

Hillel Academy



Isadore Joshowitz Early Childhood Center

**Family Handbook
2024-2025**

HILLEL ACADEMY OF PITTSBURGH
5685 Beacon Street Pittsburgh, PA 15217
(412) 521-8131 FAX: (412) 521-5150 www.hillelpgh.org

WELCOME

Welcome to Hillel Academy! We feel fortunate that you have joined our school. Many of the items in this handbook are covered in your initial visit to our school or at our open house. Please read this manual carefully, which explains the specific policies of our school. You are ultimately responsible for knowing the information contained in this handbook. Questions or concerns can be brought to us at any time.

Mission Statement

The mission of Hillel Academy of Pittsburgh, an Orthodox Jewish Day School, is to graduate young men and women with unlimited capacity to compete in a superior manner in any challenge they undertake, who are G-d fearing, Torah observant models of exemplary character, who love God, the Jewish people, and the land of Israel and possess a love of learning, confidence and the ability to think critically and serve as active members and leaders of the Jewish community and of society.

We will accomplish this mission by creating an environment in which every child can grow socially, emotionally, and cognitively. We will help each child reach his/her full potential through developmentally appropriate activities using creativity, imagination, experimentation, discovery, and problem solving skills. Our classes present a range of independent and group-based activities designed to address all key areas as defined by the Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Learning Through Play, Creative Thinking & Expression, Cognitive Thinking & General Knowledge, Scientific Thinking & Technology, Social Studies Thinking, Health, Wellness & Physical Development, Early Literacy Foundations, and Social & Emotional Development.

Our highly trained and certified teachers will provide a safe, supportive, and warm environment. Each day, our goal is for each child to feel good about him/herself and that he/she views him/herself as a competent, capable, and valued member of our early childhood community.

Administrative Staff

The administrative staff views the entire Early Learning Center staff as one cohesive team where every member is a vital piece of the puzzle. We are all here to support one another. Please feel free to come to us at any time with questions or concerns.

Ruth Pohuly, *Director*
412-521-8131
rpohuly@hillelpgh.org

Rabbi Sam Weinberg, *Head of School*
412-521-8131
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Leah Ackner, *Director of Compliance*
412-521-8131
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PROCEDURES WITHIN THE PROGRAM

The policies and procedures in this handbook are subject to change at any time to reflect and comply with the current CDC, local and state guidelines. Any changes will be communicated to families and staff via email and on our website: www.hillelpgh.org

SECURITY

Our number one priority is ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all students, staff, and visitors. The school is guarded at all times when in session by licensed security personnel who include active and retired police and military members. Throughout the year, administrators, teachers and staff work closely and collaboratively with the security team, local emergency responders, and community agencies to evaluate the security needs of the school.

VISITOR POLICY

All visitors must visit the receptionist to be screened and to sign in to the facility. For the duration of the visit, all visitors are accompanied by a staff person or administrator. Tours of the building must be scheduled in advance with our Director of Admissions, Kira Sunshine by calling 412-521-8131 or emailing her at ksunshine@hillelpgh.org. Persons visiting the school to provide essential services must schedule their visits in advance by calling the Early Childhood Director, Ruth Pohuly, at 412-521-8131 or emailing her at rpohuly@hillelpgh.org.

FIREARM POLICY

Weapons, firearms, and ammunition are prohibited on the premises, unless carried by authorized, licensed individuals hired by the school to provide security.

ECC SCHEDULE: ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES:

Please respect your child's teachers and the staff by dropping off and picking up your child on-time.

Car seats and strollers must be "parked" on the lower level (accessed by elevator).

Drop Off:

- **8am drop-off:** Children may arrive between 7:50-8:15am. Children will NOT be allowed into the building before that time. ECC staff escort your child back to his/her classroom.
- **After 8:15am:** Teachers return to the classroom and you must use the designated entrance of the building for entry. Please sign in with security before taking your child back to the classroom.
- **After 10 am: Students will not be accepted into the classroom unless they were at an approved appointment. Families MUST bring a note from the doctor.** Additionally, once a child is released from the classroom, they may not return the same day unless they left to attend an approved appointment. Documentation from the appointment is necessary for reentry.

Pick Up:

If you are picking up multiple children, please pick up your youngest child first.

MONDAY-THURSDAY:

- **2:00 dismissal** - your child will be at the front entrance by 1:50pm and brought to you by an ECC staff member. Please plan accordingly to find parking if needed and arrive on time.

- **4:00 dismissal** - your child will be at the front entrance by 3:45pm and brought to you by an ECC staff member. **This is the busiest pick-up time** because our Elementary and High School also dismiss at this time. Please plan accordingly to find parking if needed and arrive on time.
- **5:00 dismissal** - your child will be at the front entrance by 4:45pm and brought to you by an ECC staff member. Please plan accordingly to find parking and arrive on time.
- **ALL children must be picked up by 5:00 PM.**

FRIDAYS:

- **2:00 dismissal** - your child will be at the pick-up location at by 1:45pm and brought to you by an ECC staff member. Elementary and High School also dismiss at this time. Please plan accordingly to find parking if needed and arrive on time.
 - **3:30 Extended Day dismissal:** - your child will be at the pick-up location at by 3:20pm and brought to you by an ECC staff member. **Last dismissal for all children is at 3:30 pm on Fridays**
 - No unauthorized adult will be permitted to pick up children without permission from the parent/guardian. **This includes siblings.** Families must fill out the Pick-Up Permission form (in Renweb) indicating who is allowed to pick-up your child.
 - Any unrecognized person picking up a child will be verified by checking ID. If they are not on your approved pick up list, you **MUST** notify us (office/teacher). We will **NOT** release your child without written or verbal permission from a parent/guardian.
 - **If you need to change your child's hours please speak to Kira Sunshine or Ruth Pohuly. Changes are not guaranteed and are subject to availability of staff and space. All changes to hours must be approved before sending or leaving your child in care.**
- Families who fail to pick up their children on time repeatedly will be charged additional fees AND required to speak/meet with an administrator about their non-compliance.**

EMERGENCY/DISASTER PLANS

BASIC PLAN

- Every staff member must have annual fire and disaster safety training. In case of an actual fire or disaster, make every effort to avoid panic. If any locations change, including the location where Hillel cares for children, staff will be notified and trained immediately.
- Staff should familiarize themselves with the location of fire extinguishers, AEDs and with exit routes.
- Staff talk to and teach children emergency plans in an age-appropriate way. Classes can utilize visual safety reminders and classroom rules along with opportunities to regularly discuss safety and practice fire, disaster, emergency, shelter in place and lockdown drills.
- Staff model appropriate language and behavior during drills or live emergencies.
- Know your room's exit route and designated safe spot in advance, it is posted by the door of your room.
- Students must remain silent while in lockdown, shelter in place and during evacuations.
- As a part of safety awareness and in accordance with NAEYC and the Department of Human Services, the ECC participates in scheduled fire and/or emergency drills every 30 days.

