



# Family Handbook

Child Care Center Program

Revised December 2025

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## 1. Welcome to My Place

Established February 2012 to serve families throughout Schuyler County, My Place, A Play and Learning Center is a not-for-profit organization that provides high-quality care and education for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children (ages 6 weeks–12 years) through our two locations.

## **Mission**

To be the pillar of childcare in Schuyler County by providing children and families with quality care and educational experiences.

## **Vision**

To provide a sustainable model of care that promotes family and community partnerships and quality childhood learning experiences through play.

## **Values**

- Play
- Welcoming environment
- Nurturing relationships inside and outside of the organization
- Accessibility
- Continuous learning
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion

## **Goals**

- Provide a sustainable model of care
- Contribute to the local economy
- Promote a culture of learning through play

## **Educational Philosophy**

We believe every child has the potential to bring something unique and special to the world. We provide quality early childhood experiences to foster children's potential by believing in them as capable individuals. We assist children in discovering who they are so they can express opinions, nurture ideas, and develop a lifelong love of learning. We are committed to learning through play and honoring children's diverse developmental timelines. Together, staff and families agree to honor our center as an equitable environment where we respect, accept, and embrace differences as core to the future we are shaping.

## Who We Serve

My Place serves approximately **60 children**, from six weeks to five years of age. We are open to the public and prioritize placement for:

- Siblings of children currently enrolled
- Children of our staff
- Children in the foster care system

## New York State Licensing

My Place follows all regulations in the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) Child Care Regulations. A copy is available in each classroom and in the lobby on the information wall. Parents may report licensing concerns to the Regional OCFS office at **585-238-8531** or the NYS parent warm line at **800-732-5207**.

Regulations: [https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/daycare\\_regulations.asp](https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/daycare_regulations.asp)

## 2. Daily Operations

### Hours of Operation

Center hours: **Monday–Friday, 7:00 a.m.–5:30 p.m.**

Early arrival before 7:00 a.m. is not permitted. All children and families must exit the building by 5:30 p.m.

### Holidays (Center Closed)

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Grand Prix Day
- Veterans Day

- Thanksgiving Holiday (Thursday and Friday)
- Christmas Holiday (Eve and Day)
- New Year's Day

## Weather-Related Closings & Delays

We make every effort to remain open provided adequate staffing can arrive safely. Closings or delays are rare. In the event of a change, we will notify families via **ProCare app (SMS push)** and the **My Place Facebook page**.

## Drop-Off & Pick-Up Procedures

- Sign-in/out via ProCare at arrival and departure.
- Alert staff at drop-off of any changes to your child's routine.
- Only authorized adults (with written permission and photo ID) may pick up children. For custodial disputes, provide current court documentation.
- Supervise your child and siblings during drop-off/pick-up.
- Knock and wait for staff to greet you before entering the classroom.
- For safety: drive slowly in the lot; never leave a child unattended in a vehicle; turn off engines when unattended.

## Attendance & Absence

Please send a ProCare message or call by 8:30 a.m. if your child will be late or absent. This supports accurate meal counts and staffing plans.

## Late Pickup Fees

- \$5.00 per child for the first 5 minutes after 5:30 p.m.
- \$1.00 per additional minute thereafter.
- Fees are charged to your account and due upon receipt. Child care assistance programs do not cover late fees.
- **Unattended Child Protocol:** At 5:30 p.m., we begin calling emergency contacts. If no contact is made by 5:45 p.m., we will contact law enforcement to ensure the child's safety by requesting a welfare check on the parent/guardian.
- **Repeated Violations:** Three late pickups within six months may result in termination of enrollment.

### 3. Enrollment & Admissions

My Place admits children without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, religion, or disability. Limited part-time enrollment (fewer than five days per week) may be available; however, partial-day rates are not offered. If a classroom has a full-time waitlist, the Director will collaborate with part-time families to explore available options. Full-time enrollment is given priority.

