Family Handbook

2025-2026

Updated August 2025



OPEN CENTER FOR CHILDREN
155 Powder House Boulevard | Somerville, MA 02144 | 617-628-3891

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Welcome to the Open Center For Children

Dear Open Center families,

Welcome to the Open Center for Children. We're glad you've found us, and we look forward to embarking on your child's early educational journey with you. The Open Center for Children was founded in 1972 in Somerville, MA, guided by the belief that children learn much of what they need to know through play, and our philosophy is still the same all these years later. The teachers and I work together to provide children with a warm, nurturing environment where they learn through relationships and experiences. We teach children to take care of themselves, their classmates and teachers, and their environment.

Through our curriculum, we help children develop the tools necessary for living in a diverse world, being able to resolve conflicts peacefully, and to challenge stereotypes.

We strive to create a learning atmosphere that inspires children to:

- feel a sense of belonging and responsibility to the Center's community;
- develop trusting relationships with adults and children;
- respect and appreciate diversity;
- become curious and motivated learners;
- feel competent in their skills and abilities; and
- develop conflict resolution skills.

Welcome to our community! We look forward to working with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Marisa Spits and Milo Evans

Marisa Spitz and Milo Evans
Director and Assistant Director

About Us

Written Statement of Purpose

Our purpose is to provide a safe, caring, and responsive environment where children's social and emotional development is supported by a nurturing and well-trained staff. Our emphasis is on learning rather than teaching. The staff, materials, and other children are all resources for children to use to develop skills and competency. The Center has areas for small motor play, large motor activities, reading and quiet times, building, fantasy play, and art activities. There are frequent opportunities for stories, singing and snuggling.

Mission

Since 1972 the Open Center for Children has worked in partnership with families to create a nurturing early education and care experience. The play-responsive curriculum inspires children to become motivated, self-directed learners who feel competent in their skills and abilities, express their creativity and develop trusting, respectful relationships with their peers, teachers, and the wider Somerville community. The Open Center experience helps children develop the tools necessary for living in a diverse world by encouraging the appreciation of differences and identification and advocacy against injustice at any age.

Certification

The Open Center for Children is licensed and regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care. Families can call the regional office of the Department of Early Care and Education (EEC) if they have questions about the Center's history of compliance with the Massachusetts licensing requirements:

Department of Early Education and Care
1250 Hancock St. 120-S
Quincy, MA 02169
Licensor: Josian Daley, 617-472-2722

Staff Qualifications

The Massachusetts Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) determines the required standards for teacher and administrative credentials. At the Open Center, all of our teachers have a background and training in early childhood education. They are certified by the EEC and often surpass certification requirements. The staff are also required to receive 20 hours of additional training per year and encouraged to enhance their knowledge and understanding by attending early childhood workshops, in-service training, and conferences.

Teachers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

Hiring current teachers to babysit for Open Center children is strongly discouraged. However, if a family and teacher agree to such an arrangement, the Open Center for Children disclaims all responsibility for the safety of both the teacher and the child in such a circumstance.

For the current administration organization, see Addendum A.

Interns

The Open Center occasionally hosts interns from local colleges and universities that offer highly respected early-education training programs.

Specialists

A specialist is an early childhood educator who has particular experience or skill in a given field (e.g., dance, music, art, science, etc.) that visits the classroom on a regular basis to work with the children. Our current specialist opportunities include: music and yoga. If you have ideas for specialists, please let the director know.

Contact Information

Phone Number: 617-628-3891

Email communication:

Director and Assistant Director: director@open-center.org

Green Room Teachers: greenroomteachers@open-center.org

Blue Room Teachers: blueroomteachers@open-center.org

Board of Directors (including Director): board@open-center.org

Green Room FAMILIES: greenroomfamilies2025@open-center.org

Blue Room FAMILIES: blueroomfamilies2025@open-center.org

Hours and Closings

Hours of Operation

Services are provided from 8:00 AM to 5:30 PM in the Green Room and the Blue Room, Monday through Friday.

New children attend on a staggered schedule for their first four days of enrollment. Pick-up is at 12:30 for the first two days of school and 2:30 for the next two days.

Drop-off time has a cut-off of 9:30, to ensure children are able to participate in intentionally planned play and small group activities. Drop-off after 9:30 is allowed only with prior communication.

Families should arrive in time to be packed up and ready to leave by 5:30 to ensure staff have ample time to clean up and prepare for the next day.

Holidays and School Closings

We are closed for the following holidays. Please note that when the summer holidays of Independence Day or Juneteenth fall on a Tuesday or Thursday, the center will be closed either the day prior (Monday), or the day following (Friday).

- Labor Day
- October Professional Development Day (Friday before Indigenous Peoples' Day)
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving (Thursday and Friday)
- Winter Break (December 23 through New Year's Day, unless otherwise specified [closed through January 2, 2026])
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- EEC Mandated day of Professional Development for grant recipients (June 18, 2026 - TBD)
- Patriot's Day
- Good Friday (Staff Development Day)
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- The week before Labor Day for teacher prep

For a complete list of this year's holidays and specific dates, see Addendum B.

Closing/Delayed Opening Due to Extreme Weather

The Center will be closed on all snow days, delayed openings, and early dismissals announced by the Somerville Public Schools. Public school cancellations are announced on radio, television, and the internet. In the case of a severe storm warning or extreme weather, you may be contacted to pick up your child early to ensure the safety of children and teachers. If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts through email, Brightwheel message, and/or by phone with specific details, in addition to sending an alert through the Brightwheel app. All efforts will be made to remain open as long as possible and to provide adequate lead time for pick-up to be arranged. The Center may also call for a delayed opening, usually of 2 hours, depending on weather conditions. If it is necessary to delay opening, we will contact you via email and an alert will be sent through the Brightwheel app.

Center Policies

Inclusion

The Open Center for Children believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance, and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs.

In determining whether to accept a child with a disability, the Center will, with family consent, and as appropriate, request information related to the child's participation in the Center's program from the local education agency, early intervention program, or other health or service providers.

Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, the Open Center does not discriminate in its enrollment, program participation, or hiring with regard to a person's race, religion, marital status, age, sexual orientation, gender identification, HIV status, political beliefs, disabilities, toileting status of the child, or any other categories protected by Federal or State law. The Open Center for Children is an equal opportunity provider.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies.

The information contained in your child's record is privileged and confidential. The file is only accessible to those people directly involved in the care of your child. Information in your child's file will be released to others only if you provide written consent. The Center will notify you immediately if your child's record has been subpoenaed by a court of law which does not require your consent.

The Center keeps a written record of any organization or person that receives information from your child's file. This record will only be available to you and the Center staff responsible for record keeping. Once your child is no longer enrolled, you may request, in writing, that your child's record be transferred to you or to any other person you designate. Otherwise we retain your child's record for the required seven years.

Transfer of Records

When transitioning to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

When your child transitions to a new school, we can only transfer your child's records with your written permission indicating where and to whom the records should be sent.

Written Notification Policy

The Department of Early Education and Care requires all child care centers to have a written notification policy. The Open Center for Children will inform families:

1. Immediately of any injury which requires any medical care beyond minor first aid or of any emergency administration of non-prescription medication
2. Immediately of any allegation of abuse or neglect involving their children while in the care and custody of the center
3. Prior to or as soon as possible following any change in staffing
4. At the end of the day regarding any minor first aid administered
5. In writing within 48 hours of any incidents of 1, 2, or 4
6. Whenever special problems and significant developments arise
7. Whenever a communicable disease or condition has been identified in the program – this is done by email as soon as we are informed of this situation by a family
8. In writing seven days prior to the implementation of any change in program policy or procedures
9. Prior to the introduction of any pets into the program
10. Of the use of any herbicides or pesticides, prior to their use whenever possible
11. Whenever the program deviates from the planned snack menu

Photography and Social Media

All families complete a photograph/video consent form at the beginning of their child's enrollment at the Open Center which authorizes or restricts the use of their child's image in monthly newsletters, on the Open Center website, Facebook page, Instagram account, and/or in marketing materials. The consent form does not need to be renewed each year, but must be updated if preferences change.

Open Center does <u>not</u> authorize families to use Open Center photographs outside of the community, such as on your own social media pages (unless the photograph is of your child only). We also encourage families to be sensitive to the preferences of other families and to either refrain from publishing photos you have taken that include other Open Center children, or to seek permission from the other families before publishing them.

Program and Fee Structure

Program

The Open Center operates on a year-round basis. Families sign a one-year contract with the Center that is renewable upon agreement by the Center and the family. The contract covers the period from September 1st (or your child's start date) through the following August 31st. Children remain in their classrooms for the entire duration of that time. Classroom transitions and new enrollment only occur in September (unless a spot becomes open in the classroom).

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 2.3 years to 5 years of age.

For the current enrollment policy, see Addendum C.

Tuition

Tuition is set by the Board in late winter for the following September as part of the annual budget process. Families are notified about the new rate by email after the board meeting in which the decision is made.

A non-refundable tuition deposit is required upon enrollment. This deposit will be held without interest, by the Open Center, as security and will be refunded upon completion and full performance of the tuition contract.

For all current tuition rates and fees, see Addendum D.

Payment

Tuition is paid in advance on a monthly basis. Families will be billed via brightwheel approximately ten days prior to the first of the month, and their tuition is due on the first day of school each month. If your family is experiencing unexpected financial difficulties, please contact the Director to discuss an alternative payment plan or emergency tuition assistance.

No deductions are made for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control.

Late Payment Charges

If payment is not received on or before the 1st of the month, you will receive a reminder via email. A late fee of $20/day will begin on the 15th of the month and continue until tuition payment is received. If your account has not been paid in full within 30 business days, your child may be discharged from the program.

