



Family Handbook

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WELCOME TO THE SEEDLINGS!

At The Seedlings, we cultivate learning by supporting the whole child through harmonious caregiving and teaching. Research tells us that the first 5 years of a child's life are critical for their success in school and in life. It is our goal to partner with families to make these first five years a strong foundation for all children in our care. Through nurturing strong attachment with caregivers/teachers and fostering strong social-emotional skills we are able to promote language, motor, cognitive, literacy and math development in a coordinated effort. Our goal is for each child to gain the confidence, independence and love of learning to propel them in school and life.



WAITLIST

A family can get on the waitlist by emailing theseedlingselc@gmail.com, through the form on the website at <https://www.theseedlingsearlylearningcenter.com> or by calling the center at 360-676-4015. Priority on the waitlist is given to current Seedlings clients and staff. We also prioritize full-time participants. Part-time participants are considered when a partial opening is available. Sometimes due to enrollment in all of our classrooms, priority will be given to a certain aged child so that there will be room when that child moves to the next classroom. We will contact you if an opening is coming up and set up a tour. If you have your unborn child on the waitlist, please contact us once your child is born so that we can update the waitlist and check in about upcoming availability.

ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Your child's spot at The Seedlings is reserved when we receive your \$150 registration fee, and a deposit of half the first month's tuition. The registration fee is non-refundable, and the deposit goes towards your first month's tuition when your child starts. If we receive three weeks' notice of your decision for your child not to attend, the deposit is refundable. If your family qualifies for assistance, we must have proof of approval from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to reserve your child's spot. At that time, you will receive our enrollment packet. The enrollment packet includes:

- **Registration packet:** The registration paperwork must be fully completed and include an up-to-date record of your child's Certificate of Immunization Status, and/or a Certificate of Exemption (signed by a doctor).
- **Classroom Brochure**
- **Family Handbook:** This is available online and in hard copy at your request.

We encourage all new families to have a tour/orientation meeting with a member of our administration team before your child's first day at The Seedlings. This meeting allows us to go over registration paperwork together and to review our

Family Handbook, Disaster Manual, and Health Policies. These can be found on our website <https://www.theseedlingsearlylearningcenter.com>

We ask that you take your time to read and complete the enrollment packet. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions throughout that process.

BRIGHTWHEEL APP

We are excited to be using Brightwheel, a childcare management application, for communication with parents. Prior to your child's first day you will receive an invitation via text message to sign up for the app. The app is free to download. You will use this app to check your child in and out of the center, to communicate with the administrative team and your child's teachers. Teachers post photos and videos of your child's experiences at The Seedlings through this application. If your child is in diapers and or toilet training, teachers will post diaper changes, successful toileting, as well as toilet accidents through the app. Injury and Illness reports are posted here, as well as all meals served to your child.

Photos of your child and possibly other children in their classroom will be posted on Brightwheel for your viewing. You are able to download these photos. *Posting photos of other children on your personal social media is not permitted.*

YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DAY

It is important that your child's first few days of school are successful, so allow yourself plenty of time to get ready for school. Upon arrival please sign your child in and proceed to their classroom. Encourage your child to wash their hands. In the classroom, let your child stay with you to allow time for him/her to feel ready to become involved with the group. After looking around with your child, find a comfortable place to stay and remain there. Often children will use you as a "home- base" from which to explore the environment. Make sure that you meet all the teachers in your child's classroom, and pass on any important information to them.

On your child's first day, please bring:

- a small blanket for rest/nap time if your child has a favorite
- 3 full sets of spare clothes (labeled with your child's name)
- a photo of your family
- boots or extra shoes and rain gear
- diapers, wipes and diaper cream
- extra underwear and pants if toilet training
- medication if needed
- check infant brochure for additional infant supplies

When you want to leave, let your child know you're leaving. When you say good-bye, feel confident that the teachers will support your child with their feelings, offering comfort, reassurance, and acknowledgment of what she/he is feeling. Our intention is to honor the bonds between you and your child, and to make room for your child's feelings. It may help you to make a specific plan with your child on the way to school about how the drop-off time will look, one example, not necessarily a fit for all families: "let's read one together, and then you can give me two hugs and three kisses and push me out the door."

The first few days of school can be stressful and/or fatiguing for children, and this is sometimes expressed by regressive behavior or irritability. We also understand that the first day is difficult for parents and guardians too - please let us know how we can help you. We are able to send pictures on Brightwheel to show how your child's day is going and are available by phone at any time. Feel free to discuss any concerns you may have about your first day with your child's teacher or our administration team.

DROPPING OFF AND PICKING UP

Children should be brought to school by 9:30 to be able to participate in optimal learning time. Your child will be marked absent at 10:00am if prior arrangements for late drop off are not made in advance. Children must be signed in and out on Brightwheel using your own smartphone or with a teacher or administrator using

your own special code. When dropping off your child, please be sure that you connect with a staff member so that they know your child is at school. If all teachers and children are outside when you drop your child off, you need to take them to their assigned outdoor area.

Please remember that children can only be released to adults that are listed on their Pick-Up Authorization and Emergency Contact list. *Picture identification* will be required for any adult that is not recognized by our staff members. Families may change their child's Pick-Up Authorization list at any time.

When you are in the foyer with your child, please supervise them so that they don't run out into the parking area unsupervised. Some parents find it easier to sign their child in after taking the child to their classroom and sign their child out before getting your child at pick-up. **Please walk your child to their assigned classroom at drop off and help your child wash their hands.** Please be sure that you connect with a staff member so that they know your child is at school. If all teachers and children are outside when you drop your child off, you need to take them to their assigned outdoor area.

Between 6:45 and 9:15, some children are dropped off in other rooms where they stay until their classroom is open. *Juniper children* may be dropped off in the Multipurpose room for breakfast between 8:00 and 9:15.