#### Enrollment Process

1. **Tour:** Families visit the Center, view classrooms, and learn about daily operations.
2. **Application & Fee:** Complete the enrollment application and pay the non-refundable fee (\$25 first child / \$40 per family). Provide emergency contact cards, medical clearance, and current immunizations.
3. **Classroom Visit:** When an age-appropriate opening is available, families meet the teacher to review routines and needed personal items.
4. **Secure Enrollment:** Enrollment is confirmed when the Director affirms availability and the deposit is received.

#### Special Enrollment Considerations

During temporary family changes (e.g., maternity leave, illness, job layoff), full-time families (enrolled at least six weeks) may reduce to part-time (minimum two days/week) for up to eight weeks without losing their full-time slot. After eight weeks, if full-time cannot resume, families may join the waitlist for the next full-time opening. This option may be used once per year and requires Director approval.

#### Childcare Transition Policy

**Purpose:** Ensure smooth transitions between classrooms based on readiness, developmental milestones, and family input; support transitions to district Pre-K and after-school care.

**Process:**

- Family communication meeting with teachers/administration
- Transitions based on age, development, and space availability
- Short classroom visits prior to transition
- Warm welcome and ongoing observation/support
- Family information on new routines, curriculum, and teacher introductions
- Annual staff training on transition best practices

## Confidentiality of Records

All family, children, and staff information is confidential. Educational and health records are stored securely. We do not release information without parental written consent.

## 4. Classroom Structure & Staffing

### Capacity & Ratios

The Center has **five classrooms**. Maximum group sizes:

- **Infants:** 8
- **Waddler:** 8
- **Toddler 1:** 7
- **Toddler 2:** 12
- **Preschool:** 18

Minimum staff-to-child ratios:

- **Infants (6 weeks–18 months):** 1:4
- **Waddlers (12–24 months):** 1:4
- **Toddlers (18–36 months):** 1:5
- **Preschool (3–5 years):** 1:7

### Staff Qualifications & Training

All teachers have education and training in Early Childhood.



- **Lead Teachers:** Associate degree or Child Development Credential (CDA), or an approved study plan with Program Director and OCFS licensor.
- **Assistants:** High school diploma/GED (additional coursework/experience preferred).
- **Teacher Aides:** High school diploma/GED; may float based on program needs.
- **Clearances:** Interviews, working interviews, references, health screening, child abuse screening, and criminal record check are required.
- **Professional Development:** Minimum 30 hours every two years; staff set annual PD goals.

## 5. Curriculum & Social-Emotional Development

### Learning Through Play

We utilize developmentally appropriate practices that center play, literacy, and hands-on exploration. Daily routines include oral care, handwashing, diapering/toileting, and gross motor activities.

### Programming & Gross Motor Development

**Purpose:** Promote healthy physical development.

**Infants:** Supervised tummy time begins early (3–5 minutes, multiple times daily), increasing as development allows. Conducted on firm, clean surfaces; alternatives (on caregiver chest/lap) provided as needed.

**All Children:** Teacher-led and independent movement opportunities occur throughout the day. Policies reviewed annually; staff receive training on physical development and obesity prevention.

### Implementing the Pyramid Model

A multi-tiered framework promoting social-emotional development:

- **Nurturing Relationships:** Strong, responsive relationships among children, families, and staff.
- **Supportive Environments:** Visuals, routines, and choices to foster independence and regulation.
- **Targeted Supports:** Explicit instruction in sharing, turn-taking, and emotional vocabulary.
- **Intensive Interventions:** Individualized behavior support plans in collaboration with families when needed.

## Addressing Challenging Behaviors

We use proactive, compassionate strategies that seek to understand root causes, set clear expectations, and gently redirect behaviors. When needed, children may step out of the classroom with an adult for a brief reset before rejoining the group.

