

PARENT HANDBOOK



**DEDHAM COMMUNITY HOUSE
PRESCHOOL
70 BULLARD STREET, DEDHAM, MA 02026
781-329-4841
www.dedhamcommunityhouse.org**

updated July 2022

**Health Care Policy and Emergency
Procedures are provided in a separate
document to families.*

Table of Contents

Ownership – 1
History – 1
Board of Directors – 1
Administrative Plan – 1
Mission Statement (Philosophy and Goals) – 2
Hours of Operation – 3
Late Fees – 3
Arrivals and Departures – 3
Drop Off – 3
Pick Up – 4
Flex Time – 4
Child Guidance – 5
Intake Procedure/Wait List – 6
Fall Program Enrollment Timeline – 6
Financial Arrangements – 6
Financial Assistance – 7
Transitions – 7
Parental Participation – 7
Parent Grievance Procedure – 8
Helpful Hints for First Few Days – 8
Snow Days – 8
Curriculum Framework – 9
Program Activities/Routines – 9
Holiday Policy – 10
Birthday Celebrations -- 10
Nutrition Policy (Snacks/Lunch) – 10
Assessment Process – 11
Child's Records – 11, 12
Record Confidentiality – 12
Referral Plan and Procedures – 12, 13
Research – 13
Unauthorized Activities – 13
Termination/Suspension Procedure – 14
Evacuation Procedures – 15
Child Abuse – 16
Transportation – 16
Area Resources – 17
Signature Page – 18

Ownership

The Dedham Community House Preschool, 70 Bullard Street, Dedham, MA is a childcare facility/preschool operated by the Dedham Community Association, a nonprofit organization better known as the Dedham Community House, or DCH. The school is licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Early Education and Care:

1 Washington St., Suite 20

Taunton, Ma 02780-3960

Phone: (508) 828-5025

***Parents may contact EEC regarding programs regulatory compliance history.**

History

DCH Preschool celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2020 and is located in a building known as the Stone House or Bullard Estate. Although modifications have been made over the years, some lovely touches still exist from the old estate building, such as marble fireplaces, ornamental plaster, and encaustic tile. All areas originally containing lead have been removed or encased for children's safety.

Role of Board of Directors

DCH Preschool is governed by the DCH Board of Directors. Board Meetings take place on the fourth Tuesday of each month, and the preschool director attends these meetings. The preschool is always on the agenda, and information and concerns are shared with the Board at this time.

Administrative Plan

DCH Preschool has two administrators. The Director and the Assistant Director work closely together to make sure the needs of the school are met and that the program runs smoothly.

The director assumes full responsibility for the development and maintenance of the early childhood education program of the center. The director's other responsibilities include: assisting the executive director of DCH in long range fiscal planning and budget preparation as well as reconciliation and review. She is responsible for including children with disabilities. Staff development, supervision and training, parent involvement, and social services will also be handled by the director. The Assistant Director is responsible for staff schedules, children's records, and scheduling children's enrichment programs. She purchases all educational equipment for the center.

In the event that the Director is absent, the Assistant Director will assume full responsibility for the center and the designated adult will be the other back up person. They will both be responsible for emergency evacuation and natural disaster evacuation in the absence of the director.

Mission Statement – Philosophy & Goals

The mission of DCH Preschool, in partnership with DCH, is to foster the growth and development of young children by providing a play-based, developmentally appropriate, and nurturing environment that will pave the way for a lifetime of love of learning. Our goal is that each child should reach their potential in all developmental areas and increase their sense of self in the process. We believe that all children should be provided with a warm, supportive environment which fosters the self-confidence necessary to try new experiences and to master new skills. The curriculum is implemented in a manner that reflects responsiveness to family and home values and needs, beliefs, experiences, and home language. It allows for differences in age and ability, developmental stage, and for adaptations and modifications to ensure access to the curriculum for all children.

The center offers flexible programs to suit a variety of schedules and needs. Choices include half and full day options for toddlers (15 months) to children 5 years of age. Any child or staff member of any race, marital status, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or disability may be enrolled or hired. The status of toilet training will not be a disqualifying factor.