At pick-up and drop-off, please escort your child to and from the car. The parking lot can be a really busy place and it is difficult for people in cars to see small children. **Please keep hold of your child's hand and supervise them closely in the parking lot.** Every once in a while, a child has a difficult time in the parking lot; maybe your hands are full, or your child is exerting their independence. Whatever the reason, we will give you a hand getting your child to the car. Just ask for help if needed.

We also ask that you do not leave your car running while picking up and dropping off.

Hours of Operation and Daily Schedules

We are open Monday-Friday, 6:45am-6:00pm. Breakfast is served between 8:00 and 9:15. For your child to benefit from the full learning experience of our program we ask them to **arrive by 9:30**. While we understand that there will be exceptions, we need for you to bring your child by 10:00 at the latest, so that they have some active time before we have lunch and nap. This also helps us prepare our food for the correct number of children. Infants can arrive and leave at any time throughout the day because infant care is based on each baby's individual need. Below is a general daily schedule. This schedule pertains to toddlers and preschool schoolers. Infant care is based on the child's needs and own routine.

General Daily Schedule

6:45-8:00	Free Choice and Stations
8:00--9:15	Breakfast served during free choice and stations
9:30-11:45	In classrooms by age group-Learning and development skills, body movement, structured play, games, learning centers, art and outdoor play (depending on weather).
11:00-11:30	Infant/Toddler Lunch (Willow, Huckleberry, Juniper Gooseberry Rooms)
11:50-12:30	Preschool Lunch (Rhodie and Cedar Rooms)
12:30--12:45	Bathroom break/clean up
11:30--2:30	Naptime Preschoolers (Infant-Willow Room nap as needed, Huckleberry Room 11:30 nap, Juniper 11:45 nap)
2:30-- 3:00	Toileting/Diapering/Wash hands for snack
3:00-- 3:15	Snack
3:15-- 4:45	Free Choice- Outside or Inside if weather doesn't allow for outside play.
4:45-- 5:15	Story and songs

5:15-- 6:00 Quiet table toys or free play

6:00 **Closing** - *Late charge (\$2 per minute) for pickup after this time*

The schedule above is a basic daily schedule. Each classroom has a more detailed schedule and can be seen hanging on the classroom wall and is part of your classroom brochure.

SEEDLINGS CLASSROOMS

Infant Care and Education

Willow Infant Room

Age: 4 weeks – 15 months, Class Size: 6 Infants, Ratio: 3:1

At Seedlings we utilize a holistic approach designed to treat your infant as an individual. From being flexible about nap and eating times to adapting on the fly to their needs, you will know that your baby is receiving high-quality care.

The Willow Room is a Mixed-Age Classroom for infants and toddlers 1-15 months of age.

Between the age of 12 months and 15 months a child will transition to the Huckleberry Room, our young toddler classroom. At around 11 months of age, we will start a discussion with parents about the transition to The Huckleberry Room. The timing of the transition will be based on the child's readiness to participate in toddler feeding, napping, and developmental activities.

The rationale for extending the time a child might stay in the Willow Room past 12 months of age is to support a smooth transition to the Huckleberry Room. A delayed transition can support the Huckleberry Room to be ready for the child and for the child to be ready for the Huckleberry room.

At The Seedlings, we individualize for all children, so individualizing for the 12-15 month child in the Willow room will be a continuation of the Individual Learning Plan already developed for the child. Special considerations for a 12-15 month old child in the Willow room could include but are not limited to.

- Drinking from a cup rather than a bottle
- Sleeping on a mat rather than in the crib
- Eating USDA meals designed specifically for toddlers
- Providing age-appropriate toys and learning activities for a 12-15 month old

The teacher to child ratio in the Willow room, regardless of the age of the children, is generally 3:1 with a maximum group size of 6. On occasion the teacher to child ratio might be 4:1 but will never exceed this or the group size of 6.

Toddler Care and Education

The time spent as a toddler will be some of the most important and formative of your child's life. For exactly that reason, Seedlings wants to help by ensuring that their journey into exploring the world around them is complete with teachers who make sure that they are given the freedom to discover and learn, and the safe environment in which to explore.

Huckleberry Toddler Room

Age: 12 - 18 Months Old, Class Size: 9 Toddlers, Ratio: 5:1

Our Huckleberry class is adjacent to our infant room so as children move from infancy to toddlerhood, they can have a smooth transition.

Juniper Toddler Room

Age: 18-32 Months Old, Class Size: 14 Toddlers, Ratio: 7:1

As your toddler grows older, Seedlings will be there to help guide their development, encourage positive social habits, scaffolding language, supporting problem-solving and cognitive skills.

Gooseberry Toddler/Preschool Room

Age: 2 - 3 Years Old, Class Size: 7-8 Toddlers/Preschoolers, Ratio: 7:1 or 8:1

This class is intentionally small to support these older toddlers as they learn the ways of being a preschooler. It is a mixed age classroom for toddlers *and*

preschoolers, 2-3 years of age. As children approach 2 years old in the Juniper room, we will start a conversation with parents and teachers about the child's readiness for the Gooseberry classroom. Considerations for moving to the Gooseberry Room include, but are not limited to:

- Gross and fine motor development
- Independence skills
- Prosocial play skills
- Communication skills
- Interest in toileting

The child/teacher ratio in the Gooseberry room will be based on the age of the students enrolled. If there is one or more children under 2.5 years, the ratio will be 7:1. If the children enrolled are all over 2.5, the ratio will be 8:1.

Preschool Care and Education

It may sound simple, but before starting school, any child can benefit from learning how to learn. With preschool childcare by Seedlings, your child will be well prepared for the structure, social life, and learning opportunities of school.

Rhododendron (Rhodie) Preschool Room

Age: 3– 4 Years Old, Class Size: 20 Preschoolers, Ratio: 7:1

This is a lively classroom where children explore and learn through play and music with routines that support your child as they become more independent.

Cedar Pre-K Room

Age: 4 -5 Years Old, Class Size: 23 Preschoolers, Ratio: 8:1

In this classroom, we continue to focus on the social skills needed for the transition to kindergarten while concentrating on the literacy, math, science, and social studies needed for kindergarten readiness.

CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

Developmentally appropriate practices as outlined by the National Association of the Education of Young Children, along with anti-bias principles, guide our curriculum. The emphasis is on creativity, choice, growing independence, cooperation and friendships. In addition, building relationships between adults (staff, parents, community) for the benefit of families is a critical component.

Let us emphasize that a child's play is their work. By playing, children are learning all they need to know to begin living successfully in this world. They are learning social values such as how to get along with others and what is acceptable or unacceptable behavior. They are learning, even at this early age, what kinds of things interest them most. Just like adults, they will feel pulled to certain activities. At The Seedlings, that may look like painting, books, block building, role playing in various themed centers, and/or sensory exploration of water, "goop", play dough, and other messy materials. Rarely will a child find interest or stimulation in all of these areas, and you may also find changes in areas of interest depending on your child's developmental level. They are also learning how to use their bodies in both large and small ways. All this learning, and more, is happening while your child "plays."

The Seedlings staff use this knowledge to plan curriculum which is developmentally appropriate. The day is planned specifically to give the children time for individual and group play, loud and quiet times, and directed and free choice play. With the emphasis on allowing each child lots of opportunity to play, the teachers plan activities that will encourage children to extend their play, make choices, experience cooperation, feel successful, and also begin to become familiar with the more abstract things in life, such as letters and numbers. This grows out of everyday exposure to stories and books, songs, finger-plays, counting games, cooking projects, caring for animals, and helping to care for the physical environment.

Our goal is to create an environment where children feel safe, respected and valued. When those crucial emotional needs are met, children are then free to wonder, grow and explore in ways that enable them to discover the joy of learning.

In all work with children, center staff strive to present multi-cultural views and anti-bias practices that recognize and applaud differences but also identify the similarities all people share. We believe that understanding and respect for all people starts very young and as adults, what we model is crucial for growth in this area

Beautiful Beginnings: A Developmental Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers

Beautiful Beginnings is a developmental curriculum designed as a guide for individualized experiences for children Birth-3 years old. It features six modules (one for each 6-month period from Birth-3) that include Developmentally appropriate experiences that are organized by the following areas of development:

- Communication
- Gross Motor
- Fine Motor
- Intellectual
- Discover
- Social
- Self-Help (6 months+)
- Pretend (18 months+)

The developmental experiences allow for scaffolding to build on each child's strengths and naturally emerging competencies and interests, providing that individualized touch infants and toddlers need. Each experience lesson has a developmental goal, detailed steps of the experience and a materials list. These experiences are easy to add into the daily play and lessons of the classroom by being adaptable for planning group goals/experiences for several children with similar developmental levels and show similar interests. The curriculum works well on an ongoing or rotating basis in classroom learning by highlighting the experience between the child, teacher, and the materials. These experiences will come alive to a child when the materials and activities are discovered by or introduced to the child at a point well timed to match the emerging interest of the child. Beautiful Beginnings fits in conjunction with the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQs) that The Seedlings uses as a screening tool to observe developmental milestones.

OUTDOOR CLASSROOMS

We very firmly believe in the outdoors being an extension of our classrooms, which means that we try to go outside at least for a little while every day, *in all weather*. Interaction with nature in this way is a great avenue for children to learn about their environment, and for growth to happen. Please be sure that your child comes dressed for the weather. We will provide sunscreen every two hours, as further detailed under our medication policies. We have dirt, sand, grass, and often mud in our outdoor classroom, and frequent active water play. We allow children to explore all of these elements freely.

In the summer we spend most of our day outside and bring the classroom with us. On extremely hot days, we will come inside for cool downs in the afternoon when it is the hottest to avoid overheating, and children's outside time is limited in other extreme weather.

Developmental Screening (Focus): During the month of September, upon enrollment and when deemed necessary, an ASQ and ASQ-SE will be completed on each child by the parents and teacher. The information is used to assess the child's development and plan learning experience to meet the child's individual development as part of the curriculum.

Nap Time

(WAC 170-295-2050) Supervised rest periods will be provided to all children in our program. Nap time at The Seedlings is a time for children to rest and rejuvenate. All children are encouraged to try and nap, but no child is forced to. Children are allowed to bring comfort items such as blankets, pacifiers, or a soft toy for nap time. Individual children may have differences, but a typical routine for going down for nap may include:

- Encouraging a child to lay on their tummy (except infants, who must lay on their back)
- Rubbing or patting a child's back to help them relax
- A teacher humming or rhythmic shushing, especially in the younger classes

- Calm music playing
- A small weighted pillow or blanket

We provide a nap mat and sheet for your child. Children may bring a blanket from home or we can provide one. **Please label your child's items.** We will wash your child's bedding weekly, if left here. If your child's blanket goes back and forth between home and school, we ask that you wash it weekly.

MEALS AND SNACKS

We do not charge separately for meals because we participate in the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Our meals are planned according to the USDA and CACFP guidelines. Breakfast is served from 8:00-9:15 A.M, Juniper Lunch is at 11:00, Huckleberry lunch is at 11:10 and Rhodie lunch is at 11:40, and Cedar Lunch is at 12:00. P.M snack is between 2:30 and 3:30. We offer a late snack between 4:30 and 5:00. We accept donations of healthy, nut-free items for our late afternoon (4:30) snack.

Our Center has a strict NO PEANUT policy. Please do not bring any food items that contain any peanut ingredients into the Center, and be mindful if your child eats them before coming to The Seedlings.

Food allergies and preferences can be accommodated. *If your child has a special diet, please include this information in your child's registration packet.* A separate "Food Preference Form" or "Food Allergy Form" will be required. The Center provides substitutions for children with special dietary needs. At times, families may also be required to provide supplemental foods to assist with special dietary needs.

Special occasion foods can be brought to the Center. Please plan ahead with your child's teacher. Health and safety regulations require that food items be store-bought. Please contact the administration team if you have any questions.