Daily Practice:

- Prepare – each day upon arrival, routinely inspect classroom to ensure area is secure
- Inspect – verify that provided emergency supplies are accounted for within classroom
- Notify – on-duty security staff if doors, windows or other infrastructure is out of order

- Be alert for emergency notifications at all times

Fire/Evacuation of Building:

- In case of a fire, or need to evacuate the building, students and staff use posted fire drill routes.
- Do a headcount before leaving the space (Check bathroom, closets, diaper and cozy areas.)
- Take your emergency bag.
- Turn off the light and close the door as you leave.
- Students and staff should evacuate and move away from the building either on Beacon Street Avenue or on Bartlett Street toward Yeshiva Boys School.
- **If there is a need to evacuate the building and relocate elsewhere students and staff will go to the Boys Yeshiva Schools campus located at 2100 Wightman Street. |**
- When you get to your designated safe spot, take attendance to determine if any students are missing. Inform a supervisor if everyone is present and who is missing.
- Do not re-enter the building until the “all clear” signal is given.

*In all emergency situations that require evacuation or relocation to another part of the building, the following accommodations must be made for Infants, toddlers, and any non-ambulatory child or child with a chronic illness:

- Non-ambulatory children should be placed in the appropriate evacuation vehicle:
- Infants: up to 4 should be placed in an emergency evacuation crib
- Infants and/or all other non-ambulatory children should be placed in a stroller with harnesses.
- Classrooms that have non-ambulatory children enrolled must have enough cribs and/or strollers to safely evacuate those children.

SHELTER IN PLACE:

- In case of weather or other emergency, students shelter in place in their classrooms or whatever room they are in at the moment.
- Children and staff should avoid windows, using interior walls if possible.
- Take attendance to determine if any students are missing. Inform a supervisor if everyone is present and who is missing.
- Do not leave the shelter area unless instructed or until the “all clear” signal is given.

LOCKDOWN:

Lockdowns are implemented when an active threat or act of violence arises within the building, with the goal of providing both staff and students alike with the highest possible degree of security to withstand the threat.

- Lock door – insert door barricade under the door, deploy lockdown pin from plastic box into floor plate
- Barricade – use nearby furniture or other heavy objects to prevent access to room
- Move students away from doors & windows
- Conceal room – turn off lights, close blinds, deploy lockdown shades
- Silence – silence all electronics and keep room quiet
- Utilize additional resources within room to enhance strength of lockdown
- Prepare - be ready to fight back and/or evacuate if room is breached
- Assess – take classroom attendance; issue further instructions as needed (note: ONLY do this once other steps have been completed)
- Wait – DO NOT emerge from the barricaded room until cleared by first responders

EMERGENCY TRANSPORTATION PLAN:

Should a child need to be transported by emergency vehicle for immediate medical attention the following steps should be followed:

- The ECC Director (or his/her designee) should be notified as soon as possible regarding the situation and the response to it.
- A staff member should remain with the child at all times until the parents/guardians arrive. This may include accompanying the child by emergency vehicle to the appropriate facility
- Contact the daily “floater” to ensure proper student-staff ratios at all times

NOTIFICATION OF EMERGENCIES, DELAYS & CLOSINGS:

School may be delayed or canceled due to conditions that include but are not limited to: Emergencies, the health and safety of faculty and staff, and/or severe weather conditions. You will be notified as soon as possible via phone through our School-Reach communication system and via email regarding school emergencies, delays, or cancellations. In the case of an emergency, communication will also be sent to inform you that the emergency is over. Hillel Academy does not follow Pittsburgh Public School (PPS) snow day and delay policies. If you feel it is unsafe to send your children to school for any reason, please keep them at home and call the school to inform us of their absence, which will be excused.

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS:

In the event that Hillel Academy cannot provide child care at its permanent, licensed location, a temporary location will be located, inspected, and licensed by DHS for child care before moving children to that space and providing services.

CHILD HEALTH & SAFETY

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

All parents/guardians must complete the online Renweb forms before the start of school. These forms include family demographic information, medical information, emergency contact information, pick up/release information, dismissal information, permissions slips, and required permissions/waivers. State regulations require you to submit this information upon enrollment and update it every 6 months.

HEALTH FORMS:

All children must submit a health form at time of enrollment along with the most recent list of all his or her immunizations. This is a Pennsylvania State requirement. These health forms must be updated at least annually and more frequently for children under two. The frequency is based on the guidelines set by the American Academy of Pediatrics. You will be notified when your child needs a new Health Form. Families who do not submit a new Health Form within 60 days of notification by the school may result in actions up to and including the dismissal of the child from the school until proper health documentation is provided.

DRESS CODE FOR CHILDREN

Children should wear comfortable clothes that they can manage independently and not worry about keeping spotless. Zippers that work and hats that fasten are helpful to both child and teacher. All boys are encouraged, but not required to wear tzitzit (if toilet trained) and a kippah. Tennis shoes or other sturdy shoes with socks are best for active play. Please remove drawstrings from jackets and sweatshirt hoods, as they can be hazardous.

Fresh air and outdoor experiences are an important component of our daily program. Children play outside each day as long as the air quality is safe and the “feels like” temperature is above 25 and under 95 degrees.

Please make sure that your child has outdoor wear that is appropriate for cold and hot weather. *All infants must have season appropriate outdoor clothing to allow them to go outside too.*

QUIET/REST TIME:

To comply with the maximum standards as set by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Early Learning Keys to Quality Stars Program, and NAEYC, all infants, tots and toddlers enrolled in the full-day program are required to have a crib, or a comfortable cot/mat for rest time while in school. Nursery and Pre-K are required to have a quiet/rest time. Our learning goal for all children during this time is to teach them to listen to their bodies and have time to relax, be quiet and rest.

Please check with your child's teachers to determine what items your child needs for rest time. Infants (under 12 months) are not permitted to have anything in their crib with the exception of a pacifier. The pacifier may not have a toy attached. Children over 1 may have a lovey or comfort item. Children may NOT sleep with bottles at any age. In the interest of sanitation, all linens are sent home each Friday to wash and return on Monday with your child.

The following are the American Academy of Pediatrics' recommended minimum and maximum hours each age group should regularly sleep during a 24-hour period for optimal health:

- Ages 4-12 months: 12-16 hours (including naps)
- Ages 1-2 years: 11-14 hours (including naps)
- Ages 3-5 years: 10-13 hours (including naps)

While not all children nap, all of our classrooms provide a "nap" or quiet/rest time. This time looks different in each classroom and changes as the needs of the children change.

Infants and Toddler Rooms:

Infants and Toddlers MUST have individual rest equipment as well as nap (quiet/rest) time built into their daily schedule.

- **Infants -(up to a year old)** As needed, no set schedule, based on the needs of the children/parent instruction. Infants must be placed on their backs to sleep. No blankets/toys, including pacifiers with a toy attached are permitted in the crib until 1 year.
- **Tiny Tots and Toddlers (1 year - 2 years old rooms)** - Quiet/Rest time is a 2 hour window that ranges from 11am-1pm for our youngest children (Tiny Tots) to 12noon-2pm for our older children (Toddler Rooms). After this 2 hour window, the lights are turned on. This may wake some children up and some may stay asleep. **Children who do not fall asleep at rest time are offered books or quiet toys that they can use on their cot while the other children rest.**

Nursery and Pre-K

Nursery and Pre-K classes do NOT have individual rest equipment and families should NOT send in linens for nap. Quiet/rest times may be built into the day as needed in each class. Children may fall asleep during this time but teachers cannot force a child to sleep, nor can they keep them awake.

