


Serenity
Early Learning Center

- Family Handbook -





Parent Handbook

Serenity Early Learning Center 2: 5090 Summerdale Ave, Philadelphia PA 19124
Phone: (215-289-2231)
Website: www.serenitysuccess.com

Welcome to Serenity Early Learning Center!

Dear Family,

We are delighted that you have chosen our center to provide for the needs of your child(ren). You and your family are encouraged to visit our center prior to the first day of enrollment to give our teachers, and your child, an opportunity to meet and become better acquainted. It will make separating on the first day a bit easier.

The Parent Handbook has been written to describe our program, philosophy, policies, and, all the practical details that go into making each day as happy and successful as possible. Please carefully read this handbook and keep it for future reference. The staff at Serenity would be glad to address any of your questions. Thank you for choosing Serenity Early Learning Center. Once again, welcome! We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT US.....	1
Philosophy	1
Mission	1
Certification.....	2
Definition of Family	2
Hours of Operation	2
Holidays.....	2
Admission & Enrollment	2
Inclusion	2
Non-Discrimination	2
Family Activities.....	3
Confidentiality.....	3
Staff Qualifications.....	3
Child to Staff Ratios.....	3
Communication & Family Partnership	4
Open Door Policy	4
Publicity	4
CURRICULA & LEARNING	5
Learning Environment	5
Curricula & Assessment	5
Developmental Screening	5
Outings and Field Trips	5
Transitions	6
Transition from home to center.....	6
Transition between learning programs	6
Transition to elementary school.....	6
Transition for before/after school care.....	6
Electronic Media	6
Multiculturalism.....	7
Celebrations	7
Rest Time	7
Toilet Training.....	7
GUIDANCE.....	7
General Procedure	7
Challenging Behavior	8
Physical Restraint.....	8
Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families.....	8
TUITION AND FEES.....	9
Important Notice	9
Tuition Rates	9
Tuition Deposit.....	9
Payment	9
Methods of Payment.....	9
Late Payment Charges.....	9
Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges	10
Late Pick-up Fees.....	10
Other Fees.....	10
Credits & No Credits.....	10
ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL.....	10
Absence.....	10
Vacation.....	10
Withdrawal.....	10
Transfer of Records.....	11

Closing Due to Extreme Weather	11
DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP	11
General Procedure	11
Cell Phone Usage.....	12
Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up.....	12
Right to Refuse Child Release	12
PERSONAL BELONGINGS	12
What to Bring.....	12
Cubbies	13
Lost & Found	13
Toys from Home	13
NUTRITION	13
Foods Brought from Home	13
Food Prepared for or at the Center	14
Food Allergies.....	14
Meal Time.....	14
Infant Feedings.....	14
Children 24 Months and Older.....	14
School Aged Participants	14
HEALTH.....	14
Immunizations	14
Physicals	15
Illness	15
Allergy Prevention	16
Medications	16
Communicable Diseases.....	17
SAFETY	17
Clothing	17
Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play.....	18
Communal Water-Play	18
Injuries	18
Biting.....	18
Respectful Behavior	18
Smoking.....	18
Prohibited Substances.....	19
Dangerous Weapons.....	19
Child Custody	19
Suspected Child Abuse	19
EMERGENCIES.....	19
Lost or Missing Child	19
Fire Safety	20
Emergency Transportation	20
CENTER POLICIES	20
FAMILY ACTIVITIES	218

ABOUT US

Philosophy

Our Philosophy

We Believe...

- That children are precious and must receive care from adults who are capable and caring—whose values enable them to be excellent role models.
- That children should experience numerous positive learning milestones, leading to an increased sense of competence and independence.
- That children's play is extremely vital to healthy physical development, acceptable social skills, and cognitive growth.
- That teachers, drawing upon their training and experience, must create an appropriate educational environment which carefully guides children from one developmental, and cognitive, level to another.
- That parents contribute to and enhance the quality of care offered at Serenity Early Learning Center.

Serenity Early Learning Center welcomes those of diverse faiths, ethnic origins, race, sex, handicapping condition, or ancestry.

