



Parent Handbook

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Facebook: Branford Early Learning Center

NAEYC Accredited Center Preschool and Child Care Center

Dear Families,

Welcome to Branford Early Learning Center, Inc. (BELC). We're delighted to have you as part of our BELC family!

Branford Early Learning Center, Inc. is proud to be licensed by the Connecticut Department of Public Health, monitored by the State Office of Early Childhood (OEC), and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). We offer Early Start CT slots for eligible preschool children, and we welcome all children—regardless of ability—into our inclusive learning environment.

As a nonprofit organization, BELC operates under the guidance of a volunteer Board of Directors and adheres strictly to all grant and donor requirements. We also offer a sliding fee scale determined by the CT Office of Early Childhood, ensuring affordability for families of all income levels. Enrollment at BELC is open to all children and is conducted without regard to race, national or ethnic origin, disability, or religious affiliation.

Our dedicated team of teachers, assistants, and support staff is committed to creating a safe, nurturing, and stimulating space where your child can learn, grow, and thrive. At BELC, we believe that strong partnerships with families are essential to a child's success. That's why we host a variety of family-friendly events and activities throughout the year—to build connections and foster a vibrant, supportive community.

We encourage all families to actively participate, share your thoughts, and help shape the future of our program. Your input—especially regarding your family's culture and values—is always welcome and valued.

Thank you for choosing BELC. We look forward to a wonderful year of learning and discovery together!

Warmly,

BELC Staff and our Board of Directors



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MISSION and VISION STATEMENT / PHILOSOPHY

Mission Statement

The Branford Early Learning Center, Inc (BELC) celebrates the rich diversity of our community by providing an inclusive environment where all families feel welcomed. Our mission is to offer affordable, high quality early childhood care and education that nurtures each child's unique needs. We are dedicated to laying a strong foundation for lifelong learning and success by focusing on the whole child: socially and emotionally, physical development, cognitive development, creativity, and academically. Together, we foster a supportive community that values growth, curiosity, and the joy of learning.

Vision Statement and Philosophy

Branford Early Learning Center, Inc., is an Office of Early Childhood funded agency that provides families with high quality and affordable access to early childhood care and education. Our program utilizes CT Early Learning and Development Standards in alignment with developmentally appropriate practice. BELC is accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). As a NAEYC accredited program, BELC uses a holistic play-based approach to learning to concentrate on the whole child. We support positive relationships among children, families and staff by realizing that families are their children's first teachers, and we need to work together to provide the best future for our children.

By achieving these goals in a warm, caring and engaging environment, the center allows families to reach their goals of self-sufficiency with full confidence that their children are safe, and well cared for, as well as receiving the best education that will build a strong foundation for their future educational journey and beyond.



HOURS OF OPERATION

The school is open from **7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.**, Monday through Friday and we are open year-round. We request that all children be in by **9:00 a.m.** Currently, each classroom holds an educational circle-time. This is a very important learning component each day and we require all children to participate to best prepare them for the best educational future we can provide. BELC is closed for inclement weather or emergencies when the Branford Public School system is closed. When public schools have early dismissals because of bad weather, so will BELC. We will open as soon as possible on delayed opening days. Please watch WTNH for Branford Public School closings. You can also check our Facebook page for closings.

CALENDAR

The school is closed for the following holidays:

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

Presidents' Day

Good Friday

Memorial Day

Juneteenth

Independence Day

Labor Day

Indigenous Peoples' Day/Columbus Day

Thanksgiving plus the day before and after

Christmas Day

New Year's Day

The week between Christmas and New Year's

Other days are updated annually

Our calendar is subject to change.

ENROLLMENT, ENTRY & WITHDRAWAL

Infants must be 6 weeks old to begin in our Infant Toddler Room. Preschoolers must be at least 2.9 months old by September 1st. Our Early Start CT slots ensure that all children enrolled in have access to our program.

All children are enrolled in accordance with enrollment policy and without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, disability, or religious affiliation.

Please be aware that as an early education facility, we are not a babysitting service and do not offer wrap around care. **Attendance should reflect your working/school hours.** Translators will be made available on request.

A non-refundable registration fee of \$100.00 is required when you accept enrollment into Branford Early Learning Center. Before entry, all enrollment paperwork must be turned into the office. Each child entering the program must have an updated physical form, signed and dated by their pediatrician, including current immunization documentation. Children who are not school age must have their physicals updated yearly. Children who are school age are

required to have a physical upon entering kindergarten and then as required by the school district for which that child attends and acceptable to the local education authority.

During the enrollment period, we request you and your child come in for a tour. This is set up with the Office Assistant via email or phone. This is a great opportunity to ask questions and meet your child's potential teachers.

Any changes regarding parent information and/or child information, such as a change in address, phone number, health issues, etc.; must be reported to the administrative staff.

All children are accepted into the program on a probationary basis. If the child has not adjusted to the program, or the child's behavior is unacceptable, the parent will be required to withdraw him/her from the program. However, ANY transition on a young child will be difficult in the beginning. Typically, after 2 weeks, your child should become accustomed to BELC.

We need two weeks' notice before your child is withdrawn for other reasons. **A child cannot be temporarily withdrawn from the program.** To re-enroll, you must re-apply.

If a child is absent for two weeks without a valid explanation or if attendance is erratic for a month without a valid reason as evaluated by the Director, it will be deemed you no longer need care, and the child will be withdrawn from the program.

Excused absences can only extend for one month unless approved by the Director.

→ [FEE POLICY](#)

BELC uses the current OEC Sliding Fee Scale. As a state-funded program, we are required to follow the Sliding Fee Scale established by the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood (OEC). This means that all tuition rates must be determined based on each family's household income and family size, in accordance with state guidelines. Our cap amount for the 2026-2027 school year, that families will pay depending on their household income, per month and per child is \$1075.

As part of this requirement, we will be conducting tuition redetermination annually for all enrolled families. Updated income documentation will be required to ensure that your tuition rate is calculated accurately and in compliance with OEC regulations.

- a copy of your income tax form

Please be aware that with this redetermination, there may be changes to your tuition - either an increase or a decrease. If you have any questions or need assistance regarding your new fee structure, do not hesitate to reach out. I encourage all families to contact us if you need tuition support; we are here to work with you to find a plan that fits your needs.

All fees will be collected monthly with the following **Fee Schedule:**

- **Option A:** ACH Direct Withdrawal from your account via Brightwheel, on Day 1 or Day 15 of each month
- **Option B:** Check submitted to Center Day 1 of each month

A late fee of \$25.00 will be added to any tuition not paid by the 15th of the month and a fee of \$35 will be applied for all returned checks. If your fees are not paid, your child may be refused entry until the unpaid balance is remedied. Continued delinquent fees will result in permanent withdrawal from BELC.

Full fee is charged no matter how many days attended in a particular month. There is no reduction for holidays, inclement weather, or emergencies. To account for months with five weeks, no adjustment is made for the weeks the Center is closed in August or December. Tax information is provided upon request.

R.9.04 CONFIDENTIALITY

Branford Early Learning Center strives to protect everyone's right to privacy. Individual child intake forms, assessment information and medical information are secured in a lock file. Administration and teaching staff will have access to all records. Confidential and sensitive information concerning children and/or parents or guardians will not be shared with outside agencies without consent. Grantors or regulatory agencies will have access upon request. Records are available to the child's parents or guardian.

A.2.03 HARDSHIP POLICY

If you are experiencing hardships of any kind, please reach out to the Director. This includes having difficulty paying or needing assistance/an adjustment in family fees.

A hardship may be due to, but not limited to:

- ❖ Loss of employment
- ❖ Divorce
- ❖ Unexpected medical emergencies/bills
- ❖ A death in the family
- ❖ Military service deployment of household members

The Director will assess the situation and discuss options with the Board of Directors to help

in any way we can. This can include reducing the family fee, suspending the fee or postponing the fee as needed. The hardship case will be reviewed in 2 months, or as needed.

R.2.01/R.2.02/R.2.03 PARENT-SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

Branford Early Learning Center uses the app called **Brightwheel**, to communicate with parents. Parents can have daily contact with teachers and/or Admin staff.