REST RULES FOR ALL AGE GROUPS:

- **Teachers cannot force children to sleep or to remain awake during rest time.**
- **To ensure proper supervision, children cannot be moved out or into another classroom during quiet/rest time.**
- Families who have concerns about rest policies should speak to the ECC Director, Ruth Pohuly.

DIAPER CHANGING POLICY: [\(CDC guidelines\)](#)

Hillel Academy trains and evaluates all employees in safe practices with regard to the health and safety of changing and toileting children annually and as needed. This includes ensuring staff lift children to minimize injury to the staff or child.

- Staff uses **only** commercially available disposable diapers or pull-ups
- Staff checks children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or soiled every two hours and/or when children wake up from a nap.
- There is a log of all diaper changes kept daily in each infant/toddler rooms for each child
- Diapers are changed at least every 2 hours and when noticeably soiled
- Soiled clothes are placed in a separate bag and sent home to be laundered
- Staff never leave a child unattended on a table or countertop. At all times, staff have a hand on the child when the child is being changed on an elevated surface.
- Diaper changing tables are designated for the children in that classroom who need to be diapered.
- Staff wear gloves for changes and clean and disinfect all surfaces before and after changing. Changing procedures are posted in all changing and toileting areas. [Diapering Poster](#)
- Staff ensure the hands free garbage designated for soiled diapers is kept closed when not in use.
- Potty chairs and toilet covers/inserts are not permitted
- Diaper cream requires a medication log permission form: [Medical Form](#)
- All cleaning and disinfecting solutions should be stored to be accessible to the caregiver/teacher but out of reach of any child.

HAND-WASHING POLICY ([CDC guidelines](#))

(Staff assist children as needed including infants who cannot wash hands alone)

Posters describing hand washing steps are placed near sinks.

- Upon arrival in the morning
- Before and after preparing and eating food
- After handling bodily fluids
- After using the bathroom
- After touching a child who may be sick or has handled soiled items
- Before and after playing in sand, water or with “wet” items like play-doh
- Upon returning after playing outdoors or from another space

Staff also wash their hands

- Before and after diapering
- Before and after feeding a child
- Before and after diapering
- After assisting a child with toileting
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
- After handling garbage or cleaning materials
- After assisting children with handwashing

Recommended method for hand-washing is as follows:

- Rub hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds using warm water and soap.
- Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used. If sanitizer is used, staff supervise children to prevent ingestion.

CLEANING/DISINFECTING/SANITIZING:

The health and safety of our children is a priority. ECC teachers and cleaning crew follow the cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing guidelines provided by our accreditor, NAEYC. The guidelines can be found here: [NAEYC Cleaning Guidelines](#).

PRODUCTS AND PROCEDURES

Whenever possible, our program chooses the least toxic, fragrance free products to use for cleaning our facility. When children are in care, staff use a mixture of soap and water to clean. Sanitizing and Disinfecting are done using a mixture of bleach and water, following the bleach label for mixing, application and dry times.

STEP 1: Clean surface/toy of visible debris/dirt first with soap and water.

STEP 2: Sanitize or disinfect

DISINFECT: Hard non-porous objects/surfaces that DO NOT go in child's mouth

SANITIZE: Other items that cgo in the mouth or may come in contact with the mouth

LAUNDER: Soft toys and clothing/materials

GENERAL RULES:

- All cleaning materials should be kept secure and out of reach of children.
- Cleaning products are not used near children, and staff ensure that there is adequate ventilation when used.
- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys placed in mouths or otherwise contaminated by bodily fluids are set aside until cleaned.

ACCIDENTS:

Minor injuries such as superficial cuts or bruises will be treated in the classroom. If there is any question as to the severity of the injury, parents/guardians will be notified and an incident report will be completed. In the event that a child becomes ill in school, parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.

ILLNESSES:

Policies for routine childhood illnesses are covered below. **Health policies are subject to change to maintain the overall health and safety of the school body. This includes any specific COVID-19 policies. Any changes to the policy will be communicated to staff and families.**

The 24 hour Policy:

The following illnesses require a child to go home and return to school 24 hours after symptoms resolve WITHOUT medication.

- A doctor's note does NOT reduce the 24 hour waiting period.
- Fever, vomiting and diarrhea must cease for 24 hours WITHOUT medication.
- If the 24 hour period expires during a school day, **please follow the arrival policy and do NOT bring your child to school after 10 am.**

DAILY HEALTH CHECK:

Staff conduct a daily health check of each child as soon as possible after the child enters the child care facility and whenever a change in the child's behavior or appearance is noted while that child is in care. The health check includes a visual inspection of the child and when possible a verbal exchange with the caregiver dropping off the child to assess overall health, checking for rashes and other signs or symptoms of illness and injury (such as drainage from eyes, vomiting, diarrhea, cuts/lacerations, pain, or feeling ill).

WHEN DOES MY CHILD GET SENT HOME?

In general, if your child develops an illness after arriving at school, and we feel the illness is serious enough that the child should not be in school, we will contact you so you can make arrangements for your child's care. Hillel follows the Department of Health guidelines. The following are illnesses defined by the Department of Health that demand the child's exclusion from school:

COVID-19 Symptoms: A list of current symptoms can be found on the CDC's website: [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)

Fever: If a child has a temporal temperature of 100.4 degrees or above (checked by 2 independent people), the parent/guardian will be notified and the child sent home. The child may return to school once s/he is fever free WITHOUT medication for 24 hours.

Vomiting: If a child vomits outside of immediate consumption of food/smell or vomits with signs of other illness, the parent/guardian will be notified and asked to pick up the child. The child may return to school after the vomiting has ceased for 24 hours WITHOUT medication.

Diarrhea: Diarrhea is defined as frequent, loose, watery stools. If a child has two or more episodes of diarrhea within two hours, staff will contact a parent/guardian to take the child home. The child may return to school 24 hours after the last episode. (No drop off after 10 am) Children who have irregular stools due to food interactions or a medical condition must have this documented by a doctor.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): If a child's eyes appear red, irritated, swollen, itchy, and/or have thick or discolored drainage, the staff will notify the parent/guardian to take the child home. **If the child requires medication/eye drops, the child will not be readmitted until at least 24 hours after the start of medication.** If no medication is required, the child must have a note from the doctor stating the child can return to the classroom.

Strep: Child may return with a doctor's note when fever free for 24 hours AND after a MINIMUM of 12 -24 hours (2 doses) of antibiotic treatment. (No drop off after 10 am)

Chicken Pox/ Measles/ Rubella: Re-admitted with doctor's note AND at least seven days after the onset of the rash. (Children with open, weeping sores may not be in school).

Mumps: Re-admitted with doctor's note AND after fever and swelling have ceased.

Rashes/Skin Conditions: If your child has a skin condition that fluid filled or open, weeping blisters, raised red blotches, or very itchy rashes, please keep your child home and have it checked by your physician. If the staff notices any of these types of skin conditions, they will contact you to take your child home. The family is required to bring a slip from the physician stating that the child is allowed to return to school. **Children with open and/or weeping sores and skin conditions may not be in school. This includes molluscum that is open and cannot be covered.**

Respiratory Disease: A child will be sent home if he/she has an upper respiratory illness which causes him/her to have a stuffy nose and runny nasal discharge and he/she cannot properly wipe his/her nose. A child will be sent home if he/she has a cough, or wheezing which is interfering with his/her ability to participate in classroom activities.