Mission

Our professional and dedicated team nurtures and educates infants, toddlers, preschool, and school-age children in a wide-range of childcare programs. Our children develop positive social skills and values and learn about their world through age-appropriate play, projects, and activities. We provide a stable, secure learning environment that fosters a solid foundation for lifelong success. At Serenity, we encourage children to discover their individual strengths and unique talents. We are devoted to creating a fun, safe, and interactive learning experience for kids while offering a high-quality educational program. We adhere to the Pennsylvania Department of Education Standards for Early Childhood and hire teachers with specialized training and experience. We believe learning is best accomplished in a place that is emotionally secure, physically safe, and fun!

Certification

Serenity Early Learning Center 2 is a State Licensed childcare facility that operates in Philadelphia PA.

Serenity Early Learning Center 2 participates in the PA Keystone STARS to quality program and currently has earned two out of four stars.

Definition of Family

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

Hours of Operation

Childcare services are provided from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. Our centers are closed on weekends. All children are expected to arrive at the center each morning before 9:00am, **no children will be permitted to enter the building after our 10:15am deadline.**

Holidays

Serenity early learning Center will be closed on the following holidays New Year's Day, and the day after. Memorial Day, and the day after. Independence Day, and the day after. Labor Day, MLK Day, Thanksgiving Day, and the day after. And Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and the day after. regular tuition is expected.

Admission & Enrollment

Children may be enrolled on either a fulltime or part time basis. Children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

Inclusion

Serenity Early Learning Center believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

Non-Discrimination

At Serenity Early Learning Center equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Family Activities

Each family is a child’s first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children’s classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Staff Qualifications

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

Position Title	Education/Certification	Experience
Teacher	Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education	2 years
Teacher Assistant/Aide	Child Development Associate Credential	1 year

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

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by Serenity Early Learning Center.

Child to Staff Ratios

Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
≤ 12 months	<u>1-4</u>	<u>[6]</u>
13-35 months	<u>1-5</u>	<u>[8]</u>
3,4 & 5-year-olds	<u>1-10</u>	<u>[16]</u>
6 to 8-year-olds	<u>12-1</u>	<u>[20]</u>
9 to 12 year olds	<u>15-1</u>	<u>[24]</u>

Communication & Family Partnership

Daily Communications. Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Notes will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day.

Bulletin Boards. Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

Newsletters. Monthly newsletters will be posted on our Online Blog to provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters are available at the sign-in/sign-out desk for your taking.

Email. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

Family Visits. Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or eat a meal with your child. Signing in is required for the safety and protection of our children. Each visitor must wear a visitor's badge while on premises and sign-out upon leaving.

Conferences. Family & teacher conferences occur three times a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child's growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child's progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

Open Door Policy

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

Publicity

Frequently, photos will be taken of the children at the center for use on our secure website, which requires administrative permission to view photographs. Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use names of children for publicity.

CURRICULA & LEARNING

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Curricula & Assessment

Serenity Early Learning Center uses the Creative Curriculum for guided learning. As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources. For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lessons plans posted in each classroom.

Developmental Screening

Serenity Early Learning Center uses the Ages and Stages Developmental Screening Tool To coincide with curriculum-based assessment(s), we monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child's parent/guardian(s).

Outings and Field Trips

Weather permitting; we conduct supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood twice a day for Preschool & School age children. Children are accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package. From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child's family.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of child care programs. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the child care program as well as during field trips.

Pennsylvania State rules prohibit children under two from going on field trips or outings if transportation is needed.

Transitions

Your child's transition in child care should be a positive and exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to center

Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition between learning programs

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

Transition to elementary school

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school, creating a mural of special friends and special times at our center will be part of your child's education at our center. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school.

Transition for before/after school care

Children who are of school age may continue with before/after school care at our center. The center will provide staff to ensure that your child arrives at the bus stop for pick up (before school) and drop off (after school) in a timely manner. The Supplemental Enrollment Form must be completed and on file with the center in order to be eligible for this service.