Our teachers are carefully chosen. Each is committed to making the children's preschool experience a happy and healthy one. They are trained in early childhood education and have experience in curriculum planning and assessment. Professional development hours are required for all staff members, and furthering one's education is encouraged.

To offer a quality, age-appropriate curriculum, we follow the Massachusetts Early Childhood Program Standards that describe goals for knowledge and skills important for children's development. It is a shared vision of what children should know and be able to do. Learning experiences are linked to these goals. The purpose of these standards is not only to guide instruction and professional development but also to guide child assessment and information sharing. It also frames evaluation of the program and aids in transition between programs. The Preschool Learning Experiences based on the Program Standards provide curriculum ideas for enhancing children's development that teachers use to design a multitude of valuable learning experiences for young children. The basic categories for these learning experiences are: language arts, mathematics, science and technology, social science, health education, and arts. The daily schedule and routines encourage child's choices, independence, and input.

Teachers will assess children's progress through assessment tools, observations (including picture taking and individual assessment portfolios) and rating scales. Ongoing child assessment helps to develop individual child goals and to mold the curriculum. Curriculum goals and objectives align with the assessment of children's progress. This alignment also drives future goals for program quality and improvement. Information from children's assessments will be considered during curriculum planning. We encourage and depend on parent input and participation.

Due to the variety of communication methods available, the school's hope is that families will feel supported and nurtured in their child rearing efforts as well as informed of their child's daily

activities. Families will also be included in their child's education as well as the assessment process. This ongoing communication will include feedback from child observations and results of child's assessments.

Hours of Operation, Late Fees

DCH Preschool opens daily at 7:30 a.m. The **half day program ends at 12:30 p.m.** (which includes lunch), and the **full day ends at 4:30 PM.** Parents are expected to pick up their children at the appropriate time. We understand that emergencies occur in every family and a late fee will not be imposed in the event of an emergency, provided the center is notified accordingly.

However, a late fee will be charged for consistent late pick-up (half day, full day). Families will receive a reminder note following the first late pick-up and a fee will be charged the next late pick-up.

The late fee policy is as follows:

- Anyone who is picked up after the 4:30 PM closing time will be charged a \$10 fee for up to the first five minutes.
- After the initial five minutes, a charge of \$1 per minute will occur.
- Late fee notices will be sent via email the following day by administrators, and you will be expected to pay these fees by closing time on the following business day.

Arrivals & Departures

Please make sure that when you drop off your child in the morning, the teacher or administrator is aware of their arrival. Please do not allow your child to enter the school alone; **children should be always under adult supervision** (this includes siblings not enrolled at the school). At pick up time, please make sure to let your child's teacher know that you are taking your child home. The staff will mark your child in and out on the attendance sheet and in Brightwheel.

Drop Off:

- Drop off begins at 7:30am. The Director or Assistant Director will be there to greet you between the hours of 7:30-8:30. If you arrive after this time, please use your door code to enter.
- If your child will not be at school for the day or you will arrive after 9:00am, please send a message directly to teachers in Brightwheel or call the school.
- Parents/Guardians will park their cars and escort their children into the building through the side door of the building, closest to the toddler playground.
- All children and families entering the building will be asked to use hand sanitizer on their hands prior to entering. Once inside children will wash their hands, store their belongings, and join their class.
- If you need to relay information to the teacher about your child, please keep it brief as they are there with children. You may also send the teachers a message through Brightwheel to give them updates or check in on them after drop off. If you need more time to talk to a teacher about your child, please speak with an administrator to set up a conference time.

Pick Up:

- Parents/Guardians must pick up by 4:30pm. Please be on time. If you are running late, please send a message through Brightwheel or call the office. An administrator will be at the door from 4:00-4:30pm.
- Parents/Guardians or siblings entering the building should sanitize their hands before coming into the building.
- Your child's belongings will be in their cubby for you to pick up and take home with you.

