



Early Learning
Center of Aspen

Family Handbook

Early Learning Center 2026/2027

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About Us	3
Our Purpose and Mission	3
Our Values	3
Hours of Operation	3
Drop-off procedures and hours: *subject to change	3
Pick-up procedures:	4
Inclement Weather Closure	4
Admission & Enrollment	5
Inclusion & Partnering with Families to Meet Children's Special Needs	5
Equity and Diversity	6
Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Trauma or Adversity	6
Health Immunizations	7
Tuition and Fees	8
Fees	8
Buy-A-Days -	10
Attendance and Withdrawal	10
Absence	10
Closing Due to Extreme Weather	11
Withdrawals	11
What to Bring to School	11
Infants	11
Toddlers	11
Preschool and PreK	11
Pick-ups	12
Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up	12
Staffing	13
Child-Staff Ratios and Group Sizes	13
Our Recruitment and Retention Plan	14
Communication & Family Partnership	15
Parent Communication	15
Engaging Families in Continuous Quality Improvement	16
Parent-Teacher Conferences	17
Ways to be Involved	17
Interpreters	18
Connecting Families to Resources	18
Curriculum & Learning	20
Curriculum	20
Teaching Strategies Gold	20
Outings & Field Trips	21
Multiculturalism and Inclusion	21
Celebrations	21

Routines_____	23
Daily Routines and Schedules_____	23
Community-Based Learning_____	23
Meals, Snacks, and Nutrition Policy_____	24
Lunch Ideas for a Healthy Meal_____	24
Rest Time_____	25
Infants – Safe Sleep_____	25
Toddlers-PreK Rest Time_____	26
Diapering_____	26
Toilet Training_____	26
Engaging Families in Transition Planning_____	27
Transitions for Classroom Move-Ups_____	27
Health Promotion and Immunizations_____	28
Developmental Screening Opportunities_____	28
Health Screenings_____	28
Health Requirements at Enrollment_____	28
Special Health Care Needs_____	29
Annual Physicals or General Health Form_____	31
Illness Policy_____	31
Medications_____	32
General Procedures_____	33
Challenging Behavior_____	33
Biting_____	33
Suspension and/or Expulsion Inclusion and Continuity of Care Policy_____	34
Our Commitment_____	34
Response to Challenging Behavior_____	34
Non-Exclusionary Practices_____	35
Quality Improvement Plan_____	35
Fundraising_____	35
Safety_____	36
Dangerous Weapon_____	39
Child Custody_____	39
Suspected Child Abuse_____	39
Product and Food Recall Policy_____	39
Emergencies_____	40
Child Supervision and Separation Response Policy_____	40
Fire_____	40
Evacuations_____	41
Emergency Assistance for Children with Additional Needs_____	41
Emergency Transportation_____	41
Early Learning Center Complaint/Grievance Procedure_____	42
Family Handbook Acknowledgment_____	44

About Us

Our Purpose and Mission

We nurture our students, educators, and families by providing inclusive, creative, and individualized learning experiences.

Our Philosophy –

Through interactions with a highly trained staff, play and learning activities, and partnerships between teachers, families, and the community, the children of the Early Learning Center will receive a high-quality education in their first six years of life.

Our Vision –

The ELC is committed to community-focused, economical childcare and inclusive programming, which suggests a vision of fostering a supportive and accessible early learning environment for all families in Aspen. We emphasize the importance of inclusivity, community engagement, developmentally appropriate practices, and accessibility.

Our Values

Our values guide every aspect of our program; from the way we interact with children and families to the learning experience we create each day. The ELC core values are:

Partnerships First:

We build strong relationships with families, educators, and the community to support every child.

Inclusive Community:

We create a welcoming environment where everyone feels valued, respected, and included.

Growth & Excellence:

We encourage continuous learning, growth, and excellence in children, staff, and our program.

Purposeful Play:

We believe children learn best through meaningful play, exploration, and discovery.

The Early Learning Center is licensed by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) and meets all state requirements. For general Child Care Licensing questions, contact CDEC at **1-800-799-5876 or 303-866-5948.**

Certifications

1. Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) License – Large Child Care Center
2. Colorado Shine Rated- 4 Star
3. Member of the Rocky Mountain Early Childhood Network.

Hours of Operation

Monday- Friday from 8:00 a.m. - 5:15 p.m.

Drop-off procedures and hours: *subject to change

- Drop-off will be from 8 - 9 a.m.

- Arrivals after 9 a.m. will be subject to a late drop-off fee
- Parents must sign into ProCare every morning
- Please have every child already wearing sunscreen upon arrival
- Any child with a fever of 100.4 or above or other signs of illness such as excessive cough, sore throat, or shortness of breath will not be admitted into the school.
- If your child has a fever of 99.2-100.3, we will monitor throughout the day.
 - Our drop-off procedure includes unpacking your child's bag, helping them use the potty and wash their hands (for at least 20 seconds) when they are old enough, and guiding them to their classroom's morning activities.

Late drop-off procedures:

We understand that occasional delays happen. However, frequent late arrivals can significantly disrupt classroom routines. For example:

- If your child's class has already departed for a field trip or off-site activity, please contact the ELC office before attempting to join the class. Staff will let you know whether joining the class is possible and, if so, provide an approved meeting location. Your child must be transferred directly to an ELC staff member and signed into care. If the child cannot safely join the class, they may return when the class returns to ELC.
- If a child arrives after snack time and requests food, other children may also want another snack, which disrupts the routine.
- Arrival during circle time often interrupts the group activity, as other children get excited to greet their friend, making it difficult to continue the planned lesson.

To support a consistent classroom environment, **if you know you will be late due to an appointment or unexpected delay, please notify teachers or staff in advance.**

Pick-up procedures:

- Pick-up will occur on the big playground or in the classrooms. This is subject to change per classroom and as weather permits.
- All children must be picked up before 5:15 p.m. to avoid late pick-up fees. Children picked up after 5:15 p.m. will automatically incur a \$5/min late fee.

Holidays

We are closed for all major holidays. Please refer to our yearly calendar for details. These days are accounted for in your prorated monthly tuition.

Inclement Weather Closure

Please check the Aspen School District website for information on closures or 2-hour delayed starts due to snow or excessively hot weather. We follow the Aspen School District when announcing closures. If the Aspen School District is out of session, the director and board president will call for a snow day or a closure due to excessively hot weather. This decision is based strictly on transportation safety for getting children and staff to and from school. The director(s) and board president can call a snow day based on staff safety when getting to school.

The Early Learning Center defines a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor, or any other adult responsible for the child's care and well-being.

Admission & Enrollment

Prior to your child's first day of school, all admission and paperwork must be submitted electronically to ProCare, our online admissions platform, and all enrollment fees must be paid. Electronic paperwork includes: A **general health appraisal** completed by a physician, an **immunization record**, a **childcare emergency contact form**, and **signed policies and procedures**. If a child is under 2 and placed in a toddler room, parents will also need to sign a **cot permission form**. All forms must be uploaded to ProCare by the parents/guardians.

Admissions

Our program accepts children ages 8 weeks to 6 years of age before entering Kindergarten. Families will be offered a 2 to 5-day-a-week spot in the program. The spot will be offered based on what is available in the classroom. If families need to adjust their days, they need to email the director, and changes can be made if available. The ELC cannot guarantee additional days to a family but will always reach out when days open in classrooms.

Children are admitted without regard to race, culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate based on special needs, provided a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

Inclusion & Partnering with Families to Meet Children's Special Needs

At the Early Learning Center, all children, regardless of ability, are given equal opportunities to participate. Our goal is to create a learning environment where all children are empowered to grow. We ensure that children with special needs are fully included in the classroom through intentional support and collaboration. We recognize the essential role families play in helping us understand and meet each child's individual needs. We partner closely with families to:

- Collaborate on Individual Learning Plans, IFSPs or 504's, and IEPs or goals when needed
- Respect and incorporate family insights and preferences regarding their child's learning and care
- Work with outside specialists, including early intervention providers, therapists, and school districts.
- Make reasonable accommodations to ensure access to and participation in activities at school

Any concerns or questions regarding inclusion or accommodations are addressed in partnership with families and with input from professionals who support the child.

At the ELC, we recognize that families are the most knowledgeable advocates for children, while our teachers, admin, and staff the most knowledgeable on the curriculum. For children with identified special needs, we work in close partnership with families to understand their goals and priorities. Together, we collaborate on strategies that support the child's growth and

development, both in and outside the classroom.

Equity and Diversity

At the Early Learning Center of Aspen, we celebrate and respect the unique backgrounds, experiences, and abilities of each child, family, and staff member in our community. Diversity takes many forms—not only through culture, language, religion, or socioeconomic background, but also through differences in how we think, move, communicate, and connect with others. We are committed to creating inclusive, equitable learning environments where all children and families feel welcomed, valued, and supported. Our classrooms reflect this commitment by honoring each child's identity, family traditions, and learning needs. Teachers intentionally create environments and experiences that are developmentally appropriate, culturally responsive, and inclusive of all abilities and backgrounds.

Each year, we take time to reflect on how well we are meeting this goal. We conduct internal reviews that focus on family partnerships, inclusive teaching practices, reducing bias, and creating trauma-informed spaces. These assessments help us improve how we support all children and families.

As part of this process, we invite each family to complete a “Learning About Your Child and Your Family” questionnaire. This helps us get to know your family's values, routines, and any specific needs you may have. If your family is navigating a difficult time or facing trauma or adversity, we are here to help connect you with trusted community resources and support services.

Our educators participate in ongoing professional development related to trauma-informed care, equity, and anti-bias practices. The diversity of our community is also reflected in the books we read, the music we sing, the materials we use, and the conversations we have in our classrooms.

We welcome families and community members to share their customs, languages, and celebrations with us. These contributions are deeply appreciated and are seen as meaningful parts of the children's learning experience.

Non-Discrimination

At the Early Learning Center, equal educational opportunities are available to all children, regardless of race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other factor made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the diverse needs of all students.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, we will not release information about your child, except as required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children in our program are confidential. All emails between parents and staff must remain confidential and are intended only for the recipient specified in the message.

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Trauma or Adversity

At the Early Learning Center of Aspen, we recognize that trauma can take many forms—ranging from stressful events to ongoing challenges such as grief, family instability, or financial hardship. These experiences can have lasting impacts on a child's development, behavior, and emotional well-being. We are committed to supporting children and families through these challenges with compassion, confidentiality, and intentional care.