ITEMS FROM HOME

Clothing

Please send your child in clothing that is comfortable and can withstand the wear and tear of our daily routine and activities. Because our activities can be messy, we ask that children do not wear special articles of clothing to school.

Since we go outside everyday, hats, coats, and mittens are necessary in cold weather. We ask that 3 complete changes of clothing are kept in your child's cubby at all times, in case of spills, toilet accidents, etc. **All clothing should be labeled with your child's full name.** Please also provide a pair of rainboots and rain clothes that will stay at The Seedlings. In the summer, please provide swimwear so that children can freely participate in water play. We will launder swimwear as needed.

Toys and Comfort Items

We understand the attachment children have to certain objects during various stages of development. It is acceptable to bring one stuffed animal, a doll, or another "lovey" as a comfort during nap/rest time. We will ask the child to keep this object in their cubby or in their nap mat during class time.

We ask that weapons of any kind (swords, nerf guns, light sabers, etc.) remain at home. If play is centered on violence, or weapons are created with manipulatives, children will be positively redirected by teachers.

Small or valuable objects, such as money, marbles, jewelry, or electronics also need to remain at home. *The Seedlings is not responsible for any lost or broken toys.*

Label your Child's things! Please label your child's clothing and other supplies.

Any items left at The Seedlings after your child is withdrawn will be donated.

HOLIDAYS AND CLOSURES

We will be *closed* the following holidays:

New Year Day, Martin Luther King Jr Day, Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Thanksgiving and the day after Thanksgiving (Native American Heritage Day) and Christmas.

Should a holiday fall on a Saturday, the Center will be closed the Friday before the holiday. Should it fall on a Sunday, the Center will be closed on Monday.

We may be closed or will close early on October 31st, December 24th, December 31st, and one Friday in August for Graduation. This will be determined and posted so that families can plan for alternate care if needed.

Our program includes the celebration of some holidays but there is no religious instruction. Holidays and special days shall be celebrated at a level appropriate for the children's development.

Teacher In-Service Closures

We believe that high quality childcare is correlated with ongoing professional development for teachers. As such, we are closed 5 other days throughout the year for teacher in-service training. These dates will be posted on Brightwheel and on the Annual Closure Sheet that is sent out annually in the fall and will be with your registration packet. **We will be closed on Thursday and Friday before Labor Day, the first or last day of Bellingham Public Schools Spring Break, and Friday before Memorial Day.** These are teacher in-service days to train, clean and prep the center for the new school year and summer sessions.

No tuition credits are given on the days that the Center is closed for a holiday or other reasons, as these dates are calculated into your monthly fee rate.

Closures Due to Inclement Weather

During times of inclement weather, we will make every attempt to be open for our families. *As a general rule, if Bellingham School District is closed or running on a 2 hour delay, we will plan to open late at 8:45 so that staff have time to get their own children situated and to the center safely.* We will post our closures and delays on our Facebook page and on Brightwheel.

EMERGENCY/DISASTER PLAN

In the event that our building is unable to be occupied, we will take one of the following options:

1. Take refuge in the two houses located directly behind the learning center,
2. Go to Alderwood Elementary School (3400 Hollywood, 360-676-6404) or
3. Go to Life Church (747 Marine Drive, 360-733-8980).

Location will be posted on the front door, on our facebook page, and through Brightwheel if internet is available.

Any school closures or emergency evacuations will be called into **Cascade Radio Group (KAFE 104.1)**. We will also post any closures on our Facebook Page and through Brightwheel if internet is available.

If there is an emergency and we need to *shelter in place* here at The Seedlings, we have food and supplies to last for several days. **If your child requires life-saving medication during school hours or outside of school hours, we need a three-day supply here at the center to take with us in case of evacuation or to have here in case we need to shelter in place for an extended amount of time.** This could include but not limited to insulin, EpiPen, or an inhaler.

It is very important that we have current information about you and your child, your current phone numbers, where you can be reached, and who can pick your child up in the case of an emergency. *Please note that we still will not be*

able to release your child to anyone not on the release form. It may be a good idea to add those you may send to pick up your child in the case of an extreme emergency. **Please make sure to update any of this information ANY time it changes.** A parent can update this themselves on Brightwheel.

We care very deeply for the Safety and Security of your child. In the case of an emergency, please be assured that we would do everything in our power to maintain a safe and secure environment.

We have a detailed Emergency/Disaster Guide available for your review at the front desk and on our website.

<http://www.theseedlingsearlylearningcenter.com>

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

For all other FNS nutrition assistance programs, state or local agencies, and their subrecipients, must post the following Nondiscrimination Statement:

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/ad-3027.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

email:

Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

The Seedlings Non-Discrimination Policy

The Seedlings Early Learning Center participates in the Child/Adult Care Food Program as well as US Government Childcare Subsidy programs. In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, our Center does not exclude from admission, deny privileges, participation in programs or otherwise discriminate against any person on the basis of **race, color, national origin, sex, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, age, use of service animal, veteran or military status or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity** We do not

discriminate in the administration of education policies, admission policies, or fee structure. This policy shall be included in the Family and Staff Handbooks. It shall also be reviewed when dealing with student admission, programs, and in all advertising done for prospective students. A copy of this policy will be posted at all times in the Center.

Commitment to Diversity

The Seedlings Early Learning Center is committed to acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of our world. We strive to create an environment that encompasses respect, fairness, cooperation, understanding, and professionalism for our families, children, and staff. We welcome and support families, children, and staff of all ages, races, cultural backgrounds, religions, physical abilities, socioeconomic status, genders, and sexual orientations. In doing so, we hope to be an example for the kind of world we envision for our children – a community where all people are accepted and understood.

Gender Identity

At Seedlings, we strive to promote a safe and inclusive environment for everyone (staff, children, and families), regardless of gender expression or gender identity. All staff, children, and families must be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of gender, gender identity, and gender expression. Staff, children, and families may not harass, discriminate, or retaliate against anyone based on their gender identity or transition status. Transgender and gender nonconforming employees have the right to dress in a way that matches their gender identity, in alignment with Seedlings' dress codes. Transgender, gender-nonconforming, and nonbinary employees have the right to discuss their gender identity and expression openly, or to keep that information private. We will respect everyone's pronouns and will ask that staff, children, and families do so as well.