Excessive lethargy/general illness: A child will be sent home if he/she has symptoms that interfere with his/her ability to participate in classroom activities.

Post Surgical Procedure: A child must wait 24 hours after having anesthesia administered before returning to school. A physician's note is required indicating that the child can resume normal school activities.

ER Visits: If your child visits the ER please be in touch with their teacher or the school nurse before returning to school so we can continue to provide the best care for your child.

Lice - Live: The child's parent/guardian will be notified and sent home for treatment. The child may ONLY return the next school day after treatment. (See our full lice policy below)

Lice - Nits: The child's parent/guardian will be notified. The child may stay in school for the remainder of the day. Child may ONLY return the next school day after treatment. ([Click here to see our full Lice Policy](#))

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

In accordance with Pennsylvania state regulations, only trained staff who have completed specific training can administer medication. Additionally, any medication administered MUST be prescribed by a doctor. ALL medications, including rescue medications, MUST be in the original box/packaging accompanied with the prescription detailing the child's name, dosage and physician that prescribed the medication. No item will be stored or dispensed without these required items. Items cannot be expired. **Over the counter medicines including Tylenol, Ibuprofen and Benadryl WILL NOT BE ADMINISTERED** without a doctor's note instructing administration. Medications are kept in a locked container either in the classroom or in the nurse's office.

Sunscreen, diaper cream and bug spray:

These items are considered medications. They DO NOT require a doctor's prescription, but DO require parent/guardian consent by filling out this [MEDICAL FORM](#) before they can be applied by morahs. These medications are kept in the classroom, out of reach of children but accessible to staff as needed.

Rescue Medication for allergies:

Medications for allergies, asthma, diabetes, and seizures fall under the category of rescue medications. If your child has one of these conditions you must return the appropriate emergency action plan and permission documents to the main office by the start of the school year (or when prescribed by a medical professional). Emergency action plans can be found on the [Health Forms](#) page, under the "Admissions" section of www.hillelpggh.org. For safety purposes a list of allergies is posted in the classroom in a discreet way. Rescue medication is kept in the classroom, in the emergency bag which is always accessible, and kept out of reach of children.

HEALTH CONCERNS/ALLERGIES

The school strives to create a healthy environment for the children and staff. A school nurse, or someone trained in administering rescue medications is always on site when children are in care. If a student or staff member has an allergy that requires special consideration, the school will attempt, within reason, to accommodate the special needs of that individual. A written note from the treating physician must accompany the request for this adaptation of the classroom. When the school takes this action, parents/guardians will be informed of this and be given guidelines for accommodating this change. Any questions or concerns that a parent/guardian/staff member may have should be directed to the Director. All medical conditions and allergies are considered confidential. For safety purposes a list of such conditions will be posted in the classroom in a discreet way.

IMMUNIZATION POLICY:

Immunization Requirement. All students will be required to provide proof of current, age-appropriate immunizations according to current Pennsylvania immunization requirements prior to the beginning of each school year. Children in infant care and preschool programs will be required to provide proof of adherence to the universally recommended schedule produced by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice of the CDC. NB: In cases where a range of ages is given as the recommended time to administer a vaccine, a child will be considered in compliance if they have received the vaccine by the end of that age range. However, where state requirements exist specifying a specific grade level at which the requirement must be completed, the state requirement takes precedence.

Request for Medical Exemption Forms. Any student not meeting these requirements must have his or her licensed primary healthcare provider or regularly treating pediatric specialist complete and sign a Physician's Medical Exemption Certificate form explaining the medical rationale for not immunizing the child in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Academy of Family Physicians, and Centers for Disease Control Guidelines. A copy of the CDC guidelines for medical exemption will be provided to families as a part of their medical paperwork. Parents/guardians of the student must file an Application for Medical Exemption together with the Physician's Medical Exemption Certificate. If there is a child with a medical exemption who becomes exposed to a vaccine-preventable disease while in care, that child will be excluded from care until cleared to return by the child's doctor and the childcare center's medical team.

Hillel Academy follows the vaccination policy statement created by Pittsburgh's three Jewish day schools. **All exemptions (including religious), requests outside CDC guidelines, and catch up schedules are addressed in that policy.** A full copy of the policy can be found here: [VACCINATION POLICY AND PROCEDURES OF PITTSBURGH'S THREE JEWISH DAY SCHOOLS POLICY STATEMENT](#). Questions

about these policies can be directed to the Director of Admissions or the ECC Director.

- All immunization forms **must be** completed by **August 28, 2023**. State Law requires that no student may enter class if the immunization forms are not on file in the school building.
- Every child enrolled must have current immunizations in accordance with the recommendations of The CDC available at this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/parents/downloads/parent-ver-sch-0-6yrs.pdf>
- We must have a record of your child's most recent well visit and immunizations before entry. All subsequent required well visit documentation (6 month visit, 12 month visit, 18 month visit...) needs to be provided to Kira Sunshine, Director of Admissions.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

Teachers follow state guidelines and regulations that apply to child supervision. All staff and administration receive training on ratio regulations upon hire and annually at mandatory beginning and mid-year staff training sessions. All classrooms are staffed appropriately to ensure the correct ratio of staff to children as mandated by the state. Staff practice active supervision of children in the classroom, school and on the playground. Active supervision requires that all children remain within sight and sound of the staff at all times. Preschool aged children (3 and up) may be out of sight for short intervals (for example, when using the bathroom) as long as they can be heard and are checked on by sight frequently.

Ratio and supervision policies apply indoors, outdoors and on field trips. The following are the minimum staff ratios for children in care who are awake (the ratio follows the youngest child in any particular group.):

Infant (0-12 months)	1 staff person per 4 children
Young Toddler (12-24 months)	1 staff person per 5 children
Older Toddler (24-36 months)	1 staff person per 6 children
Preschool age (36 mo and older)	1 staff person to 10 children

When napping (designated quiet time with children resting/sleeping on cots/mats) the ratio is:

Infant (0-12 months)	1 staff person per 4 children
Young Toddler (12-24 months)	1 staff person per 10 children
Older Toddler (24-36 months)	1 staff person per 12 children
Preschool age (36 mo and older)	1 staff person per 20 children

ADDITIONAL INFANT/TODDLER SUPERVISION:

- Infants and Toddlers and Twos are supervised by sight and sound at all times. This includes staff positioning themselves in the room so someone can always hear and see any sleeping infants, toddlers and/or twos, even when caring for other children who are awake.
- Infant "Back to Sleep" policy: Unless ordered by a doctor, ALL infants are placed back to sleep until one year of age, without the use of a sleep positioner. A child must be placed on the back initially by the staff person but may reposition him/herself onto the side or back independently.
- Shaken Baby Syndrome Policy. All caregivers/teachers who are in direct contact with children, including substitute caregivers/teachers and volunteers, receive training on preventing shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma; recognition of potential signs and symptoms of shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma; strategies for coping with a crying, fussing, or distraught child; and the development and vulnerabilities of the brain in infancy and early childhood.
- No toys, blankets or soft items may be placed in a crib with an infant under one year of age. Infants' heads remain uncovered during sleep.
- If infants arrive to the program asleep, or fall asleep, in non-sleep equipment (car seat, bouncer, swing, etc) the infant is removed and placed in appropriate equipment.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

- Staff are not permitted to release any child or children to anyone who is not listed on that child's emergency sheet.
- Families may have someone else pick up their child IF written permission is granted or verbal permission is given to release the child.
- ID is required of the person picking up the child before the child may be released.
- Unless there is a custody agreement and court order on file at the facility, the staff MUST release a child to his/her legal guardian(s).
- Staff are not permitted to release children to adults appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or other substances.