Our trauma-informed approach includes:

- **Safe and Nurturing Classrooms**
We strive to create a calm, predictable, and supportive environment where children feel emotionally and physically safe. Teachers build warm, trusting relationships with children and use consistent routines and gentle guidance to help children feel secure and connected.
- **Staff Training and Awareness**
Our educators receive ongoing training on trauma-informed practices, including how trauma may affect children's behavior, learning, and relationships. Teachers are equipped with strategies to support emotional regulation, resilience, and healing through responsive, strength-based interactions.
- **Early Identification and Responsive Support**
Teachers observe and document signs that a child may be struggling emotionally or behaviorally. When concerns arise, we work collaboratively with families to understand each child's experience and identify appropriate supports. If needed, we can assist with referrals to community-based mental health services, early intervention programs, and other trusted local resources.
- **Family Partnership**
We value open communication and work in partnership with families to understand their needs and experiences. We ask families to complete a ProCare form during enrollment, which gives us insight into your family's culture, strengths, and any current or ongoing challenges. Families are welcome to share as much or as little as they feel comfortable.
- **Confidentiality and Respect**
All conversations and information related to trauma or family circumstances are handled with the utmost care, privacy, and respect. We believe that healing and support happen best within a safe and trusting relationship.

The Early Learning Center of Aspen is committed to providing a supportive, trauma-sensitive environment where every child can thrive. Our goal is to help children build resilience, develop healthy self-esteem, and feel seen, heard, and valued—no matter what challenges they or their families face.

Health Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Service and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Every January, we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding the attendance of children who are not immunized for religious or medical reasons are followed. Children who are not immunized are excluded from attending school during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illness, as directed by the state health department. These families will also sign an exemption from immunization to be placed in their child's file.

Immunization records must be up to date as your child receives them. Within 14 days of each new vaccination, we are required to have a new immunization record on file for your child. Your child may not attend school without these records.

Vaccinations

The Early Learning Center requires up-to-date student vaccination records or a certificate of exemption on file by the first day your child attends school. Colorado law ([Board of Health rule 6 CCR 1009-2](#)) requires all students attending Colorado schools and licensed childcare to be vaccinated against certain diseases unless an exemption is filed.

Colorado follows the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). You can view the recommended vaccine schedule for children ages 0–6 at <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/public-immunization-information>. Please provide a copy of your student's updated vaccine record to the school each time your student receives a vaccine.

Your student may be excluded from school if the Early Learning Center does not have an up-to-date vaccine record or certificate of exemption for your student on file.

If someone gets sick with a vaccine-preventable disease or there is an outbreak at the Early Learning Center and your student has not received the vaccine for that disease, they may be excluded from school activities.

If you choose to file a non-medical exemption for your child you are required by Colorado law ([SB20-163 School Entry Immunization](#)) to have the exemption signed by the immunizing provider or you may complete the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's online education module prior to claiming a non-medical exemption, <https://cdphe.colorado.gov/vaccine-exemptions>.

The Vaccinated Children's Standard for every Colorado school requires 95% of enrolled students to be vaccinated with each vaccine required for school entry to reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable disease and protect the health of all people in the school community, including students who cannot be immunized for medical reasons.

Colorado childcare and school immunization and exemption rates are available at COVaxRates.org.

Tuition and Fees

Fees

Due Upon Enrollment (per child)

- \$55.00 - Registration Fee — A \$55 nonrefundable registration fee is due upon enrollment after a child has been offered and accepted a space at ELC. ELC does not charge an application fee
- \$300- Materials fee that covers the entire year of materials needed for children (families have two months to pay)
- \$500 - Continuous Care Deposit (ages 0-3)/Security Deposit.

Continuous Care and Security Deposit Policy

The Early Learning Center of Aspen believes in the continuum of care for every child in our school community. Research shows that consistency in caregiving and learning environments supports healthy child development. We are committed to providing a nurturing pathway that adapts to each child's growth from infancy through pre-K.

To support this commitment, a **\$500 Continuous Care Deposit** is required upon enrollment. This deposit reserves your child's space in the program and supports our ability to provide continuity of care throughout the early years.

Children Under Age Three

The Continuous Care Deposit is non-refundable and will be forfeited if a child withdraws from the program before their third birthday.

When a child reaches age three and remains enrolled, the Continuous Care Deposit automatically converts to a **Security Deposit**.

Children Age Three and Older

Once converted to a Security Deposit, the \$500 deposit is refundable upon withdrawal from the program, provided that:

- A minimum of **60 days' written notice** is given to the Executive Director.
- All tuition and fees have been paid in full.
- There are no outstanding balances on the family's account.

Please note that ELC does not offer mid-month billing adjustments. Families should plan their child's final enrollment date accordingly.

Exceptional Circumstances

We understand that unexpected life events can occur. Families who must withdraw a child before age three or who are unable to provide the required 60-day notice due to extraordinary circumstances may request consideration for a deposit refund.

To do so, families must submit a **Policy Exemption Form** to the Executive Director. Any exception to this policy must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors.

ELC reserves the right to evaluate each request on a case-by-case basis.

Payment

Invoices are sent on the 1st of the month, unless the 1st falls on a holiday or weekend. They will be sent out on the next business day. Payment is on or before the 5th of the month.

Tuition is due in full each month with no deductions for absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control.

If a child starts or ends in the middle of the month, there will be no prorated amount for that month. PreK children will be charged through the last month of the school year. If a child is enrolled at the Early Learning Center and the parents are separated or divorced, both parents are equally liable for the tuition bill. If the parents have an agreement on who is paying, it is their responsibility to enforce it among themselves.

Fees

Late Pick-up Fees

Late fees of \$5 per minute after 5:15 p.m. will be charged to your account. Please respect our staff by being at school on time to pick up your child.

Late Drop-Off Fee

We understand that occasional delays happen. However, frequent late arrivals can significantly disrupt classroom routines. For example:

- The class may be preparing to leave for a field trip, and a late-arriving child may need a diaper change or transition time, delaying the group.

- Arrival during circle time often interrupts the group activity, as other children get excited to greet their friend, making it difficult to continue the planned lesson.

To support a consistent classroom environment:

More than three late drop-offs in a month, without prior notice, will incur a \$25 fee.

This policy encourages timely arrivals and helps ensure all children can fully participate in planned activities. **If you know you will be late due to an appointment or unexpected delay, please notify teachers or staff in advance.**

Late Payment Charges

If payment is not made by the 5th of the month, a \$50 late payment fee will be applied to your bill. Enrollment may be terminated if the family's account has not been paid in full within 10 business days, subject to applicable program agreements and state requirements. If payment is more than 60 days past due, we will attempt to recover the amount in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a third-party collection agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions, including all court and attorney fees.

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

Returned Check Charges—A \$40 fee applies to all returned checks. Two or more returned checks will result in a “cash only” status.

Schedule Changes—For permanent schedule changes, such as adding or dropping days, the director must receive two weeks' notice. There is a \$25 fee for schedule changes.

Vacation - To retain your child's spot during vacation, 100 percent of your regular tuition is due.

Buy-A-Days -

Buy-A-Days will be charged to your account at the daily rate. Please email enrollment@earlylearningaspen.org to check availability.

Attendance and Withdrawal

Absence

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 9:00 am, please call us at 970-920-9201 or email mallory.radney@earlylearningaspen.org. Please remember that absences are still part of your monthly tuition.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

If severe weather or other conditions (e.g., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, blizzards, power outages, water outages) prevent us from opening on time or at all, the director will send a notification to families via email. If the Aspen School District is closed,

the Early Learning Center is closed as well. If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. It is your responsibility to arrange your child's early pick-up.

Inclement Weather Two-hour Delayed Start

If the Aspen School District calls a two-hour morning delay due to inclement weather and road conditions, the Early Learning Center will also call one. If the Aspen School District is not in session, the ELC executive board members and the ELC Director will decide if conditions require a delayed start.

Withdrawals

When a child withdraws, the center requires 60 days' written notice in advance. If 60 days' notice is not given, your \$500 deposit will not be returned. Deposits will not be transferred to a sibling and cannot be held for a later enrollment date.

Transfer of Records

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where records should be sent is required.

What to Bring to School

Leave toys from home at home or in your car. They create many arguments among children because it is hard to share a special toy. In addition, special toys can be easily lost at school or broken.

Infants

Bottles and milk for the day's use, diapers, wipes (enough for at least six diapers a day), diaper cream, a change of clothes, crib sheet, sleep sack (blankets are not allowed in the cribs per safe sleep regulations), a pacifier if needed, sunscreen, and a sun hat. Winter: warm clothes, including a snowsuit or snow jacket with bibs, mittens, hats, and boots.

Toddlers

A sippy cup or water bottle for the day, diapers, wipes, and at least two changes of clothes (more if they are potty training) A crib-sized sheet for napping to fit a small cot, a pacifier if needed, sunscreen, and a hat are also needed. In winter, warm clothes, including mittens, a hat, a snowsuit, and boots, are also needed.

Preschool and PreK

At least two changes of clothing for the day, a water bottle, a mat sheet (napping is not mandatory, but by licensing standards the children must rest for 30 minutes), a blanket, sunscreen, a hat, and a backpack. Winter clothes, including mittens, a winter hat, a snowsuit, and winter boots.

***Please label all items brought from home. The Early Learning Center will not be held**

responsible for lost or damaged items.

Pick-ups

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will be released only to you or to the individuals you have listed as additional authorized pick-up in ProCare. If you want someone who is not listed as either of those options to pick up your child, you must notify us in advance by email. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child must show a valid photo ID for verification. Please make sure your pick-up person is aware of this policy. The pick-up person must be 18 years old or older.

If a child has not been picked up by closing time and we have not heard from you, we will attempt to contact you and the contacts listed on your emergency and release lists. A staff member will stay with your child, but if after 15 minutes we have not been able to reach you or someone listed on your approved list, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Child Release Policy

The ELC cannot refuse to release a child to their parent or legal guardian unless a court order states otherwise. If parents disagree on authorized pickups (perhaps in situations of separation or divorce), we must release the child to any parent-authorized individual unless court documents specify otherwise.