There is always an ongoing dialogue regarding children's learning and development. We make every attempt to work individually with each child. However, we are an institution devoted to group care, and it is difficult for us to deviate from the prescribed schedule for your child. For example, if you would like no nap period for your child, please be advised that we cannot offer such individual exceptions from the group norm.

ALTERNATIVE CARE POLICY

Branford Early Learning Center is open 50 weeks a year. In the event that BELC needs to close other than the traditional holidays, and families need alternative care, BELC has made arrangements with CDC and ABC Preschools in town to provide alternative care.

Parents will be informed of the Alternative Care Policy when they enroll their children, including information on the alternative care programs that they can access.

- ❖ Parents will be given at least a two-week prior written notice of the closing
- ❖ Parents will be asked to sign a form for the child's file indicating a need for alternative care
- ❖ A plan for reimbursement for alternative care arrangements will be made between BELC and the alternative care provider, if needed

ARRIVAL, DEPARTURE & ABSENCES / SIGN-IN & SIGN-OUT PROTOCOLS

Please enter the parking lot circle from the entrance closest to the parking lot. All cars should stay to the right of the parking circle. **Please do not leave young children in the car, as this is unsafe and against the law.**

→ A.6.14 IDLING POLICY

For the safety and health of our children, idling vehicles are not allowed on the grounds of Branford Early Learning Center. Please make sure you are shutting off your vehicle at drop-off and pick-up. In extreme heat or cold vehicles may idle to maintain interior or engine temperatures.

We ask that parents drop off their children before 9 a.m. All classes have breakfast at 8:30 a.m. All classes have their circle time morning meeting by 9 a.m. This is an important part of your child's day, and learning is very concentrated during this time. Social and academic skills are encouraged and learned, language development is enhanced, as well as specific teaching units are introduced each day during circle time. It is essential for your child to be part of this

time of learning each day.

Upon arrival, children must be signed in and before leaving, they must be signed out. Please write your name or initials, rather than mom or dad. We kindly ask that any siblings entering the building stay with their parents at all times.

As part of our NAEYC accreditation, we are legally required to record drop-offs and pickups with parent signatures at both events. Please be vigilant in following sign-in and sign-out protocol. If it comes to our attention that a parent is not signing in, we will have to contact you for a meeting to address the policy and further escalation steps will be taken, if necessary.

Please report all absences to the front office using either the Brightwheel app or by calling (203) 488-4512.

A ten-hour day is hard on young children, regardless of the quality of care provided. Therefore, we expect parents or guardian to pick up their children after work or school. If you are not working, you should pick up your child after lunch. Our staff hours have been scheduled with these arrangements in mind, as we are a childcare center for working/in school families.

People who pick up your child must be on the child's emergency list. **People who are not on the list will not be allowed to pick up the child unless we have verbal or written confirmation from the parent.** We will make every effort to contact you, but if this is impossible, your child will not be released until we have permission for him or her to leave. If it is someone's first time picking up, we require a photo ID.

As soon as you pick up your child, they become your responsibility. They must stay with you at all times and continue to follow our rules. **Children are absolutely not allowed to leave the building without an adult.**

→ [LATE FEE](#)

Our school closes at 5:00p.m. If you are going to be late, you need to notify our Assistant Director, or Administrative Assistant at (203) 488-4512. A late fee of \$5.00 for every portion of five minutes will be charged to your monthly rate. Every attempt will be made to locate you with the information given on the enrollment forms. If your child is not picked up by 6:30, he/she will be taken to the local police department, and you will be charged the accumulated late fee. According to state regulations, this will be reported to the OEC and the Department of Health as well as the Department of Children and Families.

→ [APPOINTMENTS CAUSING LATE ARRIVALS](#)

BELC understands that doctor appointments are unavoidable. Therefore, if your child has a scheduled appointment, please make sure to do the following:

- Inform BELC of the appointment in advance, at least 2 weeks in advance
- Ensure you arrive by the designated cut-off times listed below

This policy helps ensure that all children can participate in morning activities/allows for full engagement in planned curriculum and social interactions. It helps maintain a consistent and structured environment for your little ones, while also trying to accommodate necessary appointments.

Parents are encouraged to communicate any anticipated late arrivals as soon as possible via Brightwheel.

Consistent late arrivals can disrupt the classroom environment and the flow of planned activities.

ARRIVAL GUIDELINES

Infant/Toddler (Chipmunk, Ladybug) Room

No arrivals after 10:00 a.m. unless prior arrangements have been made

Preschool (Lollipop, Teddy Bear, ABC) Room

No arrivals after 11:30 a.m. unless prior arrangements have been made

COMMITMENT TO TRANSITION

To sustain our mission and vision statements, BELC strives to maintain high quality, developmentally appropriate practices for our children. To do this, we recognize that children form attachments with teachers. We encourage keeping infants with their teachers for 18 months and toddlers together with their teaching staff for nine months or longer. Depending on enrollment and the time of enrollment, toddlers may be moved to the 3-year-old room if it is developmentally and age appropriate.

All children will have transitions into their new classroom over a period of several months. We have a transition policy in place to make the transition smooth for the child, the parent, and the teachers. If at any time the transition is not the best practice for the child, teachers, the Director, and parents will discuss our next or continued course of action.

To minimize the number of class and staff transitions that children experience during the day, as well as during the year, teaching staff are assigned to specific classes. This enables children and teachers to become comfortable with each other and their routine. It is also a strong goal of BELC that all teachers know and interact with all children.

FAMILY VISITING POLICY

Our program has an open-door policy with some considerations in mind. Visits are preferred during the hours of 9:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., as well as 3:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. These hours are to avoid disruption in your child's schedule. If you choose to come in the afternoon, please be prepared to take your child with you after your visit. The program also plans periodic educational and fun field trips. Volunteers are more than welcomed.

If you would like to stop in, please give us a call at (203) 488-4512, so that we can plan

accordingly.

ADMINISTRATION & STAFF

Our high program quality is in direct correlation to our staff's education and dedication to each child. Each head teacher at BELC has a degree in Early Childhood Education. Our assistant teachers have a CDA (Child Development Associate) and have attended Early Childhood College courses. Several staff members are bilingual. Continued Professional Development requirements are met through attendance at workshops, conferences and continuing Early Childhood Education courses, as well as weekly in-service meetings. The Director and staff discuss the curriculum and the education of each individual child. We work together to ensure your child receives the best education we can give. Our staff has been trained in School Readiness literacy, curriculum, assessment and how to offer and implement support to our students and families through many workshops, classes, and seminars. We work closely with the public-school Kindergarten program, so our students will be ready for kindergarten in all ways. We provide transitional activities and provide evaluations to public schools at the time of kindergarten registration with parents' permission.

Our Board of Directors is composed of community members and parents. Please contact the Director if you are interested in contributing to the Board. The Executive Director and Assistant Director govern the day-to-day operations of the Center. Besides our Director, the staff is composed of Head Teachers, Teacher Assistants and a Cook. We have specialty guest teachers for dance, music, soccer and yoga.

A.2.02/A.2.03 ADMINISTRATIVE OVERSIGHT

We strive to ensure that the day-to-day operations of BELC are aligned with the current Connecticut Statutes and Regulations for Child Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes, the Program Policies, Plans and Procedures, Program Philosophy and best practice. Our program works hard to ensure that all children, families, and program staff have positive experiences daily.

Most concerns can be resolved by:

1. Discussing the issue with the classroom teacher.
2. Discussing the issue with the program director or director's designee.

Name of Designated Director: Catherine Bencivengo

- Telephone #: 203-488-4512 Email: catb@belcinc.org

Name of Alternate Person in Office: Alexis Morales

- Telephone #: 203-488-4512 Email: amorales@belcinc.org
- At times if a concern or issue that is raised may need more attention, a meeting between the parties can be held at a mutually agreed upon time with the parties which can include the parents/ guardians, classroom teacher/ program staff, the head teacher/alternate person in office, and the director. We appreciate other perspectives and are committed to continuous quality improvements that will

make the experience within our program a positive and nurturing one for all.

- At any time during this meeting if there is an impasse and a resolution cannot be reached the matter will be brought to the attention of the administrative leadership team which includes: the executive director, and the Board of Directors.

ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM STRUCTURE AND COMMUNICATION

To provide families with the highest level of support, our program has a dedicated administrative team. Each team member has specific responsibilities to ensure efficient operations, clear communication, and strong support for children and families.

Executive Director

The Executive Director oversees the overall operations of the program. This includes ensuring compliance with state regulations, maintaining program quality, supporting staff, and guiding the overall vision of the program.

Families may contact the Executive Director for:

- Program concerns or feedback
- Policy questions or clarifications
- Escalated matters requiring additional support
- General questions about program operations

Assistant Director

The Assistant Director supports the daily functioning of the program, with a focus on curriculum, child development, and family communication.

Families may contact the Assistant Director for:

- Questions about curriculum and learning activities
- Child development and classroom experiences
- Daily communication and program updates
- Support related to your child's classroom

Administrative Assistant

The Administrative Assistant is responsible for administrative operations and ensures all

systems and records are maintained accurately and efficiently.

Families may contact the Administrative Assistant for:

- Enrollment and waitlist inquiries
- Tuition, billing, and payment questions
- Required forms and documentation
- Updates to your child's records

Our Commitment to Families

Our team structure is designed to provide:

- Timely and accurate responses
- Clear and consistent communication
- Dedicated support in all areas of the program

If you are unsure who to contact, you may reach out to any member of the administrative team, and we will ensure your inquiry is directed appropriately.

R.6.06 SUPERVISION, SAFETY & SECURITY

The safety of your children and staff members is our main priority. All children will be always supervised by BELC staff members, indoors and outdoors, by sound and sight using the proper staff to children ratios provided by the CT OEC. For the safety of our students, we monitor every person that comes in and out of our school. Consequently, our doors will be always locked. To enter the school during these times, you will have to ring the buzzer located at the front entrance of the school on the right-hand wall. Cameras will be checked, and the door will be unlocked by someone in the office, if approved for pick-up/drop-off. Please be sure to hold your child's hand in the parking lot when going to and from your car.

In classrooms where children are under the age of 3 years old, the program staff/child ratio is 1 program staff for every 4 children under the age of 2 years old and/or 1 program staff for every 5 children 2 years old up to the age of 3. At no time should the group size exceed 8 children under the age of 2 years old and/or 10 children at the age of 2 years old up to the age of 3.

In preschool classrooms where children are between the ages of 3 years old to 5 years old the program staff/child ratio is 1 program staff for every 10 children over the age of three years old. At no time shall the group size exceed 20 children over the age of three years old, even if ratios are being observed.

In school age only classrooms where school aged children are enrolled in kindergarten up to the age of 12 years old the program staff/child ratio is 1 program staff for every 15 children. At no time shall the group size exceed 30 school aged children, even if ratios are being observed.

Group sizes shall be observed in the classroom, gym, bathrooms, and outside. Children must be supervised by sight and sound including nap time and during transportation. Program staff shall position themselves to see as many children as possible. When there is a mixed group, the lower

required ratio and group size for the age of the youngest child shall prevail.

NO CHILD/CHILDREN SHOULD BE LEFT ALONE AT ANY TIME.

→ **FIELD TRIPS**

Program staff/child ratios will be maintained while outside of the building. All children must have signed permission slips prior to leaving the building. Program staff must bring each child's emergency contact information and the first aid kit on the field trip.

→ **BATHROOMS**

Program staff must supervise children while they are using the bathrooms. Where toilets and sinks are shared by children and adults, program staff will ensure that the bathrooms are not in use by adults prior to the children entering the bathroom facility. Program staff will supervise and help when needed. At no time shall a child and adult use the toilets at the same time.

→ **TRANSPORTATION**

All children will be supervised by sight and sound while getting on and off any mode of transportation.

→ **PLAYGROUND/OUTDOORS**

It will be the responsibility of all program staff to ensure the safety of children on the playgrounds. Supervision of children will be the following:

- A head count will be taken before leaving the building
- Children will be escorted by the staff to their designation play areas
- Program staff will encourage and demonstrate proper equipment usage and play
- Program staff will circulate through the play areas, supervising and interacting with the children in a positive manner. Program staff will coordinate positions so that all play activities and equipment is supervised.
- A head count will be taken before re-entering the building
- Program staff may not leave children unattended or out of state-permitted ratios and group sizes
- Children may not go inside for any reason (including to the bathroom): nor may they go back outside unless accompanied by program staff
- Always have a phone outside in case of emergency
- At least one CPR certified program staff member will be on the playground whenever there are children under the age of three using the playground

→ **MEDICAL EMERGENCIES**

In the case of a medical emergency, a qualified program staff member will attend first aid as needed. Another program staff member will notify the family of the child. Attempts will be made to consult with the child's physician/dentist. If neither is available, the program's

medical consultants will be contacted. For extreme emergencies, 911 will be called. An ambulance will take the child and a program staff member to the nearest hospital, Yale New Haven Hospital. The child's emergency permission form will be brought with them. A program staff member will notify the family or alternate pick-up person to meet the child at the emergency room. Additional program staff will be called in if necessary to maintain required ratios.

→ FIRE/EVACUATION EMERGENCY AND DRILLS

In the event of a fire, evacuation from the building will be through the closest fire exits:

- Chipmunk, Teddy Bear and ABC rooms evacuate via windows in classroom
- Ladybug and Lollipop rooms evacuate using rear exit

Program staff will be responsible for supervising the children under their care and leading them to the exit safely. Each group is to immediately walk to the firehouse on Pine Orchard Road, which is located safely away from the building, and line up to take name-to-face attendance. The Director and/or the designated person in charge will be responsible for taking the sign-in/sign-out sheets, emergency binders, portable first aid kit and cell phone.

Should it not be possible to return to the facility, program staff will transport the children by walking to the Pine Orchard Association Building. Parents will be notified and directed to the evacuation location to pick up their child(ren).

Ratios will be maintained at all times and there will always be 2 program staff 18 years or older with the children until all children are picked up.

→ SHELTER IN PLACE

In the event of severe weather, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, winter storms, or any other unsafe situation where evacuation is not possible, all program staff and children will remain indoors in a safe location (library closet and/or art closet) away from closed windows and doors. Program staff will have appropriate supplies available for the comfort and engagement of the children.

All program staff members are first aid and CPR certified, therefore, they will be on hand to administer first aid as needed, until emergency personnel can arrive.

Parents will be notified after the immediate danger has passed via Brightwheel or phone number.

→ LOCK-DOWN PROTOCOL

Should an emergency or threat involving potential violence in or around BELC require the need to stay put, the Director/person in charge will notify the staff via GroupMe that they should begin the lock-down procedure and 911 will be called.

Each program staff is responsible for the children in their care at that moment. The program staff will gather the children to the safest area of the room (art closet, library closet, etc), away from any windows and doors. Doors and windows will be locked, lights will be turned off, and curtains/blinds will be closed to all interior windows.

Program staff will calm the children and help them stay quiet. Attendance will be taken periodically. The Director/person in charge will do all they can to remain in constant communication with parents via Brightwheel. They will also remain in constant communication with emergency personnel until they receive an **ALL CLEAR** to continue the program schedule. Parents are not permitted access to the facility until the **ALL CLEAR** is given. This will be communicated via Brightwheel and GroupMe, so that all parents and program staff are aware of the all clear.

→ CONTINUATION OF OPERATIONS

If an emergency causes the facility to be unsafe for childcare, program staff will notify parents and refer them to 211 for other childcare options. The Director will submit an initial application for 'Change in Location' and will notify the Office of Early Childhood when an alternate location has been identified so that an inspection can be completed as soon as possible, so that it can be approved for childcare.

→ ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OR CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS

In consultation with the child's parent, program staff will develop a plan to ensure the special needs of the child are met during an emergency, including provision of necessities such as medications, diapers, wipes, formula and other comfort items.

Cribs can be used to evacuate infants, toddlers and children with special health care needs or disabilities.

→ A.6.19 MULTI-HAZARD DRILLS AND FIRE DRILLS

A multi-hazard emergency drill will be practiced at least annually which includes the demonstration of all program staff and children sheltering, locking down and evacuating the facility.