MANDATED REPORTING POLICY

Under 23 Pa.C.S § 6311 licensees who, in the course of the employment, occupation or practice of their profession, come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Health and Safety when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training or experience that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse. All Hillel Academy Early Childhood staff are considered mandated reporters and must be trained in current Mandated Reporting law before working alone with children.

Hillel Academy prohibits, and does not tolerate child abuse in the workplace or in any other related activity. Hillel provides procedure for employees, volunteers, parents, students, board members, or third party to report child abuse and disciplinary penalties for those who commit such acts. No employee, volunteer, parent, student, board member, or third party, no matter his or her title or position has the authority to commit or allow child abuse. It is important to remember that "child abuse" is not limited to sexual abuse alone. It includes inflicting or creating an imminent risk of physical injury, mental injury, sexual abuse, or harmful physical neglect. A "child" is any individual who is under the age of 18. Hillel has a Zero-tolerance policy for any child abuse committed by an employee, volunteer, parent, student, board member, or third party. Upon completion of the investigation, disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and criminal prosecution may ensue.

Steps for reporting abuse/neglect:

- Staff who suspect abuse or neglect should immediately report their suspicions to the ECC Director of Administrator. Follow the most recent guidelines for reporting abuse which can be found here: [Reporting Abuse](#)
- Unless the report was intended to cause harm, staff who report abuse are immune from discharge, retaliation or other disciplinary action for reporting suspected abuse or neglect.
- Staff accused of abuse or neglect of a child within the program are immediately placed on paid leave pending an investigation.
- Information on all parties suspected of or reporting abuse is kept confidential. Information may only be released to law enforcement and/or an approved agency.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Young children can present challenging behaviors as they learn to behave appropriately in the educational setting. Our program is committed to using positive strategies with teaching young children how to manage their own behavior. Our goal in discipline is to teach children new skills and give new knowledge to help the children respect appropriate limits. Child guidance and classroom management decisions promote positive social skills, foster mutual respect, strengthen self-esteem, and support a safe environment. Children are helped to become independent problem solvers and self-disciplined, which is, of course, a long-term effort.

Teachers are trained in child development including social and emotional development, assessment, special needs and cultural competence. When a child has challenging behavior, teachers assess both the child and the classroom, specifically how the child responds to the classroom's structure, environment, and schedule transitions. Teachers model appropriate behavior in the way that they talk to each other and to the children. 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.

Parents/guardians will be advised of any concerns and involved in creating an individualized plan to address the behaviors in a way that addresses both the needs of the child and the child and the other children in the classroom. The ECC Director is available for discussion at any time. If an outside behavior consultant is needed, then the parent/guardian will first be asked for consent.

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR & DISCIPLINE

It is never acceptable for staff or parents/guardians to use physical punishment, psychological abuse, coercion, or punitive discipline techniques when responding to a child.

- Physical punishment includes (but is not limited to) hitting, spanking, kicking, excessive tickling, pulling arms and hair or requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time. Suggested calm down time is one minute per age of child.
- Psychological abuse includes (but is not limited to) shaming, name calling, ridiculing, sarcasm, humiliating, cursing, threatening, scaring, ostracism, seclusion or withholding affection, attention or food.
- Coercion includes (but is not limited to) shoving, pushing, pulling, grasping of body parts and physical restraint (except when necessary to protect a child or others from harm). This also includes forcing a child to sit, lie or stay down or forcing a child to perform an action like eating or cleaning up.

INCLUSION POLICY

Our program is designed to be inclusive and limit the suspension, expulsion and the exclusion of children on a temporary or permanent basis. Please advise us of your child's special needs and/or challenges. We strive to meet the individual needs of every child by developing a cooperative and supportive relationship among parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators. All parents/guardians must meet with the director prior to registration to ensure that, through open communication, children's needs are met. Information forms and releases must be provided prior to enrollment. We work together to develop a partnership between home and school in order to ensure that we all have the tools necessary to meet each child's needs.

Modifications to the school environment and use of support services are effective in ensuring that the needs of each child are met. The more information you are comfortable sharing about your child, the better we are able to meet each child's individual needs. When a child exhibits challenging behavior or is identified with a need through a screening, teachers and administrators work with families to offer resources, strategies and support services designed to keep children in the classroom. Abiding by federal and civil rights laws, exclusionary measures are not considered until all other possible interventions have been exhausted and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. Families are then offered assistance with accessing resources and alternative placement.

SUSPENSION/TEMPORARY REMOVAL POLICY

Hillel Adademy's Early Childhood Center will not expel any child from our program due to the child's behavior. **Temporary suspension of a child for persistent and challenging behaviors will be implemented as a last resort where there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications.**

This determination will not be made prior to:

- Conferencing with parents to discuss positive behavior interventions and development of goals.
- Recommending parents obtain a mental health consultation (child development specialist)
- Reducing the number of days/and or time in care for a specified amount of time
- Providing reasonable modifications

If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, the ECC will support the child's return to full services as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by continuing to engage with parents and any mental health consultants. A written plan will be developed to document the action steps and supports needed to promote the child's successful return to full services.

In the event that the child's behavior continues to present a serious safety threat to the child or other children in the classroom, and all parties determine that Hillel's ECC program is not the appropriate placement, we will work with appropriate agencies, consultants, and the child's family to determine the most appropriate placement and assist as necessary with the transition.

In an effort to prevent expulsion and suspension of children, Hillel's ECC educators utilize the following policy and practices in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner:

- Develop healthy and nurturing relationships with children.
- Develop strong partnerships and relationships with parents.
- Use developmentally appropriate practices that provide for stimulating and interactive learning environments, age-appropriate expectations, and best practices in child development, and early learning education.
- Participate in professional development, and training to ensure educators have the competencies to support children's social and emotional health.
- Develop and implement classroom expectations and routines that are developmentally appropriate, clear, consistent, and that meet the needs of the children.
- Adapt learning environments to promote healthy social interactions with others.

COMMUNICATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY

A child's and/or staff's medical, behavioral and academic information is kept confidential by the teaching and administrative staff at Hillel Academy. Except for legal guardians and regulatory authorities, this information is not shared internally or externally unless written consent is granted.