***If someone else will be dropping off or picking up your child, please provide written communication stating the person's name, and ask that person to have their photo ID available for staff members. If there is no identification available or name does not match up, parents/guardian's will be notified, and we will not be able to release your child to this person. If you would like to have people added to your child's file that are authorized to pick up on any given day, please email administrators to have them added to their authorized pickup list.

If at any time the pickup person seems impaired or unable to care for the child, the parents will be notified, and child will not be released. In the case of parents not being reachable teachers will then begin contacting persons on child's emergency contact form.

Flex Time

Parents whose children are enrolled in a half-day program may arrange for **extra hours of care** (provided there is space), but such arrangements need to be made with the Director/Assistant Director 48 hours in advance (during operating ours of 7:30-4:30pm). The fee will be **\$20.00 per hour**.

If space and staffing allow, parents may sign their child up for **occasional flex days** in their classrooms. Arrangements must be made with the Director/Assistant Director 48 hours in advance (during operating hours of 7:30-4:30pm). The fee for a **half day is \$75** and the fee for a **full day is \$125**.

Child Guidance

We at DCH Preschool believe that there are many positive techniques and practices that can be used to ensure that groups of children learn social, communication, and emotional regulation skills that they can use in place of challenging behaviors. Staff must provide guidance to children in a positive and consistent way based on the understanding of the individual needs and development of children by:

- Using environmental modifications, activity modifications, adult or peer support and other teaching strategies to encourage appropriate behavior and prevent challenging behaviors.
- Encouraging self-control and using positive child guidance techniques such as recognizing and reinforcing children's appropriate behaviors, having reasonable and positive expectations, setting clear and consistent limits, and redirecting.
- Intervening quickly when children are physically aggressive with one another and helping them develop more positive strategies for resolving conflict.
- Explaining rules and procedures and the reasons for them to children and where appropriate and feasible, allowing children to participate in the establishment of program rules, policies, and procedures.
- Discussing behavior management techniques among staff to promote consistency.

The following are prohibited:

- ◆ **Corporal punishment, including spanking**
- ◆ **Cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, physical/ verbal abuse, neglect, or abusive treatment including any type of physical hitting inflicted in any manner upon the body, shaking, threats or derogatory remarks**
- ◆ **Depriving children of outdoor time, meals, or snacks: force feeding of children or otherwise making them eat against their will or in any way using food as a consequence**
- ◆ **Disciplining a child for soiling or wetting, or not using the toilet: forcing a child to remain in soiled clothing or to remain on the toilet, or using any other unusual or excessive practices for toileting**
- ◆ **Confining a child to a swing, highchair, crib, playpen, or any other piece of equipment for an extended period of time in lieu of supervision**
- ◆ **Excessive time out. Time out may not exceed one minute for each year of the child's age and must take place within an educator's view**

The goal of this policy is to maximize the growth and development of each child and to protect the group and individuals within it. Our Child Guidance Policy is following guidelines set by EEC.

Intake Procedure/Wait List

The Dedham Community House Preschool is open to all children meeting the age requirement regardless of toilet training status. To enroll a child at the center, parents must first return the non-refundable application fee with the application. Tours and/or enrollment meetings may be set up with the Director or Assistant Director upon request. An orientation session will be held for incoming children and families in August. Applications for children with disabilities will be accepted as well (provided it is possible for the school to meet their needs without undue burden). We will follow EEC guidelines with respect to this.

Priority is given in the following order:

1. Siblings of children currently enrolled
2. Children needing full time care

Once these priorities are satisfied, other applications will be considered in the order received. DCH Preschool does not discriminate based on race, marital status, political beliefs, religion, cultural heritage, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.