Fire drills are conducted monthly with our program staff and children.

The BELC team reviews these plans on a regular basis so that new staff will be familiar with the crisis protocols. Fire drills are planned monthly, so the children are accustomed to the loud emergency noise and exiting the building quickly, quietly, and safely. Should there be a time when you are in the building during an emergency evacuation or an emergency lock-down, you are required to remain in the area that you are presently in and follow the directions from school personnel.

→ POSITIVE GUIDANCE AND ZERO TOLERANCE POLICY

At BELC your child's safety, emotional security, and dignity are always our top priorities. BELC follows the professional standards of the NAEYC and the Connecticut Office of Early Childhood to ensure the highest quality of care and education.

We believe in guiding children through positive respectful and developmentally appropriate methods that build self-control, problem-solving skills, and empathy.

Our Commitment:

- Staff are trained to use nurturing and encouraging strategies when helping children manage emotions and behavior.
- Physical contact is used only when necessary to ensure a child's safety or to offer comfort in a caring way.
- BELC has a zero-tolerance policy for any form of physical handling that does not align with these standards.

If an incident occurs where a child is physically handled inappropriately BELC will act immediately to ensure the safety and well-being of all children:

Incident Response Protocol:

1. Immediate Action:

- a. The staff member involved will be removed from the classroom and placed on leave during an investigation.

2. Family Notification:

- a. The child's parent or guardian will be notified the same day the incident occurs.

3. Reporting:

- a. BELC will document the incident and report it to the Connecticut office of early childhood as required by law.

4. Investigation:

- a. A thorough review will be conducted to gather all information and witness accounts.

5. Outcome:

- a. If findings confirm that inappropriate physical handling occurred, the staff member will immediately be discharged from the program.

6. Follow-up:

- a. BELC will provide emotional support and communication with the family to ensure the child's comfort and safety moving forward.

→ **VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY**

Branford Early Learning Center uses video surveillance in classrooms and common areas to support the safety and security of children, staff, and families. These recordings are an important tool for program oversight, staff training, and compliance with state licensing regulations.

Please note the following:

- Confidentiality – video recordings contain images of multiple children and staff

members. To protect the privacy and confidentiality of all families, **footage is not available for parents or public viewing.**

- Internal Use Only – recordings may be reviewed by administration, licensing agencies, or other regulatory authorities as required by law.
- Retention – footage is stored securely and retained for a limited time in accordance with state requirements and program policies.
- Safety Assurance – if a concern arises, administration will review the footage promptly and take any necessary action to ensure the safety and well-being of the children in our care.

At Branford Early Learning Center, the safety and privacy of every child is our highest priority.

SMOKE-FREE POLICY

Branford Early Learning Center, Inc. (BELC) is a smoke free environment; this includes e-cigarettes. **Please do not smoke on school grounds.**

R.5.01/R.5.02/R.5.03/A.5.08 CHILD ASSESSMENTS & EVALUATION PLANS

Parents will receive a packet upon enrollment regarding your child's developmental history, as well as family history. Additionally, twice a year, we do formal written evaluations/screenings by combining multiple methods of measurements; CT Sparkler, CT Early Learning and Development Standards (ELDS) and CT Documentation and Observation for Teaching System (DOTS) to observe, plan and support child development.

These evaluations and/or assessments are confidential and shared only among the child's classroom teachers, the child's parents, and the Director as needed. Parents must fill out an Information Release form for BELC to share information with an outside agency. The formal evaluations are kept in your child's file folder in the office. By licensing regulations, inspectors may check the children's files. We are committed to serve the needs of special needs children and will participate in a referral process with the Branford Public Schools System.

→ DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Branford Early Learning Center uses the CT Sparkler family engagement and support 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).

→ ASSESSMENTS

Teachers assess children 3 times a year. The first assessment is in September, as a basic screening to detect possible developmental, behavioral, environmental, or physical difficulty. The second assessment is in December and shall be given to the parents upon completion. The third assessment is in June and shall be given to the parents upon

completion as well.

Assessments are used to support children's learning and are conducted using a variety of methods, such as observations, checklists, rating scales, and individually administered tests. Assessments are individual and are a means of communicating with families (both daily and at conference times).

A group assessment is also done for planning purposes as needed. Child assessment plans describe the purposes of assessments and procedures, and how the results of assessments are to be used. Each teacher will have a BELC Assessment Plan in his/her classroom for reference and they will only assess the children that they know and are familiar with.

The child assessment plan identifies children's interests and needs, and describes their developmental progress and learning skills through interactions with children. Additionally, having conversations, such as asking open-ended questions about how children view the world around them, what specific questions and interests they have, help teachers to modify the curriculum. It is also used to develop curriculum improvement or to plan program improvement.

Teachers may learn from assessments how they need to adapt their teaching practices or their learning environments. Teachers align curriculum and teaching practices by having weekly lesson plan meetings, or more often if needed. When indicated, the results of a child assessment may lead to a referral for diagnostic assessment.

We are committed to continuous improvement and ensuring that all children receive the highest quality care and education. To achieve this, we use assessments of child development and learning as a foundational tool to guide instructional practices, professional development and program-wide decision-making.

Assessment data is regularly reviewed and used to:

- ◆ Tailor activities and lesson plans to meet the emerging needs and interests of the children.
- ◆ Identify children who may need extra support or enrichment and create personalized learning strategies.
- ◆ Modify classroom materials, routines, and centers based on observational developmental needs.
- ◆ Identify areas for staff training, coaching, and collaboration based on patterns in children's growth and learning.
- ◆ Use trends and data to evaluate program quality, allocate resources, and implement changes that improve outcomes for all children.

→ INTENTIONAL TEACHING

As part of the cycle of intentional teaching, the CT ELDS/DOTS enables teachers to plan and implement curriculum that addresses specific learning standards and to observe and assess children's progress in achieving these standards. The teachers use the curriculum we develop based on the CT ELDS/DOTS to ensure the best for the whole child; cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically, and creatively.

The teachers use intentional teaching by observation, assessing, planning the lessons, following up with another observation and assessment. An evaluation is then written for

the parent showing the progress or areas that need to be addressed.

All Teachers are required to take CT ELDS/DOTS assessment classes through ACES, School Readiness, Charter Oaks College, Thrive, or Charts a Course. Teachers and the Director discuss the evaluation/assessment process and how the evaluations are done with the director before conducting an assessment.

Families are encouraged to and may contribute to the assessment and/or evaluation process. Enrollment questionnaires, on-going discussions, concerns with teachers or the Director, and goal setting are ways parents are involved with our process. If you would like to discuss evaluations/assessments, please feel free to reach out to the front office to set up a meeting at any time.

If observation or testing reveals issues which need addressing, parents are referred to Birth to Three, Early Years, Branford Counseling Center, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), or Clifford Beers Clinic, as appropriate. We have ongoing relationships with these agencies and work together to create the best plan of action for the individual child. You may view our testing system and ask any questions of the Director upon request.

FAMILY-TEACHER CONFERENCES

While teachers are encouraged to complete assessments three times per year (September, December and June), Teachers will report the child's development and progression two times in the year and conferences are available upon request.

During these parent/teacher conferences, parents will have the opportunity to view and discuss the assessment and/or evaluation results with their child's teacher in a confidential setting that encourages open communication and constructive, proactive sharing and discussion.

It is important to understand that the goal of our parent/teacher conferences is not to focus on what a child may not yet be experiencing or demonstrating to the staff. Instead, it is an opportunity to highlight their strengths and successes, to share their interests and passions, and to set new goals together as partners in the learning process!

There are two forms we use to help guide your conversations and engage in partner-focused goal setting between the teacher and the family. They are the "Narrative Summary" forms and the "Family Conference" forms. We also provide a "Goals for my Child" form for parents to fill out.

CURRICULUM

Curriculum upon request. One is posted in each classroom.