Behaviors that pose a safety risk include, but are not limited to, eloping (leaving the classroom or play area without permission), biting that breaks the skin, or throwing objects that result in injury, such as causing another child to sustain a head injury. If a child is unable to re-regulate after support from staff, the family may be asked to pick up their child for the day. This decision is never a punishment or a “reward,” but rather a necessary step when a child’s behavior impacts the safety of the group or our ability to maintain a safe and supportive learning environment for all children.

Per OCFS regulations, we are required to report serious reportable incidents, which include eloping, bites that break the skin, and head injuries, among others. For the complete list, please see the Program Director.

If behaviors pose safety risks or persist, we partner with families to develop individualized support plans. Families will receive communication describing the behaviors observed and the strategies we are using to help. Continued concerns will result in a parent meeting to create a collaborative plan for support. In some cases, this plan may include reduced program time or providing families with community resources to help locate additional support or alternative care options.

## 6. Assessment & Screening

**Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ):** Completed within 45 days of enrollment and on each child's birthday and half-birthday.

**ASQ:SE:** Conducted twice annually (spring and fall) to evaluate social-emotional well-being.

**Process:** Trained staff conduct screenings in the child's native language; results are shared with families and used to set individual learning goals. Records are securely stored.

**Follow-Up:** For ongoing concerns, we meet with families, share early intervention resources, and collaborate on next steps.

## 7. Meals & Nutrition

### Meal Service & Menu Guidelines

We provide breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack that meet USDA/CACFP guidelines and are approved by a registered dietitian. Meals are served family-style to encourage conversation and independence. Menus are posted in classrooms and in ProCare. Notify your child's teacher of allergies. We prohibit foods containing nuts or nut oils.

### Allergy & Special Dietary Needs

My Place is Nut-Free. Staff are trained to prevent, identify, and treat anaphylaxis. For allergies, families must complete OCFS-6029 & OCFS-7006 to create an individual health care plan prior to the start date.

### Outside Food & Beverage

- Obtain lead teacher approval before bringing outside food/beverages.
- Breakfast is served at 9:00 a.m.—please do not arrive with outside food.
- Medical dietary restrictions require provider documentation on OCFS forms.

- All outside food must be peanut-free and comparable to menu offerings.
- Children have unlimited access to water; please provide a labeled water bottle.

## **Infant Feeding & Breastfeeding Support**

- Families complete an infant feeding schedule (on-demand or scheduled).
- Center formula and jar food are available check with the infant room teacher.
- Recognized breastfeeding site with a private nursing room and classroom refrigeration.
- If a physician recommends solids before 6 months, written orders are required by USDA/CACFP.

## **Sleeping Arrangements**

All children have rest opportunities. Non-sleepers rest quietly for 30 minutes and then engage in quiet activities. Infants arriving asleep must be awakened prior to parent departure; infants must be removed from car seats and handed to the teacher.

# **8. Health & Safety**

## **Illness & Medication Policy**

- Parents/guardians administer prescription medications; relatives must be 18+.
- No medication is stored at the Center.
- Staff may apply non-medicated over-the-counter items (lotion, sunscreen, triple antibiotic ointment, diaper cream, lip balm) with written parent permission and child's full name on the product.
- Do not store medication in bags/backpacks; coordinate with the Director if transport is necessary.

## Health Care & Sick Child Policy

Exclude children for suspected/diagnosed communicable diseases until cleared by a healthcare provider. Follow AAP fever thresholds:

- Ear/Temporal: **100.4°F (38.0°C)** or higher
- Oral/Pacifier: **100.0°F (37.8°C)** or higher
- Axillary: **99.0°F (37.2°C)** or higher

Additional exclusion criteria include (abbrev.): persistent vomiting, severe headache/stiff neck, first-time seizure, acting unusually confused, unequal pupils, any rash that is spreading, uncontrolled breathing difficulty, severe abdominal pain, stools that are black or contain blood, stools that cannot be contained by a diaper or pull up, dehydration signs(not urinating once in 8 hours, dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes), open blisters from hand-foot-mouth, inability to participate in daily routines, conjunctivitis.