Any partial payments made will be applied to the oldest charges, and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

If payment is more than 90 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a third-party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All rejected ACH (automatic debits) will be charged a fee of $25. This charge will be added to your invoice. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on “cash only” status.

Late Pick Up

The first time a caregiver arrives for pick up after 5:30 PM the family will be charged a late fee of $2.00 per minute; after 5:45 PM the fee increases to $5.00 per minute. If a caregiver is late for a second time, the fees will be doubled. The family will be billed for this fee, which is used to defer the cost of the overtime paid to the teacher. Any family who frequently arrives after the Center’s closing time will be contacted by the Director and possible resolutions will be discussed. If the situation does not improve, Open Center reserves the right to terminate the child’s enrollment.

Special Activity Fees

From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities or field trips. These fees are due prior to the event, activity, or trip.

Family Involvement

Definition of Family

In this handbook, we refer to a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest, and responsibility of the child in our care.

Our Philosophy

Our goal is to partner with families to provide children with consistent, high quality care. We encourage family members to be active participants in their child's Open Center experience. We are delighted to have family members participate in our classrooms in a variety of ways. Family members are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. We encourage you to come visit your child's classroom or to share a special activity such as sharing a traditional meal, reading a story at circle time, or coming with us on a field trip.

Family/Teacher Communication

We believe that strong relationships between a child's family and teachers are paramount to the child's success in child care. We encourage conversation at drop-off and pick-up, depending on the needs of the classroom. The children's safety is the teachers' first concern and if they need to attend to a child, they will let you know when they can continue your conversation.

If you have questions or concerns that cannot be covered in a quick conversation, we encourage you to reach out to the teachers via telephone, Brightwheel message, or email. Teachers check their email daily at nap time and will respond at that time. Nap time is also the best time to speak with a teacher on the phone, though arrangements can be made at other times of the day. In-person meetings can be scheduled with advance notice. Questions about Center policies or practices, eligibility, or tuition should be discussed with the Director. In the event that a family is unable to fully resolve a question or concern, the family and/or staff may request the assistance of the Board of Directors in resolving the issue.

Each classroom has an email list which is a primary means that the Director will use to share information with families. While teachers will also use this email list on occasion, most regular classroom communication is sent through the Brightwheel app. New families will receive an email invitation to join the email list (hosted by Google Groups). You must accept the invitation to be added to the email list. If you have not received an invitation to join the email list by the time your child starts at the Center (or if you would like to add additional email addresses to the group), please contact the Director. You will also receive an email to join Brightwheel.

We value our relationships with all families. Program updates and face-to-face meetings are provided, at least quarterly, to families in their primary, or preferred, language to the extent appropriate and possible.

See About Us section for email lists.

Family-Family Communication

A list of Open Center families will be distributed in the fall and updated as needed. This list is for your use to contact other families for play dates, birthday parties, etc. Information for the entire class (e.g., fun community events, questions, resource sharing) may be shared using the classroom email lists. Neither the roster nor the email list may be used for any form of solicitation. Please do not share the family list and contact information for family and staff with anyone outside the school.

Monthly Newsletters

The Director team will send out a monthly email showcasing school wide curriculum, events, and happenings. Each classroom contributes their own page of the newsletter to highlight classroom specific updates. We encourage families to share their thoughts on newsletters with the teachers.

Meetings for Family Members

Family meetings are held occasionally during evening hours. At these meetings, families can discuss a range of topics to help them better understand their child, learn about upcoming Center events, and learn about issues facing the Center. Additional informal family gatherings are scheduled throughout the year to increase the sense of community among families and children.

Maintenance Participation

Opportunities for families to help with Center maintenance are scheduled as needed during the year. Working side by side with other family members on these projects increases the sense of community among families. It also allows the Center to save money that would otherwise be paid for professional help; this money can then be used on purchases for the classrooms. We depend on and greatly appreciate the work of our families in maintaining a safe environment for the children. Families also assist the Center by signing up to take the trash and recycle bins to the curb on Sunday evenings for a month.

Board of Directors

The Center has a Board of Directors (“Board”) made up of the Director, family members (current and past), and a community representative when available. The Board meets monthly to assist in strategic and operational planning for the Center, planning meetings and events for families, budget development and oversight, and fundraising. Family members are encouraged to submit their ideas for the development of the Center’s programs and policies to the board for consideration.

The day and time for monthly board meetings is established at the first meeting of the year in order to accommodate families schedules and availability. The board also has various committees that meet on an as-needed basis to consider such things as community-building, outreach, marketing, fundraising, etc. These committees are a wonderful way for families who may be unable to attend monthly meetings to have a voice in helping the Center to remain an important presence in the community.

Curriculum and Daily Routines

Our Philosophy

We provide a rich learning environment with a curriculum that is open-ended and developmentally appropriate. We have a flexible daily routine that allows children to explore at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, expression, and regulation of emotions and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others. Our daily schedule is subject to change from season to season and year to year; however, it will always contain the following experiences: free play, small groups, group gatherings, gross motor time, snack, lunch, rest and scheduled breaks to use the bathroom.

Assessment and Conferences

Teachers use observational assessment techniques to monitor and track children's development. They use their observations to write learning stories that are placed into a portfolio called, 'Journey Books.' These portfolios are always available in the classroom and families will be invited to take them home twice a month prior to a conference with teachers (in winter and late spring). Your child's teachers will discuss your child's growth and development, and you are encouraged to share your own perceptions and observations about your child. Together, you and the teachers will develop goals for your child at school and at home. At any point in the year you can request additional meetings with your child's teachers or the Director to discuss questions or concerns that you may have about your child.

For children with individual education plans (IEPs), the Center will prepare a written progress report and hold a family conference every three months. Any special or significant developments will be brought to your attention as soon as they arise.

Rest Time

All children nap or rest quietly for at least an hour in the early afternoon; children not sleeping after approximately 30 minutes are given books or drawing materials. In accordance with EEC regulations, teachers and caregivers are not allowed to wake a child from a nap.

Meal Times

Per state regulations for children 24 months or older:

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.

- Foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include: anything round or disc shaped, hot dogs (unless cut lengthwise), whole grapes, popcorn, and thickly spread “nut” butter.

Snacks

The Center provides each child with a nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack. Snack typically consists of a fruit or vegetable, and some type of carbohydrate (crackers, rice cakes, tortillas, bagels, cereal) or dairy (cheese, yogurt, milk). Weekly menus are available in the kitchen. The snack menu is shared monthly via Brightwheel.

Lunch

Families provide lunch for their children each day.

The Center does not have the capacity to refrigerate or heat lunches. For health reasons, we cannot serve perishable food that hasn’t been kept at the proper temperature. Please use ice packs and/or thermoses to keep perishable at proper temperature. For reasons of safety, food from home is not shared with other children.

For a list of nutritious foods, see Addendum E.

Candy, Gum and Soda

Candy, gum, and soda are also not allowed at the Center.

Food Allergies

Please inform the Center of any food allergies your child may have. The Open Center for Children is a nut-free zone. Read ingredients carefully to make sure that there are NO tree nuts or peanuts. Do not bring in any food items which state “may contain traces of...” Allergies can be life threatening, so be absolutely sure before buying.

See Health section for complete allergy policy.

Toilet Learning

Children are not required to be out of diapers for admission to Open Center. The teachers are experts in helping children learn to feel comfortable using the toilet and will work with your family to assist your child. The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles.

Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Diapers

Children who are not yet toilet trained must have a week's supply (about 20) of diapers and a package of wipes at school. We recommend diapers, but Pull-Ups with Velcro closures on the sides are permitted. Pull-Ups that require children to step into them are not permitted.

Diapering*:*

- Diapers are changed when needed (wet or soiled)
- Diapers are also checked/changed at least every two hours
    - Approximately 10 AM, 12 PM, 2 PM, 4 PM
- Diapers or soiled clothes are changed only in the bathroom
- Children are changed while standing on the floor
- Teacher wears gloves and changes them after each diaper change
- Soiled diapers are placed in the covered diaper container
- Wipes are used as needed and should be bagged with a dirty or wet diaper.
- After each diaper change:
    - Soiled clothes are bagged in plastic to be sent home.
    - Child washes hands with soap and water, and teacher changes to new gloves

Toileting accidents*:*

- Occasional accidents are common even after preschool children are trained
- Children in the older classroom who have either wet or soiled themselves are generally expected to get their extra clothing from their cubby and bring them to the bathroom
- Staff washes hands and puts on gloves
- A sheet of waxed paper is placed on a step stool and children are encouraged to sit down and change themselves into dry clothing with assistance as needed
- Staff will use wipes to clean any children who have soiled themselves
- Staff places soiled or wet clothing in a double plastic bag
- Staff and children wash hands
- The extra clothing bag is returned to the children's cubby; a note requesting additional extra clothing is sent via Brightwheel if needed
- The plastic bags are placed in children's cubbies to be taken home

Cubbies and Clothing

Each child is assigned a cubby for coats, lunchboxes and nap items. In the winter, it is helpful to put hats and mittens in the coat sleeve so your child knows exactly where to find them when it is time to go outside. Extra clothes can be brought in and transferred to their clothes bin. In the Blue Room, the extra clothes bin can be found in the tall white cabinet by the kitchen (note: please label everything with your child's name). In the Green Room, the bins for extra clothes can be found in the bathroom by the diaper storage. We ask that you check the extra clothes box weekly to keep it fully stocked. As the seasons shift, we will remind you to change out extra clothing as appropriate. For naptime, Blue Room children will need a crib-sized sheet and a small blanket. Green Room children will need a small blanket but will utilize school provided cot sheets. Your child is also invited to bring a favorite stuffed animal or "lovey" to use while resting. Nap items remain at school throughout the week and are taken home to be washed weekly on Fridays.

Please be sure to take home your child's lunchbox and any artwork placed in their cubby each day.