ABUSE PREVENTION

Because we care for children and desire to protect them, The Seedlings has implemented Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures. A copy of this policy can be found at the counter in the foyer for your reading pleasure. It is summarized below.

The Seedlings Early Learning Center requires all volunteers and staff members to complete 3 SAFETY STEPS before employment or volunteer work begins. This process includes background check, reference check, mandated reporter training, sexual abuse prevention training and Seedlings Abuse Prevention Policies and Procedures training.

Abuse Prevention in Curriculum

Abuse prevention starts with the work we do every day with children in our care.

We use appropriate language. We start using the appropriate names of body parts from the beginning, so children use and know their private body parts. We talk about how our private body parts are the parts of our body covered by a swimsuit.

We respect modesty. While our bathrooms have open doors so that teachers can supervise toileting, children can always ask for privacy when using bathrooms. Teachers read children's cues and allow them privacy if wanted.

We don't force affection. We teach children that they can decline hugs and affection and never force children to show affection to other children or adults. We teach children to ask for hugs and teachers ask children before giving TLC to a child. We don't kiss at school because we have a lot of germs in our mouths and kissing spreads germs. We teach children that their body is their own, no one should touch their body unless it is to keep them clean and healthy like when a grown up helps them with cleaning up after an accident, or to change a diaper or to wash a face, etc We teach them that they can always tell a safe grown up if they are uncomfortable with how they are touched or talked to.

We give children a solid rule. We teach children that it is NOT okay for anyone to look at or touch their private parts, or what is covered by their swimsuits. We let them know that they can always tell a grown up that they trust if they are asked to show their private parts, if anyone shows them their private parts or touches them in anyway. We listen to children and thank them for trusting us when they tell us about their feelings.

Second Step Child Protection Unit. For preschool age children, we implement the Second Step Child Protection Unit. This curriculum introduces the topic of child sexual abuse within a general safety curriculum. The program realizes the role of the Parent/Guardian by including them in the curriculum and teaches children to get help if they need it.

To increase Parent/Guardian awareness of abuse and maltreatment of children and an understanding of typical and not typical sexual behaviors in young children, we offer a Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment Prevention Training without cost to all Parents/Guardians of children attending The Seedlings Early Learning Center. Parents can request a link to the free training.

The full policy further outlines procedures for diapering/toileting, naptime, physical contact, one-to-one teacher/child interactions.

We are mandatory reporters as required by the Child Care Licensing Requirement: WAC 388-150-480 Reporting of Child Abuse. Any instance where the licensee or staff has reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional child abuse, child neglect or child exploitation, is required to be reported, by telephone, to Child Protective Services. *Any suspicion of immediate danger to a child will also be reported to local law enforcement.*

HEALTH POLICIES

Hand Washing

Hand washing is a very important part of our infection control procedures. **We ask that children are assisted by their parent/guardian in washing their hands when arriving at and leaving The Seedlings each day.** Children wash hands before each meal, after using the toilet, when coming in from outdoors and any other times that warrant. Staff washes hands after helping children with nose blowing, toileting, diapering, and other times as needed. Soap, warm water, paper towels, and proper hand washing techniques are used at every wash.

Illness

Children exhibiting these signs of illness **cannot** be admitted to the Center. These symptoms include:

- A temperature of 100.4 degrees or higher
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Obvious infectious matter draining from eyes
- Open sores or skin rashes that indicate possible infection
- Any contagious disease, illness, or infection

A note from a physician may be required upon re-admittance depending on symptoms and/or diagnosis.

If your child becomes ill during care, we will do our best to isolate your child away from others under the supervision of staff until you or an authorized person can come to pick them up.

Any outbreak of a communicable disease will be reported to the local Health Department. In the event that we are within the guidelines given by the Department as an epidemic, we would follow the procedure for closure.

If your child is ill or has a communicable disease, including influenza, please inform the Center when calling in your child's absence, so we may inform other parents of the symptoms.

Keep me *home* if...

- Vomiting two or more times in 24 hours
- Body rash combined with a fever or itching
- Lice or nits
- Three or more watery stools in 24 hours
- Eye infection, or thick mucus or pus draining from eye
- Sore throat with a fever or swollen glands
- Fever of 100.4 degrees or more
- Just not feeling good – unusually tired, pale, lack of appetite, confused, upset

INCIDENTS, INJURY, AND MEDICATIONS AT THE CENTER

Incident Reports

An incident/injury report will be completed for any injury/incident that is sustained by a child. A paper copy of the injury report will be made, and a photo of it will be posted on Brightwheel for your review. The report will describe the incident and the care that was given by staff. If you notice an injury on your child and do not have an incident/injury report, please bring it to the attention of the staff. We do our best to document all injuries, but from time to time we miss one. We will make every attempt to figure out when and where the injury occurred. *We ask that if your child has a visible injury that happens at home, please let us know so that we can document the incident for record keeping purposes*

First Aid

In the event that a child has a minor injury, such as a splinter, small cut, abrasion, etc. the childcare staff will clean the wound with soap and water, apply ice if necessary, and dress it appropriately. Reports of injury or illness will be sent to you on Brightwheel.

In the event that further medical attention is required, a parent/guardian will be contacted. If emergency care is necessary, the child will be transported to St. Joseph's Hospital Emergency Center by ambulance.