Do not attempt to pick up your child if you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or are physically or emotionally impaired, as this may endanger your child. If you arrive at school under the influence, we strongly encourage you to arrange for another authorized adult to pick up your child. We must involve Child Protective Services if you arrive at school under the influence. If you pick up your child while under the influence, we must contact law enforcement.

If an authorized pick-up person who is not the child's parent or legal guardian appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or otherwise impaired in a manner that may endanger the child, ELC will not release the child to that individual and will contact the parent/guardian or another authorized adult.

Child Protective Services **must** also be contacted. To protect your child, we will request that another adult pick up your child. In the event of push back we will call the police for assistance.

Recurring safety concerns related to pick-up will be addressed in partnership with the family. ELC will work with the family to develop a safe and appropriate pick-up plan and may involve appropriate community or safety resources when necessary.

Staffing

Child-Staff Ratios and Group Sizes

At the ELC, we maintain low child-to-staff ratios and small group sizes that exceed both Colorado state licensing standards and NAEYC recommendations. We are committed to continuous improvement and regularly review classroom composition, staffing patterns, and enrollment to ensure high-quality interactions and individualized care.

We utilize floater teachers who support classrooms throughout the day, allowing us to maintain low ratios and provide flexibility during transitions, breaks, and absences. We also use intentional grouping practices to ensure that children are placed in environments that support their developmental needs and social-emotional growth.

Current Ratios and Group Sizes:

- **Infant and Waddler (8 weeks to 18 months)** – 4:1 ratio, max group size: 8
- **Toddler 1 (12 months to 3 years)** – 5:1 ratio, max group size: 10
- **Toddler 2 (12 months to 3 years)** – 5:1 ratio (7:1 once all children are 2), max size: 14
- **Preschool (2.5 to 7 years)** – 8:1 ratio, max group size: 16
- **Pre-K (4 to 7 years)** – 11:1 ratio, max group size: 18

NAEYC Guidelines for Comparison:

- **Infants (0–15 months):** 4:1 ratio, max group size: 8
- **Toddlers (12–36 months):** 6:1 ratio, max group size: 12
- **Preschool (30 months–5 years):** 10:1 ratio, max group size: 20
- **Kindergarten:** 12:1 ratio, max group size: 24

Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care

Each child is assigned one or two consistent teachers to support the development of strong, secure attachments. Whenever possible, children remain with the same primary caregiver and peer group for at least two years. This model supports the development of trust and stability, critical for early learning and social-emotional development.

Our staffing model and group size limits are intentionally designed to foster strong, consistent relationships between children and caregivers. By maintaining small groups and minimizing transitions, teachers can build a deep understanding of each child's personality, learning style, and developmental needs. This foundation allows us to offer individualized care that promotes each child's sense of security, confidence, and emotional well-being.

These practices also help teachers tailor their approaches to each child, building meaningful relationships and creating an environment where children thrive socially, emotionally, and academically.

Supervision

Staff are required to always supervise all children in attendance in their classroom during the day. Staff will track who is at school and who has been picked up, count children during transitions, and maintain a record of where each child is throughout the day.

Staff Qualifications and Professional Development

The Early Learning Center is committed to employing qualified early childhood professionals who meet or exceed the requirements established by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) for Teacher and Lead Teacher positions. Our educators bring a combination of education, experience, and specialized training in early childhood development and best practices.

While CDEC qualifications may be met through a variety of educational and professional pathways, ELC encourages and supports staff in pursuing higher education, including associate and bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or related fields. Many of our teachers have completed extensive professional development training and continue to build their knowledge through ongoing coursework, coaching, conferences, and in-service training opportunities.

Professional learning is a core component of our program. ELC invests in continuous staff development to ensure that our educators remain current on research-based practices and are equipped to provide high-quality learning experiences that support the growth, development, and well-being of every child.

Assistant Teachers: are participating in early childhood education courses and working toward their Early Childhood Teacher Qualifications.

Aids, Floats, and Substitutes: They work under the direct supervision of an Early Childhood Teacher and have completed all required pre-service training.

Our Recruitment and Retention Plan

For young children to grow and thrive, they need stable relationships with caring adults who are invested in their healthy social, cognitive, physical, and language development. High teacher turnover can negatively impact this program's goal of providing high-quality early childhood programming. The Early Learning Center is committed to continuity of care and to the hiring and retention of highly qualified teaching staff, which aligns with the mission and vision of this program. *We nurture our students, educators, and families by providing inclusive, creative, and individualized learning experiences*, ensuring a strong foundation for meaningful relationships and consistent, high-quality care.

The program has a recruitment and retention plan that is reviewed and revised by the administration annually to ensure it is in keeping with all federal and state mandates and aligns with and supports the program's mission and vision. As reflected in our mission and vision statements, The Early Learning Center puts diversity and equity goals at the center of all aspects of its organization and daily life. We are an equal opportunity employer. We do not discriminate in employment, recruitment, advertisements for employment, compensation, termination, upgrading, promotions, and other conditions of employment against any employee or job applicant on the bases of race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression.

- To recruit highly qualified, committed teaching staff, we advertise in, Indeed, Colorado Healthy Child Care job board, at local colleges, but primarily through word of mouth and then retain those individuals, by offering teachers competitive wages, reduced child-care

costs for their children, benefits which include: 75% of employees health insurance, Group rates for vision and dental insurance, Paid Vacation, Paid sick days, Paid holidays, Wellness Benefit, Paid bus passes, Paid Early Childhood courses, Discounted Childcare, 401K matching program.

These benefits attract and help retain qualified staff. Also, as part of our retention and recruitment plan, we are committed to making The Early Learning Center a recognized leader in high quality early childhood care and education, providing teachers with the supports they need in the classroom to function at the highest level, encouraging teachers to pursue professional development related to credential-level increase and supporting them in that pursuit, and ensuring manageable teacher-child ratios.

Communication & Family Partnership

Child, Staff, and Family Relationships

The Early Learning Center recognizes the importance of nurturing strong, positive relationships among children, staff, and families in our program.

Parent Communication

ELC values open and consistent communication with families. Teachers will provide daily updates regarding your child's basic needs, including meals, diapering/toileting, and nap times, along with a general overview of classroom activities.

Infant Classrooms: Infant teachers will communicate through a daily written note and may also add activity updates in ProCare.

Toddler and Older Classrooms: All daily communication will be submitted through ProCare. In addition to daily updates, teachers will provide a weekly individualized summary of your child's experience at the center. This weekly communication may include:

- Activities your child particularly enjoyed
- Milestones or goals achieved
- Skills in which your child is excelling
- Skills that are still developing and being practiced

When possible, teachers will include photographs in daily communications. Please understand that classroom needs and unexpected situations may occasionally prevent daily updates or photos from being sent. We appreciate your understanding and flexibility as our staff prioritizes the care and supervision of children throughout the day.

Because pick-up can be hectic, if there is an issue during the school day (an injury that requires further explanation, behavior problems, or a behavior that needs to be addressed), teachers will email the child's family at the time of the incident. During these email communications, a time can be scheduled to speak with the teachers further.

Monthly Newsletters

Newsletters will be sent monthly to provide center news, events, announcements, and

upcoming community events.

Office Communication

Please read all communications from the office. This includes emails that share important school announcements, policies, illness, and general updates. **All emails** from the Early Learning Center **are confidential** and intended for the recipient only. **It is strictly forbidden to share** any part of the message with any third party without written consent from the sender.

Engaging Families in Continuous Quality Improvement

The ELC conducts annual surveys to collect family feedback. We value the voices of families and believe that ongoing feedback is essential to maintaining high-quality care. After we review the survey responses, we share the summary with families. Feedback from the survey is used to inform decision-making and guide meaningful changes. Each year, we document at least one improvement or adjustment made based on family input.

Families participating in Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK) will also be notified of opportunities to participate in surveys administered by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) regarding their experiences with the UPK program

We maintain a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Plan in the Colorado Shines system. This plan is accessible to staff, families, and stakeholders. A printed copy is posted outside the administrative office for anyone to view.

Family Visits *Subject to change

Family visits in the classroom are encouraged. Please feel free to visit classrooms, volunteer, join a field trip, or eat a meal with your child. Please communicate with your child's teacher and the director(s) so they can plan accordingly. This helps ensure visits are arranged in advance and do not disrupt the classroom. You will need to sign in with the office when you arrive. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage families to be involved in the program by visiting classrooms, participating in events, and providing feedback.

Please understand that events or circumstances may arise, and the office may call to see if another day would work better. In this rare instance, it would not be because we do not want families in the classroom, but with other children in the room, we must be respectful of situations that may arise.

Family Nights/Events *Subject to change

Family nights are held regularly. These nights include snacks, drinks, and fun, age-appropriate activities for families. They provide families and children with time to share, learn, and have fun. Families can be part of their child's learning experience and connect with other families. If you would like to participate in planning, please reach out to the office.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year, in the fall and spring. These conferences provide an opportunity for families and teachers to discuss the child's progress and developmental needs, including social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development, and to collaboratively set goals to support the child's continued growth and learning.

The infant rooms through PreK use Teaching Strategies (TS) Gold observation reports to guide these discussions. You may request additional conferences regarding your child. We ask that you communicate any concerns you may have regarding your child.

Ways to be Involved

At ELC, we believe that strong partnerships with families contribute to the growth and continuous improvement of our program. Families are encouraged to share feedback, ideas, and perspectives that help us better serve our children and community.

Opportunities for family involvement may include:

- Participating in family surveys and program evaluations
- Attending family events, meetings, and conferences
- Sharing feedback with teachers and administration
- Serving on advisory committees or focus groups when opportunities arise
- Volunteering at a classroom, school, or community event
- Sharing special skills, talents, cultural traditions, or career experiences with children
- Supporting fundraising and community engagement efforts

We value open communication and welcome family input as we work together to create a high-quality learning environment where all children can thrive.

Volunteer Reminder

We welcome family participation and volunteer support at ELC. To ensure the safety and well-being of all children, volunteers are required to complete the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) background check process before volunteering in our program when their activities involve the care and supervision of children or unsupervised access to children. This requirement includes criminal background checks and child abuse, and neglect records checks in accordance with Colorado childcare licensing regulations.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the office for information about the required screening process.