R.4.01 IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

Branford Early Learning Center is committed to playful learning and recognizes the importance of play being a method used to meet learning goals and developmental milestones. Play activities are aligned with early learning standing and support goals outlined in assessments. Play is not separate from learning and through intentional planning, and responsive teaching we ensure that every play experience contributes meaningfully in these ways:

- helps children learn about the characteristics and properties of people, animals, and objects that enhance cognitive development
- enhances social development
- enhances emotional growth
- improves motor skills
- may facilitate the gradual process in which the child becomes independent
- allows children to exercise control
- develops creativity
- develops a sense of competence and adequacy
- provides relaxation and pleasure
- reinforces and generalizes instructional activities
- expends excess energy
- helps create new patterns of thinking and doing
- allows children to test their own skills
- develop problem-solving skills
- increases self esteem

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

We strive to build a relationship of mutual trust and respect between our families and our staff.

- If you have a problem or concern about our program or your child, please feel free to talk to the Head Teacher, Teacher, Assistant Director or the Director at any time.
 - If you need to discuss a matter with a teacher, please set up a time to speak with them during school hours via the front office
 - If there is a classroom issue that you would like to discuss, please see the Head Teacher first

Should you not be able to resolve the issue, contact the Assistant Director and she will set up a meeting with all involved. We are committed to work with you as a team to resolve any problem you may have.

If a parent or supervising adult is in any way abusive to a staff member, the child will be withdrawn from Branford Early Learning Center.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

→ CLOTHING, BEDDING AND SHOES:

We work with many types of art materials (markers, paint, paste, clay, glue, play dough, crayons, glitter, and chalk) which can be messy. We also do gross motor activities on the floor and play outside. For these reasons, it is important that your child wear comfortable, washable clothes that they are allowed to get dirty. **Please do not send your child to school in anything that must be kept clean.** A child who is apprehensive about getting dirty is a child who will not participate, and consequently, will not learn.

It is necessary that all children have 2 extra sets of clothes at the Center at all times. Please replace the clothes as they are used, outgrown, or out of season. Clothing or sleeping things soiled by any bodily fluid will be placed in a plastic bag, sealed, labeled, and stored apart from other items to be sent home.

For Infants, please provide several changes of clothing, disposable diapers, and wipes. Their crib sheets will be provided for them and will be washed weekly.

For Toddlers, please provide several changes of clothing, a set of bedding (cot sheet, small pillow, a light blanket and a small stuffed toy), disposable diapers, and wipes. Bedding for all children must be washed at least weekly.

For Preschool age children, please make sure that they are wearing pants that can be easily removed by them to use the bathroom. Please provide several changes of clothing, a set of bedding (cot sheet, small pillow, a light blanket and a small stuffed toy). Bedding for all children must be washed at least weekly.

All children must wear non-slippery shoes and must have backs. Sneakers or rubber soles are best.

As we go out to play in cold weather, the children need appropriate winter clothing, including hats, mittens, and boots. Outdoor clothing should be marked with your child's name. In the summer, we go under the sprinkler on hot days. Please send a bathing suit, towel, and water shoes, all marked with your child's name. **Absolutely no flip-flops.**

→ **TOYS:**

Since some toys are not appropriate in the school setting, we ask that you do not send toys from home except for a small soft toy for naptime.

Please do not bring in electronic toys or games. We are not responsible for toys from home that become lost or broken.

Guns, war toys, and superheroes are not appropriate for sharing.

→ **EDUCATION:**

Your child's day will be a balance of structured learning, such as circle time and teacher directed activities, and free choice in our learning areas - science, literacy, housekeeping, fine motor manipulatives, math, computer, blocks, and art materials. They will have story time, music, dance, Spanish, sign language, and drama.

Each month will focus on a different theme. They will get to make choices and learn to develop relationships with other people. We use elements of the Reggio Emilia philosophy, learning through art in a beautiful environment with the support of our families and community; a project approach, studying what is interesting to our children; and the Connecticut Early Learning Developmental Standards (ELDS), providing structure and an assurance that all areas of fundamentals are met. For our infants and younger toddlers, we provide a language rich environment with close caregiver relationships and plenty of stimulation with books, toys, music, large motor movement, and activities that are age appropriate. The director will provide further information about our education philosophy, our educational programs, and our curriculum upon request.

→ **REST/NAP:**

For preschoolers and toddlers, please bring in a soft toy, a small pillow and blanket marked with the child's name. Familiar things from home provide comfort at nap time. Nap time is required for all children; however, they may lay quietly on their cot and rest if they do not want to nap.

→ **INFANT SLEEP ARRANGEMENT POLICY:**

All staff are trained to be diligent in their awareness and implementation of infant safe sleep practices for all children under the age of 12 months. We recognize the importance of being vigilant in the adherence of best practice and state regulations regarding safe sleep. All staff responsible for the supervision of infants will ensure the following:

- Infants shall be physically observed at least every fifteen minutes to assess the infants' breathing, color, temperature, and comfort
- Infants are placed in a supine (back) position for sleeping in a well-constructed, free standing crib or other piece of equipment designed for infant sleeping and appropriate for the particular child
- The crib mattress will be covered with a tightly fitted sheet unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for an alternative sleep position or alternative piece of equipment
- When infants can easily turn over from the supine to prone position (back to front), they will be put down to sleep on their back and then allowed to adopt whatever position they prefer to sleep
- No items are allowed/shall be placed in the crib or hung over the side of the crib unless we have written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for its use; this includes:
 - Pillows
 - Soft bumpers
 - Toys
 - Blankets (including weighted blankets, sleepers and/or swaddles)
- Pacifiers without attachments are allowed
- Bibs and/or garments with ties and/or hoods shall be removed from infants that are placed to sleep
- No toys or objects shall be attached to sleeping or rest equipment
- No infant shall be put to sleep on a sofa, bed, couch, soft mattress, waterbed, or other soft surface
- No infant shall be put to sleep or allowed to remain asleep in a child restraint system intended for use in a vehicle, an infant carrier, a swing or any place that is not specifically designed to be an infant bed unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for their use
- No infant shall be swaddled unless the child has written documentation from the medical provider specifying instructions and a timeframe for swaddling
- No child under 3 years of age shall have access to teething necklaces, teething bracelets or other jewelry that could present a choking or strangulation hazard

Please make sure you sign the Infant Sleep Arrangement Acknowledgement form given to you and turn it into the front office.

→ TOILETING

Ideally, BELC children will be potty-trained by the age of three. However, we understand that children develop in different ways and on different timelines. We have procedures in place that allow us to work with parents in support of diaper training efforts towards having BELC children fully potty trained and no longer diaper dependent.

All children are supervised during toileting but allowed as much privacy as is appropriate. No child will be punished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.

Children will be introduced to the toileting process when they show an interest and or the parents and teachers feel the children have the capability to remain dry during nap or during the night. Toilet training will never be coerced and will be done in accordance with a family's request and will be consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.

All children can use the bathroom when needed. Teachers will encourage children to use the bathroom regularly (i.e., before going to the playground, before lunch, after rest, etc.) and will check a child still in diapers or pull-ups at least every hour and as needed to see if they need changing.

Any child soiled or wet will be made more comfortable using the school's diapering procedure. Soiled items will be sent home daily, and a replacement set should be sent to school the next day. The school has a limited supply of spare clothing. Any clothing supplied by the school must be laundered before being returned.

Families of children who are toilet training will receive information daily regarding their progress. All families will provide a complete change of clothes for their child to be stored at the school.

Toilet training will never be coerced and will be done in accordance with a family's request and will be consistent with the child's physical and emotional abilities.

Children must wash their hands with soap and running water after toileting and before snacks, meals, or meal preparation.

Disposable gloves will be used whenever cleaning feces, urine, blood, or vomit. All teachers must wash their own hands after assisting a child with diapering/toileting. Individual paper towels will be used to dry hands.

Contaminated areas will be cleaned and sanitized with bleach to water solution approved disinfectant solution.