TRANSLATION SERVICES

We strive to provide policy and procedure information to families in a language that they can understand. If English is your second language, please contact the ECC director so that you can be referred to the proper agency to assist you in fully understanding the Family Handbook and enrollment forms.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES - FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

At Hillel Academy, we believe we can best meet the needs of individual children by working closely with families. We strive to create inclusive, culturally and linguistically responsive partnerships that support families in their role as a child's first teacher. Our engagement with families is based on mutual trust and respect and strives to be intentional, meaningful, and impactful. Hillel Academy's guidance aligns with the six standards in the [*PA Family Engagement Birth through College, Career, Community Ready Framework*](#). These standards are reflected throughout the following sections of this handbook and center on:

- Building respectful, reciprocal partnerships with families.

- Supporting and encouraging families as they develop their leadership and advocacy skills.
- Partnering with families to support them as they support their child's learning and development, including times of transition.
- Connecting families to community resources.
- Providing opportunities for families to connect and engage with each other.

Partnership begins with communication. This starts at our admission visit and continues through the enrollment period and into the classroom. We try to keep our lines of communication open with both formal and informal means of communication including daily communication when necessary, weekly newsletters, monthly calendars, and teacher conferences. Email, phone, written and verbal communication are all used to promote open communication between staff and families. Families are asked for their preferences in communicating with staff in order to best meet the needs of each family. Parents/guardians and staff are asked to complete a program evaluation annually. The results of this evaluation are shared and then used to improve the program. When differences arise between family values and school values, we work toward educating families on our educational values and vision. We utilize local and community resources when necessary.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS FROM TEACHERS TO FAMILIES

Teachers are expected to communicate with families at least weekly. Our ECC uses Remini, a secure online communication tool to share photos, messages about your child's achievements and progress, photographs of projects, as well as share class activities and events. Infant and Toddler/Two staff also use Remini daily to communicate information about toileting, food intake and sleep schedules through Remini. For families who use another language at home (usually Hebrew) we have several staff members who can assist in translating communication sent home.

Parents/guardian-teacher conferences are scheduled twice a year and include sharing the results of formal and informal assessments. When the results of assessment indicate a need for support, we provide families with information on communal resources and help facilitate additional assessments as necessary.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Hillel Academy is responsive to the needs and concerns of parents/guardians and children. To ensure the greatest efficiency in responding to and working through important issues, it is necessary to follow the appropriate grievance procedure. The first step is to contact your child's teacher and set up a meeting to discuss the issue. If there is a lack of satisfaction at this point, parents/guardians should continue moving up the grievance ladder step-by-step until there is a resolution of the issue.

The steps are as follows:

- 1- Contact your child's teacher.
- 2- Contact Ruth Pohuly, Director
- 3- Contact Rabbi Weinberg, Principal

DEALING WITH COMPLAINTS

- The administration deals initially with any general concerns/issues about the Early Childhood Center. When needed, conversations between families and staff are mediated by the ECC Director and/or the Principal.
- Any complaint is dealt with promptly by the administration and Director. We keep a written record of the nature of the complaint, the action taken, the person responsible for investigating and taking action, the person responsible for investigating and taking action, the timescale and the outcome. We keep confidential copies of this record in the ECC office.
- Should the need arise, outside resources including mediation and any legal action will be sought. Care will be taken to ensure all parties are informed and represented.

TRANSITIONS

ORIENTATION OF NEW CHILDREN

Prior to admission, each potential new family has an admissions interview to learn about the school, its policies and culture. Parents/guardians meet with the ECC Director, tour the facility and observe the teachers with their students in the classroom. Parents/guardians also meet the Educational Director and the Executive Director. Financial and admission information is supplied by our Director of Admissions and Financial Manager.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

We have an open door policy and invite prospective as well as current families and caregivers to come and observe their child in the classroom setting. Please note that while classroom observation is welcome, parents/guardians and caregivers must prepare themselves for possible separation problems when it comes time to exit the class. The teachers will assist with transitioning your child at this time, however if the child is acutely disturbed it may be necessary to take your child home after the observation. Since we have frequent visitors to our school, we ask that you make arrangements in advance so that we do not have too many adults in the classroom at one time. If you would like to arrange for an observation, please contact Kira Sunshine in the Admissions Office at 412-521-8131.

TRANSITION POLICY FOR INFANTS, TINY TOTS AND TODDLERS

Young children meet developmental milestones at different times. In our Infant and one year old classrooms, we strive to keep children in the same classroom. However, the need may arise to transition a child into or out of a classroom. These transitions are usually done over Thanksgiving, Winter or Pesach break- natural transition times for the school. Transitions are considered on an individual basis and only happen if the new room has the capacity and staff to hold a child. Once we have reached capacity in a room, it is full and no more students may be added. We also consider if that child is developmentally ready to be transitioned by making sure that child has reached certain developmental benchmarks to assure the child is capable of integrating into the room properly. During the academic school year, we do NOT transition children into our 2's, 3's or Pre-K classrooms from younger groups. You may contact the ECC Director if you have any questions regarding this policy.

ANNUAL TRANSITION FOR CURRENTLY ENROLLED STUDENTS

Children already enrolled in the program have several opportunities at the end of the year to visit potential new teachers and classrooms. Various activities are planned to increase comfort levels for the children.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

CURRICULUM

We use the Creative Curriculum, PreK Big Day and PA Early Standards as a way to guide our staff and the implementation of our curriculum. Within the PA Early Learning Standards are the key learning areas. These standards define the domains or areas of children's learning that assures a holistic approach to the instruction of young children and their families. We teach through facilitating play in ways that focus on the social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical aspects of each child to develop a well-rounded foundation from which to grow strong, healthy, happy and thriving adults.

USE OF CURRICULAR MATERIALS

We strive for an accepting, non-stereotypical environment by offering all materials to all children without exception. The use of materials by either boys or girls, of any ethnicity or ability, is accepted neutrally and without comment or ridicule. Our teachers encourage children of all races, genders, and abilities to become engaged with all materials in the classroom equally. This is done in various ways including providing books, toys, and pictures in each classroom that represent various ages, cultures, abilities, and non-stereotypical images. We also label items in Hebrew and English to reflect the use of Hebrew in both our children's homes

and synagogues. Using the types of materials mentioned above helps children build their understanding of diversity, an important goal for the children in our care. Diversity brings with it a variety of attitudes, expectations, and beliefs. We work with each family on an individual basis, taking these differences into account and treating them with respect.

- Materials are continuously checked to ensure they are in good condition and rotated at least monthly and/or to meet the needs and interests of the children in care.
- Materials (including books, toys and pictures) should reflect the linguistic, familial and cultural diversity of the class and community.
- Information gathered from child observations, assessments, and family input help teachers modify lesson plans, curriculum goals, and materials to meet the needs of individual children as well as the whole class. Modifications to the curriculum can include the use of other languages and vocabulary as well as the inclusion of other cultural and religious beliefs and values.

CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES

- To maintain the highest standards in Early Childhood Education.
- To carefully launch the children's development through intentional play that is guided by natural milestones, introduced through our professional staff.
- To maintain a well-trained professional staff.
- To have families and their children at the heart and start of every decision.
- To incorporate the linguistic, familial and cultural diversity of our families and community into our classroom environment, lesson planning, and communication.
- To have on-going open communication between staff and families.
- To bring our families a rich Jewish experience that acknowledges and respects the diversity of Jewish practice and custom.
- To provide support and guidance to young families through education, play and community.

