absent for 14 days or more, the JCC will send a written warning with a request for a response from the family. After 20 days of cumulative absences, the JCC will follow Pre-K Counts Program's recommendation to terminate a child's enrollment.

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)**

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English. To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at:

[http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

## **Section 2 - Inclusion Policy**

### **Inclusion Policy**

We believe that inclusion programs provide the best educational settings for all children and that each child contributes his or her own personal value to our program. Children benefit from an environment that promotes diversity and respect for differences. All children learn best when they participate with others, even when some have different learning goals and abilities.

We welcome children with special needs into our program and make sure that they are fully integrated members of the classroom in which they are enrolled. However, our School and Child Care programs can neither meet the needs of *every* child nor of *every* family. Our teacher to child ratios and level of staff knowledge are not adequate to meet every special need. To make certain that our classroom environment is appropriate for your child; we ask that you set up an appointment with a Program Director to discuss your child and our ability to meet his or her

needs. We also ask that you provide information from other professionals involved with your child, such as an Early Intervention professional, an LIU teacher or a therapist. To maintain a high quality of care and education for all enrolled children, we ask that a family provide a special aide (TSS) for a child that requires frequent and prolonged one-on-one guidance or care from an adult.

We are committed to working with the community partners that support the special care and educational needs of children. We ask that families help us collaborate with other professionals working with a child by providing up to date reports and inviting JCC staff to Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings. Any information JCC staff learn from such collaboration is held in strict confidence and used only to gain a more effective understanding of a child's unique care and educational needs. With family permission, we invite early intervention professionals to observe individual children in the childcare classroom.

### **Policy Guiding the Use of Special Consultants, Therapists, and Therapeutic Support Staff in the Classroom**

We respect the professional knowledge and expertise of the consultants and therapists visiting our center to work with children enrolled in our classrooms. It is always our intention to form a cooperative team with classroom teachers, consultants/therapists, and families working together to reach the common objectives the team sets for the child.

### **Using the natural setting for therapies**

In general, we believe that therapists should work with children within the child's regular classroom setting and within the child's normal classroom routines. Our staff is eager to collaborate with consultants/therapists on classroom curriculum and activities. Many activities that are helpful for children with special needs also meet the needs of typically developing children.

### **Therapies that take place outside the classroom**

When therapy must take place outside the child's classroom, we make every effort to reserve an appropriate space in the JCC for the child's therapeutic sessions. When the child must leave her familiar classroom setting, we ask that the therapist check in with the classroom teacher to create a smooth transition *from* the classroom and *back into* the classroom. A smooth transition may require that the therapist engage in transitional activities with the child in his classroom before and after therapy sessions. Our staff is happy to help.

### **Sharing observations, assessments, and plans**

Our staff is happy to share our observations and assessments on a child whose family has signed our *Jewish Community Center Consent for the Release of Information*. The state **requires** that we keep current copies of the child's IEP/IFSP on file. We feel it is important for JCC staff to attend IEP/IFSP meetings and are happy to provide a room for meetings whenever possible.

### **Educational philosophy and guidance methods**

JCC curriculum is based on a constructivist philosophy of teaching and learning. We believe that both typically developing children and those with special needs learn through a balanced program of child and adult initiated activities. We believe that all children learn best through a combination of active, hands-on projects and adult guided reflection. In general, we do not use behavioral modification strategies to guide children's behavior; we use constructive discipline, with the belief that both typically developing children and those with special needs learn classroom protocol through adult guided interactions within a structured learning environment, building more mature social knowledge as they grow and develop. We respect, however, that

some children will have disciplinary needs that differ from the typical child's. When differences in philosophy or in teaching and guidance methods arise, we will work within the team, including JCC staff, family, consultants, and therapists to resolve our differences to better serve the child.

### **Individual Education Plans (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)**

It is important to our School and Child Care programs to gather as much information as we can about the best ways to care for and educate each child. All children have special educational needs. If your child already has an educational or behavioral plan in place, through a school, other child services organization, or through private testing and therapists, we should have the plan in your child's JCC file to help us meet your child's special needs. Our Keystone STARS Performance standards require us to request copies of IEPs, IFSPs, and behavioral plans for each child enrolled in our School, Child Care and School Age programs. The information on these forms is protected by privacy laws, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA.) We require each member of our teaching teams to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. We instruct our teachers to discuss useful confidential information only in relation to a child's care and education.

## **Section 3 – Status & Scholarship**

### **Scholarship Program**

The JCC recognizes the need to serve all members of the community regardless of their ability to pay the full cost of programs, membership or School/Child Care tuition. As a not-for-profit United Way Agency, we have limited scholarship funds available for families that meet our financial assistance guidelines. If you think you may qualify for assistance, please ask for our Financial Assistance Application at the Front Desk. All families that apply for tuition assistance for Child Care must also apply for a state subsidy through Child Care Consultants, our local Child Care Information Service (CCIS.) Please turn in a copy of your CCIS application along with your JCC Financial Assistance application.

## **Section 4 – Safety Procedures**

### **Parking**

Parking in the Early Childhood lot is for pick-up and drop-off only. Families exercising or taking a class while their children are in school should park in the main lot. Please do not block the roadway at the school entrance.

No matter how rushed you are at drop off or pick up times, **never** leave a child or infant unattended in your car in the JCC parking lot!