→ DIAPERING POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The following procedure must be posted in each diapering area, and followed:

- Staff and children will wash their hands thoroughly and dry them with paper towels
- Staff will put on protective gloves (best practice but not required by regulations)
- Child will be placed on disposable changing paper
- Soiled diapers will be removed, and the child will be cleaned with wipes
- Soiled diapers, wipes, and changing paper will be disposed of in a covered, washable, lined waste receptacle which will be removed outside at least daily
- Gloves will be removed, and a new, clean diaper will be applied
- If needed, diaper cream, ointment, or powder will be applied using new gloves
- Staff will wash their hands and the child's hands
- Diaper area will be washed & disinfected after each use
- Changing paper will be replaced
- Staff will again wash their hands and dry with a paper towel

◆ CLOTH DIAPER AND SOILED CLOTHING

The following procedure must be posted in each diapering area and followed:

1. Program staff will put on protective gloves
2. Child will be placed on disposable changing paper
3. Soiled diapers will be removed, and the child will be cleaned with wipes
4. Soiled clothing and diapers (unrinsed) shall be placed in a sealed plastic bag (labeled with the child's name if more than one child uses cloth diapers). The plastic bag shall be placed in an airtight container.
5. Gloves will be removed, and a new clean diaper will be applied.
6. If needed, diaper cream, ointment, or powder will be applied using new gloves.
7. Program staff will wash their hands and the child's hands
8. Diaper areas will be washed and disinfected after each use
9. Changing paper will be replaced.
10. Program staff will again wash their hands and dry them with a paper towel.
11. Parents must remove soiled clothing diapers daily.
12. The container shall be cleaned and sanitized daily.

Cloth diapers and soiled clothing are immediately placed in a plastic bag and sent home that day for laundering. Staff checks for wet or soiled diapers or training pants (pull ups) every two hours when the child is awake and when the child awakens from a nap or sleeping. Diapers are changed when wet or soiled following diapering procedures. (5A.17). Changing surfaces are not used for any other purpose whatsoever. Food preparation staff do not change diapers.

[Disposable diapers are the norm, unless cloth diapers are required for a documented medical reason. Cloth diapers must have absorbent inner lining completely contained with an outer covering of waterproof material; both changed as a unit.]

→ BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

As birthdays are special times, we encourage doing something special to celebrate. We prefer a special project, game with the children, or have a guest performer entertain.

If you prefer food, it must be a healthy snack and you must check with the Assistant Director first. **NO CUPCAKES or SWEETS ARE ALLOWED.** You may bring in fruit, mini bagels with cream cheese, smoothies, Pirate Booty or fruit yogurt.

If your child is having a birthday party outside of BELC, and not all of the children in the room are invited, we ask that you do not leave invitations in the classroom, as this leads to hurt feelings.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM PLAN

Children at BELC will follow a flexible daily schedule that meets the individual needs of the diverse population of children and families served by our program by following developmentally appropriate practices which include children with cultural, language and developmental differences.

When the weather permits, our daily schedule will include indoor and outdoor physical activities which are planned around the children's interests and needs. These activities will allow for both fine and gross motor development. BELC will also include the opportunity for problem-solving experiences that help to formulate language development, emotional intelligence, and sensory discrimination.

Children will have the opportunity to express their own ideas and feelings through creative experiences in all parts of the program, including:

- Cultural learning experiences
- Child initiated and staff-initiated experiences
- Exploration and discovery
- Varied choices in materials and equipment
- Individual and small group activities
- Rest, sleep or quiet activity
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Toileting and clean up
- Outdoor physical activities

Children under 2 years old **will not** have access to cell phones, laptops and computers that are capable of playing video games. Program staff will restrict access to cell phones, laptops and computers for children ages 2 and up, **unless it is for educational and physical activities.**

HANDWASHING PROCEDURE

Staff are to wash their hands after using the bathroom, helping children use the bathroom and touching food; although food is handled with gloves on by teaching staff. Hand washing is to be taught to the children and monitored. There are a variety of posters to use as teaching tools, that are located in the children's bathroom.

STEPS TO ENSURE PROPER HANDWASHING PRACTICES:

- Use liquid soap and running water
- Lather hands, scrub wrists, backs of hands, under fingernails, AND between fingers
- Scrub vigorously for at least 20 seconds, then rinse thoroughly
- Dry hands with paper towels
- Use paper towel to turn off water

5.A.09 WHEN TO WASH HANDS

FOR CHILDREN:

- Upon entering
- Immediately before eating
- Before a diaper change
- After using the bathroom or having a diaper changed
- After playing outside and handling pets
- When visiting infant toddler (or another room)
- After handling body fluids
- When hands are visibly soiled

FOR STAFF:

- Upon entering
- Immediately before handling food, preparing bottles, or feeding children
- Before meals and snacks, or preparing or serving meals, or after handling raw food that needs to be cooked.
- After using the bathroom, before and after assisting a child in the bathroom or diaper change
- After having contact with a child's bodily fluid or one's own
- After handling pets
- Before and after cleaning any surface or the water table
- When hands are visibly soiled
- After handling or cleaning garbage

- Before and after administering medication

NUTRITION

We are a peanut-free zone.

Breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack are provided to all children without cost. We participate in the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) which ensures our meals and portions are healthy. A weekly menu is posted in all classrooms, the front hallway and in the lunchroom. Child Care Nutrition is Supported by the Food Program. All children must be registered for the CACFP program unless medically necessary

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a federal program that promotes healthy meals and snacks to children in childcare programs. As part of the CACFP, BELC serves meals and snacks that meet specific guidelines and record children's attendance at meals and snacks. In return childcare providers are reimbursed a set amount per meal or snack. Providers also receive visits/inspections several times a year, up-to-date information about feeding young children, a monthly newsletter, and various other support materials. The childcare food program plays a vital role in improving the quality of childcare and helping children get a healthy start in life.

Meal and snack times are planned so that no child will go more than three hours without being offered food. Scheduled mealtimes are 8:30 am -10:00 am, 11:15 am -12:15 pm, and 2:30 pm - 3:00 pm. Accommodations for food allergies will be made on a case-by-case basis. If the allergy is not severe or life-threatening, reasonable substitutions will be made to the menu. If the allergy is severe and life-threatening, the specified foods will not be served. In the case of an allergy so severe that it is dangerous for the child to come into contact with small amounts of the food or breathe in its odor, BELC will take reasonable precautions to prevent an allergic reaction, with the understanding that complete protection is not possible. Food allergies are posted in the kitchen and in each classroom.

→ SPECIAL DIETS

If your child has religious or lifestyle dietary restrictions BELC will make reasonable adjustments to the menu in order to accommodate his/her needs. For example, a vegetarian child may be offered meatless spaghetti sauce while the other children have meat sauce. If your child is not able to follow the CACFP child care nutrition guidelines due to special dietary needs, BELC is required to have a written doctor's order to follow.

→ WEEKLY MENUS

The weekly menus have been reviewed by our CACFP representative from the State of Connecticut, our registered dietician/nutritionist, the Director, food Manager and cook. Each meal is planned with optimal nutrition in mind. Each menu is designed to provide a wide variety of foods that are different in color, shape, size, and texture. Menus include a wide variety of foods, including those that are the children's favorites, new or unfamiliar, culturally diverse, and seasonally appropriate. In addition, menus are planned with children's ages and developmental abilities in mind. A five-week rotation of menus changes seasonally to provide the children with a balance of variety and familiarity.

→ CACFP CHILD CARE NUTRITION REQUIREMENTS

Children two and older receive meals and snacks based on the minimum components listed below. Children under the age of two have separate requirements, based on age and development.

Breakfast Lunch Snacks (any two):

- 1% or Skim Milk, Grains or Bread, Meat or Alternative Protein Meat or Alternative
- Fruit or Vegetable, Grains or Bread, Grains or Bread Fruits and Vegetables
Fruit or Vegetable

→ [A.6.07 INFANT FEEDING POLICY](#)

The infant room welcomes parents to nurse/feed their infants.

Expressed human milk should be placed in a clean and sanitary bottle with a nipple that fits tightly, or into an equivalently clean and sanitary sealed container to prevent spilling during transport to home or to the facility. Only cleaned and sanitized bottles, or their equivalent, and nipples should be used in feeding. The bottle or container should be properly labeled with the infant's full name and the date and time the milk was expressed. The bottle or container will be immediately stored in the refrigerator on arrival. Staff will offer the oldest milk first.

The parent's own expressed milk should only be used for her own infant. Likewise, infant formulas should not be used for breastfed infants without the parent's written permission. Non-frozen human milk should be transported and stored in containers to be used to feed the infant, identified with a label which will not come off in water or handling, bearing the date of collection and the child's full name. The filled, labeled containers of human milk should be and will be kept refrigerated upon arrival. Human milk containers with a significant number of contents remaining (greater than one ounce) may be returned to the parent at the end of the day if the child has not fed directly from the bottle.