The Early Childhood Center utilizes the following curricula:

Secular

Big Day for PreK
Creative Curriculum

Judaic Curricular Materials:

The Little Midrash
Jewish Holidays

ASSESSMENT

TYPES OF ASSESSMENT

Ongoing and curriculum-based assessment assures individualization for children and classroom planning that is responsive to children's needs. We offer an initial 45 day assessment at the start of each year. Depending on the age, assessments/screenings include the use of Ages & Stages Questionnaires, vision screening and Brigance assessment. Hearing screenings and dental visits should be done by your child's doctor as part of their annual check ups. Resources for screenings not offered through the school are available. Please contact the Director for more information.

Multiple sources of evidence comprise a comprehensive approach to assessment. Ongoing assessment sources include portfolio collection, parents/guardian report, child report, anecdotal records, checklists, running records and observation. In addition we utilize the Ounce and Work Sampling assessment tools to more formally assess our students twice a year. In utilizing multiple approaches to assessment, we document children's progress in all of the key areas as defined by the Learning Standards for Early Childhood: Learning Through Play, Creative Thinking & Expression, Cognitive Thinking & General Knowledge, Scientific Thinking & Technology, Social Studies Thinking, Health, Wellness & Physical Development, Early Literacy Foundations, and Social & Emotional Development.

HOW WE USE ASSESSMENTS

Assessments are typically performed by the teachers in a child's classroom throughout the year. These informal assessments allow teachers to observe children individually and in small and large group settings. When assessments are done by an outside agency, a teacher from the child's class is always present to provide that child with the comfort a familiar caregiver can provide.

Teachers are provided with annual training on how to observe and assess children so that they can use the outcomes in order to design and modify activities and plan for your child's interests and skill levels. On-going formal and informal assessments allow for teachers to adjust and modify their teaching strategies, classroom schedules and even arrange materials to best meet the needs of each child. Assessments also help teachers and administrators plan overall program improvements from classroom materials, curriculum and family programs to the design of classrooms and play spaces.

SHARING ASSESSMENTS

Teacher's schedule conferences with families at least twice a year. During conferences the outcomes of assessments are shared and families are provided with a written report of those outcomes as well as suggestions for ways to further learning and development. During conferences, families have the opportunity to ask questions or share concerns about the assessment methods, outcomes and whether they appropriately meet the needs of their child. Assessment information is also shared with the Kindergarten teachers as part of the transition process. When the results of assessment indicate a need for support, we provide families with information on communal resources and help facilitate additional assessments as necessary. Assessment information is kept confidential in a locked area and is available only to your child's teachers, the Director, the Principal and our accrediting agencies.

CHILDREN WITH AN IDENTIFIED NEED

The ECC offers the following screenings to all children: Vision, Hearing, Speech and Language, Developmental, and Behavioral Observations. Parents/guardians must complete a consent form before these services are provided. Before any formal assessment is conducted, families have the opportunity to ask questions or share concerns about the assessment methods, how they are administered, and if they will meet the needs of their child. Assessment outcomes are used to identify a child's strengths and challenges. When a child is identified as having a particular need by either the parent/guardian/caregiver or a member of staff, the concern will be discussed with the parent/guardian/caregiver, as well as the administration. We will consult with support services for advice and assessment on providing for the child's needs.

SUPPORT SERVICES & MISCELLANEOUS CONSULTANTS

We work closely with a number of organizations that provide behavioral and developmental support to your children as well as act as consultants for our staff and families. This is especially valuable because it enables us to identify developmental issues and begin early intervention. We also offer space and time for families who want to get screenings, such as speech and vision, Early Intervention, etc. When support staff work with children in our program, they are always in the presence of and supervised by one of the regular educators working with that child.

FOOD POLICIES

At Hillel we value the importance of good nutrition and understand that unless your children are eating right we cannot expect them to perform up to standard. Please try to limit sugary treats and other unhealthy snacks. Sugary drinks are not permitted to be brought to school.

Teachers sit at the tables while the children eat snack and lunch, modeling table manners, conversation skills and helping with food consumption as needed. Staff do NOT force children to eat, nor do staff withhold food or threaten food as a form of discipline.

FOOD PREPARATION

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER IS A NUT-FREE ZONE

KASHRUT POLICIES:

- All food that is brought into the building must be certified by the OU, Star K, Chof K, CRC, OK or the local Vaad. Packaged foods must have an acceptable Kashrut symbol. Additional acceptable certifications may be checked at http://www.crcweb.org/agency_list.php.
- No food prepared at home should be brought in for distribution at school. If you have a question about a different Hashgacha, please contact the school.
- DAIRY DAYS: Meals brought or bought on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays should be dairy.
- MEAT DAYS: Meals brought or bought on Tuesdays and Fridays should be meat.
- **Any food or snacks that are distributed to the entire class must be certified kosher, either parve or if dairy, chalav yisrael. Fruit and vegetables should be sent to school UNCUT. Staff will wash any fruits and vegetables before cutting and serving them to children**

- Staff follow all applicable federal, state, and local regulations related to safe preparation of food.
- Meals are served in classrooms. Each child's meal is plated separately by the teacher to ensure children are not using the same serving utensils. Gloves are worn by the staff preparing and serving food.
- Sinks used for food preparation are not used for any other purpose unless sanitized first.
- Caregivers ensure children wash hands prior to and immediately after eating.
- Caregivers wash their hands before preparing food and after helping children to eat.
- For health and kashrut reasons, children do not share or trade food with one another.
- Food/Snacks should come **READY TO EAT** by your child. This means, hard boiled eggs should be peeled, fruits, veggies and meat should be cut appropriately to prevent choking. Teachers sit with the kids during lunch and snack and will assist with the eating of food and manipulating utensils when necessary.
- Please send a lunch box and remember to label all items. Staff cannot heat food. Send food in a thermos to keep it warm. Staff also cannot add hot water to make food - like oatmeal. There is a fridge and freezer available in each room.
- Please send a labeled drinking cup at the beginning of the week. Staff wash cups during the week and send them home at the end of the week. Toddlers do not carry sippy cups while walking/crawling.
- For health reasons, food that is opened & offered to your child cannot be sent home. Staff reoffer opened food throughout the day but once opened, it must be thrown out at the end of the day.
- All expired food must be thrown out.
- Popcorn and hard candies cannot be served to children under the age of 4.
- *Children with medical dietary needs must have a **medical form** detailing those needs and a parent/guardian consent form for us to implement the dietary plan. When necessary, teachers will log food intake as directed and share this information with families.

FOOD & BREASTFEEDING IN THE INFANT PROGRAM

We support those families still breastfeeding and provide places in which they can nurse freely. When children are fed with bottles, they are held until at least 6 months of age. Bottles are not propped up for feedings and children do not sleep with bottles at any age.

- Bottles should be properly labeled with the infant's full name and date/time the milk was expressed. Bottles will be immediately stored in the refrigerator on arrival. Milk will not be kept for more than 5 days in the fridge and 2 weeks in the freezer.
- Send in enough bottles for your child to use a new bottle at each feeding. We will not wash bottles. We will rinse (if desired) and put in child's bag to be sent home at the end of the day. Please send in new bottles each day.
- Infant formula will not be used for a breastfeeding infant without the parent's/guardian's written permission.