### **Proximity Cards**

We have installed a security system to protect the well-being of our children, families, and staff. Each family will receive two access cards. Child care families may pick up their proximity cards at the front desk one week prior to the beginning of school. Cards will be distributed to School for the Early Years families during their scheduled Welcome to School Meeting prior to the first day of preschool. If you need to replace a lost card or want an extra card, Proximity Card Request Forms are available at the front desk. The cost is \$5.00 per card.

Families of SFYEY children can gain access to the school from 8:50 AM (7:45 AM for Early Drop-Off) until 11:45 AM (2:15 PM for Lunch & Learn, Discovery Class). Cards for families enrolled in the Extended Day program will open the doors from 8:50 AM until 6:00 PM. Child Care cards will operate the doors from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM.

If you forget your proximity card, you must sign-in at the front desk, show identification and verify your status as an authorized pick-up person. Teachers will also ask for identification from unfamiliar adults.

Please use your proximity card for **you and your child only**. Do not hold the door open for other families. Our security system is effective only when we use it properly. When we hold the door open for other adults, we undermine the system. If someone asks you to open the door for her, please contact a staff member or direct the person to the JCC main entrance.

### **Emergency Weather Closings or Delays**

Closings or delayed openings due to snow or hazardous driving conditions will be announced on Remind, our website, and our classroom Shutterfly pages. **Inclement weather closings differ between Child Care and School programs:**

- The **Child Care** program will remain open as long as the JCC building remains open.
- The **School for the Early Years** closes when the York Suburban School District closes. If York Suburban announces a two hour delay, SFEY will open at 10:00 AM. There will be no early morning drop off on delayed opening days. Class will dismiss at 12:15 PM (2's), 12:25 PM (3's) and 12:30 PM (4/5's). Lunch and Learn will run 12:30 PM-3:00 PM on days when there is a delay. The SFEY incorporates five snow days into the regular school calendar. If school is canceled for more than five days, we will extend our school year.

## **Section 5 - Communications**

### **Communication between Parent and School**

A solid parent-center partnership is as important to the success of our Early Childhood program as it is to the well-being of your child. When communication between the Center and parent is a two-way channel, both teachers and families are more confident with the care giving partnership. The child benefits from this partnership.

### **Shutterfly Website**

In a continuing effort to "go green" at the JCC, we introduced a school website for easy communication between teachers and parents. This website not only allows safe and secure access to school photos, announcements, calendar of events and forms, it also sends email alerts letting you know when important updates or information have been posted. To access, you must first be registered by the child care administrative assistant.

### **Notes to the Teacher**

Please be sure that all important messages to teachers take the form of a written note or e-mail. Spoken messages are easily forgotten, misinterpreted or misdirected. To be certain that a teacher receives a note promptly, you will be wise to deliver it yourself. Notes left in children's book bags may never reach their destination.

### **Classroom Logbooks**

Each classroom has its own logbook. We use these logbooks to communicate any messages from staff member to staff member or from parent to staff. Parents' written notes are placed inside the classroom logbook. Parents may also write notes directly in the logbook or may dictate information for staff to enter into the logbook.

The logbook can also be used to remind us of any important dates in your child's life. Bringing a special snack to school? Temporary change in your child's schedule? A vacation? Write it in the logbook. This information not only reminds teachers of facts they need to know, it can also serve as a clue to a shift in the child's behavior. Seemingly minor or ordinary events in the life of your family may affect your child's behavior in child care. Children excited by an upcoming vacation or weekend with Grandma, or worried about a mother's business trip, may need extra attention from their caregivers.

### **Talking to the Teacher**

Throughout the year, families and teachers will have information to share about children, school or child care and family matters. A change of routine at home or at the Center, conflicts with another child, or a particularly amusing anecdote may all warrant a brief conversation. It is important to discuss these topics when all children are out of ear-shot. If a teacher is unable to leave her group at drop-off or pick-up time, you may leave a note and a staff member will get back to you, or you may call the front desk and a teacher will return your call as soon as possible.

### **Concerns/Suggestions/Grievances**

Please share all concerns or suggestions with your child's home base teachers. If you want to take a suggestion or concern beyond the home base please contact:

- The Director or Associate Director of Children's Education and Development
- The Family Group Coordinator
- The Executive Director
- The Board of Directors

### **Conferences**

Conferences provide an opportunity for families and teachers to share valuable insights and information about the child. This exchange helps families understand the teacher's perspective of the child at the Center. In turn, the teacher will benefit from the family's unique knowledge of the child to gain a fuller understanding of the child's growth and development.

Regular conferences are scheduled twice a year. You will be notified about conference time through an e-mail, the Shutterfly page or a note home. Classroom teachers post conference sign-up schedules in each classroom. If the listed dates and times are inconvenient for you, please arrange an alternate conference date with your child's head teacher. The School for the Early Years will be closed on conference days.

If at any time during the year you feel that an extra conference with either the child's teachers for the Early Childhood Director would be useful, please contact us and we will arrange for one.

### **Confidentiality**

All information concerning individual children is kept on file in the ECE office. All financial information pertaining to individual families is kept in the JCC's business office in a locked file cabinet. People who have access to a child's files include: the Director, the Associate Director, the child's classroom teachers, the child's parents, and the child care administrative assistants. Only the Financial Assistance Director and the family have access to a family's financial information. Files must not leave the office as long as a child is enrolled in School or Child Care.

Whereas we respect the confidentiality of children's health assessments, these must be reviewed by our licensing agency, the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

Files or information from the file may be released to schools or other agencies only with a signed parental consent form. Information about a child or his family is confidential and may not be shared with other families.