Frozen human milk may be transported and stored in single use plastic bags and placed in the freezer. Human milk should be defrosted in the refrigerator if frozen, and then heated under warm running water so that the temperature does not exceed 98.6°F. If there is insufficient time to defrost the milk in the refrigerator before warming it, then it may be defrosted in a container of running cool tap water. Some infants will not take their mother's milk unless it is warmed to body temperature, around 98.6°F. The caregiver/teacher should check for the infant's full name and the date on the bottle so that the oldest milk is used first. After warming, bottles should be mixed gently (not shaken), and the temperature of the milk tested before feeding. Staff must discard any unfinished and unrefrigerated formula or breast milk after one hour. (5B.7)

Expressed human milk that presents a threat to an infant, such as human milk that is in an unsanitary bottle, is curdled, smells rotten, and/or has not been stored following the

storage guidelines of the Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine as shown later in this standard, should be returned to the parent.

Some children around six months to a year of age may be developmentally ready to feed themselves and may want to drink from a cup. The transition from bottle to cup can come at a time when a child's fine motor skills allow use of a cup. The caregiver/teacher should use a clean small cup without cracks or chips and should help the child to lift and tilt the cup to avoid spillage and leftover fluid. The caregiver/teacher and mother should work together on cup feeding of human milk to ensure the child is receiving adequate nourishment and to avoid having a large amount of human milk remaining at the end of feeding. Two to three ounces of human milk can be placed in a clean cup and additional milk can be offered as needed. Small amounts of human milk (about an ounce) can be discarded.

Labels for containers of human milk should be resistant to the loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling. This is especially important when the frozen bottle is thawed in running tap water. There may be several bottles from different mothers being thawed and warmed at the same time in the same place.

By following this standard, the staff is able, when necessary, to prepare human milk and feed an infant safely, thereby reducing the risk of inaccuracy or feeding the infant unsanitary or incorrect human milk. Written guidance for both staff and parents/guardians should be available to determine when milk provided by parents/guardians will not be served. Human milk cannot be served if it does not meet the requirements for sanitary and safe milk.

- ❖ Excessive shaking of human milk may damage some of the cellular components that are valuable to the infant.

It is difficult to maintain 0°F consistently in a freezer compartment of a refrigerator or freezer, so caregivers/teachers should carefully monitor, with daily log sheets, the temperature of freezers used to store human milk using an appropriate working thermometer. Human milk contains components that are damaged by excessive heating during or after thawing from the frozen state. Currently, there is nothing in the research literature that states that feedings must be warmed at all prior to feeding. Frozen milk should never be thawed in a microwave oven as 1) uneven hot spots in the milk may cause burns in the infant and 2) excessive heat may destroy beneficial components of the milk.

By following safe preparation and storage techniques, nursing mothers and caregivers/teachers of breastfed infants and children can maintain the high quality of expressed human milk and the health of the infant.

FIELD TRIPS

We occasionally go on field trips using B and B Transportation. Children must be at least 4 years old to participate. You will sign a permission slip with details of the trip on it before every field trip.

If allowed, we will request parent chaperones. Staff and bus drivers are equipped with cell phones and first aid kits, medication for the children that require it, class lists and parent contact information. If there is a problem with the bus, another will be sent to replace it. We also use our schoolyard habitat for walking, special events on site, such as concerts and family days and graduations.

FAMILY SHARING PLAN

Our family sharing plan requires that one family member donates an hour of time a year volunteering at BELC. Parents can help in our schoolyard habitat or at a fix-up day, complete a class project, read books, and accompany us on a field trip. Ask a teacher for more ideas or please feel free to meet with the Director and discuss your ideas.

DISCIPLINE/BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT POLICY

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop inner controls so that he/she may move toward appropriate social behavior. Modeling positive guidance, setting clear limits and using Redirection is part of our ongoing process to acknowledge children's feelings as well as help them develop their own problem-solving skills and conflict resolutions.

By having clear rules, a comfortable environment, keeping the children happy and busy, as well as reinforcing positive behavior, we try to minimize the need for discipline.

Discipline is needed for:

- ✓ Redirection
- ✓ Discussion
- ✓ Peer problem solving
- ✓ Removal from the situation so the child may calm down and reflect
- ✓ The child is encouraged to go back to play or group when they are ready
- ✓ Staff will continually supervise child during disciplinary actions
- ✓ If the Behavior is continued to be aggressive towards peers, teachers, classroom objects, or themselves, the child may be asked to go home for the day, and to be picked up promptly.

Staff shall not be physically or psychologically abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, physical, humiliating, or frightening punishment under any circumstances. Physical punishment and verbal humiliation are forbidden. No child will be coerced or physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the child or others, using the least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

We require parents to abide by these guidelines while on school property. Children must still obey school rules while parents are with them. They must always stay with parents after they have been signed out.

If Branford Early Learning Center recommends counseling for a child, the parent must

make an appointment within two weeks. The child must then be seen within a month, or they will be asked to leave the program. If your child is out of control or if your child is being physically abusive to other children or staff members, you will be called and must immediately pick up your child. Please speak to the Assistant Director if you need any help with social services of any kind or if you need help with any child rearing issues. We have an extensive library/resource center and will be happy to help in any way we can.

Although we do not encourage suspension and will do everything possible for the benefit of the child, we also must protect all our children. Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child. Our procedure will follow our discipline policy, working with the student teacher and parents, putting outside agency help in place, with the permission of the parents, and then a decision will be made in conjunction with the OEC rules.

If exclusionary measures must be taken, the program offers assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

Policy acknowledges that it complies with federal and state civil rights laws.

→ **BITING**

Biting is common developmental behavior for young children and occasionally happens in childcare settings. Therefore, it is our goal to always protect all our children. The child will be redirected, as per the discipline policy above, and the parent will be notified by incident/accident report or a phone call that a biting has occurred. The staff will not discuss with either parent the identity of either child involved as this is confidential. Biting will be addressed, and a plan will be put into action to protect all children in the Center, if it continues.

Any plans made will be discussed with parents before implementing.

SUSPENSION/EXPULSION POLICY

Some examples of situations when it may be necessary to remove a child or to suspend a child's enrollment are:

- A child is a danger to him/herself, other children attending the center, center employees, or anyone else at the center.
- Medical, psychological, or social service personnel working with the center determine that continued care at the center could be harmful to or not in the best interests of the child.
- The family declines to explore or secure outside support or behavioral resources which may help to address the child's needs, improve the behavior, and reduce the safety risks.

If exclusionary measures must be taken, the program aids the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

Exclusionary measures are not considered until all other interventions have been exhausted, and there is agreement that exclusion is in the best interest of the child.

Policy acknowledges that it complies with federal and state civil rights laws (available on request).

HEALTH

According to the OEC regulations, each child shall be examined by a physician within a year prior to admission and shall have been successfully immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, pertussis, measles, rubella, pneumococcal conjugate, Hib, Hep B, and varicella as per age requirement.

According to state regulations, all children must also have a flu shot between September and December 31st in order to attend BELC. Proof must be given to the Director and kept in the child's file. By State law, physicals are due yearly. Children will not be allowed to attend if their physical is not up to date. We work with a dental consultant for screenings in February and an eye exam completed by the Lion's Club in October. If you or your child is in need of medical treatment or insurance, the Director will provide you with information on how to apply for Husky Insurance.

→ MEDICINE

We do not administer medicine with the exception of those for asthma and life-threatening allergies or conditions. We will need required forms for these medications filled out by your doctor. The OEC may also require a special medication authorization form which we will need in order to give your child specific medication. The Director and school nurse will explain this procedure to parents of children that may need this special authorization.