Celebrations

At Open Center, celebrations are designed to honor individuality, foster inclusivity, and create joyful, meaningful memories. We acknowledge the importance of cultural traditions and birthdays while ensuring every child feels valued and included.

Birthdays are celebrated with activities such as wearing a crown, sharing a favorite book, or decorating a birthday canvas. Families can contribute to these moments through letters or photographs that will be shared with the classroom at meeting time. The center will provide a special birthday snack in the afternoon, typically in the form of 'birthday waffles.' However, if a family would like to bring in their own treat, they are welcome to coordinate with the school; all children will be provided a birthday snack regardless of their families contribution, and there is no pressure for families to provide their own.

Our holiday celebrations reflect the diversity of our community and are shaped by family contributions and children's curiosity. We explore cultural traditions through stories, art, and activities that promote understanding and respect. We provide both windows and mirrors through holiday exploration - ensuring children experience their own community holidays in the classroom as well as those from other communities. This provides the opportunity to build a positive relationship with their own identity, as well as an appreciation for identities and cultures outside of their own.

Families play a key role in shaping our celebrations, and we welcome their involvement in sharing cultural traditions or ideas. We welcome participation, sharing of your families traditions, and appreciate hearing about what holidays and celebrations your family recognizes during Listening Conferences and throughout the year.

Electronic Media

Our normal daily routine does not typically include electronic media where children are viewing movies, television or using computers/ipads freely. Short video clips may be shown when relevant to the curriculum, such as videos of trains when exploring transportation. During periods of inclement weather, children may engage with movement-based video, such as dance or yoga. Teachers supervise this activity and encourage active participation. A yearly tradition of watching a short film no longer than 20 minutes prior to the start of winter break is one exception. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world, using electronic media with intention.

Guidance and Discipline

We are committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. The Center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community. Positive and consistent guidance is based on individual needs and development.

Staff will model positive behaviors and help children understand their own behaviors. Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined and learn social, communication and emotional regulation. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Discipline and limit setting is to be consistent and based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of each child. The goal of discipline is to maximize the growth and development of the children and to protect the group as a whole and the individuals within it. Teachers are responsible for setting reasonable and positive expectations that are consistent with developmentally appropriate practices.

Whenever possible, children are given choices and/or options to promote positive behavioral outcomes. The Center's philosophy encourages the development of conflict resolution skills in children by providing them ample opportunities to verbalize their feelings, listen to and take into account another person's feelings, and to participate in the development of classroom rules, when appropriate.

Questions from either staff or families regarding limit setting in general, or for a specific child, should be discussed with the Director.

Interactions Among Educators and Children

1. Educators must be responsive to children's individual needs and support the development of self-esteem, self-expression, autonomy, social competence, and school readiness.
2. Educators must be nurturing and responsive to children by:
    a. frequently expressing warmth to individual children through behaviors such as social conversations, joint laughter, eye contact, and smiles, and communicating at children's eye level;
    b. providing attentive, consistent, comforting, and culturally sensitive care;
    c. being consistent and predictable in their physical and emotional care of children, and when implementing program rules and expectations;
    d. recognizing signs of stress in children's behavior and responding with appropriate stress-reducing activities.
3. Educators must support children in the development of self-esteem, independence, and self-regulation by:
    a. demonstrating courtesy and respect when interacting with children and adults;
    b. encouraging appropriate expression of all emotions, ranging from joy, pleasure and excitement to anger, frustration and sadness.
    c. providing opportunities for children to develop self-help skills as they are ready; encouraging children's efforts, work and accomplishments;
    d. assuring that all children have equal opportunities to take part in all activities and use all materials;
    e. offering opportunities for children to make choices and decisions.
4. Educators must support children in the development of social competence by:
    a. promoting interaction and language use among children and between children and adults by talking to and with children frequently;
    b. encouraging children to share experiences and ideas;
    c. modeling cooperation, problem-solving strategies and responsible behavior for children;
    d. assisting children in learning social skills such as sharing, taking turns, and working together;
    e. encouraging children to listen to, help, and support each other;
    f. providing guidance to assist children in resolving conflicts, finding solutions to problems, and making decisions;
    g. helping children to understand and respect people different from themselves;
    h. helping children learn to respect each other's possessions and work;
    i. helping children to learn effective ways to deal with unfairness, teasing, or other forms of intolerance.
5. Educators must provide guidance to children in a positive and consistent way based on an understanding of the individual needs and development of children by:
    a. encouraging self-control and using positive child guidance techniques such as recognizing and reinforcing children's appropriate behaviors, having reasonable and positive expectations, setting clear and consistent limits, and redirecting;

   b. helping children learn social, communication, and emotional regulation skills they can use in place of challenging behaviors;
   c. using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support, and other teaching strategies to encourage appropriate behavior and prevent challenging behaviors;
   d. intervening quickly when children are physically aggressive with one another and helping them develop more positive strategies for resolving conflict;
   e. explaining rules and procedures and the reasons for them to children, and where appropriate and feasible, allowing children to participate in the establishment of program rules, policies and procedures; and
   f. discussing behavior management techniques among staff to promote consistency.
6. Educators must have a method of communicating effectively with each child.
7. Educators must direct child guidance to the goal of maximizing the growth and development of children and protecting the group and the individuals within it.
8. The following practices are strictly prohibited:
   a. spanking or other corporal punishment of children;
   b. subjecting children to cruel or severe punishment such as humiliation, verbal or physical abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment including any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body, shaking, threats, or derogatory remarks;
   c. depriving children of outdoor time, meals or snacks; force feeding children or otherwise making them eat against their will, or in any way using food as a consequence;
   d. disciplining a child for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet; forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting;
   e. confining a child to a swing, high chair, crib, playpen or any other piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision; and
   f. excessive time-out. Time-out may not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age and must take place within an educator's view.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others, and we may restrain a child by gently holding them only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

Notification of Incidents

It is developmentally expected that children will occasionally engage in behavior such as hitting, scratching or biting. When there is an incident that requires an injury report be filled out, either involving other children or teachers getting injured, an incident report will also be created for the child who was involved in the incident, to be signed at pick-up. This allows us to ensure

proper communication to both families, and if needed to identify a pattern of behavior to best support all involved through intentional intervention and behavioral strategies. After three incident reports involving a similar behavior, a meeting will be requested so we can work together to develop a strategy and move forward together.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If teachers and directors decide a child's behavior requires additional support, communication will begin with the family as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. In some instances, it may be beneficial to consult a behavior specialist for assistance with a plan or to request a referral for outside services, such as the MTSS team through Somerville Public Schools, who we are in partnership with.

Referral Services

The following procedures shall be observed in the event that a family or child must be referred to an appropriate social, mental health, or medical service.

1) The teacher will privately discuss their concern relative to the need for an outside service with the Director. The teacher and/or director will record observations of the behavior of concern. They will ensure that all efforts have been made to accommodate the child's needs and to consult with the child's family prior to making an outside referral.
2) If the teacher and Director decide that an outside referral should be made, they will arrange a conference at the earliest convenience of the family.
3) At this meeting they will describe the circumstances and concerns that have led them to believe that a referral should be made. At all times, they will ensure that the family understands their interpretation of the problem.
4) The Director will provide the family with a list of available resources in the community to meet the specific needs of the family and child. If a child is at least 2.9 years of age, families will be informed of services and rights under chapter 766. If a child is under 3 years of age families will be notified of appropriate Early Intervention Programs. (*See following referral list for further information*.)
5) The family must agree that an outside referral needs to be made and must initiate the referral process. The director may help the family seek outside services, at the family's request.
6) If it is determined that the child does not need the services or is ineligible, the child's progress will be reviewed every three months to determine if another referral is necessary.
7) Records of all referrals will be maintained in writing, including family conferences and results.

Referral Sources

The following is a list of local resources:

- Department of Children and Families Cambridge/Somerville: 617-520-8700
- Parental Stress Line 800-632-8188
- Somerville Public Schools: 617-625-6600
    - Parent/Guardian Support Groups: X 6990
- Medford Public Schools: 781-393-2101
- Riverside Early Intervention: 617-629-3919
- Refugee and Immigrant Assistance Center: 617-238-2430
- Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination: 617-944-6000
- Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development: 617-626-7122
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health: 617-624-6000
- Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program: 617-624-5757
- Cambridge/Somerville WIC Program: 617-575-5330

Attendance, Withdrawal and Termination

Absence

We ask families to notify the Open Center that their child will be absent or will arrive later than scheduled that day. There is a 9:30 cut off time for drop-off without proper notice. At 9:30 children will be marked absent and can no longer be dropped off. You may contact us regarding your child's attendance by either emailing the classroom teachers or sending a Brightwheel message.

Vacation

While we recognize the value of family vacations, the Center does not provide credit for vacation days.

Withdrawal

If you choose to withdraw your child before the end of the school year, the Center requires written notice two weeks before the child's last day. It is important that your child and their classmates and teachers have adequate time for closure. Even with written notice, families are contractually obligated to continue to pay tuition until either the end of the contract or the child's space has been filled.

Termination

The Open Center makes every effort to help families and children adjust to our program. We are committed to developing and modifying plans that will enable most children to have a successful experience here. If challenges arise with a child, the teachers will notify the families of the issue(s) and suggest ways in which they can help their child. If this does not bring about the desired improvements, the Director will meet with the family and teachers to develop a corrective plan and specify an acceptable time over which progress is to take place. Behaviors such as repeated and persistent acts of aggression toward other children or staff and persistent disruption of the classroom activities and environment are examples of issues that would need to be addressed with a corrective plan.

If, at the end of this period, improvement is not made and/or families fail to participate in or cooperate with the plan, the Director is authorized to make the decision to terminate the family's contract or not to renew the contract for the following year. If the family does not agree to meet for collaboration, the Director will request assistance from the Board of Directors. If it is the determination of the Center to terminate care, the Director will inform the family in writing within 24 hours of the determination. A termination date will be determined and the Center will work with the child and family to provide closure.