Family/Parent Workshops

Our array of family and parent workshops changes annually. Please check the school calendar to see when these nights are scheduled and look for an email from the office with the topic of the discussion or workshop. ELC partners with Kids First to offer a wide range of workshops.

Open Door Policy *Subject to change

All visitors must check in with the ELC office or designated building check-in location upon arrival and follow applicable sign-in procedures. Visitors who are not authorized parents, guardians, or approved individuals will not have unsupervised access to children. ELC may require identification and may restrict or deny access when necessary to protect the safety, privacy, and well-being of children and staff.

We are pleased to have family members participate in our program. Parents/guardians are welcome to visit the program during regular hours if a visit has been scheduled in advance. The infant rooms welcome parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants. Please remember that external doors will be kept always locked for the safety and protection of the children. Parents have access to the building during school hours, and other family members can sign in with Kids First.

Our team will always do its best to speak with parents/guardians. Staff are devoted to caring for children. If they are busy with other children in the class and a situation requires a more extended discussion, kindly arrange a meeting with the teachers.

Publicity and Media Release

ELC respects the privacy of all children and families. A child's name, photograph, video, or likeness will not be used for publicity, marketing, social media, the ELC website, newsletters, or other publications without parent/guardian permission.

During the enrollment process, families are asked to complete a media release authorization indicating whether they consent to the use of their child's photograph or image in ELC publications and promotional materials. Families may update their media release preferences at any time by notifying the office in writing.

ELC will honor the preferences indicated on each child's media release form and will take reasonable measures to protect the privacy of children and families.

Interpreters

Our preschool is dedicated to effective communication with all families by providing interpretation services and translated materials in their home language. We use bilingual staff, professional interpreters, and community resources to ensure families can fully engage in their child's education, with language preferences documented at enrollment and supported throughout the school year. All costs associated with interpretation services are covered by the Early Learning Center. The interpretation services are provided by [ARUSA TRANSLATION SERVICES, LLC](#)

Connecting Families to Resources

At the ELC, we are committed to supporting the children and families at our school and in our community. We understand that families might need additional assistance outside of the classroom. Our school maintains connections with a variety of agencies and resources including the following:

1. [Lift Up](#) - Food and basic needs assistance
2. Harvest to Hunger is a local, stigma-free, self-service food pantry open 5 days a week. No information is collected. Located at 405 Castle Creek Road in Aspen or 130 Kearns Road in Snowmass Village.
3. [Kids First](#) - Financial aid program and access to parenting counseling with [Emily Supino, MA, LPC](#) Kids First: 970-920-5363
4. [Aspen Family Connections](#) - A family resource center created to connect all Pitkin

County children, youth, and families with a wide range of community resources, workshops, prevention activities, and referrals to mental health providers. (719) 427-7969

5. [Aspen Community Foundation](#) - A community foundation that partners with donors and nonprofits, ensuring equitable opportunities for all residents in Aspen and the surrounding areas.
6. **Mental health services agencies:**
 - a. [Aspen HOPE Center](#) 970-924-0703
 - b. If you are in Colorado, free, confidential mental health support is available 24/7. Call or text **988** to reach the Colorado Mental Health Line.
 - c. [Pathfinders](#) is a Colorado non-profit psychosocial support program for cancer and chronically ill patients, those suffering from grief and loss, caregivers, family members, and the community.
 - d. Emily Supino through Kids First listed above.
 - e. Mommy Matters Support Group at the Aspen HOPE Center meets on the first and third Thursdays of the month. Call Mia at 970-618-8660
7. **Parent resources and family counseling:**
 - a. [Aspen HOPE Center](#),
 - b. [Emily Supino MA LPC](#) and
 - c. [Aspen Family Connections](#).
8. **Medical & Child Health: [Community Health Services](#):** Located at 405 Castle Creek Rd, this nonprofit clinic offers affordable women's health, immunizations, and prenatal care with sliding-scale fee options. **Aspen Birth Center:** Provides lactation consultations, breastfeeding support groups (Bosom Buddies), and baby massage classes.
 - a. [Great Expectations](#): Provides reliable information, guidance, and support for new and expectant parents in Garfield, Pitkin, and western Eagle counties. Our programs are free and available to all. 970-212-5199
 - b. [Hidden Gems](#): Offers ABA Therapy. A research-based treatment for individuals with autism spectrum disorders.
 - c. Developmental screenings and free evaluations are available for children in Colorado based on age. For children 0–3, contact [Early Intervention Colorado](#) (1-888-777-4041)
9. [Aspen Kids Guide Community Resources](#)
10. [Aspen Kids Guide Health and Well-Being Resources](#)

Our procedures include providing confidential, family-centered support by sharing community resources, making referrals as needed, and maintaining open communication to help families access essential services.

When families complete their initial registration or annual update, they must designate which services they are interested in. Otherwise, we recommend reaching out to the ELC director for more information.

Curriculum & Learning

Learning Environment

We provide a rich and positive learning environment using TS Gold—Creative Curriculum, which is developmentally appropriate for each classroom's specific ages. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and facilitated through learning centers. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: social/emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development.

Curriculum

Each group of classroom teachers plans their weekly curriculum and talks about the different developmental needs of their students. They use Creative Curriculum to prepare studies and activities. Teachers adjust the curriculum to children's needs by observing them and planning classroom activities based on their interests. The room is then transformed into the theme. The learning centers in each school are designed to enhance and nurture children as they acquire knowledge and skills through play.

The Early Learning Center features eight classrooms. Each room is arranged into learning centers, with developmentally appropriate materials to enrich each student's play. In each classroom, you will find learning centers that offer play with these types of materials/play: Art, Blocks and Accessories, Books and Posters, Dramatic Play, Large Muscle Equipment, Manipulative Toys, Musical Equipment, and Science Materials. Through facilitating play in these centers, children are exposed to concepts in math, science, literacy, art, and language. For more detail on what your child is learning in each of these areas in their specific classroom, please feel free to talk to the director or your child's teacher.

Social and Emotional Development

At the Early Learning Center, we primarily focus on social and emotional development. We use teaching strategies to help children develop attachment, self-regulation skills, friendship skills, the ability to identify and respond to emotions, and to promote children's overall social and emotional competence. Several of our staff are trained in the [Pyramid Model](#) while others are trained to use the [Flip It](#) strategy. We use early childhood best practices to help all children thrive in this area. When needed, we will intervene and support children and families who need extra support by developing a positive behavior support plan with our teaching team, parents, administration, and early childhood mental health consultant to reduce challenging behavior. By using strategies and training our teachers in the social and emotional development of young children, we provide a socially and emotionally respectful learning and care environment.

Teaching Strategies Gold

TS Gold is our observation tool, integrated into our curriculum. Based on authentic observations of each child, we gather information about their developmental abilities, evaluate their progress, and modify our classroom practices to provide individualized instruction. This evaluation is communicated to families through a report provided at parent/teacher conferences. If you would like to discuss your child's progress, these reports are available. During the summer months, classrooms do not use TS Gold; instead, they focus on outings and field trips.

Outings & Field Trips

ELC is a community-based school and partners with local organizations to enrich children's learning through outings and field trips throughout the year. Families will be notified of field trips in advance, and written parent/guardian authorization will be obtained for participation in field trips and special activities, including walking trips and trips using public transportation.

Children will be actively supervised and accounted for at all times, and applicable staff-to-child ratios will be maintained throughout all outings and field trips. ELC will maintain an itinerary and a list of participating children and staff at the center. Staff will carry required emergency information, emergency medical authorizations, the emergency disaster plan, and necessary health information while off-site. When a child requires medication or has special health needs, appropriately trained and delegated staff will accompany the group as required.

ELC does not provide in-house transportation. When transportation is needed for a field trip, staff and children may use the local public bus system. Families will be notified in advance and are responsible for ensuring their child arrives at ELC in time to depart with the class.

TV Time

Our regular daily routine does not include screen time. From time to time, age-appropriate screen time will be used in the classroom as a teaching aid and discussion simulator. Occasionally, classrooms will have a movie-and-pajama day, and all movies will be G-rated, appropriate, and preplanned. Screen time will not be used as a filler for transitions or downtime.

Electronic Media

When using electronic media such as learning apps, children are limited to 20 minutes per day per child. Apps are prescreened, age-appropriate, and educational.

Multiculturalism and Inclusion

At the Early Learning Center, we believe that exposure to diverse cultures, perspectives, languages, family structures, and life experiences enriches every child's learning and development. We are committed to creating an inclusive environment where all children and families feel welcomed, respected, valued, and represented.

Through books, music, art, dramatic play, celebrations, community experiences, and a wide range of classroom activities, children are introduced to the diversity that exists within our local community and the world around them. These experiences help foster empathy, respect, curiosity, and an appreciation for differences while building a strong sense of belonging for every child. Our goal is to nurture children who value diversity, demonstrate kindness and respect toward others, and develop a lifelong appreciation for the people, cultures, and environments that make our world unique.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages greater understanding and respect for the diverse cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff, and the community. The ELC celebrates a variety of traditional holidays, seasonal events, birthdays, and cultural traditions throughout the year. Our goal is to foster appreciation for the diverse backgrounds, beliefs, and experiences of the children and families in our community.

We welcome families to share traditions, cultural practices, and celebrations that are meaningful to them.

Birthdays may be celebrated in the classroom. Any treats provided must be commercially prepared and purchased from a licensed food establishment. Homemade or home-baked items may not be served. Please coordinate with your child's teacher in advance regarding classroom celebrations.

Developmental Delays and Additional Resources

If you have any concerns about your child's development, please speak with your child's teachers and the director. Our goal is to see each child thrive. If a teacher or parent raises concerns about developmental delays, the school will meet with the teacher, parents, and administrative staff. At this time, we can set goals to work on together for your child, discuss strategies to help, and submit a Child Find referral to evaluate your child for developmental delays.

Primary Caregiving & Continuity of Care Practices

We value stability and consistent relationships at the ELC. Each child at our center is cared for by the same teachers daily to foster a strong bond. Children remain with the same primary caregiver and in the same peer group for at least two years, depending on enrollment date.

We recognize that certain factors, including licensing requirements, age eligibility, and individual readiness, may occasionally allow a child to transition to a new classroom earlier than planned. In these cases, we communicate closely with families to ensure a smooth, thoughtful transition that supports the child.