Electronic Media

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use but from time-to-time, we may use a television show without advertisements as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic Media will be offered only as a free choice, used

to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than 40 minutes per week per child.

Pennsylvania rules prohibit any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos and computers.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

Rest Time

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every [enter # of minutes].

After lunch, all children less than six years of age, participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

GUIDANCE

General Procedure

Serenity is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their

fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

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

Positive Discipline Policy

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children. A copy of the discipline policy is included in your enrollment package for you to review and sign.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness.

Each student at Serenity Early Learning Center has a right to:

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

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

Physical Restraint

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

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.

-
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

TUITION AND FEES

Important Notice

All payment and fee processing will be completed by Methods of Payments Accepted

- Debit Card
- Credit Card
- Money Order
- Cashier Check

(No Cash Accepted)

Enrollment & Tuition

A \$15 fee is charged for late tuition payments that are more than 2 weeks behind, payments are due on Mondays. The late fee will be applied for every week thereafter until the tuition is paid in full. Special payment arrangements may be made in advance with center administrators. A service fee of \$25 will be charged for any returned checks. Two-week notice is required for any schedule change.

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.

Overtime Rates

Overtime rates apply only to both full & part-time families and are contingent on prior agreement of hours of care needed. When your family surpasses the agreed hours of childcare per day, a fee of \$10 for will be charged to your account for every 15mins that your child is still in our care.

Payment

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control.

Late Payment Charges

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance equal to more than two weeks of tuition. **Late payments will result in the imposition of late**

payment fees. Failure to pay childcare payments will result in childcare services being terminated.

Repeated late payments will result in your family being required to set up automatic payments or credit card payments.

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

If payment is more than 30 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a 3rd party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$20. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on an “electronic payment only” status.

Late Pick-up Fees

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$10 per 15 minutes will be assessed beginning at 6:15 PM and will be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up may result in child care services being terminated.**

ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL

Absence

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 10:15 AM, please call us at (215) 289-2231. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

If a school age child will not be attending before or after school care, please notify our front desk staff.

Vacation

[A] Vacation days only apply if your child is normally scheduled to attend on those days. Each child is given 5 vacation days each calendar year.

or

[B] While we recognize the value of family vacations, the center does not provide credit for vacation days.

Withdrawal

A written notice, two weeks in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

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

Transportation

Transportation to select schools is provided for all school age children. On the first day our staff will designate a specific area in the school for your child wait to be picked up. Multiple schools are picked up in one trip so make sure they know to use the bathroom. If we arrive and your child is not in the assigned area, we will go to the school's main office and ask them to locate the child.

If the child does not arrive within 5mins we will have to leave!

o We are not responsible for pick up if your child has After school Detention or planed After school activities.

Parents are required to contact the center....

- o When children do not attend school.
- o When children are picked up early
- o When children are picked up by someone else

We do Not pick up or Drop off during or immediately after inclement weather

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on our website. (www.serenitysuccess.com)

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

General Procedure

We open at 6:00 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in.

We close at 6:00 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after two hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring

- **Young Toddlers:** enough clean bottles for a day's use (if applicable), six diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **Kindergarteners:** at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **After School Care Children:** books for homework, appropriate play clothes

Please label all items brought from home with your child’s name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

Cubbies

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a “cubby.” Cubbies are labeled with your child’s name. Please check your child’s cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

NUTRITION

Foods Brought from Home

[A] We request that you do not bring food from home into our center.

[B] Food brought from home is permitted under the following conditions:

- Perishable food to be shared with other children must be store-bought and in its original package.
- Baked goods may be made at home if they are fully cooked, do not require refrigeration and were made with freshly purchased ingredients. A list of ingredients is required, and there must be enough food for all children.
- Foods should be labeled with the child’s name, date, and type of food.
- Children will not be allowed to share food provided by the child’s family unless the food is intended for sharing with all of the children.
- Leftover food will be discarded except for foods that do not require refrigeration and/or come in a commercially-wrapped package that was never opened.