### **End of the School Year Transitions**

At the end of each school year, teachers help smooth the children's transition into the next classroom age group. Children moving from a 2s group to 3s and 4s or from 3s and 4s to 4s and 5s visit their new classrooms, engaging in familiar activities, such as meeting time, story time or snack in the new environment. Children moving to a classroom with new teachers meet with these teachers several times before the transition. Children transitioning into kindergarten have many opportunities to discuss this move through class meetings and through children's literature dealing with the many issues surrounding the transition from pre-school to "big kid school." Your child's JCC file can be sent to the school district by request of the parent or by the school itself.

### **Program Surveys**

We ask that all families complete a survey once a year to help us evaluate our programming. The Family Survey provides a valuable opportunity for families to share with staff their thoughts about their children's care and education. Please make sure that you turn in your completed survey form. These forms are an integral part of our strategy for building and maintaining high quality in our children's programming.

### **Visits to the Classroom**

Our classrooms have the bustling informal appearance of many developmentally-appropriate early childhood classrooms. When you walk into your child's room, you will frequently find children in groups of three or four, painting, building with blocks, drawing, playing house, looking at books, talking, arguing or singing. Please do not mistake this informality for random activity or unstructured "free play." Even though the children are not all seated at tables engaged in paperwork or listening to a teacher's lecture, there is both a structure and a schedule in each classroom which teachers and children work hard to maintain.

If you are visiting a classroom, you may choose to either observe or to volunteer your help. If you are observing, you are welcome to enter the classroom quietly and to sit unobtrusively while you watch the children at work and play. Teachers will be glad to answer any questions you may have after class is over and all children have left the classroom.

If you would like to volunteer in the classroom, let the teachers know ahead of time when you can come and what sort of help you will be offering. You might like to plan a special activity around the theme or unit the children are covering. If you are very brave or foolhardy, you might do a cooking project with a group of children. An extra adult to read stories or to help children write stories is always welcome in any classroom. Do not hesitate to ask the teachers for suggestions or for any guidance you feel you need. Please do not draw for children because we encourage them to make their own representations of objects.

Children often enjoy having their older siblings visit the classroom. If your older child has a vacation day and wishes to visit, please arrange a time in advance with your child's teacher.

## **Section 6 - Guidance**

### **Guidance**

Teachers in each classroom work as a team, gently and firmly guiding the children's behavior as the children gradually learn to control their own impulses. The adults model appropriate

behavior in the way that they talk to each other and to the children. Rather than emphasize what should not be done, teachers try to show the children what they can do. It is also the adult role to provide young children with the language they need to communicate so they discover alternatives to grabbing, hitting or crying in order to have their needs met.

Impulsive behavior is common to all early childhood classrooms. Teachers watch their groups carefully and consistently and try to intervene before any child hurts another. If a child is hurt, it is the teacher's job to help all the children, including the victim and the aggressor, regain their sense of the classroom as a safe and secure environment. Comforting words are in order for both the child who was hurt and the child who did the hurting. A firm reminder to the aggressor, "I will not let you hurt your classmates," is frequently sufficient to help the child regain control of his behavior. When words alone do not work, the teacher's continued presence will be required. Long angry lectures, time out chairs, shaming or adult yelling have no place in the classroom.

Although teachers expect to deal with the impulsive behavior of the young child, frequent or dangerous aggression, disruptive, and/or inappropriate behavior cannot be permitted. Families will be notified immediately if their child's behavior is unduly disruptive or if the child does not respond to his teacher's efforts at discipline. We rely on the parent's cooperation in handling such behavior. When family and JCC staff, working together, cannot control a child's behavior, the JCC retains the right to terminate care for the child.

If you have concerns with another family's child behavior, please speak confidentially to a staff person and allow the staff to handle the child's behavior. If you feel you must discipline your own child at the JCC, please avoid loud yelling and physical punishments of any kind.

### **Separation**

We experience separations throughout our lives; the way we help children handle early experiences lays the foundations for how the child copes with later separations. First ventures away from home and family are a welcome adventure to some children, but a difficult challenge for others. Children's reactions to separation will be as varied as their temperaments. Some children will breeze into the classroom as if they have been there for years, others will cry and cling to a home caregiver. Some will behave wildly, running and grabbing toys, others may revert to thumb-sucking and even wetting their pants. These behaviors are ways that children try to cope with scary inner feelings.

The following are some useful separation strategies for families:

1. If a child has a difficult time adjusting to school, respect her feelings, but do not give in to them.
2. Remember, if you believe school is a good place to be, your child will usually believe it too.
3. Set the stage and prepare your child in advance by talking about school and some of the things he will be doing.
  - "You will be able to play with puzzles and blocks."
  - "There is a play yard outside with scooters to ride and things to climb on."
  - "Your teachers will read you stories and take good care of you while I'm gone."
  - If your child is joining a child care classroom, we ask that you bring her to visit her classroom and teachers before her start date. Your child's teachers will help you arrange these visits. Don't hesitate to ask for several visits, if you think your child will benefit.

4. Let your child know what you will be doing, while she is at school.
  - “While you are at school, some days I will be shopping or exercising, other days I’ll be at home.”
  - Or, “While you are at school, I am at work. I miss you and think about you, but I know your teachers take good care of you while I am at work.
  - Because young children do not have an adult’s sense of time, use concrete terms to tell your child when you will return to pick him up. If the classroom morning ends with a story time, you might say, “I will pick you up after story time.”
  - Avoid telling your child something such as, “I will pick you up right after nap time,” unless you are sure you really *can* pick up right after the child’s nap.
  - Always let your child’s child care teachers know if you will be changing your pick up schedule.
5. Read books about separations.
  - *Owl Babies, Good Night Moon, Runaway Bunny*
6. Establish rituals.