The ELC serves two age groups in accordance with licensing requirements. Multi-age grouping within each classroom is consistent with our philosophy as listed below:

- Multi-age grouping provides a natural, familiar setting. In this age of small families, children learn about the complexities of living together in an atmosphere that begins to make sense.
- Teaching is a wonderful way of learning—older children, in essence, become the teachers of the younger ones as they gain confidence in their own competence. It's wonderful to be the top dog even if only for a little while.
- Interaction among children over several years provides an opportunity for them to learn about each other's developmental stages. The younger children begin to aspire to things they will be able to do, as they grow older. The older children begin to deepen their insights about what they did when they were little.
- Older children begin to take responsibility for the care and safety of younger children, an important lesson in preparation for future parenthood, teaching careers, and life. They begin to develop a sense of humor as they observe the funny things young children do, which may seem nonsensical. They also gain ideas as they watch the spontaneous, less-inhibited actions younger children take, things older children have learned to be cautious about.
- Research has shown consistently that all intellectual development is based on sound social-emotional development. But learning is also intellectual. Older children begin to put things in perspective, which is the beginning of logic and reasoning.

Routines

Each classroom has a flexible daily schedule that teachers and children follow. This routine includes playtime, snack time, bathroom breaks/diaper changes, large- and small-group activities, outdoor time, lunch, rest, and other activities. Knowing what comes next in their daily routine helps children thrive at school.

Daily Routines and Schedules

Children thrive when they know what to expect. Consistent daily routines help children feel safe, build independence, and support social-emotional development. While schedules vary by classroom and age group, each day includes a balance of:

- Arrival and welcome activities
- Group meeting or circle time
- Child-directed learning and exploration
- Outdoor play and gross motor activities
- Snacks and meals
- Rest or quiet time (as developmentally appropriate)
- Small-group learning experiences
- Departure and transition activities

Teachers post classroom schedules and may adjust routines based on children's interests, developmental needs, weather conditions, special events, or community outings. While flexibility is important, maintaining predictable routines helps children develop confidence and self-regulation skills.

Arrival and Departure

To support classroom routines and minimize disruptions to learning, families are encouraged to arrive by their scheduled start time and notify the school if a child will arrive late or be absent.

Outdoor Learning

Outdoor play is an important part of our curriculum and daily routine. Children typically spend time outdoors each day, weather and air quality permitting. Families should send children with appropriate clothing and footwear for the season.

Rest Time

State licensing regulations require that opportunities for rest be provided for children enrolled for a full day. Children are not required to sleep, but they are encouraged to participate in a quiet rest period.

Community-Based Learning

Depending on age and classroom plans, children may participate in walking field trips, visits to local parks, museums, libraries, and other community experiences that extend learning beyond the classroom.

Meals, Snacks, and Nutrition Policy

In accordance with Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) child care licensing requirements, ELC supports children's health and well-being by partnering with families to meet each child's nutritional needs.

ELC is a **food-from-home program**, and families are responsible for providing their child's meals and snacks each day. Food should be nutritious, age-appropriate, and ready to serve. If a child does not have sufficient food for the day, ELC may provide supplemental snacks.

ELC is a peanut-free center and is committed to providing a safe environment for children with food allergies, dietary restrictions, and special nutritional needs. Families must provide written documentation of any diagnosed allergies, medical dietary needs, or dietary restrictions and notify the center of any changes. When necessary, an Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) or Food Allergy Action Plan will be developed in collaboration with families and healthcare providers.

To ensure children's safety:

- Food sharing is not permitted.
- Children and staff wash hands before and after meals and snacks.
- Tables and eating surfaces are cleaned and sanitized after each use.
- Staff closely supervise all meals and snacks.
- Appropriate allergy precautions are implemented in classrooms and during field trips.
- Any food brought for classroom celebrations or sharing with other children must be commercially prepared and in its original packaging with a complete ingredient label.
- Homemade or home-prepared food items may not be shared with other children at the center.
- ELC reserves the right to prohibit foods that may pose an allergy or safety risk to children in the program.
- Perishable food to be shared with other children, for special occasions, i.e. birthdays, holidays, must be store-bought and in its original package.
- Per Public Health Guidelines, baked goods must be store-bought with access to all ingredients.
- Please label food with your child's name, date, and type of food.
- Children will not be allowed to share food.
- Leftover food will be returned, except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or are in a commercially wrapped package that was never opened.

Families are responsible for providing any necessary food substitutions for their child. Emergency medications and allergy action plans will be readily available for children with documented food allergies.

ELC staff receive ongoing training in nutrition, allergy awareness, medication administration, and emergency response procedures. The center regularly reviews its nutrition and allergy practices to ensure compliance with licensing requirements and maintain a safe and healthy environment for all children.

Lunch Ideas for a Healthy Meal

Please see <https://www.superhealthykids.com/> for healthy lunch recipes for children.

Birthday Treats and Special Celebrations: To help protect children with food allergies and dietary restrictions, any food brought to the center for birthdays, holidays, or special celebrations must be commercially prepared, unopened, and in the original packaging with a complete ingredient label. Homemade or home-prepared food items may not be shared with children at the

center. ELC reserves the right to decline any food item that does not meet the program's health and safety requirements.

Infant feedings

We adhere to the following procedures when feeding the infants in our care:

- Bottle-fed infants are fed while being held or sitting up.
- Infants are fed “on demand” to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and typically not more than hourly).
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies.
- Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. Fresh breast milk must be used within 48 hours. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child’s name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to three months.
- Formula must be brought to the premises measured in bottles for the day, with the child’s name, and the measurement of water to be added to the formula written on the bottle.
- We encourage parents to come and do a feed during the day, whether formula or breastfeeding. This is a great opportunity to build your community with the teachers and other parents.
- Bottles will be sent home each day to be cleaned and brought to school the next day.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after consultation with the child’s family.

Toddler feedings

- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent they are capable. Children are encouraged, but not forced, to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children under four years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, peanut butter spread thickly, and hard candy.

Rest Time

Infants – Safe Sleep

Infants sleep according to their individual schedules. ELC follows Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) safe sleep requirements for all infants.

- Infants are placed on their backs for sleep. If an infant independently rolls from their back to another position, staff are not required to reposition the infant.
- Each infant is provided with individual sleep equipment that meets applicable Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) standards and is appropriate for the infant’s size and movement.
- Crib mattresses are covered with a clean, properly fitted sheet.
- Soft bedding and other items that may pose a suffocation hazard are not permitted in an infant’s sleep space. This includes pillows, blankets, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, sleep-positioning devices, stuffed animals, bibs, cloth diapers, and pacifiers with stuffed animals attached.

- If additional warmth is needed, appropriate sleep clothing or a sleep sack may be used instead of a blanket. Sleep clothing must not restrict the infant's arm or leg movement.
- Staff monitor and supervise infants during sleep and ensure that infants are appropriately dressed and are not overheated.
- An alternative sleep position will only be used when ELC has a health care plan completed and signed by the child's physician.
- Swaddling will only be used when ELC has a health care plan completed and signed by the child's physician.
- Required health care plans are maintained in the child's file and communicated to appropriate staff.

Toddlers-PreK Rest Time

After lunch, all children are offered a 30-minute rest time. They are not forced to take a nap. If a child does not fall asleep after 30 minutes, a quiet activity will be provided for them.

Diapering

The staff changes diapers at routine times of the day and as needed in between. They are trained in and follow the best practices for diapering and for cleaning and sanitizing the diapering area.

Toilet Training

The most essential factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is family/teacher partnership, which 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. Positive toilet training occurs after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they are interested. We are committed to working with you to ensure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns. Per state regulations, toilet training of children under 18 months shall not be attempted. Toilet facilities must be provided for children two years of age or older but are not required for children under two.

Children in potty training will frequently be reminded to try to use the toilet. Health laws prohibit the use of potty chairs. Supply LOTS OF EXTRA CLOTHES as it takes a while for children to get the knack for using the toilet at school.

When your child is potty training, please bring your child to the bathroom at drop-off and pick-up. This reinforces the potty-training experience. Please stay in communication with your teacher throughout this process so we can work together most effectively.

Engaging Families in Transition Planning

Transition from home to center

Your child's transition into childcare should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure a smooth transition as new routines and people are introduced. We will schedule a meeting with you to discuss the transition period and to allow you to visit your child's new classroom before your child starts at the school.

Before your child's first day, you can tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and share any anticipated concerns. Please share the best ways for teachers to reach you during this time. We offer a classroom tour and time to meet with the teachers and the director. During the meeting, you can tell us about your child, and we can share important information about the program and classroom. We encourage parents to bring their child to play before starting the program to help with the transition. The teaching staff will communicate individually during the first few days to let you know how your child is handling the change. At the start of each new school year, there will be an ice cream social where you can meet your child's teachers and other parents in your class. There will also be an open house in September.

Transitions for Classroom Move-Ups

Children transition to the next classroom based on a combination of age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and available classroom space. Because each child's development and enrollment circumstances are unique, transitions may occur at different times throughout the year rather than on a fixed schedule.

We view classroom transitions as a collaborative process between families and school staff. Parents are involved every step of the way and will be notified before any transition begins. The timing of a classroom move is determined in partnership with families and is based on the child's readiness and ability to thrive in the new environment.

To support a successful transition, children typically spend one to two weeks gradually visiting their new classroom. This allows them to become familiar with the teachers, routines, and peers while building comfort and confidence at their own pace. The length of the transition may vary depending on the individual needs of the child. A permanent move will occur once the child demonstrates readiness and feels secure in their new classroom community.

Our goal is to ensure that every transition is positive, supportive, and developmentally appropriate, setting each child up for success in their next stage of learning.

Transition to Elementary School

When your child is in the PreK classroom, they begin preparing for elementary school. We will collaborate with the school district your child will attend on a few activities, such as touring the elementary school and meeting the elementary teachers. We incorporate the LETRS program into our PreK curriculum to help children build a strong foundation in early literacy skills. Please partner with us by discussing this transition with your child, bringing them to family events for incoming Kindergarten families, and staying in contact with your child's school district about registration and events.