Good Lunch Box Suggestions for a Balanced, Nutritional Lunch.	
Bean & cheese dip Tortilla chips (crackers) Tropical fruit salad Broccoli Milk	Chicken strips Whole Wheat Roll Orange wedges Broccoli Milk
Cheese quiche Fresh fruit cup Broccoli Milk	Whole Wheat Macaroni & Tuna Salad Green Beans Carrots Milk

Food Prepared for or at the Center

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the CBS Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

Food Allergies

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Meal Time

At meal time the dining table is set with disposable plates and flatware, and the food is placed in small bowls from which the children can help themselves. Everyone sits at the same table. Children are encouraged to serve themselves from food passed around each table. Good table manners are modeled and encouraged. Weekly menus are posted for viewing by parents/caregivers.

A caregiver who is trained in first-aid for choking is present at all meals.

Children 24 Months and Older

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted. These foods include hot dogs, whole grapes, peanuts, popcorn, thickly spread peanut butter and hard candy.

School Aged Participants

- Before and after school children will be offered one snack each day. These snacks are not a meal. If your child will be arriving before 8:00 AM, we will serve a full breakfast. please make sure your child is supplied with an adequate lunch if required for school.

HEALTH

Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Every six months, we check with the public health department or the American Academy of Pediatrics for updates of the recommended immunization schedule. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to

religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. A copy of your child's physical should be received before but must be received no later than [30] days after your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessment is given to the program.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.

-
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
 - Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
 - Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Allergy Prevention

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

Medications

(A) Our center does not administer prescription or over the counter medication to children.

(B) All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- **Prescription medications** require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.
- **Non-prescription medications** require written permission and instructions signed by the child's primary care physician. The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be

in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.

- (C) **Non-prescription topical ointments** (e.g., diaper cream or teething gel), sunscreen and insect repellent require a note signed by the legal guardian, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid which cannot exceed 12 months.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis

SAFETY

Clothing

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, water, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 90 °F or less than 15 °F degrees. Additionally, outdoor play will be cancelled if the air quality rating is four or below.

Communal Water-Play

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

Biting

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

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

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Respectful Behavior

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

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and

vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

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

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

Dangerous Weapons

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

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

Child Custody

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

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCIES

Lost or Missing Child

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, the family and the police will be notified.

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with a sprinkler system, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers. Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a regular basis.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

CENTER POLICIES

Our center policies not included in this handbook are reviewed annually and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.

Television/Computers/Video

Children over 2 years old will be given computer instruction in our classroom's for approximately 30 minutes per week. Children under 2 years old will not be given screen time or computer use. Television and videos will occasionally be used for planned events, i.e. Movie Day and Parent's Night Out. We will not use movies or television as a substitute for educational activities. All television, computer use, and videos will be age appropriate.

Outdoor Play

Fresh air and outdoor play contributes to your child's health and overall development. Please make sure your child(ren) have weather appropriate clothing such as mittens, hats, coats and boots. In extreme inclement weather (rain, snow, icy conditions, extreme cold or heat) the children will be kept indoors.

Positive Discipline Policy

At Serenity Early Learning Center our staff uses positive discipline as a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of a child, the group, and the adult. Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells children what they should not do. Positive discipline tells children what they should do. Punishment teaches fear. Positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

At Serenity we believe that discipline is a measure of showing children that we care about them and their welfare. Our policy is based on the principles of love; respect the concern for the rights of all individuals. The manner in which a teacher handles a discipline situation will depend on the child and the individual occurrence. The positive discipline technique could involve any of the following:

1. Provide ample activities to keep the child involved.
2. Discussion with child and give gentle explanations and reminders.

-
3. Positive reinforcement and encouragement.
 4. The child will be redirected to another activity.
 5. Provide a quiet time. (This is a short time where the child is given time in the classroom to collect him/herself until they are ready to be a part of the group activities again.)

*The child's teacher may send a child to the front office when all of the above positive discipline techniques have been exhausted. After 3 visits to the Director's office the Teacher and Director will then call to schedule the "Initial meeting" with the parents. Any time your child is sent to the Director's office the Teacher or Director will notify the parent in writing, email, text or by phone call.