The following circumstances are grounds for termination from the Center:

1) Unsafe or dangerous behavior by child or family
2) Consistent disruptions to the functioning of the classroom
3) Failure to attend on a regular basis
4) Chronic late pick-up
5) Failure to pay tuition
6) Non-compliance with center policies
7) Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
8) Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation

Our goal is to work with families to prevent the need for such action whenever possible.

Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Attire and Sunscreen

We are busy at Open Center, and we do lots of "messy" play. Please dress your child in clothing that can get dirty. We attempt to use "washable" art materials, but occasionally certain colors and types of paint may not wash completely out of fabric. We also encourage you to dress your child in comfortable clothing designed for movement! Sneakers or other closed toe/closed back shoes are required. We go outside in all weather, so please make sure your child has rain coats and warm winter gear when appropriate.

In the summer (and on hot spring/fall days), please apply sunscreen at home in the morning prior to arrival. This provides your child with a solid base layer to which teachers will add throughout the day.

We supply Coppertone Water Babies SPF 50 sunscreen with a signed permission form. If you prefer to utilize your own sunscreen, please bring in a labeled bottle. Teachers will reapply sunscreen during morning outdoor time as needed, and again will reapply sunscreen in the afternoon. Note: Sunscreens do not last for more than a year, even though many still do not have expiration dates on their labels. To be sure your child is protected, please do not use any sunscreen you know to be more than 6-8 months old. It is recommended that children use sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.

When necessary, the Center will apply insect repellent based on recommendations from the Department of Public Health and with written permission from the child's family.

Drop-Off and Arrival-see Addendum F for changes to Drop-off and Pick-Up Procedures

We open at 8:00 AM. Please do not drop off your child prior to the opening. When you arrive, please accompany your child into the classroom, sign them in on Brightwheel, and assist them in their morning routine, including washing their hands before playing in the classroom. Morning activities are planned in a way to help children move from home into the classroom. To effectively help with these transitions, we encourage you to bring your child to school before 9:00 AM. This enables teachers to greet children and families, settle children into activities and help with saying good-bye. We understand the importance of transitional objects. If your child has a lovey or soft transitional object, they are welcome to hold onto it during drop-off and for a few minutes after you leave. When your child is ready, a teacher will help your child return the object to their cubby until nap time and find a classroom activity to start their day. Please label any lovey brought to school. We ask that you refrain from bringing toys (other than a lovey) to school. These are hard to keep track of at school and can be easily lost or broken or often cause conflict. We encourage your child to bring books to school to be shared with the class at circle time, at the teachers' discretion.

Pick-Up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If someone other than an identified guardian will be picking up your child, you must give written authorization for us to release your child to that person. You must also notify us in person, by phone, or through email on the day that person is going to pick-up. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy. Older siblings under the age of 18 cannot be used as an authorized pickup person.

When you pick up your child, please be sure to sign your child out using the Brightwheel app. If your child is not signed-out, we will send a Brightwheel message to confirm and sign them out on your behalf. Accurate Brightwheel attendance is required by EEC and ensures best safety practices. After three notifications within a single month, families will be charged a $2 fee.

Late Pick Up

In the unusual instance that you will be arriving after closing, please send a message on Brightwheel to let the closing teacher know your approximate time of arrival. You will be charged a late fee, even if you call. (*See Program and Fee Structure for late fees*)

If you have not contacted Open Center by 5:30 PM to notify us that you will be late, the teachers will first attempt to reach you and will then call the emergency contact people identified on your enrollment form. At 6:30 PM, the Center will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) if you have not contacted the Center and we have been unable to reach any of your emergency contacts.

Parking

Families who are not residents of Somerville may park on the street. The Somerville Traffic and Parking Department allows relaxed parking restrictions during school drop off and pickup times.

All families and visitors should park in legal parking areas only. Please do not park in or block any private driveways. Please note that street cleaning on Powder House Boulevard happens on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays and 2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month from April through December. The city of Somerville aggressively tickets illegally parked cars on any street cleaning days. If found in violation of street sweeping guidelines, the department will ticket for any other offenses (i.e. no resident sticker). Families can sign up for notifications of street sweeping at www.somervillema.gov/sweeper.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the Center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time during which we can communicate with you about your child. In order to make

the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the Center unless checking your child in or out.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program. In order to safeguard your child we will need copies of any court-ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

Safety

Main Door

Our main entrance is located on the right side of the church toward the back of the building. The door is locked at all times, as is the gate to our play yard at the front of the church. The electronic key code will be provided to families via email and is changed periodically. You can also create a fingerprint based entry during your first week of attendance; directors will schedule time to do so. Please do not give the code to your child or allow them to play with the keypad. At drop off and pick up, please consider yourself a supervisor of any child who is near the door. We must share responsibility for all the kids' safety. No child should go out unescorted. You may only admit known Open Center family members or authorized stand-ins.

Transportation Policy

The Open Center for Children requires written permission for each child's transportation plan. The Open Center does not provide transportation to or from our program. Please escort your child into the classroom and sign them in using Brightwheel. Additionally teachers will use Brightwheel to mark attendance in and out of the classrooms and playgrounds, which is used to account for children throughout the day. We take daily walks to area playgrounds. Family members must authorize permission for walking trips with their enrollment paperwork. Public transportation is occasionally used for field trips (*see Field Trips*).

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

We follow "Child Care Weather Watch" and Air Quality charts for guidelines regarding weather precautions for outdoor exposure. When the weather permits, we go outside twice a day. It should be assumed, outside of extreme weather, we will be going outside - even in rain and snow. When necessary, we shorten our time outside or do gross motor play in our licensed space in the church basement.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the child who bit learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Both families will be informed through Injury and/or Incident reports. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your children from our care.

Smoking

Open Center is a smoke-free facility. This includes all areas of the building and the grounds and sidewalk area surrounding the building. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the Center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol, marijuana, and illegal drugs is prohibited on the Center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Suspected Child Abuse

Educators are mandated reporters and as such, are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred.

In the event of an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child while in the care of the program or during a program related activity, the Director will notify EEC immediately after filing a 51A report, or after learning that a 51A report has been filed. Should an allegation of abuse or

neglect be filed against a staff member at the Center, that person will not work directly with children until the Department of Social Services investigation is completed and for such further time as EEC requires.

Any family member with concerns about the abuse or neglect of a child should speak with the Director immediately.

Families will be notified of allegations of abuse and neglect involving their child while in the care of the program.

Emergencies

The Center will maintain a daily attendance list using Brightwheel that is current. Teachers are responsible for signing children in and out of the center by arrival and departure times. The attendance list will be readily accessible in case of an emergency evacuation. One teacher will be responsible for taking the attendance list and for accounting for all of the children in the class once they are safely out of the building.

Our Center is fully equipped with smoke detectors, a fire alarm system, carbon monoxide detectors and emergency lights. Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis and Emergency evacuation drills are conducted every other month at different times of the program day as determined by the Director.

Children and staff practice using different evacuation routes so that the children and staff are familiar with them.

The Director maintains documentation of the date, time, and effectiveness of each drill in the Fire Drill Log. This documentation is maintained for five years.

Safety Drills

Open Center practices routine “safety drills” which occur monthly. The drill is an exercise in the safe evacuation of the center building, for preparation in the event of a fire, utility emergency, security threat, natural disasters and other safety emergencies. Open Center staff does everything possible to minimize disruption in the children’s routine and alleviate any anxiety that the practice may cause.

Emergency Evacuation

In the event of a fire, natural disaster, or other situation requiring evacuation of the building, we will proceed to the escape route as follows:

<u>Procedure from classrooms</u>

- Staff person determines the location of the fire or threat (front or back) to decide which staircase will be used. Alarm is pulled in the BLUE ROOM near the front exit and lights are turned off.
- Any teacher on break returns immediately to their classroom.
- Any teacher with children in the bathroom takes children to nearest safe exit
- **Blue Room** teachers lead children to appropriate exit;
    - Teacher must have: attendance up to date on Brightwheel and outside backpack
    - Exit building as quickly as possible using both sides of stairs

    - Turn left at the sidewalk to fence in front of the house next door (153 Powder House Blvd).
- **Green Room** teachers lead children to appropriate exit and follow Blue Room group;
    - Teacher must have up to date Brightwheel attendance and outside backpack
    - Exit building as quickly as possible using both sides of the stairs; children are carried if necessary
    - Turn left at sidewalk and sit on stone ledge in front of house next door (153 Powder House Blvd)
- Teacher in charge (Director if they are in the building) checks and closes doors to all rooms, office, stairs, kitchen, bathroom and small rooms and takes the evacuation bag with extra clothing, diapers and emergency supplies; they exit the building as quickly as possible.
- Children remain in an emergency location, away from the building while attendance is taken. Teachers count children AND take attendance by name. Children may return to the Center after fire personnel have determined it to be safe.

<u>Procedure From Basement</u>

- **Staff person** determines the location of the fire to decide which staircase (front by ladies bathroom or back by OC door) will be used. Alarm is pulled in the BIG ROOM near the front exit.

- **Teachers** lead children to appropriate exit;

    - Teacher must have: phone with attendance and first aid backpack
    - One teacher takes a walk around the space to verify all children have lined up
    - Exit building as quickly as possible using both sides of stairs
    - Turn left at the sidewalk to the wall in front of the house next door (153 Powder House Blvd).

- **Teacher in charge** (Director if they are in the building) checks and closes doors to all rooms, office, stairs, kitchen, bathroom and cubbies and takes the evacuation bag with first aid supplies and extra clothing; they exit the building as quickly as possible. (If group in the basement, TIC checks basement before exiting building)

- Children remain in the emergency location (on the wall in front of 153 Powder House Blvd.), away from the building while attendance is taken. Teachers count children AND take attendance by name. Children may return to the center after fire personnel have determined it to be safe.