Health Promotion and Immunizations

Developmental Screening Opportunities

The Early Learning Center provides families with information regarding developmental screening opportunities and available screening resources. Screenings may include vision, hearing, dental, health, social-emotional, cognitive, language, and fine- and gross-motor development screenings. Participation in screenings is voluntary. Some screenings may be conducted directly by ELC or in partnership with community organizations, while others may be accessed through healthcare providers or community resources. When screening results indicate a potential developmental concern, ELC will collaborate with the family to provide appropriate referrals, including Child Find or other evaluation services, and connect families with early childhood mental health programs or other community-based supports when appropriate.

Families who have concerns regarding their child's development may request information about screening opportunities, referrals, [Child Find services](#), early intervention services, mental health resources, or other community supports at any time. Interpreter and translation services are available to assist families in accessing information and services in their preferred language. Families are informed of developmental screening results, and when concerns are identified, staff will work with families to discuss next steps and provide referrals to appropriate community resources or evaluation services.

For children participating in Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK), when developmentally appropriate, ELC will offer or coordinate developmental screening within 45 calendar days of the child's first day of attendance. Screening will use research-based, standardized tools and will incorporate information from families and teachers. Screening practices will be developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate for each child.

Information regarding developmental screening opportunities is provided to all families through this handbook and during the enrollment process.

Health Screenings

Each year, the ELC conducts hearing, vision, and dental screenings in collaboration with our nurse consultant, the Lions Club, and Community Health Services.

We maintain a separate tracking system to document each child's dental, vision, and hearing screening results, including the screening date and any areas identified for follow-up. This documentation is reviewed and updated regularly to ensure timely referrals and support. Families are notified of the screening outcomes, whether no concerns were noted or if further evaluation with a personal physician is recommended.

Health Requirements at Enrollment

Upon registration, families are required to submit:

- A General Health Appraisal signed by a medical professional – families must use the most current version of the General Health Appraisal form provided by the State of Colorado. The information must be complete and up to date.
- Up-to-date immunization records or a valid exemption form
- Documentation of current medical insurance and medical home (primary care provider) Information about the child's dentist

All medical and developmental records are kept confidential and securely stored in the Director's office. These must be updated annually or as required by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and local regulations.

In accordance with state health policy, any child or adult with an immunization exemption may be excluded from care in the event of a communicable disease outbreak.

If a child has an IFSP, IEP, School Readiness Plan, or any individual learning plan, we request a copy to better support the child's needs. We are committed to working with any specialists and implementing their recommendations as appropriate.

Children who may need additional support are identified through ongoing observation and evidence-based assessments, including Teaching Strategies GOLD, Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ), and the DECA (Devereux Early Childhood Assessment). Referrals may be made to medical providers, Child Find, Bright Futures, or local mental health professionals.

Special Health Care Needs

Families must inform ELC of any special health care needs, chronic medical conditions, allergies, medications, or health-related accommodations their child requires. When a child has a special health care need requiring medication, intervention, or specialized care, families must provide the required written instructions and an Individualized Health Care Plan completed and signed by the child's health care provider and parent/guardian. ELC will coordinate with its Child Care Health Consultant as required to ensure appropriate staff training, delegation, and implementation of the child's health care plan. Health care plans must be kept current and updated whenever the child's needs or treatment change.

Smoke and Vape-Free Environment

ELC is located in a smoke-free facility. Smoking, vaping, and the use of tobacco, nicotine, cannabis, or cannabis-infused products are prohibited on ELC property, both indoors and outdoors, and during ELC field trips, excursions, and transportation. These products must remain inaccessible to children at all times.

COVID-19 & Infectious Disease Policy

We follow state and local health department guidelines related to COVID-19 and other infectious diseases. Families are notified of any changes to procedures or policies.

Family Support Services

If your family needs help obtaining health insurance, a medical or dental home, or other community resources, our staff is available to assist and refer you to appropriate services. Family resource tables are also available outside of our office and next to Kids First's office, for your reference.

Family Questionnaire

During enrollment, families receive a voluntary questionnaire that asks about your child's developmental history, cultural background, family values, and personal preferences. This information supports smoother classroom transitions and individualized care.

Nutrition

The ELC promotes healthy nutrition and supports the well-being of children and families. Our practices include:

1. **Offering fresh fruits and vegetables** as part of daily snacks and meals to introduce healthy eating habits.
2. **Supporting breastfeeding** by providing a welcoming, breastfeeding-friendly space in the child's classroom. Each room includes recliners for mothers to comfortably breastfeed their child.
3. **Limiting the use of sugary and highly processed foods** in meals and snacks.
4. **Encouraging water consumption** by providing clean drinking water throughout the day and promoting it as the primary beverage during school hours.
5. **Staff model healthy eating behaviors** by sitting with children during meals and snacks and engaging in positive conversations about food and nutrition.
6. **Honoring the cultural and dietary preferences** of the children and families in our school. We welcome open communication and encourage parents to share any food-related needs or traditions.
7. **Offering family-style meals** during our Thanksgiving family dinner, our summer family picnic, and other occasional potluck events throughout the year.
8. **Providing nutrition resources for families** through a resource board located outside our office with flyers, brochures, and other informational materials.
9. **Engaging children in gardening activities** using our small outdoor garden. Children participate in preparing garden beds, planting seeds, watering, observing growth, harvesting, and sampling fruits, vegetables, and herbs. This hands-on experience supports their understanding of nutrition, responsibility, and science. Children have the opportunity to visit local farms such as the **Farm Collaborative** and **Rock Bottom Ranch**, where they learn about farming, interact with farmers, and pick harvested vegetables and flowers. These field trips enhance children's understanding of where food comes from and deepen their connection to healthy eating and the natural world.

Structured Physical Activity

At the Early Learning Center of Aspen, we place a high value on teacher-led structured physical activity due to the many benefits it provides to children's development. Structured physical activity helps build classroom community, supports self-regulation and mindfulness, and offers academic learning opportunities. These activities are not limited to outdoor games but are intentionally embedded into transitions, group times, and other parts of the daily routine.

Teachers, families, and administrators well know that transitioning between activities and locations can be incredibly challenging for young children. Being asked to stop one activity and start another is a common trigger for challenging behavior. However, we see all transitions as learning opportunities. When teacher-led structured physical activity is used as a transition tool, it helps prevent negative behaviors and builds positive habits and skills.

Examples of structured physical activity we use include:

- Outdoor games like Duck Duck Goose, Kick the Ball, or obstacle courses
- Music and movement songs (e.g., Bear Hunt, 5 Little Monkeys)
- Yoga or stretching before nap or circle time
- Fun transitions like "walk like an elephant" or "hop like a bunny"
- Fingerplays and fine motor songs while waiting in line
- Calming activities like deep breathing or slow music before reading

For infants, we also include:

- Daily tummy time
- Reaching and grasping during music
- Gentle rocking or movement games

Our expectations:

- Teachers plan structured physical activity in their weekly lesson plans.
- These activities happen multiple times per day, across age groups.
- Staff receive training in how to incorporate and lead these activities effectively.
- Lesson plans are reviewed to ensure consistent implementation.
- Families are encouraged to use movement strategies at home and are informed about their importance.

Annual Physicals or General Health Form

Physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org). A copy of your child's physical should be received before your child begins the program and must be received no later than six weeks after your child begins the program. A new physical form must be submitted to the ELC within 14 days of each new school year for your child. Your child may not attend school without these records.

Illness Policy

Children must be feeling well to attend The Early Learning Center. This not only helps prevent the spread of illness but also gives your child time to rest and recover. The Directors have the right to refuse entry to a child who appears ill at drop-off. If illness is spreading through the school, we will communicate to parents' which illnesses we are seeing within the school. Due to confidentiality, we will not provide details about which child or classroom. The Early Learning Center will follow the "How Sick is Too Sick" Guidelines from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment. You can find the link to this information on our website or posted on the bulletin board outside the office.

Children who show any of the following symptoms will be asked not to attend school: fever of **100.4° F** or higher, diarrhea, chronic coughing, vomiting, flu-like symptoms, or if your child does not feel well and cannot participate in normal activities. For example, a child may be overly tired, fussy, or unable to stop crying, or may need more care than teachers and staff can provide while still caring for the other children (this will be at the discretion of the Director). Parents are asked to promptly pick up their child.

Please note: Children may return to the Early Learning Center when they meet the return-to-care criteria outlined in the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment's current "How Sick is Too Sick?" guidance. Generally, children must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication, other symptoms must be improving, and the child must be able to comfortably participate in normal program activities. Additional exclusion or return requirements may apply for certain symptoms, diagnoses, or communicable diseases

If your child has been exposed to any contagious diseases such as, chicken pox, measles, hand-foot-mouth, pink eye, strep throat, head lice, RSV, impetigo, etc. parents are required to notify the office of the exposure.

There are no exceptions to our sick policy. If your child is sick, please respect this policy and do not bring your child to school.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us of children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments, and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and the kitchen. We are trained to review the list to avoid exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications

Medications will be administered only with a completed Medication Administration form that specifies the frequency and dosage. This includes, but is not limited to, fever reducers, laxatives, teething tablets, diaper cream and skin lotions used to treat a rash, inhalers, EpiPens, Benadryl, antibiotics, vitamins, and more. Medication must be administered and recorded by a trained staff member delegated by our school's nurse. Medication will be administered only as directed by a doctor and will not be given to children diluted in a drink. Our procedure for storing medications includes keeping them locked in the cabinet, out of reach of children. If your child uses an EpiPen, that medication will remain unlocked and be kept in the field trip backpack.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following: Bacterial Meningitis, Botulism, Chicken Pox, Diphtheria, Hemophilus Influenzae (invasive), Measles (including suspect), Meningococcal Infection (invasive), Poliomyelitis (including suspect), Rabies (human only), Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect), Tetanus (including suspect), H1N1 Virus, any cluster/outbreak of illness.

Hand Washing

Hand washing is one of the best tools in controlling the spread of infections. We ensure that all the children perform good hand washing, which will greatly reduce the amount of sickness in your facility. The technique: Use soap and warm running water. Rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds when soaped. Wash all surfaces, including the backs of hands, wrists, between the fingers, and under fingernails. Rinse your hands well. Dry your hands with a paper towel. Turn off the water, using a paper towel, instead of bare hands.

Please wash your child's hands when they arrive at the facility and when you pick them up.

Our staff ensures that children wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating or drinking. We wash a child's hands for them if they are too young to do it themselves. We also teach children that proper handwashing helps control the spread of germs.