Ceremonies help to ease many of life’s separations. A leisurely breakfast and a favorite song in the car on the way to school are a nice way to start the day. Once at school, help your child get settled comfortably. A kiss and a hug and a wave goodbye usually suffice, but even if you know your child will cry when you leave, ***never sneak out.*** You will want your child to trust you and to trust her teachers. Be consistent in your routines, confident and straight forward in your voice and manner and, even when it feels difficult, always say goodbye.

A few more tips:

- Prepare your child in advance of any changes.
- Let the teachers know if you want help.
- Talk to your child honestly about his feelings.
- Allow your child to bring a transitional object from home (stuffed animal, blanket, pictures from home).
- If your child is really having a harder time than what feels right to you, check with your child’s teacher about spending time in the classroom. We have specific guidelines to help.
- Ask your child’s teacher to help you set up a goodbye routine that works for your child’s particular classroom.

## **Section 7 - Academics**

### **Academic Content**

Young children learn by doing. Many children have a remarkable capacity for memorization. They can recite the alphabet and count from one to one hundred. But for information to become truly meaningful to a young child, he must experience it concretely. Letters and written numbers are the symbols adults use to express ideas. When we stress learning the mechanics of letters and numbers in early childhood, it is often at the expense of learning the importance of expressing ideas. The symbols of written language and numerals are not as useful to children as they are to adults. Yet, children have important ideas. A good early childhood curriculum supports the child in learning many ways to express and refine those ideas. The child who sits

down on her own to draw a picture or to write out a pretend shopping list is beginning to learn about symbols and writing more significantly than the three- or four-year-old who is asked to trace letters on a worksheet. The children who gather in the classroom library to look through books together or to listen to their teacher read to them are learning literacy on a deeper level than the children whose teacher drills them with flashcards. When a child sets the snack table with six cups for six chairs, he may begin to understand that the word or symbol "6" has a constant meaning whether applied to cups, chairs or children.

At the JCC we expose our children to a great variety of hands-on experiences. Painting, building, cooking and outdoor explorations can offer a depth of learning to the young child, particularly when her experiences are supported and extended by an attentive and skillful teacher. Most importantly, each child must be encouraged to learn at his own pace and in his own way. An early childhood program gives every child the opportunity to excel and allows each individual to feel important and valued both for himself and for the part he plays as a member of his classroom group.

### **Assessment System**

The use of assessments as an integrated part of the classroom curriculum is an indispensable tool in helping teachers design appropriate learning experiences. Children of any age learn most efficiently from materials that provide a level of familiarity the learner readily grasps, yet that are open ended enough to provide extended interest and challenge. This is particularly true for very young learners, with their limited knowledge and experience. In addition to a firm understanding of child development, we rely on our assessment system to inform classroom teams on what to teach and how to teach.

Assessment fulfills five functions:

- Aiding the teaching team to plan curriculum for the group and for the individual child
- Identifying special needs
- Providing feedback and opportunities for collaboration for families
- Program evaluation
- Program accountability to the public and to funding entities

Our program makes use of both formal and informal assessments. Our formal assessments are the Ounce Scale (used in the Child Care 1s and 2s and SFEY 2s&3s classroom) and the Work Sampling System (used in both Child Care and SFEY). This assessment has been chosen by the State. In addition to fulfilling all the above functions, the use of the Work Sampling System allows us to comply with PA state programs such as Keystone Stars and Pre-K Counts. All staff members receive ongoing training on the Ounce Scale and the Work Sampling System in particular and on child observation and assessment in general. Teachers fill out a 45-day assessment for every child that starts in the program. Teachers will have parents sign off on these assessments. These assessments are kept confidential and only the Director, the School Coordinator, the child's classroom teachers, the child's parents, and the child care administrative assistants will have access to the assessments.

## **Section 8 - Health and Safety**

### **Health Forms**

To comply with regulations from the Department of Education, the Department of Human Services, and the PA Code we are required to have health forms, emergency information forms,

and agreements on file for each child by the first day of school. Health forms must be renewed at the child's 18 and 24 month checkups and annually after age two through kindergarten age. Emergency information forms and agreements forms must be reviewed and signed by a parent or guardian every six months. No child may attend school without a completed health form and a completed emergency information form. Please help us keep these forms up to date, as required by the state Department of Human Services.

### **Immunizations**

The Department of Human Services requires that families provide the JCC with copies of each enrolled child's immunization records. If you have decided not to immunize your child, please provide a signed waiver for your child's JCC file.

### **School Health Policy**

When a family sends a child to school, we assume that the child is in good health and can participate in all activities including swimming, gym, and outside play. If, for any reason, a child is not to participate in a scheduled activity, please notify the classroom teacher and drop a note in the class log book.

Runny noses, mild coughs and colds should not keep children from participating in school activities. A day at school places both physical and emotional demands on the child. If your child is truly sick, he is better off at home. If a child becomes sick while at the Center, we will call to ask you to make arrangements to pick up the child as soon as possible. We will send a child home with any of the following symptoms: (1) temperature of 101 degrees or higher taken under the arm or orally, (2) vomiting, (3) severe diarrhea, defined as two or three very loose stools within one hour, (4) complaints of sore throat or earaches, (5) any contagious rash such as untreated impetigo or ringworm, (6) untreated head lice (head lice requires that you contact your child's doctor and the JCC immediately. Your child may return to child care after being treated with Nix shampoo or physician-approved treatment with a doctor's note).