If it is determined that the children cannot return to the building, all teachers take the children to the West Somerville Neighborhood School at 177 Powder House Blvd. Teachers contact families by cell phones, informing them of the emergency and telling them to pick up their children as soon as possible at the West Somerville Neighborhood School. Teachers remain with children until all are picked up.

We will ensure that all children are accounted for before and after leaving the Center and after arriving at the temporary location and will meet children's needs for medication, food, first aid and activities in the temporary location. We will document when the children are picked up from the temporary location and by whom. We will notify EEC immediately about any emergency relocation.

Sheltering in Place

In some emergency situations it may be safer to remain on site until the emergency has ended. In the event of an EMERGENCY SITUATION in which children and staff CAN REMAIN AT OPEN CENTER while awaiting further information, one of the following plans shall be implemented:

- In case of loss of **WATER**: Director or teacher in charge will contact the appropriate authorities. Children and staff will remain at Open Center for a maximum of 1 hour while we await information from the authorities or water service is restored. If water service is not restored and we are unable to ensure when it will return, families or emergency contacts will be phoned to come pick up children as soon as possible.
- In case of loss of **ELECTRICITY:** Director or teacher in charge will contact the appropriate authorities. Children and staff will remain at Open Center for a maximum of 2 hours (depending on the amount of outside light and other factors) while we await information from the authorities or electricity is restored. If electricity is not restored and we are unable to ensure when it will return, families or emergency contacts will be phoned to come pick up children as soon as possible.
- In case of loss of **HEAT**: Director or teacher in charge will contact the appropriate authorities. Children and staff will remain at Open Center for a maximum of 1 hour (depending on the inside temperature, which must remain at 65 degrees or higher) while we await information from the authorities or heat is restored. If heat is not restored and we are unable to ensure when it will return, families or emergency contacts will be phoned to come pick up children as soon as possible.

In the event of a potential threat from an intruder inside or outside the facility, we will observe the following "lock-down" procedures:

- The Director or teacher in charge will alert staff if a "lock-down" is necessary.

- **Blue Room** teachers will gather the children in the “small room”. One teacher will bring the first aid bag and ensure Brightwheel is up to date. The teachers will close the window shades and seat children on the rug. Teachers will ensure all children are accounted for.
- **Green Room** teachers will gather the children in the staff room. One teacher will bring the first aid bag and ensure Brightwheel is up to date. The teachers will close the window shades and seat children on the rug. Teachers will ensure all children are accounted for.
- **Director or teacher in charge** will notify police, emergency officials, and the church pastor of the situation. They will lock all doors and ensure safety of all children/teachers in their shelter-in-place locations. They will gather in the staff room with the Green Room until they receive word that the Center has been secured.
- Once the Center is secured, the Director or teacher in charge will alert staff that the Center is safe. Teachers will return to their classrooms and ensure all children are accounted for. Director and one teacher from each classroom will notify families over the phone of the incident.

This “Lock Down” procedure is subject to change during the 2025-2026 school year. Any policy change will be made in consultation with a security professional, and any policy updates will be shared with families accordingly.

Lost or Missing Child

All staff at the Open Center are trained to be alert at all times and to follow procedures to ensure each child’s health and safety. Teachers carefully monitor all doors leading to and from the classrooms, and children are taught to never leave the classroom without their teachers or family. Teachers mark the children present as they arrive, and teachers frequently conduct “head counts'' throughout the day to ensure that all the children are accounted for. The children are counted before going downstairs to go outside and again when they are lining up on the sidewalk. They are counted as they arrive at the park or destination and again before they leave to return to the Center. Finally, they are counted when they arrive back at the Center.

In the unlikely event that a child is believed to be missing, the following procedures will be utilized:

- If a child is believed to be missing <u>while in the Center</u>, a teacher will immediately notify the Director and together they conduct a thorough search of the Center including storage areas, closets and stairs. If the child is not located inside within five minutes, the Director and teacher will search the area immediately outside of the Center. If the child is not located within five minutes, the director will then notify the police department and the child’s family and an incident report will be filed with EEC.
- If a child is believed to be missing while <u>outside the Center</u>, a teacher will immediately conduct a search of the surrounding area while the other teacher(s) remain with the

group of children. If the child is not located within five minutes, the teacher will phone the director. Depending on circumstances and location, the director will either meet the teacher at the park to search further or will contact the police department and the child's family. An incident report will be filed with EEC.

Health Care Policies

Hand Washing

Hand washing is the best way to keep the children and staff healthy. We wash hands frequently throughout the day. Our health policy requires all children (and staff) to wash hands when they arrive at school to keep outside germs from coming into the Center. Please take your child to wash hands as soon as you help them put away their belongings.

Staff assists children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children wash either independently or with staff assistance.

Children and adults wash their hands:

- on arrival for the day;
- after diapering or using the toilet;
- after handling body fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit);
- before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food, or after handling any raw food that requires cooking (e.g., meat, eggs, poultry);
- after playing in water that is shared by two or more people;
- after handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals; and
- when moving from one group to another (e.g., visiting) that involves contact with infants and toddlers/twos

Adults also wash their hands:

- before and after feeding a child;
- before and after administering medication;
- after assisting a child with toileting; and
- after handling garbage or cleaning

Proper hand-washing procedures are followed by adults and children and include:

- using liquid soap and running water;

- rubbing hands vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails;
- rinsing well;
- drying hands with a paper towel, a single-use towel, or a dryer; and
- avoiding touching the faucet with just-washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water)

Gloves:

Except when handling blood or body fluids that might contain blood (when wearing gloves is required), wearing gloves is an optional supplement, but not a substitute, for hand washing in any required hand-washing situation listed above.

- Staff wears gloves when contamination with blood may occur.
- Staff does not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or for removing smeared fecal material.
- In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

Emergency Telephone Numbers

Health Care Consultant

Olivia Larkin, MD	(w) 617-665-1264
Cambridge Health Alliance	(p) 617-546-0614

Emergency Telephone Numbers as Posted by all Telephones

Fire/Police/Ambulance	911 (617-625-1600)
Poison Control Center	1-800-222-1222
Department of Social Services (Cambridge Office)	617-520-8700
Somerville Department of Health and Human Services	617-625-6600 x2550

Designated Emergency Back-Up Christina Gunther-Schummers, Board Representative	510-504-1482

Information to Give in an Emergency

Your name	
Nature of the emergency	
Name of Center	Open Center for Children
Center telephone number	617-628-3891
Center address	155 Powder House Blvd., Somerville (cross street: between Curtis Street and Packard Ave.)
Center's location in the building	Second floor-instruct to enter through front of church and come up the stairs

Physical Exams and Immunizations

The EEC requires that all children have documentation of a physical examination, within the past 12 months. This completed health form must be on file before your child will be allowed to attend the center. Children are required to have a complete physical exam every year. Children are also required to be immunized according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics. www.aap.org.

According to state law, all children must be completely immunized **before** attending the center. At this time, the required immunizations include:

* 4 doses of DTP (diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis)
* 3 doses of Polio
* 1 dose of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella)
* 3 doses of HBV (Hepatitis B)
* 4 doses of HIB/Prohibit (Haemophilus influenzae boosters)
* 1 dose of Varicella vaccine (chicken pox)

Additionally, all children are required to be screened annually for lead paint exposure.

A family may be excused from this requirement if they provide an exemption letter from their doctor stating that immunizations cannot be performed for medical reasons or if a family

provides a letter stating that they cannot immunize their child due to religious beliefs. According to state regulations, children must be denied admission or attendance if these immunizations, screenings, and examinations are not up to date. Massachusetts recommends, but does not currently require, children to receive a COVID-19 vaccine prior to attending. If a child is overdue for a physical examination or under immunized, families must provide written evidence of an appointment in order for their child to remain in care. Please review your child's immunization record to verify that all required vaccines and tests have been administered.

Plan for Preventing Injuries

All Open Center staff are responsible for reading and following the Open Center Emergency Procedures and Health Care Policies and Procedures.

- Each teacher is responsible for monitoring the safety of the classroom on a daily basis, removing or fixing potential hazards (removing a broken toy or replacing an outlet cover, for example) and immediately reporting any other hazards to the director.
- All rugs have thick, dense foam padding that keep the carpet from slipping and provide for soft landings to minimize the possibility of injuries.
- All staff ensure that all toxic substances, first aid supplies, and sharp objects are in a secure place out of reach of children.
- Teachers replace all outlet covers after each use and check frequently to make sure that all outlets are always covered when not in use.
- All hot beverages are inaccessible to children at all times. Liquids and foods that are hotter than 110 degrees Fahrenheit are kept out of children's reach.
- Staff does not offer children younger than four years these foods: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonfuls of peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole.
- Children are supervised, with staff/child ratios maintained, at all times including while playing or walking outdoors. Staff positions themselves near any playground equipment where children might fall or injure themselves. Outdoor gates are locked, secured or supervised by a teacher who stands at the gate. On walks, children are either paired with another child or hold onto a tether with loops. Teachers position themselves at the beginning, middle and end of the line of walkers.
- Children and staff must remain inside whenever outside air conditions are considered unhealthy or whenever environmental noise is considered to be loud enough to possibly harm ears.

- Family members are notified immediately if their child needs or receives emergency care beyond basic first aid. (See Procedures for Emergencies and Illness, below.)

- Teachers inform another staff member or the director if they feel the occasional need for a time away from the children to minimize stress. Long term stress should be addressed with the director who maintains a list of resources to deal with stress-related issues.

- Staff is mindful of possible injury when lifting children or moving heavy equipment or supplies. The director must be notified if any such injury occurs.