Fall Program Enrollment Timeline

➤ **December:**

Current families receive Enrollment Applications which are due back mid- January

➤ **Mid-January:**

Enrollment Applications (found on website) are accepted for new families, along with \$50 application fee

➤ **Early February:**

Current families are notified of placement at DCHP

➤ **Mid-February:**

Enrollment Agreements from current families due with \$500 tuition deposit to hold spot.*

➤ **Early March:**

New families notified of acceptance

➤ **Mid-March:**

Enrollment Agreements from new families due with and \$500 tuition deposit to hold spot.*

***\$500 tuition deposit is applied to June tuition and is non-refundable.**

Financial Arrangements

- Tuition is due at the beginning of each week or month. Checks can be placed in the tuition box in the front hall, you can mail them to the main office at 671 High Street, or they can be handed to administrative staff at the school. Electronic payments are also accepted through Brightwheel. If you would like a receipt, please let us know.
- Credit is not allowed for sick days, snow days or holidays.
- **At least 2 weeks' notice is required when families are leaving the program. Parents are responsible for the 2 weeks' tuition and the \$500 enrollment deposit will be forfeited.**
- There will be a \$25.00 charge for any tuition check that is returned to us for any reason.
- A refund will be granted to a parent if it is determined that a child's needs cannot be met at this center and if the tuition is paid beyond the date of termination.

Financial Assistance

Some financial assistance is available. Interested families should contact the Director for information and eligibility guidelines. Families in need of financial assistance should submit a form (found on the DCH website) at time of application. There is a 5% sibling discount. This discount is taken off the sibling's tuition of lesser value.

Transitions

When children enter DCH Preschool they are offered an orientation to provide information and predictability. If the child has come from another program sometimes transitions can be facilitated by collaboration and the sharing of information between programs (with parental permission). When children move from one group to the next (usually late June or end of August) they are given the opportunity to visit the new group before making the transition. Teachers will share information including assessment information about the child with the next group of teachers.

When children leave the program to go to another school, we try to do everything possible to assist. Teachers are available to offer support and guidance with this transition and may, if necessary, collaborate and share information (with parental permission) with new programs.

To offer continuity of care daily transitions within the program are kept to a minimum. Most transitions take place during the early and late hours of the day, according to the number of children and staff. The school has several float teachers on staff that act as substitutes when regular teachers are out. This provides predictability as they are known by all parents and children. The school has several substitute teachers available to cover classrooms when a teacher is out.

Parental Participation (Visits, Involvement, and Input)

We encourage all families to become involved in the activities of the center. A parent involvement/volunteer survey will be distributed in the fall. We encourage parents to visit the program at any time when their child is present but ask that you be mindful of how your child will handle this additional separation when adjusting to school. Some volunteer opportunities include becoming a room parent who organizes classroom wish lists and events or planning and assisting with events such as our teacher appreciation week in May. If you have a special talent or interest (music, cooking, woodworking, etc.) and would like to share it or just feel like spending time in your child's classroom, please let your child's teacher or the Director/Asst. Director know.

Families are asked to evaluate the program annually. All suggestions and input from parents regarding the program and policies are welcome. Please share your thoughts and ideas with us in order to help us at DCH Preschool best meet the needs of your family.

Teaching staff, families, and support personnel (public school, preschool coordinator, speech pathologist etc.) collaborate to achieve desired outcome for children and their families. If your child receives support services, it is important to share information about these services so that staff can collaborate with you and the service providers to best support your child here at school.

Parent Grievance Procedure

If a parent is uncomfortable or not in agreement with a school policy or any matter pertaining to the operation of the preschool, the matter should be discussed with the Director. A resolution will be reached as quickly as possible.

Helpful Hints for the First Few Days

A young child's first experience in a group setting is an important milestone. It is also a special experience for parents. A good beginning sets the stage for happy days for your child and relieves some of the worries about leaving your child. You may find some of the following suggestions helpful:

- ◆ Plan a visit to the center before your child begins. Keep your visit to 15-20 minutes, and stay with your child.
- ◆ Recognize your child needs time to become comfortable with the new environment, and accept that it may take longer than you would like.
- ◆ Expect some crying and clinging. With some children this does not occur initially, but it may come later as a delayed reaction.
- ◆ Prepare your child by talking positively about this new experience. Avoid using phrases like *"I'm sorry, I have to go to work, and you have to go to preschool."*
- ◆ Try to allow enough time to avoid rushing – both in the morning and in the afternoon. Children need time in the morning to get settled before you leave: they need time in the afternoon to complete whatever they were doing before you arrived and to show you what they have done during the day.
- ◆ On the other hand, avoid lingering too long in the morning during this adjustment period. While it is important to get your child settled before you leave, it is also important for your child to comprehend that you really are going to leave and will return in due time. Lingering may imply to your child that you do not really have to go.