### **Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Procedures**

The Jewish Community Center has a staff handbook, the JCC Emergency Plan, to establish procedures for handling crises within the JCC building and the local community. These procedures include means of handling crises such as weather related or other environmental hazards, individual medical and dental emergencies, intruders, and fire. The JCC posts emergency evacuation routes in classrooms and hallways throughout the building. Our emergency procedures are updated annually. The York County Emergency Management Agency reviews and signs the JCC Emergency Plan annually. All JCC staff are trained and drilled in the emergency procedures outlined in the handbook. New teaching/childcare staff must be trained in emergency evacuation procedures within three weeks of hire. Additionally, all teaching/care giving staff receives annual emergency training, annual fire safety training, and pediatric first aid and CPR.

### **Administration of Prescription Medicines**

A teacher will administer physician prescribed-medicine to your child when necessary. Our licensing agency, the Department of Human Services, enforces the following strict regulations that we must adhere to for the safety of both staff and children.

### **Prescription Medicines**

Medications must arrive at the Center in an original container, labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, medical necessity, an exact time medication is to be given, and a dosage. Medications for asthma such as inhalers or nebulizers will sometimes be prescribed on

an "as needed basis". This is fine as long as a physician's note accompanies the prescription describing the symptoms that constitute the "as needed" situation. For example, "Administer two puffs as needed for symptoms of excessive coughing or wheezing."

### **The Medication Log**

A parent or guardian must sign the classroom Medication Log with a signature, child's name, name of the medication, an exact time the medication is to be given, and a dosage. If your child is to be on a medication over a period of time, please ask the home base teacher to give you your own, separate Medication Log sheet for that one medication, to avoid the chore of filling out information and signing each day. **And remember, Staff cannot administer medication without the parent signature.**

### **All Medications**

Make sure to hand all medications to a home base teacher. Do not leave medicine in a child's backpack or cubby. The Department of Public Welfare requires that even products as mild as sunscreen or chapstick for chapped lips must be delivered to staff.

Please keep in mind the following suggestions:

- Many antibiotics can be administered on an early morning and evening schedule, eliminating the need to send medicine to the Center. It is always safest that your child take medicines at home.
- If your child is taking medication at home, please let a home base teacher know.
- Consider **not** using over-the-counter medications. We will deal with runny noses, coughing and mild fevers (under-the-arm readings less than 101 degrees). Many of the over-the-counter drugs are not effective and no medication is one hundred percent safe.

### **Allergies**

Information about a child's allergies is listed on the health form and Child Information form. In addition, we ask that you speak to your child's head teacher about any precautions staff should take to protect your child.

### **Special Health Needs**

If your child has special health needs, please provide us with a written plan or statement detailing your expectations of how we can collaborate with you in providing the best care for your child. Please make sure that this written statement is accompanied by a written confirmation of your statement from your child's physician.

### **Outdoor Policy**

We will go outdoors in almost any weather. Pouring rain will keep us indoors, drizzle will not. Dangerous conditions, such as a play yard slicked with ice, or subzero temperatures, will lead us to skip outdoor time, but snow, even slush, may send us bounding out the door. Our policy is based on the belief that weather has little, if any, effect on the children's health. We understand that not everyone shares this view. Please let us know your feelings.

### **Sunscreen**

Please apply UVA/UVB sunscreen protection to your child before drop-off in the morning during weather warm enough for your child to be outdoors in short sleeves. Your child's teachers will reapply sunscreen before afternoon outdoor play. Please consider encouraging your child to wear a sun hat during the summer months.

### **Hand Washing**

Our state licensing agency, the Department of Human Services, requires children to wash hands upon arrival at the center. Please help your child wash hands at drop-off time.

### **Fire Drills**

In compliance with regulations set by the Department of Human Services and the National Association for the Education of Young Children standards, we will hold one fire drill every month.

### **Child Abuse Prevention**

The JCC is concerned about children and has a responsibility to provide each child with a safe environment. As a result, we have a number of practices in place to assure the children in our care are respected and cared for properly. All employees are screened by the state prior to employment and are trained in our child abuse prevention policies. Teachers learn to watch for certain signs of abuse in children as well as for patterns of behavior that might indicate abuse. They are also mandated by the state to report any suspicions of abuse. Our programs have an open door policy granting families the right to drop in at any time and supervisors to make unannounced visits to classrooms.

### **Car Seats**

Your child's safety is important to us. Please make sure your child arrives at and leaves from the Center in a safety seat or booster seat for older children. If someone other than you will be dropping off or picking up your child, make sure you or that driver supplies a proper car or booster seat to keep your child safe. Teachers are happy to help you store a safety seat at the Center and will make sure the pick-up adult locates the seat for your child's use at pick-up time.

### **Pet Visits**

Some children are afraid of animals. A surprise pet visit can be disturbing. *Please do not bring animals into our school* unless you have arranged the visit with your child's teacher. It is best to arrive at a time when your child's class has been prepared for the visit and is seated for meeting, and all other children are in their respective rooms.

### **Smoking**

The JCC is a smoke free environment. The JCC does not permit smoking in any part of its building, in the play yards or in front of the Early Childhood entrance.

### **Peanut Free**

The JCC Early Childhood area is a peanut free environment. To protect our children with allergies, we ask that families refrain from sending in any foods that may contain peanuts.