General Procedures

The Early Learning Center is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and to form personal, meaningful bonds with people in the school community. Thoughtful direction and planning are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating clear, consistent rules and involving children in problem-solving help children develop self-discipline. We encourage children to be fair, to respect other people and property, and to understand the results of their actions.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness. Every child has the right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to teach them to solve problems through appropriate, positive interactions. When discipline is necessary, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance for bullying. If you have any concerns at any time, please report them to the Director of the Center.

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 the safety of others, and we may gently hold a child only as long as necessary to control the situation. This will be done gently.

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 biter 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.

All biting incidents are documented by the teachers and reported to the Executive Director. Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. When biting is frequent, severe, or presents a significant safety concern, ELC will work collaboratively with the family to develop individualized strategies and seek additional support as appropriate, consistent with our Inclusion and Continuity of Care Policy below.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If hostile, threatening, or aggressive behavior occurs, ELC may take appropriate steps to protect children and staff,

including restricting an individual's access to the program and working with the family to establish a safe communication and participation plan.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

Incidents of problematic behavior will be documented by the child's teacher and reported to the Executive Director. If a child's behavior or circumstances are of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step in understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. In certain situations, such as ongoing behavioral issues, we may ask the family to engage with a social worker or other early childhood professional to help develop a plan to address them.

Suspension and/or Expulsion Inclusion and Continuity of Care Policy

Our Commitment

Early Learning Center (ELC) is committed to providing an inclusive environment where every child is welcomed, valued, and supported. Consistent with Colorado Universal Preschool (UPK) expectations and Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) guidance, ELC does not use suspension, expulsion, or exclusionary discipline practices in response to a child's behavior, developmental needs, disability, or social-emotional challenges.

We believe that all behavior communicates a need and that children learn best when they remain connected to supportive relationships and learning environments.

Prevention and Support

ELC utilizes proactive and relationship-based practices to support children's success, including:

- Developmentally appropriate expectations
- Positive behavior guidance
- Consistent routines and classroom environments
- Social-emotional learning opportunities
- Individualized support strategies
- Family partnerships
- Consultation with specialists and community resources when available
- Ongoing staff training in inclusive practices

Family Partnership

Families are essential partners in supporting children's growth and development. When concerns arise, staff will communicate openly with families to share observations, identify strengths, and collaborate on strategies that support success both at school and at home.

Response to Challenging Behavior

When a child experiences difficulty regulating emotions or behavior, ELC staff will:

1. Ensure the immediate safety of all children and adults.
2. Use developmentally appropriate de-escalation and calming strategies.
3. Provide additional support, supervision, and environmental modifications as needed.
4. Document observations and interventions.
5. Collaborate with families to develop individualized support plans.
6. Seek consultation and support services when appropriate and available.

Temporary Classroom Support

In situations where a child is experiencing significant distress or dysregulation, staff may provide a temporary change of environment, additional adult support, or a calming space within the program. These supports are intended to help the child successfully return to classroom activities and are not considered suspension or exclusion.

Non-Exclusionary Practices

ELC will not suspend, expel, or disenroll a child due to:

- Challenging behavior
- Developmental delays
- Disability or suspected disability
- Social-emotional needs
- Mental health needs
- Toileting delays or accidents
- Communication differences
- The need for additional support services

ELC is committed to working collaboratively with families and community partners to identify supports that promote each child's successful participation in the program.

Enrollment Continuity

Children will maintain enrollment while support strategies are implemented. The program will make reasonable efforts to accommodate individual needs and promote meaningful participation in all aspects of the educational program.

Program Commitment

ELC is committed to reducing and eliminating exclusionary practices and ensuring that every child has equitable access to high-quality early childhood education. Through strong family partnerships, individualized supports, and inclusive practices, we strive to create a community where all children can learn, grow, and belong.

Quality Improvement Plan

The Quality Improvement Plan is clearly posted outside the office, next to our licensing and health department folders. It is easily accessible to any parents, guardians, or visitors who wish to review it and are welcome to do so at any time.

Fundraising

As a non-profit, the Early Learning Center depends on parents to assist the program in various ways. With parental help, everyone benefits, and the quality of the children's experience at school is greatly enhanced.

The Early Learning Center is funded primarily by tuition, subsidies provided by Kids First, and grants received throughout the school year. However, this money does not cover the cost of operating the school, and each year, additional funds are needed through grants and fundraising. Our fundraisers require the participation of both families and staff.

Fundraisers are scheduled each year and are subject. Participation is not required but strongly encouraged.

Safety

Safety is a major concern in childcare, so daily safety inspections are conducted inside and outside the center to prevent injuries. A trained caregiver will administer first aid if your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., a scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and the course of action taken. If the injury causes swelling or requires medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Please inform us if your child sees a doctor due to a school-related injury so we can document it appropriately. Each classroom is equipped with a first-aid kit that meets state regulations. In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital by ambulance immediately, and we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

Incident Clean-Up Procedure

Norovirus is a highly contagious virus that causes vomiting and diarrhea, which can start suddenly and be severe. The virus spreads through direct contact with an ill person, consumption of contaminated food or water, or contact with contaminated surfaces. Norovirus can survive on common surfaces for up to two weeks if the surfaces are not properly disinfected. Only certain disinfectants are effective against norovirus. Norovirus outbreaks are common, especially in childcare centers, schools, healthcare facilities, and other community settings. For this reason, it is important to have a clean-up procedure in place to promptly respond and disinfect a surface contaminated with vomit or feces.

Facility Information

Facility Name:	The Early Learning Center
Address:	215 N Garmisch St, Aspen, CO 81611
Contact Name:	Katelyn Timroth
Title/Position:	Nurse Consultant

Disinfectant

Disinfectant Name:	Clorox Healthcare - Bleach Germicidal Cleaner
Contact Time for Norovirus:	1 minute

Employee Training and Plan Maintenance

- Identify who will oversee cleaning up after vomiting and diarrhea events. Person(s) responsible for clean-up:
- Train selected workers on how to use personal protective equipment (PPE), wash and disinfect surfaces, and dispose of vomitus and feces.
- Training should take place when:
 - The clean-up procedures are put into place.
 - New employees onboard.
 - At least annually, and
 - As procedures change.

- Monitor employees who are involved in clean-up for illness for at least 48 hours following the incident.

Clean-Up Procedure

1. Promptly move ill children to the designated ill/injured child area. Exclude ill children and staff from attending the facility and working according to the facilities illness policy.
2. Notify the designated clean-up staff, if applicable.
3. Keep children away from the contaminated area. Block off areas within 25 feet of the contaminated area until the area is properly cleaned and disinfected.
4. Gather cleaning supplies.
 - a. Absorbent material
 - b. Disposable scoop
 - c. Mop and bucket
 - d. Garbage bags
 - e. Caution tape or signs
 - f. Disposable paper towels/cloths
 - g. Disinfectant effective against norovirus (e.g., bleach solution or other EPA registered and approved disinfectant)
 - h. PPE
 - i. Other:
5. Staff cleaning up the area should wear the following PPE to minimize contact.
 - a. Disposable mask
 - b. Disposable gloves
 - c. Disposable apron
 - d. Shoe covers
 - e. Eye protection
 - f. Other:
6. Identify the surfaces that were contaminated and follow the proper clean-up procedures (e.g. hard surfaces, soft surfaces that cannot be laundered, soft surfaces that can be laundered).
7. Discard any food that may have been exposed in the affected area.

Hard, nonporous surfaces

Step 1: Use an absorbent material to cover and contain the vomitus or feces.

Step 2: Use disposable paper towels or cloths to pick up any solid materials. Avoid vacuuming the area as this can spread germs into the air.

Step 3: Wash the surface with soap and warm water using a cloth or mop.

Step 4: Apply a bleach solution following the instructions for disinfecting, or another Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- registered and approved disinfectant effective against norovirus. Leave the solution on the surface for the required contact time as listed on the product instructions.

Step 5: Rinse the surface with water unless otherwise instructed on the product label, if the surface commonly comes into contact with food, hands, the mouth, eyes, nose, or the exposed skin of children and staff.

Soft Surfaces That Cannot be Laundered

Step 1: Use an absorbent material to cover and contain the vomitus or feces.

Step 2: Use disposable paper towels or cloths to pick up any solid materials. Avoid vacuuming the area, as this can spread germs into the air.

Step 3: Use soap and warm water on the area. Blot the area gently with a disposable cloth, taking care not to spread the contamination.

Step 4: Apply an EPA-registered, approved disinfectant effective against norovirus that is safe to use on carpets and soft surfaces. Alternatively, steam-clean the carpets or upholstery using the highest temperature setting. Allow the area to air dry.

Soft Surfaces that Can Be Laundered

Step 1: Use an absorbent material to cover and contain the vomitus or feces.

Step 2: Use disposable paper towels or cloths to pick up any solid materials. Avoid vacuuming the area as this can spread germs into the air.

Step 3: Launder contaminated items separately from other laundry. Use the highest heat setting on the washer and the dryer. Additionally, add a laundry sanitizer, such as bleach, to the rinse cycle. Follow the labeled instructions to determine the amount of laundry sanitizer needed.

After Clean Up

1. Place all used cleaning supplies, such as used towels, absorbent material, and other items in a disposable plastic bag. Remove all personal protective equipment and place in the disposable plastic bag and seal it. Remove all waste from the facility immediately.
2. Disinfect reusable cleaning supplies following the steps above for each surface type.
3. Staff shall thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
4. Open windows if it is possible and allow for air circulation to avoid strong chemical odors.
5. Once dry and thoroughly disinfected, remove any signage.
6. Record details of incident, cleaning actions taken, and time.
7. Based on facilities illness policy, inform parents if their child was directly involved or exposed.
8. If an illness is suspected, follow any additional health protocols or recommendations from the health department.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies; therefore, the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are always non-smoking areas. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or 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 must leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapon

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object that, by the manner it is used or intended to be used, can inflict 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.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all 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.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept responsibility for determining which parent/guardian has legal custody when there is no court documentation.

Legal Disputes between Parents/Guardians

As your child's school provider our main interest is the well-being of your child. We will not be involved in child custody disputes, divorces, separations, or any other legal dispute between parents/ guardians. Other than complying with an order of the court, we will not write letters, testify, or otherwise provide support in any legal dispute between parents/guardians.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of suspected child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities 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. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may investigate. It then becomes the agency's role to determine whether the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

If you suspect abuse or neglect happening to a child, please call 1-844-CO-4-KIDS to report.