Children need fresh air and enjoy experiencing snow, rain, and mud. Except in truly inclement weather, we will be going outdoors. Please make sure your child comes to school dressed in appropriate clothing for outdoor play.

Snow Days

We understand how disruptive snow days can be for families. Therefore, we try only to close school when driving is unsafe for teachers and families. Families will receive an email and Brightwheel message by 6:30 am if the preschool should close due to inclement weather. If the center is open and weather conditions become such that an early closing is necessary, parents will also be notified via email and a Brightwheel message.

Curriculum Framework

Although we develop our own curriculum, the goals and objectives are aligned with assessment of individual children. The curriculum is implemented in a manner that reflects responsiveness to family and home values and needs, beliefs, experiences, and home language. This information is gathered using “Tell Us about your Family” form, enrollment forms, and informal conversations that take place throughout the day and at planned family events.

There is flexibility within the curriculum to allow for differences in age, ability, developmental stage, and learning style. It ensures access to the curriculum to all children. It also allows for adaptations for all children’s individual needs, not only those with identified special needs.

Family perspective will be considered with reference to language acquisition, especially when the home language is not English.

Ongoing child assessment helps to develop individual child goals and to mold the curriculum. Curriculum goals and objectives align with the assessment of children’s progress. This alignment also drives future goals for program quality and improvement. Information from children’s assessments will be considered during curriculum planning.

Program Activities/Routines

Daily schedules are posted inside/outside each classroom and curriculum plans on a board inside the classroom. Daily schedules, newsletters, and photos will be sent home with your child regularly throughout the year. All routines for children are predictable but flexible if necessary. Children are given many choices during the day and opportunities to be alone if needed as well. Children are given lots of time to play outside (more than 60 minutes, weather permitting) and indoor gross motor is available during inclement weather.

The following activities will be made available to children daily: art, music, literature, dramatic play, and science. Books will be read often to children, and opportunities will be offered to develop self-help skills. Children will be encouraged to develop independence, problem solving skills, and responsibility through decision making and choice. DCH Preschool is diverse in many ways, and children will be encouraged to develop a level of acceptance of all. Toddlers will be encouraged to move freely and to achieve mastery of their bodies.

Rest time is provided daily for all children who attend the full day program. The procedures for this time of the day will be handled according to the child’s age and needs. Some children will sleep during this time, while others will play quietly. It is important for parents to communicate with staff about their child’s needs regarding sleep/rest.

Each child will be provided with his/her own mat. Families should provide a light blanket and a fitted crib sheet for their child and send them in a small, zippered bag for storing in the classroom. A small soft toy may be sent in as well. Each item should be clearly marked with the child’s name. Blankets and linens should be taken home weekly for laundering.

Holiday Policy

DCH Preschool is committed to providing developmentally appropriate early childhood education. This applies to the way in which the school celebrates holidays. It is important that the school is committed to finding the best way to celebrate holidays with young children while understanding their developmental needs as well as the growing diversity of the community.

For these reasons, classroom teachers do not focus on holidays as part of their planned curriculum but will instead look to families to share their cultures and traditions with their classes. In addition, many of the themes present in holidays (sharing, being thankful, and caring for others) and many of their activities (dressing in costumes, writing notes to each other, eating special foods together) are part of our classrooms daily.

Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays can be a very exciting event for young children. If you would like to send in something special for your child's class on their birthday, we are going to ask that it be a **NON-FOOD** item to be shared. We have many children with allergies and sensitivities to food at our school, and we want to make sure that everyone can feel included in these special events. We encourage parents to come into the classroom to read a favorite book or facilitate a craft, donate a book to our school library in honor of their child's birthday, or even send in something small for each child such as stickers or fun party hats to use during the day. Please work with your child's teachers to plan what will work best for you and your child.