## **Section 9 - Classroom Routines and Policies**

### **Meals and Snacks**

Meals and snacks at the JCC are simple and healthy. Breakfast consists of unsweetened cereal and milk and toast with margarine and/or jelly. You will receive a lunch menu at the beginning of every month. Our meals are kosher-style: we do not serve shellfish or pork products and separate the serving of dairy and meat products. If a meat meal is to be served at lunch, the children will be served milk at morning and afternoon snack times. Desserts are usually limited to fruit, applesauce and an occasional cookie.

The school provides a snack each day. Children frequently prepare special morning snacks during classroom cooking projects. We also welcome healthy snack contributions from home.

Fruits, vegetables, pretzels, crackers and simple baked goods are some suggestions for appropriate contributions. Please let us know when you plan to provide a snack.

Some children like to pack meals from home to eat at the Center. If you are packing breakfast or lunch, please remember:

- Do pack simple healthy meals.
- Do observe our kosher-style dietary restrictions.
- Do limit dessert to fruit, applesauce, and yogurt.
- Do not pack sweetened cereals, doughnuts, or cookies for breakfast.
- Do not pack cupcakes, candy or pudding for lunch. If we are serving a special dessert on the day your child packs lunch, she is welcome to share some.

### **Gum and Candy**

Please do not allow your child to bring gum or candy to school. A child with five sticks of gum and 15 eager friends is a child with a problem. Gum can also create a messy cleaning problem since children often spit it out on the floor or furniture.

### **Treats for the Classroom**

Teachers appreciate donations of healthy edible treats for the classroom. **However, our state licensing and standards do not permit us to accept any foods except those that are factory sealed or boxed. We can also accept whole fruits and vegetables.**

### **School Clothes**

Children should wear simple, washable clothes to school. There are many messy activities at school each day and all children are encouraged to participate in all activities. Children wear smocks during art projects, but no smock seems to offer a guarantee against the occasional splatter of glue, paint or markers. We provide smocks but you may provide your own smock, if you wish.

Children must wear rubber-soled shoes in the gymnasium. You will be advised of your child's gym days at the beginning of the school year. Rubber-soled shoes are safer on both indoor and outdoor climbing equipment. Flip flops are not safe footwear for active play. Please do not send your child to school or summer camp in flip flops. Children play in the outdoor play yard in all weather except rain. Please dress your child appropriately for the weather. Outer clothing that is easy for the child to put on by himself avoids frustration for both child and teacher.

Mittens are easier than gloves for small children. Boot and snow pants with an ample fit are definitely easier to manage than those that are tight or verging on being outgrown.

As soon as the weather turns chilly, children in the 3s, 4s & 5s should keep a knit cap at school to cover damp hair outside on swim days. Children in the 3s and 4s & 5s should keep a bathing suit at school for swim time. Suits must be labeled with the child's name. Please put name tags on all outer clothes, mittens, hats, boots, jackets and raincoats.

### **Toys from Home**

Many younger children insist on bringing toys from home. The toy seems to serve as an effective link between home and school. One small treasured item such as a blanket, doll or book should be enough. We will encourage the children to leave their toys in cubbies and later at home, as the year progresses. We ask for your support in this process. Most older children can understand the request that they leave treasured items at home. We have carefully chosen school toys and materials and established simple routines for sharing them. Toys from home

are often disruptive influences in the classroom, creating stress for owner and classmates alike. During the busy school day, toys are sometimes lost or misplaced. Such losses are difficult for children to accept, even when temporary, and are better avoided.

### **Coloring Books**

Children will have many opportunities to draw with crayons, markers, pencils and pens. Please do not allow your child to bring coloring books to the classroom.

### **Birthdays at School**

Families celebrate their children's' birthdays in different ways and some do not celebrate birthdays at all. As child caregivers we need to recognize and respect these differences. We are also aware that a little bit of excitement goes a long way in groups of young children. We intentionally keep birthday observance low key.

**If you would like to celebrate your child's birthday at school, you may send in a favorite snack as long as it arrives in factory sealed wrapping or box. Whole fruits and vegetables are good and healthy options.** You may bring juice, plates and napkins. Please do not provide balloons or party favors. We will sing a birthday song and eat the special snack. Families are welcome to attend during the snack or to spend the whole, or part of the school session with the child. Instead of birthday prizes for the children, we suggest that you donate a book to the School. We will affix our special bookplate to the book on which your child's name and the date of the gift can be printed. Ask to see our book list if you are interested.

Unless all children in the child's class are going to be invited, please do not distribute party invitations at the Center. Over the years, we have seen too many children and parents with hurt feelings when parents have invited some, but not all, of the children from a classroom. Teachers cannot be responsible for taking children to parties held at the JCC after school.

### **Holidays**

Holidays can be over-stimulating and stressful times for young children. Because television and store windows bombard children with overwhelming stimuli, we try to maintain the classroom as a refuge. For this reason, we do not celebrate with parties, even those holidays generally considered non-religious and therefore shared by almost all children.

We appreciate that not all children share the same cultural and religious backgrounds, or the same holidays. Over the course of the year, we discuss some of the Jewish holidays with the children using age-appropriate books, projects and songs. Parents are invited to join us during holiday activities to share in the learning experience, or to contribute to it.

We ask that you refrain from bringing in any Christmas, Easter, Valentine or Halloween treats. If you are unsure what typical December symbols would be deemed a sign of Christmas, refrain from bringing in anything red and green.

There are many ways to honor different heritages at school. We welcome visits from parents who would like to share recipes, stories, games or songs representative of different cultural backgrounds.