Product and Food Recall Policy

The Early Learning Center is committed to maintaining a safe environment for all children. In the event of a food, toy, equipment, or other product recall that may affect children in our program, ELC will promptly review recall information from appropriate regulatory agencies and immediately remove or discontinue use of any affected items.

Families will be notified if a recall involves products, food items, or materials used within the program or if children may have been exposed while in our care. ELC may also share information

regarding significant consumer product or food recalls that could impact families at home, when appropriate.

The center will follow all applicable guidance from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), and other relevant regulatory agencies to protect the health and safety of children in our care.

Questions regarding recalls or product safety may be directed to the Executive Director.

Emergencies

Child Supervision and Separation Response Policy

In accordance with Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) Child Care licensing requirements, ELC staff always maintain active supervision of all children and follow established procedures to prevent and respond to any child separation or supervision incident.

If a child becomes separated from their group or cannot be immediately located, staff will respond promptly by accounting for all children, conducting a search of the facility and surrounding areas, notifying administration, and contacting the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible. If the child is not located promptly, local authorities will be contacted without delay.

To prevent supervision incidents, ELC staff maintain required staff-to-child ratios, conduct frequent headcounts, use secure sign-in and sign-out procedures, and receive ongoing training in active supervision and child safety practices. Additional safety procedures are followed during field trips and off-site activities.

Any supervision or separation incident will be documented, reported to the Colorado Department of Early Childhood as required by licensing regulations, and reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement. ELC is committed to maintaining a safe environment through continuous monitoring, staff training, and adherence to all applicable CDEC licensing requirements.

Fire

Our center is fully equipped with alarms, lights and rolling cribs etc.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff monthly. In the case of a fire in the building, the teachers will evacuate the building with their students. Once the director has all the children and staff accounted for outside of the building the children and staff will walk to the Jewish Community Center at 435 W Main St, Aspen, CO 81611 to be reconnected with parents.

Lock-Out

In the event of an unsafe situation occurring outside the yellow brick building, the school will be placed on Lock-Out. At this point, people inside the building will remain safely inside. No one will be allowed to enter the building during a lockout. The Director will be in communication with ELC parents, and once the lockout has lifted, parents will again be allowed to enter the school.

Lock-Down

In the event of an immediate threat or danger in or near the school building, including an active shooter or other violent threat, the school will be placed on lockdown. All classrooms will be

locked, and teachers will keep students out of sight at windows and doors. Once the police have secured the area and released the teacher and students from the classroom, the lockdown will be lifted. At no time during a lockdown will any person be allowed in or out of the building unless they are emergency personnel. The ELC teachers are trained to minimize fear for the children in such a situation.

Shelter-in-Place

In the event of an emergency that requires children and staff to remain safely inside the building, ELC will initiate shelter-in-place procedures. Staff will move children to designated safe areas, account for all children, maintain required supervision, and follow directions from emergency officials and ELC administration.

Families will be notified as soon as it is safe and practical to do so. Children will remain under the supervision of ELC staff until the shelter-in-place order is lifted or until reunification with families can safely occur.

Severe Weather and Tornado

If severe weather or a tornado warning occurs while children are in care, ELC staff will move children to designated safe areas within the building and account for all children. Staff will maintain supervision and follow ELC emergency procedures and instructions from local emergency officials.

Children will remain in the designated safe area until the threat has passed or emergency officials determine it is safe to leave. Families will be notified as soon as it is safe and practical to communicate.

Evacuations

If the Yellow Brick building needs to be evacuated, ELC staff and students will safely evacuate to the **Aspen Community Church** at 200 E. Bleeker Street, Aspen, CO 81611. Parents and emergency contacts will be notified of the evacuation and may pick up their child at that location. You will be required to present a valid form of identification and complete the Reunification Form for us to release your child.

Emergency Assistance for Children with Additional Needs

ELC will provide appropriate assistance during emergency procedures and evacuations for children with disabilities or other mobility, medical, developmental, or communication needs. Individual accommodations and necessary support will be incorporated into emergency planning in collaboration with families and appropriate professionals when needed. Staff will be informed of their responsibilities for assisting individual children during an emergency.

Emergency Transportation

If a child requires emergency medical transportation, ELC will contact emergency medical services and notify the child's parent/guardian or emergency contact as soon as possible. A staff member will accompany the child when appropriate and remain with the child until a parent/guardian or authorized emergency contact arrives.

Air Quality Policy

Purpose

The Early Learning Center (ELC) is committed to protecting the health and well-being of children and staff during periods of poor air quality. Because young children are considered a sensitive population, ELC will monitor local Air Quality Index (AQI) conditions and modify outdoor activities as necessary.

Air Quality Monitoring

ELC will monitor air quality daily using [AirNow.gov](https://airnow.gov) and the [City of Aspen Current Air Quality](https://www.aspeninfo.org/air-quality) website. Air quality conditions may change throughout the day, and outdoor activity decisions may be adjusted accordingly.

Air Quality Guidelines

AQI 0–100 (Good to Moderate)

- Normal outdoor activities may proceed.
- Staff will continue to monitor children for signs of respiratory discomfort.

AQI Above 200 (Very Unhealthy to Hazardous)

- All outdoor activities will be canceled.
- Families may be notified of air quality concerns and any program modifications.
- Additional precautions will be taken to minimize exposure to outdoor air.

Sensitive Populations

All children enrolled at ELC are considered part of a sensitive population due to their age and developing respiratory systems. Additional consideration will be given to children and staff with:

- Asthma
- Respiratory conditions
- Heart conditions
- Other medical concerns that may be affected by poor air quality

Communication

When air quality conditions require significant changes to programming, ELC will communicate with families regarding any modifications to outdoor activities.

Administrative Discretion

The Executive Director or designee may implement additional precautions based on local conditions, visible smoke, health advisories, weather forecasts, or recommendations from public health officials, even when AQI levels fall below the thresholds outlined above.

Early Learning Center Complaint/Grievance Procedure

If a parent or staff member has a concern, suggestion, or complaint, we want to address it immediately, directly, clearly, and respectfully. We understand that conflict cannot always be avoided and that not everyone has the same personality style when dealing with issues. We are committed to a process that allows us to resolve differences in a fair, compassionate, and timely manner.

If you have a complaint or grievance, please follow the procedure below:

1. If the problem is simple or minor, you should first talk directly to the person involved. It is important that each person has a chance to speak and not just hear but also listen. It can be helpful to repeat the person's words back to confirm whether they are trying to understand (and whether they do or do not). Choose an appropriate, conducive time and

talk with an open mind. Be willing to work out an agreement and compromise if and when necessary. It may mean you give a little from your position, and they give a little from theirs. Be mindful of your tone, body language, and intentionality always. Gossip and carrying grudges are to be avoided at all costs. Work to not take things personally or pass judgment. It can be helpful to give others the benefit of the doubt.

2. Sometimes it helps to pick your battles. At no time is it helpful to lose your temper. Count to 10 or take a break if necessary. If the situation does not get resolved, you should then talk to the lead teacher in the classroom. Schedule an appointment and review the problem and what steps you have taken to try to work things out.
3. If the situation is not resolved at that time, you should then contact the Director. Schedule an appointment and review the problem and the steps you have taken to resolve it.
4. If the meeting with the Director does not solve the problem the next step is to go to an officer of the ELC's Board of Directors.
5. If you or the Director believe that this subject needs to be reviewed by the Executive Board of Directors, schedule an appointment. The ELC Board of Directors has final authority over all parent or staff differences and disputes. The ELC Board of Directors also has the authority to call in a mediator if deemed necessary. If a parent or staff member believes that an ELC school policy or procedure is wrong, unfair, incorrect, or illegal, they must follow this procedure:
 - a. Write down the policy, rule, or situation that you feel needs to be changed. 2. Write the reasons you believe there needs to be an adjustment or change in the policy, situation or regulations.
 - b. Write how you would change the policy so that your concerns are addressed. Specifically state what you would do differently and how you would make this policy better.
 - c. Schedule an appointment with the Director to discuss your concerns. 5. If you or the Director believes that this is a subject that needs to be reviewed by the Board of Directors, then schedule an appointment and your concerns will be directly addressed.
 - d. The ELC Board of Directors has the final authority regarding all ELC school policies. The ELC Board of Directors also had the authority to call in a mediator if deemed necessary.
 - e. Any problems not resolved locally, including the reporting of suspected licensing complaints, should be referred to the: **Colorado Department of Early Childhood (CDEC) Complaint Intake, Division of Early Care and Learning** 710 S. Ash Street Denver, CO 80246
Complaint phone: 303-866-5958

Family Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the Early Learning Center Family Handbook. I understand that the handbook contains important information regarding the program's policies, procedures, expectations, tuition requirements, and family responsibilities.

I agree to familiarize myself with and follow the policies outlined in the handbook. I understand that the Early Learning Center may update policies and procedures as needed and that families will be notified of significant changes. I understand that it is my responsibility to review all handbook policies and ask questions if clarification is needed.

By Signing Below, you acknowledge review and agreement of the following policies:

- Tuition, Billing, and Payment Policies
- Continuous Care and Security Deposit Policy
- Withdrawal and 60-Day Notice Requirements
- Attendance, Vacation, and Schedule Change Policies
- Illness, Exclusion, and Medication Policies
- Health and Immunization Requirements
- Emergency Procedures and Emergency Contacts
- Behavior Guidance and Family Partnership Policies
- Classroom Transition Policy
- Arrival, Departure, and Authorized Pick-Up Procedures
- Outdoor Play, Weather, and Air Quality Policies
- Parent Communication Expectations
- Photo, Video, and Media Release Policy (or separate authorization form)

Acknowledgment

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received access to the Early Learning Center Family Handbook and understand that my family's enrollment is subject to the policies and procedures contained within it.

I understand that failure to comply with ELC policies, including tuition payment requirements, withdrawal notice requirements, health and safety policies, and other program expectations, may result in applicable fees or other actions consistent with ELC policies and applicable state requirements

I acknowledge that I have had the opportunity to ask questions regarding any policy contained in the Family Handbook and understand that it is my responsibility to remain informed of current policies and future updates.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____