Medication

Medication can be given to your child while in care under these circumstances:

- Parent/Guardian must complete and sign a "Medical Authorization Form"
- **Prescription medications must come in the prescription bottle and administration must be consistent with the prescription label**
- An over-the-counter medication can only be given with written parental consent and if the medication bottle label indicates how much medication to give based on the child's age and weight

*Medications will be kept in locked boxes in the kitchen and the Willow Room. If needed, medications can be kept in a lockbox in the refrigerator. Lifesaving medication such as Epi-pens or inhalers are kept in the **Emergency Backpack** in the classroom out of reach of children, but easily accessible for immediate use. Staff will record all administrations of medication and include the date, time, dosage, and their name on paper and in brightwheel.*

Please do not leave any medications in your child's diaper bag or backpack where children can reach them. Any medication including diaper cream, teething drops, etc. should be left in the office or given directly to your child's teacher.

Chapstick and the like are to be treated as medications, especially in terms of not having it directly accessible to the child during their day at school. We can apply it with an over-the-counter medication form, and will chart it as such.

Cough drops or lozenges are not allowed.

Sunscreen

We apply sunscreen when the UV index is 4 and above or as directed by the parent. During spring, summer and fall, we ask that you put sunscreen on your child before dressing them in the A.M. and we will reapply late morning and in the P.M. We provide sunscreen as part of our registration/supply fee. In the Spring, a permission form to apply our sunscreen is sent to families to sign. A family can opt out of program-provided sunscreen and supply their own. A medical authorization form must be filled out in order for our staff to apply any sunscreen. You can send hats and lightweight long sleeve shirts as well, and we will ensure that your child wears this for protection from the sun.

Doctor Appointments and Immunization Records

We are required to have a **yearly Physical Examination/Well Child Exam date** for each child. A well child exam date within the last year, a signed Certificate of Immunization Status, and/or a signed Exemption to Immunization form are *required* upon admission to our program and must be updated. Anytime your child has a Physical or Well Child Exam, or receives any immunizations, it is the family's responsibility to complete, sign, and turn in a "Information Update Form."

DIAPERING AND POTTY TRAINING

Families must provide all diapering supplies; this includes wipes, diapers, and diaper cream. If you would like diaper cream applied during changes, please fill out the Diaper Cream Authorization Form. All diapering supplies must be labeled with your child's name. Your child's teacher will notify you, via Brightwheel when your child's diaper/wipe supply is running low. If your child runs out of diapers, any extra diapers used will be replaced with the same number from a new supply provided by the family.

We check diapers regularly throughout the day and change at least every two hours or as the need arises.

Toilet training is available when the child is ready. Children in potty training are taken to the bathroom consistently. A staff member stays with the child and assists with hygiene. We work with parents as a team to ensure success. Please share any special techniques, words, or phrases used by your family with your child's teachers. We have a potty training brochure that we will share as the child approaches this phase of development.

SANITIZING

A sanitizing solution is used on our changing tables between each use, on classroom surfaces, eating surfaces, and on toys and other materials that may be exposed to bodily fluids. The bathroom is cleaned thoroughly each day, and as needed throughout the day. We use the 3-step method of cleaning as recommended by the DCYF, which is soapy water, fresh rinse water, then sanitizing solution.

DISCIPLINE POLICY (WAC: 170-295-2040)

Purpose

Children are learning to express their emotions and to acquire the complex skills necessary to reach their full potential. Understandably, children try a variety of behaviors as they approach this difficult task, and as they struggle to achieve a balance between their personal needs, their autonomy, and the rights and safety of others. We see discipline as a learning process designed to encourage children to recognize the choices available in order to select behaviors that are effective, appropriate, and acceptable.

Policy

We believe that discipline should not humiliate or shame a child in any way or damage their self-esteem. We believe that unacceptable behavior should be stopped, not because the child is bad, but because he or she has made an inappropriate choice.

In accordance with the DCYF's requirements, our discipline practices "guide the child's behavior based on an understanding of the individual child's needs and stage of development" and "promote the child's developmentally appropriate social behavior, self-control, and respect for the rights of others". Our staff will only use "behavior management and guidance practices that are fair, reasonable, consistent, and related to the child's behavior".

We think of discipline as guidance and not as a punishment. We are helping children understand what is expected from them. In order to accomplish this, we will follow these procedures:

- Set reasonable and consistent limits which are clearly defined in words that children understand
- Encourage children to solve their own problems by assisting them to verbalize their needs while helping them find an appropriate solution
- State directions in a positive, rather than a negative form, whenever possible
- Respect children's rights to "negative" emotions, such as anger, jealousy, or fear, and work to understand their feelings
- Select consequences for misbehavior which are immediate, of short duration, and if possible, bear some relation to the act
- Meet with parents to develop a behavioral plan that entire staff is aware of and contributes to the execution of the plan

Our Center will also prevent and prohibit any person on the premises from using cruel, unusual, hazardous, frightening, or humiliating discipline, including, but not limited to:

- *Corporal punishment*, including biting, jerking, shaking, spanking, slapping, hitting, striking, kicking, pinching, flicking, or any other means of inflicting physical pain or causing bodily harm to the child

- *Verbal abuse*, such as yelling, shouting, name calling, shaming, making derogatory remarks about a child or the child's family, or using language that threatens, humiliates, or frightens a child.

Progressive steps to prevent and address behavior issues:

1. *Prevention*. Most behavior issues can be prevented by proactive measures. The following can prevent behavior issues from arising:
 - a. Making sure that child knows the safety rules. Safety rules can be taught in whole group, small group and individually.
 - b. Making sure there are enough materials. Always provide several items of the same type of toy or material.
 - c. Make sure that children have enough materials in the classroom, and they are rotated often. Engaged children will behave appropriately if there are ample activities to engage with. If children are bored or not challenged, behavior problems will arise.
 - d. Observe, notice and intervene before a conflict starts, by getting closer to the action and redirecting the play, providing an alternate activity. Distracting one child or both to a different activity.
2. *Redirecting*. When children are engaging in an activity in an unsafe or inappropriate manner, state to them what they can do, distract them, by pointing out appropriate activities, i.e.
 - a. Use walking feet
 - b. Use a quiet voice inside, you can use a big voice when we go outside
 - c. You can climb on the climbing mats
 - d. Look! You can play with the blocks over here.
 - e. Let's go play together over in the house area.
 - f. I would like to read a book to you
3. *Reasoning*. Restate set rules and inappropriateness of child's actions. Give child reasons why their actions were inappropriate and alternative behaviors that are acceptable. Whenever possible, help children to resolve conflicts with other children themselves, while facilitating that discussion.