### **Jewish Holidays**

**Chanukah**, the Festival of Lights, commemorates the re-dedication of the Temple in Jerusalem and celebrates the victory of the Maccabees over the Syrian Army.

**Lag B'omer** recalls the struggle of the Jews to regain their independence as a Jewish nation during the second century BCE when the Romans, ruling Palestine, banned Jewish literature and the study of Torah.

**Passover** or *Pesach* recalls the Jews' ordeals as slaves in Egypt and celebrates their exodus from Egypt.

**Purim**, "The Feast of Lots," commemorates the rescue of the Jews of Persia by Queen Esther and her uncle Mordecai from Haman's evil plot to destroy them.

**Rosh Hashanah** celebrates the anniversary of creation and marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year.

**Shavuot** means "weeks" and commemorates the giving of the Torah (Old Testament) on Mount Sinai seven weeks after the beginning of Passover. It is highlighted by the reading of the Ten Commandments.

**Shemini Atzeret** is the beginning of the season that determines the fertility of the land in the year to come.

**Simchat Torah**, "Rejoicing in the Torah," is a festival observed on the ninth and final day of Sukkot. It honors the Torah and emphasizes the importance of learning in Jewish life.

**Sukkot**, the Feast of the Tabernacles, commemorates 40 years of wandering in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt when Jews lived in huts or sukkahs. Sukkot also marks the harvest time.

**Tisha B'Av** commemorates and mourns the destruction of the temples in Jerusalem.

**Tu B'Shevat**, Jewish Arbor Day, celebrates the beginning of spring in Israel.

**Yom HaShoah**, is the day of Holocaust remembrance.

**Yom Kippur** is the most solemn holiday of the year, also known as the "Day of Atonement."

**The following section contains information that is only pertinent to children and families in the JCC Child Care.**

Our program is committed to forging a strong partnership between family and Center in order to provide the highest quality of care and early childhood education for each individual child enrolled in the program.

## **Section 10 – Information Specific to Child Care**

### **Child Care Hours**

The Child Care Program is open from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM for children in kindergarten through school-Age. Our 3s/4s, and 4s/5s Rooms open at 7:00 AM and closes at 6:00 PM. Our 1s/2s Room opens at 7:00 AM and closes at 5:30 PM. When you need to drop your 5 and under age child off between 6:30 and 7:00 AM, please make arrangements through your child's classroom teachers or the Director of Children's Education and Development.

Please Note: Our Early Childhood entrance does not open until 7:01 AM.

### **Arrivals**

Please record your time of arrival on your child's home base sign-in/out sheet and let a teacher on duty know your child has arrived. 1s/2s will always be dropped off in their own home base room. Our older children's early morning schedules (before 9:00 AM) may vary depending on the weather and the numbers of children arriving before 8:00 AM. Home base signs or a teacher

will let you know whether the children are in the classroom, outdoor play yards, or gym.

### **Dismissals**

The classroom or area from which your child is dismissed may vary according to staffing and time of year. Look for a sign or white board at the classroom entrance that tells you where the children are playing.

If an adult other than those listed on the child's Emergency Contact Information Card is to pick up your child from the Center, you should notify us in writing. We do realize that unforeseen situations may require a parent to make a last-minute phone call to inform teachers of pick-up by a person not authorized on the child's enrollment forms. Please help us to identify the non-authorized pick-up person and prepare the pick-up person ahead of time, so that he/she can be ready to show some form of ID before we release your child into his custody. Record your child's departure time on the sign-in/out sheet.

### **Late Pick Up**

Our staff appreciates prompt pick-ups at closing time. Many staff attend evening classes and training workshops and cannot stay after work hours. We expect timely pick-ups for all children. A late fee of \$5.00 per 5 minutes (\$5.00 for 6-10 minutes, \$10.00 for 11-15 minutes, etc.) may be applied. The JCC may dismiss a family from the Child Care Program if late pick-up occurs on more than three occasions.

### **Family Afternoon**

Each classroom hosts a Family Afternoon once during the school year. The Family Afternoon is an opportunity to learn more about your child's program at the JCC and to participate in some favorite classroom activities. **Please be sure to join us for your child's Family Afternoon.**

### **Swim Program**

We introduce the children to the JCC swim program when they enter our 3s/4s classroom. Children should bring a towel to donate to the swim department and a name labeled bathing suit. Please remember to dress your children in easily changed outfits on swim days.

During the summer months, June through August, the aquatics department offers a recreational swim once a week for our 3s/4s, 4s/5s, 3s/4s/5s, and Kindergarteners.

### **JCC Activities**

Many families enjoy the convenience of enrolling children in art, swim, sports, and dance programs during their children's school day at the JCC. Childcare staff will deliver and retrieve your child to and from his/her activities whenever possible and up to 5:00 PM. We will let you know when classroom schedules will not permit this service. Please be sure to leave written notice of your child's scheduled activities with your child's teachers.

### **Change of Status Form**

A Change of Status for Child or Family Form is required for all billing changes including a change in your child's schedule, membership, termination, vacation, and withdrawing a child during the weeks of Summer Camp. The form is available at the Front Desk, Early Childhood Lobby, or SACC Mailbox Area. Return the completed form to the front desk or a drop box.

## **Section 11 – Information Specific to School for the Early Years**

The following section contains information that is only pertinent to children and families in the School for the Early Years.