- Open Center practices routine fire drills which occur at least monthly and full-scale evacuation drills that occur at least annually. The drill is an exercise in the safe evacuation of the center building as preparation in the event of a fire, utility emergency, security threat, natural disasters and other safety emergencies. A full-scale evacuation drill requires the children and staff to go to the West Somerville Neighborhood School with the "evacuation bag" (extra clothing / diapers) and medication and technical support that may be required by individual children. Open Center staff does everything possible to minimize disruption in the children's routine and alleviate any anxiety that the practice may cause.

Procedures for Mild Injuries And Emergencies

The program will immediately report to the Department of Early Education and Care any injury to, or illness of, any child which occurs during the hours while the child is enrolled in care and which requires hospitalization or emergency medical treatment.

<u>First Aid and Transportation to the Hospital</u>

1. In the case of a **mild injury** (surface scrape or bump) a teacher who is trained in first aid will comfort the child, assess the injury, and provide appropriate first aid. The staff will monitor the child throughout the day in case further care is needed.
    a. The teacher who observed the injury will complete and file an injury report and share it with an administrator for approval.
    b. The teacher will ensure that all other classroom staff are aware of both the circumstances of the injury and the first aid that was administered.
    c. The child's family will receive a full and accurate verbal report of the injury by phone or at pick-up.
    d. The family will sign a copy of the injury report for the child's file and receive a copy for themselves.

2. In the case of an **injury or illness that requires emergency care** (such as a seizure, a serious fall or serious cut), one teacher will begin administration of emergency first aid

while a second teacher takes other children to another area or room. Both staff members should respond in a calm and reasonable manner.

3. Other staff will be alerted to send for assistance from the Executive Director, the Assistant Director or a teacher from another classroom.

4. One of the administrative staff will contact the designated family member to come and pick up child,

5. If response time is a factor or the situation is life-threatening, staff will call an ambulance. The family member will be instructed to meet the child at the emergency room of the hospital utilized in emergencies.

6. A teacher or other designated staff will go with the child in the ambulance. The child's file will be taken, including permission forms and pertinent insurance information if the center has it.

7. If the family member comes to pick up the child and needs assistance, the teacher or Executive Director may offer to drive to the hospital or to accompany the child

8. If the designated family member cannot be reached immediately, the listed emergency contact will be called and a teacher will continue to attempt to reach them. Transportation, if needed, will proceed as outlined above by the emergency contact or by ambulance.

Emergencies While on a Field Trip

If an accident or acute illness occurs while on a field trip, a teacher will take charge of the emergency, assess the situation, and give first aid as needed. The method and urgency of transportation for the child to receive medical treatment will be determined by the teacher based on the severity of the emergency or illness. If necessary, an ambulance will be called.

The Executive Director or Assistant Director will be contacted by the teacher as soon as possible and informed of the nature and extent of the injury and the proposed plan of action.

As a preventive measure, prior to departure from the center, the Executive Director or Assistant Director and the classroom teachers will determine appropriate guidelines to be followed during the field trip to insure continuity and safety of the children including:

1. A first aid kit will be taken on all field trips.

2. Emergency information, including contacts and telephone numbers, will be taken on all field trips.

3. At least one staff member will have a cell phone for use in an emergency.

Plan for Infection Control

To minimize the spread of infectious diseases at the center the following practices will be observed:

1. All staff receive annual training on the implementation of Universal Health Precautions (Part of First Aid/CPR Training)
2. Hand Washing Protocol is strictly followed
3. Staff are responsible for ensuring that the washing and disinfecting of specified equipment and surfaces occurs in the following manner:
    a. After each use:
        - Diapering surfaces
        - Toys that have been put in mouth
        - Mops used for cleaning bodily fluids
        - Thermometers
    b. At least daily:
        - Toilets and toilet seats
        - Containers including lids used to hold diapers
        - Sink and sink faucets
        - Water tables and water play equipment
        - Table surfaces (sprayed with bleach solution and air dried)
        - Floors
        - Mops used for cleaning
    c. At least weekly (or more frequently as needed to maintain cleanliness):
        - Nap mats will be sprayed with bleach and water solution and air dried
        - Sheets and blankets will be taken home weekly to be washed
        - Machine washable fabric toys from home will be sent home weekly to be washed. Items belonging to the center will washed at least monthly or as needed
4. A commercially prepared disinfectant solution is used.
5. **Water Table / Water Play Procedures:** Staff follows this protocol to ensure that communal water play does not spread infectious disease
    a. No child drinks the water

b. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play
c. Fresh, clean water is used
d. The water is drained when the activity period is completed with each group of children
e. Children wash hands directly after water table play

While water play is a valuable activity for cognitive, physical, and social development, it is also an opportunity for infectious diseases and illness to spread between children. Thus, the Open center follows the following water table procedure: Fresh water must always be used. Every time the water table is used it must be drained, washed out with soap and water, and then sprayed with a bleach solution and allowed to air dry. The water table toys are cleaned following the same procedure.

Plan for Managing Infectious Disease

To minimize and manage the spread of infectious diseases at the center the following practices will be observed:

1. All staff receive annual training on the implementation of Universal Health Precautions (Part of First Aid/CPR Training)
2. All children and staff will regularly wash their hands:
    - Upon arrival
    - After using the bathroom
    - Before preparing food or eating
    - After helping child in the bathroom
    - After blowing nose
3. All specified equipment, items, or surfaces will be washed (see plan cleaning protocols) with soap, water and sanitizing spray.
4. Gloves are stored in each classroom, first aid backpacks and in the bathroom by the toilets. Gloves will be worn at all times when handling blood, vomit, or bodily waste products.
5. Classroom windows are opened at times during the day to allow clean, fresh air to circulate.
6. Children are provided with enough space – especially at rest time (according to EEC regulations, rest mats must be three feet apart) – to prevent overcrowding.

7. Children are taught to sneeze and cough into their elbows or a tissue to minimize the spread of infection.
8. All children are required to have age appropriate immunizations. At the time of each child's enrollment, families are required to complete a Health and Immunization form, which provides a doctor's assurance that the child is up-to-date on all vaccinations, and is in good health to attend school. The Massachusetts Dept. of Early Education and Care requires that each child's medical and immunization history be completed and signed by the child's physician or health care provider. Evidence of a physical exam is valid for one year from the date the child was examined and must be renewed annually thereafter.

Child Illness Policy

To protect children, staff and the general health of the community, ill children are not permitted to attend school. The Center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. Some of the obvious symptoms that suggest your child may be ill include complaints of pain, a fever, unusual tiredness or irritability, diarrhea, or unprovoked crying. Additionally, children with any of the following conditions are not permitted to attend school:

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Has a health professional write an order that the child be separated from other children.
- **Persistent wet cough or significant nasal mucus**: 24 hours or until symptoms subside.
- **Fever of 100.4°F or higher:**, within 24 hours of attending.
- **Diarrhea**: families are contacted if there are 2 or more cases of diarrhea.
- Vomiting (within 24 hours of attending).
- **Mouth sores**: until sores are healed (if Hand, Foot, and Mouth virus) or a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- **Rash**: unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white, yellow, or green eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours (adults 12 hours).
- **Impetigo**: until 24 hours after treatment.
- **Influenza (Flu)**: 5 days as long as fever, wet cough, and significant nasal mucus has subsided - otherwise 7 days
- **Strep throat:** until 24 hours after treatment.
- **Scabies**: until 24 hours after treatment.
- **Chickenpox**: until all lesions have dried and crusted **and** with a health professional's written order they are safe to return along with confirmation from Open Center's health consultant.
- **Pertussis (Whooping Cough)**: until 5 days of antibiotics.
- **Hand, Foot, & Mouth:** 3-5 days after symptoms begin. Mouth sores must be healed, and any blisters must be healed or crusted over.

- **Hepatitis A virus:** until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- **Tuberculosis**: requires a health professional's written order that they are safe to return along with confirmation from Open Center's health consultant.
- **Rubella**: until 6 days after the rash appears **and** with a health professional's written order they are safe to return along with confirmation from Open Center's health consultant.
- **Mumps**: until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling **and** with a health professional's written order they are safe to return along with confirmation from Open Center's health consultant.
- **Measles**: until 4 days after onset of rash **and** with a health professional's written order they are safe to return along with confirmation from Open Center's health consultant.
- **RSV**: 5 days after diagnosis or 24 hours symptom free.

If your child becomes ill or begins to exhibit any of the above symptoms during the school day, then the child is made comfortable in a location where she or he is supervised by a familiar teacher.

1. If the child is suspected of having a contagious disease, the child is moved to a place where new individuals will not be exposed until they can be picked up by the family.
2. After checking with the Director or teacher-in-charge, the teacher will phone the family, indicating the nature of the illness and request that the child is picked up. If the family member cannot be reached, the emergency contact person will be phoned and requested to pick up the child; a written note (form letter) should accompany the child describing the nature of the illness.
3. If the family and emergency contact person cannot be reached, the child will be kept isolated from the other children for the remainder of the day.

Families and staff are expected to notify the center regarding all diagnosed communicable diseases so that other staff and families can be informed about symptoms, incubation period and treatment. Notification of such an occurrence is emailed by the Director to families and staff. The director emails updates regarding the spread of the infection in question.

The director will contact the Health Care Consultant regarding any questions about specific infections, how they are spread and how they are treated.

Illness Return Policy

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for 24 hours **without using fever-reducing medication (such as Tylenol or Advil).**
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions, and drooling (not related to teething) unless:

  - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
  - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Plan for Administration Of Medication

Any administrator or teaching staff who administer medication will be trained in accordance with MA Department of Early Education and Care on the five rights of medication administration.

