

## **Creative ME LLC Early Start CT (ESCT) Parent Handbook**

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## **Welcome to Early Start CT at Creative ME LLC**

We are proud to offer high-quality early childhood education through Connecticut's Early Start CT initiative. Our program supports children and families by providing nurturing care, education, and developmental services in alignment with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC) standards.

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### **Mission Statement**

To empower children through play-based learning, foster social-emotional development, and partner with families to support lifelong success.

### **Program Overview**

Creative ME LLC is a licensed early care provider participating in the Early Start CT program, a state-funded initiative that merges School Readiness, Child Day Care, and Head Start supplemental funding to provide equitable access to affordable childcare.

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## **1. Eligibility & Enrollment**

### **Age Eligibility**

- ï **Infant/Toddler:** 6 weeks – 3 years
- ï **Preschool:** 2 years, 8 months – 5 years (not yet in Kindergarten)
- ï **School Age:** Kindergarten enrolled – 12 years old

### **Residency Eligibility**

- ï Must reside in Connecticut
- ï Border-state residents working in CT with childcare subsidies from MA, NY, or RI may qualify

### **Income Eligibility**

- ï 60% of enrolled families must be at or below 75% of the State Median Income (SMI)

### **Documentation Required**

- ï Child's birth certificate

- ï Proof of income (tax return, pay stubs)
- ï Proof of residency (utility bill, lease, etc.)
- ï Completed enrollment packet

Families remain eligible throughout enrollment even if income increases beyond 75% SMI as long as fees are paid and eligibility criteria are otherwise maintained.

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## 2. Program Schedule & Calendar

- ï **Hours:** Monday–Friday, 7:30 AM – 5:30 PM
  - ï **Drop-Off Window:** Children must be dropped off between **7:30 AM and 10:00 AM** each day. Late drop-offs may disrupt classroom routines and are strongly discouraged.
  - ï **Annual Closures:** Listed in the full program calendar (includes holidays and 2 provider vacation weeks)
  - ï **Weather Policy:** Follow Public Schools / families will be notified through Tadpoles and WTNH
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## 3. Attendance Policy

- ï Children must attend at least one day per calendar month to maintain enrollment
  - ï Notify the center by 9:00 AM if your child will be absent
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## 4. Family Fees

Family fees are calculated based on income and family size using the OEC sliding scale. Families will receive written communication outlining:

- ï Monthly fee amount
  - ï Due date
  - ï Payment method
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## 5. Curriculum & Daily Schedule

Our classrooms use The Creative Curriculum, aligned with CT ELDS. Children engage in:

- ï Language & Literacy
- ï Math & Science
- ï Music & Movement
- ï Outdoor Play
- ï Meals, Rest Time, and Free Choice Centers

Lesson plans are posted in classrooms and adapted for each child's development.

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## 6. Health & Safety Policies

- Required immunizations and physicals
- Daily health checks
- Incident/Accident reports for injuries
- Emergency preparedness drills
- All staff are certified in CPR, First Aid, and Medication Administration.

### Sick Child Policy – When to Stay Home

In accordance with OEC regulations, children who are ill must stay home to prevent the spread of illness. Children should not be brought to the center if they have:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher (must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning)
- Vomiting within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea (two or more loose stools in 24 hours)
- Rash with fever or behavioral change
- Eye discharge (thick mucus or pus) or pink eye unless cleared by a doctor
- Severe cold symptoms (excessive coughing, sneezing, or nasal discharge)
- Any contagious illness (e.g., flu, COVID-19, chickenpox, strep throat) until cleared by a physician

**Return to Care:** Children may return when they are:

- Symptom-free for 24 hours without medication
- Cleared in writing by a healthcare provider (when required)
- Able to fully participate in classroom activities, including outdoor play

Parents will be contacted to pick up their child within 45 minutes if symptoms develop while at the center. A quiet space will be provided for the child to rest under supervision until pickup.

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## 7. Supervision & Ratios

Creative ME adheres to the following staff–child ratios:

- **Infants:** 1:4
- **Toddlers:** 1:4
- **Preschool:** 1:10
- **Outdoor/Playground:** 3:8

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## 8. Family Engagement & Communication

- Parent-teacher conferences (3x/year)
- Monthly newsletters

- ï Text/email updates
  - ï Family events & volunteer opportunities
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## **9. Grievance Policy**

Parents may report concerns to:

1. Classroom Teacher
  2. Site Director (Mechele Ellis)
  3. Early Start CT Liaison
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## **10. Required Acknowledgment**

All families must sign an acknowledgment form confirming receipt of this handbook, understanding of policies, and agreement to comply with all enrollment requirements.

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Thank you for choosing Creative ME LLC and trusting us with your child's care and development. We are excited to welcome your family into the Early Start CT program!

Guardian signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_