All medications must be in their original child resistant safety container and clearly labeled with the child's name, name of prescription, date of prescription, and directions for use. All medications will be stored in a locked cabinet and, if directed by a manufacturer, refrigerated, except for nonprescription medications, premeasured commercially prepared injectable medications (i.e., Epi-pens), glucagon and asthma inhalant medications. Non-prescription topical medications will be stored away from food and inaccessible to children. Parents must sign permission for the use of all non-prescription topical medications or staff will not be able to administer them (no exceptions). All unused or expired medication shall be returned to the parent/guardian or disposed (in the presence of at least one witness) if it is not picked up within one week following the termination of the order. BELC shall keep a written record of the medications destroyed which shall be signed by both parties.

R.6.01 ILLNESS POLICY

Children who become sick during the day must be picked up immediately. Please do not send a sick child to BELC, as children who are sick must be kept out of school.

Children who are not well enough to go outdoors should not be sent to school, since the entire group goes outdoors and the teaching staff is not large enough to keep one child indoors while all others are outside.

If a child has a contagious disease, we must be notified immediately. If a child becomes ill

during the day, he/she will be isolated from the other children and a parent or authorized person will be contacted.

- **EXCLUSIONS**

- **STREP THROAT** - may not return until on antibiotics for 24 hours; cases of Mono must have a doctor's note to return to school
- **SEVERE COUGHING** - that affects a child's daily routine or severe sore throat over three days
- **FEVER** - over 100.5 degrees, exclusion until fever and medication free for 48 hours
- **DIARRHEA/VOMITING/GASTROINTESTINAL INFECTION**
 - Diarrhea: if your child has more than 3 bowel movement accidents, they must be picked up as soon as possible and cannot return for 48 hours
 - Vomiting: must be picked up as soon as possible after 1st occurrence; exclusion until symptom and medication free for 48 hours
- **SKIN INFECTION/IMPETIGO** exclusion until the child shows a positive response to antibiotic therapy (unless the impetigo affects a very small area, which can be completely and comfortably covered). An undiagnosed rash or skin condition (note from physician necessary for return)
- **RINGWORM** - exclusion until treated by a doctor
- **BODY RASHES**- exclusion until treated by a doctor
- **PINWORMS** - exclusion until cleared up
- **HEAD LICE** - exclusion until morning after the child has completed one treatment. All lice removal procedures must be followed (ask for further information)
- **CONJUNCTIVITIS (PINK EYE)** - exclusion until after 3 doses of prescribed drops
- **CHICKENPOX** - exclusion until all lesions have scabbed over
- **FIFTH DISEASE AND MIDDLE EAR INFECTION** - do not require exclusion
- **RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS** - it's best to keep your child home in the early stages. We will not exclude children who feel well enough to attend and can participate fully in the day's activities

**** PLEASE REPORT ALL illnesses, particularly: salmonella, all bacterial infections, hepatitis, meningitis, fifth disease (may be harmful to pregnant women), and chicken pox ****

CHILDREN MOVING FROM BELC INTO KINDERGARTEN

Branford Early Learning Center does not handle Kindergarten registration, it is managed by the school of your choosing.

Each student has a portfolio that we are happy to share with their school, regarding their development and growth over their years at BELC, after filling out the Information Release form provided by the office.

R.2.05 Community Resources

Emergency Numbers

Ambulance	203-481-8200
Branford Fire Dept	203-488-7266
Branford Police Dept	203-481-4241
FEMA Disaster Assistance	800-621-3362
Poison Control Center	800-222-1222
Youth Police Officer	203-481-4241

Hotlines

2-1-1 of CT (children, health, social services)

Animal Poison Control	888-426-4435
Child Abuse & Neglect	800-842-2288
Child Development Infoline	800-505-7000
Domestic Violence	888-774-2900
Maternal Mental Health	833-852-6262
Navigating Mental Health - NAMI Crisis Line	800-467-3135
Suicide Crisis Hotline - Call or Text: 9-8-8	

Urgent Care

Connecticut Orthopedics Urgent Care (Walk-in)	203-407-3550
DOCS Urgent Care & Primary Care - Branford	475-221-6002
Hartford HealthCare-GoHealth Urgent Care	860-207-8942

Child Care Centers: Center-Based, Family Based and School-Age (Before & After school)

2-1-1 Child Care	https://search.211childcare.org/
(searchable directory of statewide licensed child care providers)	
ABC Learn with Me Inc.	203-488-1506
Branford Family Resource Center (FRC)	203-481-5066
Child Development Center	203-488-2007
Duck Pond Learning Center & Nursery School	203-481-8170
Learn and Play Christian Early Learning Center	203-488-4028
The Nest (Alphabet Academy Shoreline Campus)	203-208-4429
Pine Orchard Nursery School (PONS)	203-488-3769
See Us Grow Child Care & Learning Center	203-896-8916
Tabor Christian Community Preschool	203-483-9420
Deborah Withington	203-481-5489
Giggle Patch Family Day Care	203-499-9401
Shari's Day Care	203-488-8050
Patricia A Amendola	203-488-9869
Sunflower Child Care, LLC (Tanja Kane)	203-444-6612
Branford Parks and Recreation Dept	203-488-8304
Branford School Age Child Care (SACC)	203-481-5066
Soundview Family YMCA School Age Child Care	203-481-9622

Child Development & Early Intervention

2-1-1 Child Development Infoline & Pregnancy Support	800-505-7000
Branford Schools: Linda B. Chipkin Early Years Center	203-315-3540
CT Birth to Three	800-505-7000
CT Newborn Screening Program (Dept of Public Health)	860-920-6628
Help Me Grow Program	800-505-7000
CT Office of Early Childhood (OEC)	
Lumbility - Kidssteps Early Intervention	203-453-7592
Nurturing Families Program	203-481-4233
East Shore District Health Dept (ESDHD)	

Community & Volunteer Services

BH Care Clothing Bank	203-483-2643
Boy Scouts of America, CT Yankee Council	800-333-7905
Branford Arts & Cultural Alliance (BACA)	203-433-4071
Branford Community Television (BCTV)	203-481-3232
Branford Food Pantry	203-481-3663
Branford Historical Society	203-488-4828
Branford Lions Club	203-488-4484
Branford Parks & Recreation Dept	203-488-8304
Branford Rotary Club	https://www.branfordrotary.org/
Community Dining Room	203-488-9750
The Connecticut Hospice	203-315-7301
CT Summer Meals - End Hunger CT	860-560-2100
Dan Cosgrove Animal Shelter	203-315-4125
Girl Scouts of Connecticut	800-922-2770
Integrated Refugee & Immigrant Services (IRIS)	203-562-2095
Interfaith Volunteers of Greater New Haven (IVCG)	475-257-6538
James Blackstone Memorial Library	203-488-1441
Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) CT	800-544-3690
Mother's Milk Bank Northeast	617-527-6263
	203-804-5974
Orchard House Medical Adult Day Center	203-481-7110
Soundview Family YMCA School Age Child Care	203-481-9622
Special Olympics of CT	203-230-1201
<u>Counseling/Child & Adult Mental Health</u>	
2-1-1 Mental Health Directory / 2-1-1 Support Group Directory	2-1-1
Psychology Today	https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/ct/branford
(searchable directory to find a therapist)	
Branford Counseling & Community Services (BCCS)	203-481-4248
Clifford Beers Community Care Center	203-772-1270
CT Association for Infant Mental Health (CT-AIMH)	860-786-1288
David M. Meyers, LCSW	203-260-0647
Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)	860-704-6378
Jamie Perillo, LPC - Your Food Allergy Friends	203-433-2550
Melissa Rapani, LMFT, LLC	203-623-3650
	203-904-2072
Shoreline Family Health Care	203-871-4188
Virginia (Gina) Macdonald MA, LPC, CEDS-S	203-710-6665
Yale Child Study Center at Yale University (YCSC)	844-362-9272
Yale Outpatient Psychiatric Services	203-688-3182
APT Foundation	203-781-4600
Aware Recovery Services CT	203-779-5799
BH Care	203-800-7177
	203-483-2630
CT Community for Addiction Recovery (CCAR)	866-205-9770
CT Dept of Mental Health & Addiction Services	860-418-7000
Cornell Scott Hill Behavioral Health Services	203-503-3000
Drug Free CT	800-563-4086
Generations Psychiatry Services	203-433-2550
Morgan R. Price, LPC	203-208-6145
Root Center for Advanced Recovery	475-290-0012