4. *Removal from Activity.* When reasoning does not change a child's behavior, removing the child from the activity involved may be necessary. Removal from activity must be for an appropriate amount of time (for example, not for the rest of the week, but only for the remainder of that activity at that time) and directly related to the misbehavior. Removal can be achieved in a variety of ways:
- a. Direct the child to choose a different activity. "Because you were throwing the blocks after we talked about this, you will need to choose a different activity. Stay with the child as they choose and help them settle in the new activity.
 - b. Activity is taken away from the child-if a child is misusing equipment, such as a game, or ball, the item can be taken away from the child.
 - c. If a child cannot choose an alternate activity or is angry or upset and is not calming down, they can be removed from the activity or area for a short period of time (usually 2-3 minutes). This time away is a time for the child to regain composure and think about their actions. Where they go to do this is dependent on each classroom or environment. The Teacher should have a designated calm down area that is somewhat away from others, but not isolated. Child must be in visual sight and safe. The Teacher should keep an eye on the child, they can reassure that child that when they are ready, they can talk so the child can resume activities. When the child seems calm, then the teacher will talk with the child, discuss what happened and come up with alternatives to the misbehavior.
 - d. *If child's behavior is not controlled by the above measures*, or has had multiple issues in one day, a staff person could request that a child visit the Director or the Assistant Director in the office. In the office, the child will have a chance to calm down if needed. How this is achieved is based on the child and their needs. Once the child is calm, The Director or Assistant Director will talk with the child about what was happening. They will talk about the inappropriate behavior and

alternatives to that behavior and next steps will be determined. Next steps could be for the child to return to the classroom, a phone call to parent, child to go home for the rest of the day, placement in another classroom or area for a short time, writing a note to the teacher or other children, etc. *Time in the office is not punishment.* It can be seen as time away from the group. Sometimes when children are overstimulated in the classroom, their behaviors flare, and quiet time in the office is exactly what is needed to help them gain control of themselves and reset.

- e. *Children will not be forced to tell others that they are sorry for their misbehavior.* It can be suggested as a way to “make it right”. Children can verbally say sorry, write a note, or can give a gesture, like a hug or pat on the back to show that they regret their actions. Staff can also model by telling the hurt child that they are sorry that they got hurt.
5. *Physical Intervention and Restraint.* The purpose of this procedure is to outline the protocols to be followed in the rare case of a restrictive physical intervention being used by a member of staff towards a child.
- a. ***The use of physical intervention/restraint is -- wherever possible -- avoided.*** However, where necessary and appropriate, it can be used to keep a child or others safe.
 - b. It is our aim to:
 - i. Create a warm and calm atmosphere that promotes a sense of community
 - ii. Achieve a consistent attitude by all staff that gives children a sense of security and safety while promoting clear expectations on acceptable behavior
 - iii. Ensure that all staff, directors, children, parents/caregivers understand their roles and responsibility with regard to behavior management
 - iv. Promote the continual development of staff and appropriate documented training necessary

- c. The attitude and behavior of all staff is essential in creating and maintaining a positive environment, the committed team approach will help provide a positive role model for children where they respect themselves and others.

- i. Definition:

- 1. *Physical intervention* is any method of physically intervening to resolve a difficult or dangerous situation and is not necessarily physical restraint. An example is when a teacher directs a child away from an unsafe behavior by placing their hand on the child's back and gently guides them away from the situation or a teacher offers to pick a child up and the child complies.
 - 2. *Physical restraint* is defined as when a member of staff uses their strength with the intention of restricting a child's movement against their will.
 - 3. *Physical intervention and restraint should be used as a **last resort** to support children in times of crisis.* Restraint should be avoided wherever possible. It is never a substitute for good behavior management. Other methods (such as defusing conflict, non- physical calming, etc.) of managing the situation should always be tried first, unless this is impractical.

- ii. *The degree of force used should be the minimum needed to achieve the desired result.* Physical restraint should only be considered an option if:

- 1. Calming and defusing strategies *have failed* to de-escalate the situation
 - 2. The response is in the paramount interests of the child
 - 3. Not intervening is likely to result in more dangerous consequences than intervening.

- iii. *Before using physical restraint, staff should, wherever practicable, tell the child to stop unwanted behavior and communicate in a calm manner throughout the incident.* Staff should never give the impression of acting out of anger or frustration or to punish a child and should make it clear that physical contact or restraint will stop as soon as it ceases to be necessary.
 - d. *Documentation.* Whenever physical restraint is used, an incident report **must** be completed and submitted to the Director or the person in charge *on the day that incident occurred*. This report will be shared with the parent.
6. *Staff/Director Conference*-If a staff member is having difficulty directing the child, the director should be consulted, so as to discuss alternative measures.
7. *Staff/Director/Parent Conference.* If the parent needs to formally be involved in the discipline process, specific changes in behavior will be requested and specific consequences for non-compliance will be outlined. Parental involvement can also promote compliance with appropriate behavior away from the center.
8. *Outside supports and intervention.* At times outside supports may be accessed to help parents and teachers implement strategies to help the child through difficult behaviors.
9. *Removal from Program*-In very rare cases and when all disciplinary processes have failed, the family may be asked to find an alternative program, either for temporary or permanent placement away from our center. Only the **Director** will have the authorization to make any decisions regarding any temporary or permanent removal from The Seedlings Early Learning Center and will work closely with the family to find an alternative that would better meet the needs of the child.