- If formula is used it is from factory sealed containers.
- Bottles made of plastics (#3, #6 or #7) should be avoided.
- Bottles labeled BPA-free or with a #1, #2, #4 or #5 are acceptable.
- Non-frozen human milk should be transported and stored in containers to be used to feed the infant, identified with a label which will not come off in water or handling, bearing the date of collection and the child's full name. These bottles will be kept refrigerated. Human milk containers with contents remaining greater than an ounce may be returned to the caregiver at the end of the day as long as the child has not been fed directly from the container.
- Unfinished, unrefrigerated breast milk and formula MUST be discarded after two hours.
- If milk is warmed it is warmed to no more than 120 degrees.
- Microwaves are not used to warm food or bottles.
- Teachers check for the infant's full name/date on the bottle so that the oldest milk is used first.
- Families need to fill out a [form with feeding instructions](#) that should be kept in the room.
- Solid foods are introduced following guidelines from each child's doctor. Guidelines from the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine & [Caring for our Children](#)

SNACKS

Snacks are provided for children in Nursery and Pre-K classrooms during school hours. All other children in the program and children who stay for extended day hours should bring snacks from home. State guidelines mandate that we feed children every 2 hours. So if a child stays until 2pm, parents/guardians should pack AT MINIMUM a morning snack AND lunch. If a child stays for extended day, pack an additional afternoon snack. We encourage healthy snacks and drink. Outside of a small amount of grape juice for kiddush at our Shabbos celebrations, we do not serve juice. Shabbos snacks should be challah and fruit - teachers provide additional information to families about Shabbos snack and inform families if a child needs more food throughout the day. **Any food or snacks that are distributed to the entire class must be certified kosher, either parve or if dairy, chalav yisrael. Fruit and vegetables should be sent to school UNCUT. Staff will wash any fruits and vegetables before cutting and serving them to children.**

PARTIES

HOME PARTIES:

As we know there is a wide spectrum of religious observance and practice to be found in our families. Please keep this in mind when planning your children's birthday party. As a matter of policy, party invitations may not be distributed by staff in school.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Families are encouraged to celebrate their child's birthday at school. There are many ways to do this. Below are a few options and guidelines. Please talk to morahs about what your family is most comfortable doing to mark this special day.

NO GUESTS PLEASE!

Birthdays are celebrated by the classroom children only. As much as possible, we try to weave the celebration into the normal structure and schedule of our day. This helps with transitions for all children, especially the birthday boy or girl! **Therefore, family members (parents, grandparents, siblings, etc) may NOT join the class for birthday celebrations.**

FOOD REMINDERS:

- All food served to the class must be kosher with an accepted hekshur (kosher symbol).
- Hillel's ECC is a nut free school. ALL nuts and nut butters are included in this.
- Dairy items MUST be chalav Yisroel (This means NO Dunkin Donuts or Costco bakery)
- Fruit served to the entire class MUST be cleaned and cut at Hillel. NO berries.

- Giant Eagle bakery in Sq Hill supplies parve cakes, cupcakes and cookie cake.

SAFETY FIRST:

- If you send in balloons, ONLY mylar balloons are allowed (all others are choking hazards)
- We DO NOT light candles on cakes for safety reasons.
- We DO NOT serve popcorn or hard candy because they are considered a choking hazard.

MAKING THE DAY SPECIAL:

Birthday celebrations look different depending on the ages and abilities of the children in the classroom. Whether it's making a crown, reading a child's favorite story, or a special art project, morahs make sure each child feels special on his or her birthday. Morahs share birthday pictures with you too!

GOODY BAGS:

- Goody bags are NOT necessary or expected.
- IF you make them, please remember all items must be kosher.
- Goody bags are always left in cubbies to go home and NOT given out in the classroom

ADDITIONAL POLICIES

SMOKING/VAPING POLICY:

Hillel Academy is entirely smoke and vape free. All volunteers, employees, guests and students are prohibited from smoking or vaping in the in the facility, in the presence of children or on school grounds. No employee shall smoke or vape during work hours on Hillel Academy property. When accompanying students on off-campus activities, employees may not smoke or vape in view of students.

FIELD TRIPS:

Children take special field trips to enhance the curriculum. Prior to each field trip that is outside Hillel you must complete and return a permission slip. Walks around the neighborhood do not require a separate permission slip, as parents/guardians have given permission for walks as part of the enrollment forms.

VOLUNTEERS & CHAPERONES:

Teachers often ask family members to visit the classroom to share a special talent, chaperone a field trip or read a book. There are also school wide opportunities for involvement including committee and board positions. Anyone who wants to volunteer or substitute in the school on a more permanent basis must contact our ECC Director for more information. When volunteers or chaperones work with children in our program, they are always in the presence of and supervised by one of the regular educators working with that child.

All school volunteers and chaperones must obtain PA clearances before serving as a volunteer or chaperone. Volunteers can get 2 of these clearances for free if they have not applied in the past 3 years. The NSOR clearance is always free. The FBI fingerprint clearance is not free but the cost can be waived if you have lived in the state of PA for 10+ years. Detailed instructions and forms can be found on our school website.

1. PA Criminal History Record
2. PA Child Abuse History
3. FBI Fingerprint Clearance
4. NSOR National Sex Offender Registry Clearance

PHOTOS

Pictures are taken frequently in the classroom. Teachers use photos of all of the children on our secure Remini application as a way to enhance communication with families. They are also used throughout the classroom to document projects and enhance literacy. Families who do not wish to have their child's photo used outside of normal classroom communication and activities should notify their child's teacher and the school

administration.

2024-2025 Pre-K Counts Attendance Policy

DEFINITIONS:

1. Excused absences are defined as: those absences when a student is prevented from attending school for mental, physical or other urgent reasons. These are: illness, family emergency, death of a family member, health or dental appointments, fire, natural disaster or other extenuating circumstances. Written requests for excused absences due to family trips will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Prolonged absences may result in the child being dismissed from the program and placed on a waiting list upon his/her return.
2. Unexcused absences are any absences that are not included in the above definition of excused absences.
3. Tardy is defined as arrival at school after 8:15 AM.
 - a. Excused Tardy is defined as late arrival accompanied with a note from a doctor.
 - b. Unexcused Tardy is defined as a late arrival unaccompanied with a note from a doctor.

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Students enrolled in PA Pre-K Counts classrooms are considered full-time and must attend 5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year for the full length of the day from 8:00AM to 2:00PM.
2. Families will be contacted by phone when a child is absent for 3 consecutive days to learn the nature of the absence and offer support if appropriate.
3. When a child has more than 5 consecutive unexcused absences, an administrator will meet with the parents/guardians to discuss the reasons for the absence and determine ways to support the child's attendance in school.
4. Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to school supports will be dismissed from the PA Pre-K Counts program.
5. The school day begins each day with socialization opportunities and meaningful morning routines. Children are encouraged to be on time in order to benefit from the full range of each day's activities. A pattern of tardiness may result in the administrator meeting with parents/guardians to discuss reasons for the tardiness and determine ways to support the child's prompt arrival to school.