Nutrition Policy

We do not serve food at the preschool; however, we frequently talk about healthy choices with the children. Department of Education nutrition guidelines and choking hazards will be included with the Enrollment Packet. **Please refrain from sending candy/chocolates to school.**

Accommodations will be made for breastfeeding parents. Please inform Director/Assistant Director if you need a comfortable location for breastfeeding.

Snacks/Lunch

Please pack a refillable water bottle for your child that is labeled with their first and last name. We will refill this bottle as needed throughout the day. Families are asked to provide both a morning and afternoon snack (for full day attendees) along with a lunch in a labeled lunch box. Unfortunately, we do not have the facilities to refrigerate or heat food. Ice packs and thermal containers are encouraged to help keep children's food either hot or cold in the lunch box if needed.

We are a **peanut and tree nut free** school. Any food that is labeled: "may contain peanuts or tree nuts," "is processed on machines that may have come in contact with peanuts or tree nuts" or "in a facility with peanuts or tree nuts" is **NOT** permitted, as we have many children with food allergies.

Lunchtime is a very social time in your child's day. The staff sits with children during lunch and engages in conversation while modeling and encouraging healthy eating habits.

Assessment Process

The purpose of assessment of young children is to chart growth in all developmental areas. It also identifies children's interests and needs. The identification of children's needs guides our curriculum planning.

The teachers will assess your child's development and progress throughout the school year using children's portfolios as well as observation notes and assessment forms. Teachers use a variety of assessment methods (observations, rating scales, and work sampling) that are sensitive and informed by family culture, experiences, children's abilities, and disabilities, and home language. Assessment obtains information on all areas of children's development (including cognitive skills, language, social emotional, approaches to learning, health, and physical development (fine and gross motor including self-help skills)).

Parent/ Teacher Conferences are held twice a school year, but parents are welcome to request a conference with their child's teacher(s) at any time. All children are assigned to one of the teachers in the teaching team as their primary caregiver. This means that the caregiver will contribute to the child's portfolio, will make observations, and will also write the child's assessment and conduct the Parent/Teacher conference. Progress reports will be written every six months for toddlers and preschoolers, and every three months for any child receiving services. They will address the development and growth of your child, including the developmental domains of cognitive, social/emotional, language, fine motor/gross motor skills and life skills. All educators, specialists and consultants working with the child will be offered an opportunity to contribute to the progress report.

Each parent will be provided with a portfolio as well as a written report regarding their child's activities, development, and participation at the center. This will include a review of the child's assessment form and progress report. All information shared at the conference will be confidential. A copy of all written reports will be kept in your child's file for 7 years. Issues or significant developments will be discussed with the parent(s) as soon as they arise.

We know that each child is part of a family. Teachers involve parents in their child's progress and encourage an exchange of ideas and concerns. This sharing enables the staff to guide each child according to the values of the family and develops an atmosphere of cooperation, which helps the center respond to each family's needs. During the parent teacher conferences you will be asked to help your child's teacher set future goals for your child based on the assessment results. If the school has concerns about a child's development, we will seek support from the preschool coordinator of the appropriate school system. Parents will always be involved in this process.

Children's Records

This record will contain enrollment forms, healthcare information, assessment forms, injury/incident forms, individual program plans (child with a disability), and any pertinent information about the child.

Amending the Child's Record

A child's parent has the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant materials to their child's record.

A child's parent has the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. If such parent is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record, the parent has the right to a conference with the Director to make objections known. The Director will render a decision in writing to the parents within one week of the conference clearly stating the reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the parent, immediate steps will be taken to put the decision into effect.

Record Confidentiality

Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential. The center will not distribute or release information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without written consent of the child's parents. The center will notify the parents if a child's record is subpoenaed. Parental consent will be sought (permission form) to allow access to their child's health forms.

The child's parents will, upon request, have access to the child's record in a reasonable time. In no event will such access be delayed more than two business days after the initial request. Upon such request for access, the child's entire record will be made available.