Discipline NEVER includes any of the following:

- Physical Punishment
- Taking away or threatening to take away snacks, play, recess or classroom resources.
- Making a child feel that they are "bad".

CHRONIC DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children having difficulties at Serenity Early Childhood Learning Center. Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior which has been determined to be upsetting to the physical or emotional well-being of another child/class may require the following action:

Initial meeting:

- The parents will be asked to meet for a conference with the Child's Teacher and ECLC Director. The problem will be identified, and a course of action established to resolve the situation.

Second meeting:

- After 2 weeks of no improvement and the initial plan for helping the child fails, the parent(s) will again be required to meet with the Director and the child's Teacher. Another attempt will be made to identify the problem, outline new approaches to the problem, and discuss the consequences if progress is not apparent.
- If, after 4 weeks and 2 Parent/Teacher/Director conferences, the child is unable to participate in group experiences, the discipline problems continue, the child poses a threat to self, staff or other children in the program and it is determined that all possibilities have been exhausted and that the child is incompatible with our program, the child will be dismissed from Serenity ECLC and the parents will

need to seek other school/child care arrangements. Dismissal decisions are made by the ECLC Director and Owners and are final.

Expulsion Policy

In keeping with the Pennsylvania Department of Licensing Requirements, we are required to have in place a policy on expulsion from our center. Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced.

Reasons for Expulsion:

IMMEDIATE CAUSES FOR EXPULSION

The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself.
Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members.
Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR CHILD'S EXPULSION

Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
Failure to complete required forms including the child's immunization records.
Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
Verbal abuse to staff.

CHILD'S ACTIONS FOR EXPULSION

Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
Excessive biting.

Schedule of Expulsion:

- The child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion. An expulsion action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the center.
- The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period.
- The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the center.
- The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate childcare (approximately one to two weeks' notice depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety). Failure of the

child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

Proactive Actions to Prevent Expulsion:

1. Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior.
2. Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriateness of activities, supervision.
3. Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children.
4. Staff will praise appropriate behaviors.
5. Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
6. Child will be given verbal warnings.
7. Child will be given time to regain control.
8. Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality.
9. Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
10. Parent/guardian will be given written copies of disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion.
11. The director, classroom staff and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.
12. The parent will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior.
13. Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises.
14. Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team.

Attendance and Absenteeism

We encourage you to send your child to school on all of their scheduled days, except in the case of illness. Consistent attendance is important to your child's early education and will help ensure that they gain the most from our program. Helping your child meet their educational goals and develop attendance habits that will carry on throughout their school years. Supporting a child's daily attendance allows parents to convey a message to their child that they value education and that school is an important priority. If your child will not be in school, please notify our office as soon as possible.

Home Language

Serenity Early Learning Center is responsive to serving culturally and linguistically diverse populations to ensure a high-quality program for all children and families, including those whose home language is one other than English. We are supportive of other languages through labeling of classroom centers and by providing access to classroom materials in the home language when necessary. Picture labels are used around the classroom and basic sign language is utilized to aid in any language barrier.

Community Resources

Serenity Early Learning Center provides families with a Community Resource Guide available in our Parent Resource Center located in our lobby near the Parent Information Board. This guide includes community programs, agencies, and services

available to aide in proper health, safety, and stability.

Communication Policy

We believe that regular communication with parents is essential to maintaining high quality of care. Our staff is better able to meet the needs of each individual child if parents provide relevant information about important happenings at home, updates on the child's health, and information regarding other matters of particular interest to the child. Likewise, our staff will communicate with parents daily about the events of the day and any important information specific to the child. Parents are encouraged to discuss any issues or problems concerning their child with the child's teacher or with a member of management. Any information given to the center will be treated in confidence.

Serenity Early Learning Center aims to:

Ensure that positive relationships exist between parents and the center

Ensure parents are provided with useful and relevant information about the center

Encourage participation of all families and members of the community in the activities of the center and in the development of our programs, policies, etc.

Promote effective communication between management, educators, families, children, and all those that are associated with the center.