Prescription Medication

1. A prescription medication must be brought to school in its original container and include the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the number of times per and the number of days the medication is to be administered. This prescription label will be accepted as the written authorization of the physician.
2. The Center will not administer any medication contrary to the directions on the label unless so authorized by written order of the child's physician.
3. The family must fill out the *Authorization For Medication* Form before the medication can be administered.

Non-prescription Medication

1. Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician. The Center will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it was signed.
2. Along with the written consent of the physician, the Center will also need written family authorization. The family must fill out the *Authorization for Medication* form, which allows the Center to administer the non- prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician. The statement will be valid for one year from the date it was signed.
3. The Center will make every attempt to contact the family prior to the child receiving the non-prescription medication unless the child needs medication urgently or when contacting the family will delay appropriate care unreasonably.

Topical Ointments and Sprays

1. Topical ointments and sprays such as petroleum jelly, sunscreen, and bug spray, etc. will be administered to the child with written family permission. The signed statement from the family will be valid for one year and include a list of topical non-prescription medication.

2. When topical ointments and sprays are applied to wounds, rashes, or broken skin, the Center will follow its written procedure for non- prescription medication which includes the written order of the physician, which is valid for a year, and the *Authorization for Medication* form signed by the family.

All Medications

1. The first dosage must be administered by the family at home in case of an allergic reaction.

2. All medications must be given to the teacher directly by the family.

3. All medications will be stored in the kitchen, out of the reach of children (on top of the refrigerator or on the refrigerator door shelf if refrigeration is necessary). All medications that are considered controlled substances must be locked and kept out of reach of children.

4. A teacher or administrator will be responsible for the administration of medication.

5. The Center will maintain a written record of the administration of any medication (excluding topical ointments and sprays applied to normal skin) which will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage, and the name of the staff person administering the medication. This completed record will become part of the child's file.

6. All unused medication will be returned to the family.

Plan for Meeting Individual Children's Specific Health Needs

During intake, families will be asked to record any known allergies on the face sheet. The face sheet will be updated yearly.

All allergies or other important medical information will be posted in each classroom, on the refrigerator in the kitchen, and on the snack storage cabinet. Allergies list will be updated as necessary.

All staff and substitutes will be kept informed by the Director or Assistant Director so that children can be protected from exposure to foods, chemicals, pets or other materials to which they are allergic.

The names of children with allergies that may be life threatening (e.g. bee stings) will be posted in conspicuous locations with specific instructions if an occurrence were to happen. The Director will be responsible for making sure that staff receives appropriate training to handle emergency allergic reactions.

Allergies

The Open Center and its families are deeply committed to creating a safe environment for children with food allergies or conditions requiring specialized medical equipment. **The Center will not serve any foods containing nuts and prohibits families from sending in food with nuts from home.** To reduce the risk of allergic reactions, the Center takes the following precautions:

1. The Center is a nut-free environment.
2. All children and staff wash hands before and after meals and snacks.
3. Table surfaces are sanitized before and after meals and snacks.
4. As stated in the EEC regulation under Health and Safety (7:11)(3)(a,b), the licensee must maintain as part of a child's record an individual health care plan for each child with a chronic medical condition, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner.
5. A list of children with allergies or conditions requiring specialized medical treatment is posted in each classroom and in the kitchen.

A copy of the child's up to date individual health plan, signed by a physician, will be kept in the classroom with the child's medication.

Families are required to notify staff of all allergies on the child's medical form. Prior to starting the program, families of children with life-threatening allergies must:

- Meet with staff and health care consultant, if needed, to mutually agree on a plan of care to ensure the safety and well-being of that child (Individual Health Care Plan);
- Provide medical documentation of the allergy regarding diagnosis and treatment;
- Provide physician ordered emergency medication;
- Demonstrate and provide training of proper medication administration to program managers and staff in case the medication is needed.

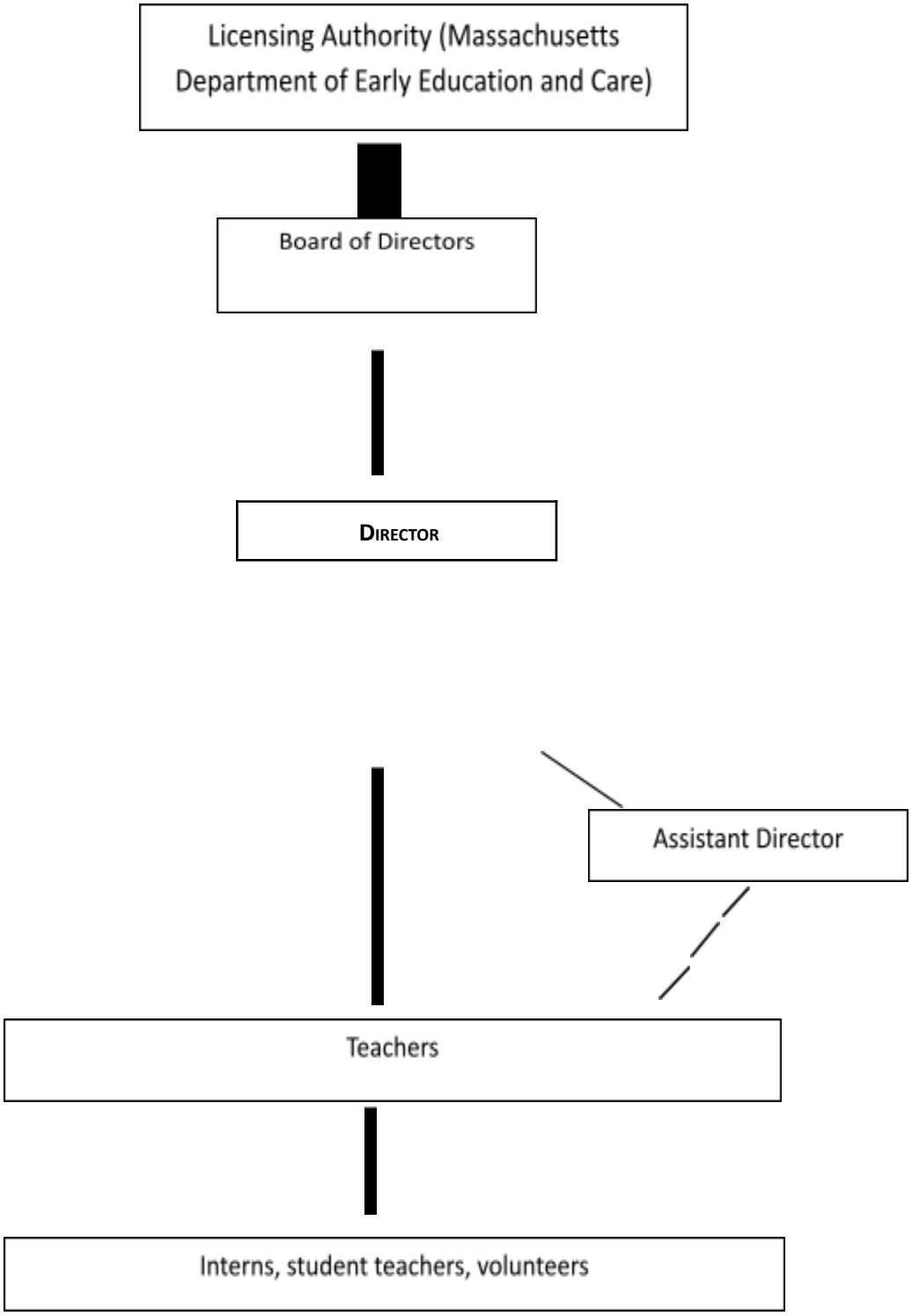
In accordance will EEC regulations, staff and administration will be trained annually in CPR, First Aid and Epi-Pen administration by a licensed Health Care Consultant. Substitute teachers will be made aware of where to find information regarding allergies in each classroom and should defer to the administration or classroom teacher in an emergency. As stated in EEC regulation section 7:11 health and safety (19)(a)6 and 7: The Open Center for Children will follow these steps to ensure a child's safety in the event an allergic reaction may occur:

1. The teacher will immediately alert an administrator who will give instructions to call 911 if necessary.
2. Staff and administrator will always follow the steps outlined in the child's individual health care when administering medication.
3. After all steps have been followed in accordance with the child's individual health care plan, the child's family will be contacted by phone to be notified of the incident.
4. Necessary paperwork to report the incident will be completed and signed by the staff, administrator and family and filed in accordance with EEC regulations.

IN CLOSING

Thank you for taking the time to read our handbook and familiarize yourself with our policies and procedures. We are looking forward to embarking on this exciting learning and growing experience with you and your child.

Addendum A: Administration Organization



Addendum B: 2025-2026 Holiday and School Closing Schedule

Tuesday September 2, 2025 is the first day of school

The Open Center will be **CLOSED** on the following days:

September 1, 2025	Monday	Labor Day
October 10, 2025	Friday	OCC Staff Development Day
October 13, 2025	Monday	Indigenous People's Day
November 11, 2025	Tuesday	Veteran's Day
November 27 & 28, 2025	Thursday – Friday	Thanksgiving
December 23, 2025 – January 2, 2026	Tuesday - Friday	Winter break
January 19, 2026	Monday	M. L. King Day
February 16, 2026	Monday	President's Day
April 3, 2026	Friday	OCC Staff Development Day (Good Friday)
April 20, 2026	Monday	Patriot's Day
May 25, 2026	Monday	Memorial Day
June 18, 2026	Thursday	Designated Commonwealth Preschool Partnership Initiative grant closure day - **TBD**
June 19, 2026	Friday	Juneteenth
July 3, 2026	Friday	Independence Day
August 31 – September 4, 2026	Monday – Friday	Teacher Prep Week

Friday, August 28, 2026 is the last day of school for the year.

We are closed on all **snow days** announced by the Somerville Public Schools (SPS) unless notified otherwise – check your television or the SPS website for closings. Additionally, we will close as necessary and pursuant to local or state public health guidance, regulations, or directives.