### Return to Care:

- Symptom-free and fever-free for 24 hours without medication, and able to participate **OR** with a healthcare provider's note.
- 24 hours after starting medication for conjunctivitis, impetigo, scabies, ringworm, or strep throat with a note from a health care provider.

## Accidents & Injuries

Staff prioritize prevention and supervision. When an incident occurs, staff provide first aid, notify parents (all head injuries you will receive a phone call), and complete a written report detailing the incident and environmental adjustments. Certain injuries are reported to OCFS; you may receive a licenser call.

## Emergency Procedures & Evacuation Drills

- **Monthly** evacuation drills at varied times; all drills are unannounced. If present, please evacuate with your child as directed.
- **Twice yearly** shelter-in-place drills (advanced notice provided).
- Primary full-evacuation meeting location: **Jefferson Village Apartments.**
- Secondary locations: **Watkins Glen Fire Station.**

- Communication for immediate pick-up: ProCare SMS push; phone call if no response.

## Outings & Outdoor Play

Daily outdoor play is required except during inclement weather. Dress children appropriately. If a child is too ill to go outside, they are likely not well enough to attend.

Guidelines for heat/cold exposure are followed; staff adjust duration and monitor children closely. Local walking trips (bank, lake, fire station, park, library) support learning; permission via blue card is required.

## Pets in the Classroom

Permitted if healthy, vaccinated, and not a safety risk. Immunization records required; licensing required where applicable. Written parent permission is required; families will be notified prior to visits. Reptiles and amphibians are **not permitted** per OCFS.

## Pest Policies & Procedures

Confidential, child-centered procedures address scabies, lice, bed bugs, and fleas. Daily health checks occur at arrival. For unmitigated or repeated cases, documentation (e.g., treatment note or extermination receipt) may be required; repeated infestations may result in termination of care per leadership review. Detailed action/return-to-care steps are posted in-center.

# 9. Parent Communication & Involvement

## ProCare Software

We use ProCare for tracking, billing, attendance, and daily communication. Families receive an authentication code via email/text. An active email is required for billing access.

## ProCare Family Policy

- **Confidentiality & Photo Sharing:** Group photos may appear in ProCare. Do **not** screenshot, download, or share photos outside the app. Violations may result in loss of photo access.
- **Updates & Staff Responsibilities:** Staff update ProCare when not counted in ratio; safety and supervision come first. Updates may be delayed until an appropriate time.
- **Messaging Expectations:** Use ProCare for non-urgent messages. For urgent changes (e.g., pick-up), call the Center. Staff maintain professional boundaries and do not respond outside Center hours.
- **Direct Communication:** ProCare supplements—not replace—conversations at drop-off/pick-up or conferences. Contact the Program Director with questions.

## Daily Communication

Classroom staff document meals, rest, activities, and highlights in ProCare. Sensitive matters should be emailed to the teacher or Director. Phone calls are welcome; extended conversations may be scheduled to minimize classroom disruption.

## Parent & Staff Communication

We encourage open dialogue and scheduled conferences twice per year to discuss milestones and goals. Provide updates about home changes that may affect your child; information is documented for the classroom team. With two weeks' notice (barring emergencies), we inform families of staffing changes.

### Extensions:

- Preschool: 102
- Toddler: 103
- Tiny Tots: 104
- Waddlers: 105
- Infants: 106
- Program Director: 100
- Executive Director: 101

## Family Partnership Policy

- **Community Resources:** Lobby displays of programs, seasonal events, and supports.
- **Personalized Assistance:** Leadership helps families locate services.
- **Engagement:** Events, workshops, and in-class opportunities (stories, crafts, cooking).
- **Responsive Support:** Policies reviewed annually to meet evolving needs.