ABOUT BITING

Biting is unfortunately not unexpected in toddler and young preschool groups, but can be very emotionally charged. Toddlers may bite for many reasons. Sometimes the biting is related to teething. Sometimes toddlers bite to express feelings they can't yet express with words. We have seen children bite when they are frustrated, and we have seen them bite in the excitement of a happy moment. No one can predict which children will bite, but we are ready to help toddlers who do bite learn other behaviors. We are also ready to give treatment, sympathy, and advise to children who are bitten. Here are the ways we work to prevent biting and how we respond to it when it does happen.

First, we try to *program the day* to avoid boredom, frustration, or overstimulation. We provide a calm and cheerful atmosphere with a mix of stimulating, soothing, age-appropriate activities, and multiples of favorite toys. We also work to model acceptable and appropriate behaviors for the children, helping them learn words to express their feelings and giving them tools to resolve conflicts with our help.

Second, if a bite does occur, *we help the child who was bitten*. We reassure him or her and care for the bite. If the skin is not broken, we use a cold pack. If the skin is broken, we follow medical advice and clean the bite with soap and water. If it is likely the bite may get dirty, we will cover it to keep it clean. If your child is bitten, we will call or message you in Brightwheel to let you know about the bite. The teachers will fill out an incident report and send it on Brightwheel. We also respond to the child who did the biting. We show the children strong disapproval of biting. Our specific response varies by circumstances, but our basic message is that biting is the wrong thing to do. We also help the child who bit to learn different, more appropriate behavior, and we let their parents know there's a problem so we can work together to solve it.

Third, the teachers and administration *analyze the cause of ongoing biting*. We develop a plan to address the causes of the biting patterns. When we need to develop such a plan, we share the details with parents, so they know specifically how we are addressing this problem.

Fourth, *parents are notified* if their child starts to bite. We ask parents to keep us informed if their child is biting at home. Children who bite in our program do not

necessarily bite at home. But if your child is biting in both places, it is important for all of us to be consistent in dealing with it. Communication is very important in order to help your child stop biting.

We wish we could guarantee that biting will never happen in our program, but we know there is no such guarantee. You can count on us to deal appropriately with biting so it will end as quickly as possible. We will support your children whether they bite or are bitten. We want the best for all the children in our program. If you want more information on biting or have questions or concerns, please let us know.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD POLICY

We have found that, from time to time, we have a child who does not adjust well to our program for a variety of reasons. When this occurs, our procedure is as follows:

- *Identify the behaviors* that are interfering with the child's integration and/or group routine
- Teachers and Directors will *work with the family* to try and identify the problem and to develop appropriate techniques to help the child change the behavior
- *Arrange for an outside observer to come in*, observe, evaluate, and report to the Directors and family at parental expense. *There could be a cost for this service that would be the parent's responsibility.*

When the child, or other children or adults in the center, cannot be kept safe within our setting even after above interventions, or if the child continues to be disruptive to the point of interfering with other children receiving the care and attention they deserve, we reserve the right to notify the family of discontinued service to the child. All efforts will be made to support the family to make other care plans, and to forward all documentation, observations, and behavior plans.

We also reserve the right to discontinue service when a family member becomes physically or verbally abusive to any staff member or child in our care.

ABSENCES

If your child is absent on their scheduled day for any reason, *please call or use Brightwheel to notify the Center by 8:30 A.M.* This allows us to adjust our meal counts and planned activities. The Seedlings ELC cannot guarantee make-up days for any given student under any given circumstance.

FAMILY STRESS

We have created the following guidelines for our relationships with families during painful or uneven times. It is important to us that we be supportive while remaining a safe and neutral place for children.

- 1. Adults who raise their voice or act in a “scary” or threatening way will be asked to step outside of the Center and away from children.**
- 2. If there is any evidence that someone is potentially dangerous, staff will immediately call 911.**
- 3. If a parent or guardian is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs, another adult will be called to pick up the child.**
- 4. While at the Center, adults are asked to refrain from speaking of personal issues (support, custody, etc.) when children (including their own) are present.**
- 5. Unless we have legal documents stating otherwise, parental rights are respected by the Center.**

6. **Please do not engage staff members in lengthy conversations during drop-off or pick-up times.** We ask that you make a meeting time for longer conversations to allow teachers to keep their focus on the children throughout the day.

Pest Control Plan

We do not regularly apply pesticides to our building. We only apply pesticide if necessary. If it is necessary to apply pesticides, the following procedures will be followed:

We will provide written notification 48 hours in advance when this will be done

We will always apply pesticides over the weekend, so it has time to dissipate some before children return on Monday.

A copy of the complete Pest Control Policy will be kept in the office and is available at any time for your review.

If you have read the parent handbook to this part, you are eligible for a \$10 discount on your childcare. Please put your name on a post-it note with the words “I read the parent handbook” and I will give your family a credit on our brightwheel billing. **Thanks so much for reading this important document!**

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

A schedule of current tuition and fees is attached to this Parent Handbook as part of the financial agreement. This tuition fee schedule is subject to change. We are committed to giving at least one-month notice when fee changes are necessary.

1. All tuition payments and DSHS Copays are due by the 10th of each month.
2. Delinquent bills will be charged a \$20 late fee, per month.
3. Late pick-up: There is a charge of \$2.00 a minute after 6:00 closing time. This fee is added to your monthly billing.
Upon leaving our program, we ask that you give at least a 2-week notice, otherwise you will be charged.
4. A one-week vacation credit per year will be allowed per family after the first year (for sick days, vacation days, etc.) This week is the number of days your child normally attends (i.e. 3/4/5 days/wk.)
5. Families attending 5 days a week with multiple children in the program will receive a 10% overall discount on their childcare bill. Families attending 4 days a week with multiple children will receive a 5% overall discount on their childcare bill.
6. You are billed a monthly tuition fee and that holds your spot. This charge is not based on the number of hours your child actually attends.
7. A bi-annual registration/supply fee will be charged in September and March of each year in addition to the first registration/deposit fee. DCYF pays the registration for families on childcare subsidies.
8. Payments can be made by ACH transaction on Brightwheel or Check or Cash at the front desk for Free. Credit Card payments made on Brightwheel will be charged a transaction fee to the credit card holder.