## **School for the Early Years Swim Volunteers**

Our swim program for the 3-day 3s and 4s & 5s depends on volunteer help from families. The children need you to help them go to and from the locker rooms, get suits on and off, and dry their hair. The extra adults can also help us ease the anxiety some children experience when leaving the comfort of their classroom. Teachers will make a swim helper roster with every family's name listed. Please find a replacement if you cannot make your scheduled date. We welcome help from grandparents, aunts, nannies and babysitters.

## **School Hours**

7:45 AM	Early morning drop off ( <i>requires prior reservation</i> )
8:50 AM	Doors open
9 – 11:15 AM	2s program
9 – 11:25 AM	3s program
9 – 11:30 AM	4s and 5s program

## **Arrival**

Children may be dropped-off at school between 8:50 - 9 AM. Any child arriving before 8:50 AM must be signed-up for early morning drop-off. There is a \$4 per morning charge for this service.

## **Dismissal**

The 2s/3s will be dismissed at 11:15 AM, the 3s/4s at 11:25 AM, and the 4s & 5s at 11:30 AM. At dismissal time, please park in the school lot and enter the building to pick up your child. If class is still in session, you may wait in the school lobby. Remember to help your child check his cubby before he leaves school. Dismissal can become a tricky and uncomfortable time unless children are given a fair amount of adult support. Children have struggled to meet outside demands and exercise much inner control during their school day. Fatigue can lead to irritable or over-excited behavior. Families and caregivers need to be focused on children from the time they meet the child at the classroom door until they leave the building. School rules are still in effect. Children should not be running in the hallway or be unsupervised by the adults who have come to take them home. Please continue the school policy of having children walk quietly, holding your hand or right by your side as they leave the building. If an adult other than those listed on the Emergency Card is picking up your child after school, you must notify us in writing. Without a note, we cannot release the child from the custody of the school.

***Please be prompt*** at dismissal time. Children become anxious when they are left behind as their classmates leave for home or extended day programs.

## **Tuition**

For your convenience, yearly tuition is divided into nine monthly installments; however, you may choose to pay your tuition in full. A \$50 registration fee and one month's tuition is required at time of registration. The registration fee is non-refundable and non-transferable. If you withdraw your child from the school at any time, you will not be refunded your registration fee or the May tuition.

## **Welcome to School Meetings**

"Welcome to School Meetings" are scheduled before the first week of school. Each child will see his classroom and meet his teachers before school begins. A 40-minute meeting is scheduled for four to five families at a time. This is a short play session for the children and an opportunity for families and teachers to meet and talk informally. Teachers will show families and children

around the classroom, the bathroom and the play yard so that school will seem at least somewhat familiar on the first day.

The Welcome to School Meeting is a good time to ask questions to which you still do not have the answers after pouring over the Parent Handbook and the September newsletter. This meeting is not a good time to discuss any matters about your child which you do not want the child to hear, since he will be with you during the meeting. Feel free to contact either our School Director or your child's classroom teacher if you want to arrange a conference about your child before the school year begins.

**Important:** We feel strongly that every child should see her new classroom and meet her teachers before the first day of school. If you will not be able to attend the Welcome to School Meeting, please contact your child's classroom teacher and arrange to come another day.

### **First Week of School**

Separating from families and beginning a new school year in a new classroom can be difficult for both families and children. To provide a happier, smoother start to the school year, we follow a half-day schedule during our first week of school.

### **Family Mailboxes/Cubbies**

Please use the Family Mailboxes rather than the children's cubbies for any birthday invitations, thank you notes, and other communications. **Please do not use the mailboxes or children's cubbies to distribute treats or prizes to the children.**

## **Section 12 - Early Childhood Staff**



**Heather Miller**, *Director of Children's Education and Development*

In 1991, Heather started volunteering with the preschool program at the York JCC. While finishing her BA degree in Elementary Education from Penn State University, she continued volunteering and working summers for the Early Childhood program. In 1995, Heather joined the newly started child care program. She obtained her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education in 2007 and her Education Specialist degree in Early Childhood Education from Northcentral University in 2013. She has worked with infants through school-age children. Heather is a certified Red Cross Instructor and PQAS Instructor.



**Kristen Nowak**, *Associate Director of Children's Education and Development*

Kristen has worked at the JCC since 1998. Her educational background includes a BS in Child Development and Teaching from Michigan State University and she holds a PA Early Childhood Education teaching certificate. Kristen has been working with young children and their families in both teaching and administrative roles since 1988.

## **Community Resources List**

Access York: 1-800-262-8444; [www.access-york.org](http://www.access-york.org)

CDC Act Early: 1-800-CDC-INFO

Child Care Consultants: 1-800-864-4925; [www.childcareconsultants.org](http://www.childcareconsultants.org)

Family First Health: (717)845-8617; [www.familyfirsthealth.org](http://www.familyfirsthealth.org)

Lincoln Intermediate Unit No. 12: (717)624-4616

Loving Care Agency: (717)848-2303; [www.lovingcareagency.com](http://www.lovingcareagency.com)

Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania: 1-888-727-2706; [www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org)

York Count Office of Children, Youth & Families: 1-800-729-9227; [www.yccys.org](http://www.yccys.org)



*The JCC is a United Way Member Agency.*

*The Early Childhood Education program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children.*

*It is licensed by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and has received a 4-STAR rating from Pennsylvania Keystone STARS.*

*Financial assistance is available.*

*The JCC shall not discriminate because of race, color, sex, age, veteran status, marital status, sexual preference, national origin, religion, disability or any other characteristic protected by law.*

*The JCC is an equal opportunity employer.*



 **York Jewish  
Community Center**

*Everyone is Welcome!*