The center has established procedures governing access to, duplication of, and dissemination of such information.

Authorized employees of the Department of Early Education and Care who are involved in the licensing of DCH Preschool, may view all records and information reasonably related to the requirements of the State's regulations. Authorized employees of the Department of Early Education and Care shall not remove identifying case material from the center's premises and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual children's records.

The center will make copies of any information in the child's record upon parental request, free of charge.

Referral Plan

When a teacher is concerned about a child's development, the following policy will be followed. During the year if after a teacher has documented her concerns several times (documented observations will take place in at least two different settings) about a child's development or physical health, they will then share their concerns with the Director. The child's behavior and development will be compared to developmental norms and to his or her own growth in the past three to six months (assessment records).

The Director will maintain a list of current referral resources in the community for children in need of social, mental health, educational, or medical services. The list will include the contact person for Chapter 766 and Early Intervention Program referrals.

Referral Meeting with Parents

After the staff has observed a child and recorded concerns and reviewed the child's record, the Director/ Assistant Director will be alerted to the concern. If there is still a concern after the Director/Assistant Director has completed observations, the Director/Assistant Director and child's teacher will schedule a meeting with parents to notify them of the concern and will prepare a current list of all possible referral resources (social, mental health, educational and medical services). A written confidential statement including the reason for recommending a referral for additional services, a brief summary of the center's observations related to the referral, and any efforts the center may have made to accommodate the child's need must be given to the parents.

The Director will assist the child's parents in making the referral. The parents will give written consent for a referral. If the child is at least 2.9 years of age, the Director will inform the parents of the availability of services and their rights including the right to appeal. If the child is under 2.9, the Director shall inform the child's parents of the availability of services provided by Early Intervention programs. The referral will follow up with parental permission, contact with the agency (766 or Early intervention) and assistance in meeting the child's needs at the center. If it is determined that the child is not in need of services from this agency or is not eligible to receive services, the center shall review the child's progress every three months to determine if another referral is necessary. The school shall maintain a written record of any referrals including the parent conferences and results.

This referral plan shall include but not be limited to, appropriate mental health, educational and medical services, dental checkups, vision, and hearing screening should the program staff feel that an assessment for such additional services would benefit the child. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

Research, Experimentation, & Unusual Treatment

There shall be no research, experimentation, or unusual treatment involving children without the written, informed consent of affected child's parents or guardians, for each occurrence. If observations of children (by other than parents of the children in the center) occur, a general parental consent will be obtained in writing. Observation means that there is no interaction between the child and the observers and no identification of the individual child. Under no circumstances will the Director or staff of DCH Preschool allow any physical harm to the children.

Unauthorized Activities

Personnel at DCH Preschool will not authorize any activities that are unrelated to the direct care of children or to any contacts with the parents or guardians without the written, informed consent of the parents or guardians. "Activities" shall mean, but not be limited to, fundraising or publicity including photographs and participation in the mass media. Please inform us if you do not want your child's picture to be taken and his/her name identified. A picture permission form will be issued at the beginning of each year.

Termination /Suspension Procedure

The staff at DCH Preschool makes every attempt to ensure that each child's participation in the center is a happy, successful learning experience. When a child has challenging behavior, the procedure to avoid suspension or termination will involve the parents and will include the following:

- Pursuing options for referrals for evaluation, diagnostic, or therapeutic services
- Supportive services to the program including consultation and educator training
- Developing a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program

A child's parents will be notified in a meeting, if possible, and in writing about any concerns regarding their child's participation. Positive solutions and timelines for resolutions will be discussed and defined. A list of Early Childhood resources will be provided to the parents at this time. If at this time or at subsequent meetings, termination is decided to be the best solution, the circumstances, including the reasons for termination or suspension, will be documented in a letter. A copy of this letter will be given to parents, and a copy will be kept in the child's records. The Director will inform the parents of the availability of information and referral for other services through the Childcare Resource and Referral Agency in the child's community.