We strive to meet the above goals through formal methods of communication, including, but not limited to: monthly events calendar in our Parents' Center (located across from the front desk), printed and digital monthly events calendars and other information available at the front desk, classroom-wide daily reports for each child, child progress reports (three times per year), frequent website and Facebook page updates, annual Back to School Night and other special events where parents are invited to attend, opportunities for parent workshops and meetings, and parent/teacher conferences as needed.

Toilet Training

Toilet training is a growth period and progression of independence. All efforts made by the child will be acknowledged with praise and encouragement. Serenity Early Learning Center provides Toilet training to help children during this development phase. When using the bathroom, children will be supervised and assisted as needed. Children will be taught to flush the toilet and wash hands with soap and water.

In the event of an accident, soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag, sealed, and returned to the parents at the end of the day. We encourage parents to communicate with the Center Director and staff so we can work together as your child strives for independence. We will make every effort to follow your direction to ensure consistency between the Center and home.

Student Observation & Assessment

We implement the award-winning, nationally recognized, Creative Curriculum. Creative Curriculum is a play-based curriculum where teachers set the stage for learning, while children interact with and learn in various interest areas, including Blocks, Dramatic

Play, Manipulatives, Science & Discovery, Music, and Art. We focus on using exploration and discovery as a way of learning, enabling children to develop confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills.

Every child learns differently, so our teachers are constantly observing their students in order to provide individualized instruction to each child. In addition to the Creative Curriculum, we implement a unique handwriting program to strengthen fine motor skills and develop pre-printing and printing skills, as well as letter and number recognition. Teachers observe and document each child's progress and assess the children using either the Ounce or Work Sampling Assessment Tool. Assessments will be provided to parents three times per year.

Developmental Screening

All students will be screened within 45 days of enrollment using the ASQ-3 developmental screening tool (Ages & Stages Questionnaire). Students will be re-screened if necessary. Information will be shared with the parents and Serenity will help families connect with local school districts if you are in need of additional services.

Behavioral Support

Serenity will support parents by sharing behavioral plans with the school districts upon completion of our pre-k programs.

Workshops

Families are provided health and safety workshops and/or resources annually in topics that include preventative health, mental/behavioral health, nutrition, medication administration policies and procedures, oral health practices, and communicable disease prevention.

Smoke-Free Environment

Serenity Early Learning Center maintains a smoke-free environment. We ask that you do not smoke in the Center or on Serenity property. We are sorry for any inconvenience.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Serenity accepts all children on a first-come, first-served basis. Serenity does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, religion, or national origin.

Student Confidentiality

Information pertaining to a child is kept confidential at all times. Records may occasionally be reviewed by regulatory agencies. Student files are otherwise kept confidential and are only monitored by the administrative staff. If your child is involved in an incident with another child, Serenity will not reveal the other child's identity without written permission from the other child's parent or guardian.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the Serenity Early Learning Center Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the Programs staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Serenity Early Learning Center Family Handbook that I do not understand.

Recipient Signature

Date

Center Staff Signature

Date

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

Advisors:

- Discussion of Program Goals – annual meeting for families to provide input into our plan for the program.
- Parent Advisory Committee – meets 4 times a year to review progress toward annual goals.
- Classroom Representative – serves as a liaison between classroom parents and teachers
- Home and School Committee – meets monthly to plan family events and fundraisers

Family Events: We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Open House
- Back to School Night
- Family Math Night
- Holiday Gathering
- Book Swap
- Fall Festival
- Annual Family Picnic

Classroom Activities: Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Share a meal with your child
- Chaperone field trips
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Serve as a parent representative
- Welcome new families
- Contribute to class Pot Luck Meal
- Family Teacher conferences

Family/Parent Workshops: Our menu of family workshops changes annually. Below is a list of workshops we typically offer. We try to offer these in the early evening or on Saturdays. See the monthly calendar for scheduled topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Positive Guidance and Loving Discipline
- Toilet Training
- Safety in the Home
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Brain Development
- Nutrition and Exercise for Small Bodies
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- Food Allergies
- How to Prepare for a Conference
- Warning Signs for Developmental Delays
- Value of Reading to Your Child
- Everyday Math