Addendum C: 2025-2026 Enrollment Policy

Process for Enrollment

We keep our enrollment process low-key, comfortable, and without stress. If you are considering Open Center for your child, the following steps will guide your process:

- Email the director at director@open-center.org
- You will receive a reply within two business days asking that you complete an "Enrollment Interest" form
- The director will work with you to schedule a 20-30 minute morning visit, without your child. During that time you will be able to observe how the teachers and children interact, see the classrooms, watch activities, and speak with the director. We will also provide you with the names and contact information for some current families who are willing to speak with you about their experiences at the Center.
- If you feel that the program might be a good fit for your family, you submit an application with a $50 non-refundable application fee. This application and fee places your child on the list for enrollment.
- When a space becomes available, the director will contact you via email to share the terms and timing of the spot. This information may become available as early as January 31 or as late as April 1.
- Upon enrollment, families are required to sign a Tuition Contract and submit a deposit equal to one month's tuition within 10 days to secure the space for their child. As further explained in the Tuition Contract, this initial deposit will be held without interest by the Open Center as security for your full performance of the Tuition Contract.

Timeline:

November 2025: Current families inform director of "Intent for Next Year"
February 2026: Board Meeting (3rd Tuesday): Board votes on tuition
February 2026: Director sends contracts to returning and new families (Green Room & rising Blue Room)
March 2026: Director sends contracts to returning and new families (returning/deciding and new Blue Room)

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. Tours are conducted year round. Enrollment for new families depends on various factors, including available space at the Open Center, and is strongly influenced by the date by which your inquiry was received by the director.

Addendum D: 2025-2026 Tuition and Fee Schedule

Enrollment Deposit

If you feel that the program might be a good fit for your family, you submit an application with a $50 non-refundable application fee. This application and fee places your child on the list for potential enrollment.

Upon enrollment, families are required to sign a Tuition Contract and submit a deposit equal to one month's tuition within the timeframe indicated in the offer letter to secure the space for their child. As further explained in the Tuition Contract, this initial deposit will be held without interest by the Open Center as security for your full performance of the Tuition Contract.

Tuition

The 2025-2026 tuition schedule is as follows:

Five days per week Green Room $2,645/month Blue Room $2,375/month

Tuition is paid in advance on a monthly basis. Families will be billed via email around the 15th of the month, and their tuition is due on the first day of school each month. For example, October's tuition is billed on September 15th and due by October 1st.

Late Payment Fee

If payment is not received on or before the 1st of the month, you will receive a reminder via email. A late fee of $20/day will begin on the 15th of the month and continue until tuition payment is received. If your account has not been paid in full within 30 business days, your child may be discharged from the program.

Any partial payments made will be applied to the oldest charges, and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

If payment is more than 90 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a third-party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) will be charged a fee of $25.

Late Pick Up Fees

The first time a caregiver arrives for pick up after 5:30 PM, the family will be charged a late fee of $2.00 per minute; after 5:45 PM, the fee increases to $5.00 per minute.

Addendum E: Nutritious Foods

The Open Center is NUT FREE. Please do not send in any items that contain nuts and check food labels carefully for hidden nut ingredients.

Unfortunately, we do not have the means to refrigerate or heat children's lunches. We ask that you pack food in such a way to maintain the necessary healthy temperature. Ice packs and insulated lunch bags can keep food cold, and insulated thermoses can keep food warm (note: It helps to heat the inside of the thermos up before adding food. You can do this by pouring in hot water, letting it sit and then emptying the water). Perishable food that is not at a proper temperature cannot be served.

We ask that you refrain from sending choking hazards, candy, or gum in lunches. Open Center provides water at all snacks and meals.

MAIN DISH IDEAS:
Sun-butter and jelly sandwich/roll-up
Hummus and crackers
Tuna or egg salad with crackers or bread
Waffle or French toast sticks
Lunchmeat and cheese sandwich or wrap
Crackers with meat and cheese
Hummus wrap with sliced vegetables
Dinner leftovers
Pasta with marinara sauce
Hot dog* on bun
Cheese quesadilla/grilled cheese
Oatmeal
Yogurt

FRUIT:
Sliced apples
Applesauce
Banana
Grapes*
Fresh berries
Orange/clementine (peeled)
Sliced pears
Avocado
Watermelon
Peaches

VEGETABLE:
Celery sticks
Sliced cucumber
Sliced bell pepper
Sugar snap peas
Cherry tomatoes
Broccoli
Cauliflower
Green beans
Corn
Sweet potato sticks

OTHER:
Veggie sticks/straws
Pita chips
Mozzarella cheese stick*/sliced cheese
Boiled egg
Graham crackers
Rice cakes
Hummus for dipping
Ranch for dipping

* Some food items are choking hazards for young children. Hot dogs, carrots and cheese sticks must be cut, the long way, into sticks (not round disks). Grapes must also be cut in half the long way or small enough not to pose a choking hazard.

Addendum F: Effective June 29, 2020 Until Further Notice

This Temporary Amendment to the Family Handbook will remain in effect until further notice and is subject to change in accordance with relevant Health & Safety Requirements and guidance. To the extent that any of the guidelines contained in this Temporary Amendment conflict with guidelines contained in the Family Handbook, this Temporary Amendment controls.

Staffing and Hours of Operation

School Hours:

The Open Center will operate from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. unless staffing shortages dictate otherwise.

Potential Closures:

In the event that a member of the Open Center community tests positive for or is presumed to be positive for COVID-19, we will notify families. We also reserve the right to implement a temporary shutdown of operations should Massachusetts experience another surge in COVID-19 infections and/or if closing down operations is advised by public health experts.

Daily Health Monitoring/Sick Child

Teachers will be monitoring children for symptoms and signs of illness throughout the day. We will follow the policy set forth by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, for making decisions about when children with symptoms or exposure to COVID-19 can return to care.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eecs-health-and-safety-guidance-during-covid-19-recovery-for-child-care-providers.

Food

Families will provide lunch. Lunch boxes and water bottles will go home daily and must be cleaned and sanitized. Open Center will provide water as well as two snacks. We encourage you to find food containers that your child can open and close independently. Teachers are required to wear clean, disposable gloves when preparing food.

Nap

Families will still provide a sheet and a SMALL blanket. Blankets will be stored with the child's mat in an individual mat cubby where space is limited. Sheets and blankets will continue to be sent home on Fridays to be laundered.

Sunscreen

Please apply sunscreen at home. This provides your child with a solid base layer to which teachers will add throughout the day. Teachers are required to wear clean, disposable gloves when applying sunscreen. You are required to supply your own sunscreen in a labeled bottle and are asked to sign a permission form. Teachers will apply sunscreen as needed in the afternoon before going outside.

Face Coverings

As of September 6, 2022, face coverings are optional for staff and children. Children who continue to wear masks will be reminded to keep their face covering on except when eating, sleeping and outside.

- Families of children who continue to wear masks must supply at least two clean face coverings for their child each day, with the child's name printed clearly on both sides, as well as clear markings for the top and bottom.
- The Open Center will have extra masks available.
- This policy will continue to be revised as determined necessary by the Board.

Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer:

If running water is unavailable or impractical, alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be available as an alternative when hands are not visibly dirty. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers should contain at least 60% alcohol and must be kept out of reach of children. Active supervision of children is required to monitor effective use and to avoid potential ingestion or inadvertent contact with eyes and mucous membranes. After applying hand sanitizer, rub hands together to distribute sanitizer to all hand and finger surfaces; allow sanitizer to air dry. Premoistened cleansing towelettes do not effectively clean hands and should not be used as a substitute for washing hands or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. See attached permission form.

2023-2024 COVID Protocol, Subject to Change

COVID Scenario	Open Center Protocol
COVID + Individual (teacher or student)	● Children and/or staff who test positive must isolate for at least 5 days. ● If they are asymptomatic or symptoms are resolving and they have been fever free without the use of fever-reducing medicine for 24 hours, they may return to programming on or after day 6 with the following conditions: ○ If on day 6 the test is still positive, the individual should continue to wear a well-fitting mask through day 10. ○ If on day 6 the test is negative, they should continue to be masked until they have 2 negative tests 48 hours apart (with the first test taken on day 6 or later) before removing their mask.
COVID exposure in classroom	● Notify staff/families of COVID exposure date ● Parents will monitor exposed children for symptoms. If exposed children become symptomatic, do not bring children to school and child should be tested for COVID. Children who test negative may attend school if their symptoms would not exclude them otherwise. ● We suggest that asymptomatic children who are exposed rapid test on days 2 and 5 *Families that need assistance in securing tests can reach out to the Open Center Director or can access Somerville resources: https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/programs/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources.
COVID exposure at home	● Quarantine is no longer required nor recommended for children or staff in these settings, regardless of vaccination status or where the exposure occurred. All exposed individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic. It is recommended that the exposed individual wear a mask for 10 days and test on Day 6 of exposure. ● If a student cannot avoid continued exposure to the + individual, they should be tested at least every 5 days until they reach 10 days after the COVID + individual became symptomatic (for symptomatic individuals) or 10 days after the individual tested + (for asymptomatic individuals) * *Families that need assistance in securing tests can reach out to the Open Center Director or can access Somerville resources: https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/programs/coronavirus-covid-19-information-and-resources.
Symptomatic individual at school, when exposure has occurred	● Rapid test will be administered on-site* ● If rapid test is negative, and/or symptoms are mild, child can remain at school ● If rapid test is negative, and/or symptoms are exclusionary, families should rapid test if symptoms do not resolve within 24 hours ● If the symptomatic individual cannot be tested immediately, they should be sent home and allowed to return to their program or school if symptoms

	remain mild and they test negative, or they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their symptoms are resolving, or if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis. A negative test is required for return. *Open Center will continue to rapid test until supplies run out