A child may be terminated from the center under the following circumstances, which include but are not limited to:

- The health and safety of the child or other children at the center cannot be assured
- The child's developmental needs are not being met at the center
- The child requires a greater amount of staffing than exists in order to be successful
- Tuition payments fall more than two weeks behind, unless specific financial arrangements have been made with the director

When any child is terminated from the center, whether initiated by the center or the child's parents, the teachers will prepare the child for termination in a manner that is consistent with the child's developmental level and ability to understand. For preschoolers, the teacher will talk with the child and other children about the departing child, using simple reasons for the departure. The children in that group may participate in a "goodbye activity".

Evacuation Procedures

EEC licensing regulations require that DCH Preschool hold practice evacuation drills with all groups of children and staff once a month (alternating evacuation routes and times). In addition, the school will also practice walking to the emergency back-up site (see below for more details). The Director will document the date, time, route, and effectiveness of each drill. All children will evacuate the building and move to their designated spot. The Assistant Director will turn off lights and close classroom doors. They will bring the daily attendance outside with them, and a head count will be taken to make sure all children have evacuated the building. If a child with a physical disability is enrolled, the Director will develop a specific plan to ensure a safe evacuation. Children and staff may go back inside the building after the Director has checked with each group and verified numbers.

Emergency Evacuation Plan

In the event of fire, natural disaster, loss of power, heat, or water, or any other situation (chemical spill, bomb threat), the Director or Assistant Director will assess the situation and contact local authorities to determine the next step (shelter in place or evacuate). In the case of loss of power, if the school becomes too dark or too cold (below 65 degrees) because of the time of year or in the case of loss of water (if hand washing or toileting is affected), the building will be evacuated using approved evacuation routes. The children will walk to an emergency back-up site (**Dedham Community House, 671 High St. Dedham, MA**). The fire department will be contacted after the school is evacuated. Once the children and staff have arrived at the evacuation site, parents will be contacted. If the situation makes it unsafe for children to leave the building, children will be taken to the basement of the preschool to shelter in place. At this site, water and a space to sit will be available. Parents will be contacted as above. Verification of numbers using attendance clipboards and Brightwheel will take place before leaving the building or changing location and again after evacuation.

Child Abuse

In the case of suspected child abuse or neglect, the staff will document their observations including date and time and inform the Director/Assistant Director. All staff are mandated reporters of any suspected case of abuse and neglect. Massachusetts law requires mandated reporters to immediately make an oral report to DCF when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 is suffering from abuse or neglect.

DCH Preschool will cooperate in all investigations of abuse or neglect, including identifying parents or caregivers of children currently or previously in the program. It will also provide consent for disclosure to EEC from anyone they may specify as necessary to the investigation of allegation and protection of children. DCH Preschool maintains written procedures for addressing any suspected incident of child abuse or neglect.

If a complaint of child abuse is filed against a staff member, the staff member will no longer have unmonitored contact with children until the investigation is completed. The staff member would be able to return to the original position when he/she is cleared by the designated authorities, EEC and DCF, and it is determined that children are not at risk.

Child at risk hotline: 1(800) 792-5200

<https://www.mass.gov/child-abuse-and-neglect>

Transportation

DCH Preschool does not offer transportation. Parents/guardians are responsible for the transportation of children to and from preschool. Children must be escorted to their classroom by the designated adult who is dropping them off at school.

***Thank you for taking time
to read this handbook!***

Area Childhood Resources

Riverside Community Care/Preschool Team

<https://www.riversidecc.org>

Massachusetts Department of Education; Taunton Southeast and Cape Office

1 Washington Street Suite 20, Taunton, Ma 02780-3960

Enable Programs-Consultation Services

(781) 828-4770

I, _____, have received, read, and understand the Dedham Community House Preschool Parent Handbook. I understand that I am responsible to abide by the policies and procedures set forth by this handbook as well as the Health Care Policy/Emergency Procedures document. If I had any questions regarding Dedham Community House Preschool policies and procedures, I have asked the Director/Assistant Director.

Print Name _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____