For health crises, updates are posted at [www.myplace-aplc.org](http://www.myplace-aplc.org) and emailed to families.

## Parent Responsibilities (Summary)

Keep enrollment documents current; inform us of changes (contact info, custody orders, emergency contacts); report contagious illnesses; pick up within one hour when requested; provide written daily instructions via ProCare as needed; authorize alternate pick-ups (with photo ID); drive cautiously; label personal items; take soiled clothes home daily; and pay tuition as agreed.

## 10. Behavior & Conduct Policies

### Child Behavior & Discipline Guidelines

We use developmentally appropriate guidance: redirection, environmental adjustments, meeting basic needs, and calm spaces. Corporal punishment is prohibited. Physical intervention is limited to immediate safety (e.g., moving a child from danger, blocking unsafe actions, and gentle guidance). One-on-one support outside the classroom may occur when other methods fail and will be documented in ProCare.

### Parent Code of Conduct

To model positive behavior, parents/guardians may not: use profanity; be verbally/physically aggressive; threaten others; or violate confidentiality. Services may be terminated for severe or repeated violations.



## Adult Conduct Expectations

Our sites must be safe, comfortable, and healthy. Adults must follow Center procedures and refrain from threats, harassment, physical/verbal punishment, violence, swearing, excessive displays of affection, theft, sharing agency passwords or codes, unauthorized posting of program images, disclosure of confidential information, social media harassment, weapon possession, or presence under the influence of drugs/alcohol. Threats to safety will be reported to authorities. Depending on severity, families may receive one written warning prior to dismissal. Concerns may be emailed to [info@myplace-aplc.org](mailto:info@myplace-aplc.org).

## 11. Tuition & Fees

### Payment Policies

- Tuition is weekly (including holidays, staff training, unexpected/weather closures) and based on **enrollment, not attendance**.
- Fees follow the Center's sliding fee scale; financial data is collected annually.
- A one-week, non-refundable deposit secures your slot.
- Tuition is due before the week begins (weekly/bi-weekly/monthly in advance).
- Accepted: cash, check, cashier's check, money order, or ACH via ProCare/Chemung Canal.
- Returned checks: \$40 fee; repeated issues may require alternate payment methods.
- Accounts 30+ days overdue accrue 16% APR (1.33% monthly) late fees.
- Childcare services may be discontinued at 60+ days overdue.
- Part-time families: Where available, make-up days may be offered for Center-related closures (holidays) during the same week; we cannot make up days for family vacations or illnesses.

### Tuition Assistance

Subsidies may be available. Contact your county DSS:

- Chemung County Childcare Connection: **(607) 737-5411**
- Steuben County Child Care Aware: **(607) 776-2126**
- Schuyler County DSS: **(607) 535-8303**
- Yates County DSS: **(315) 536-5183**

## **Withdrawing from the Center**

A minimum of two weeks' written notice is required. If a child is withdrawn without adequate notice, two weeks' tuition beyond the notification date will be charged. Unpaid balances may be sent to collections.

## **12. Additional Policies**

### **Use of Photos & Media Consent**

Photos may be used for Center communications and promotional materials when permission is granted. See Photo Permission Form.

# 13. Acknowledgment & Agreement Forms

## Parent Handbook Agreement Form

I/we, the undersigned, agree to enroll my/our child, \_\_\_\_\_, at My Place. I/we understand that My Place assumes responsibility for my/our child's well-being during the hours of care and that staff will make every effort to reach me/us should any accident or illness arise.

I/we acknowledge access to the Parent Handbook at [www.myplace-aplc.org](http://www.myplace-aplc.org) and agree to abide by its policies.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Photo Permission Form

I/we grant permission for my/our child to be photographed by Center-approved photographers for Center-related promotional materials and social media.

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent/Guardian Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Permission:** YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

If NO, do you grant the classroom teacher permission to photograph for class projects displayed within the Center?

**Class Projects Only:** YES \_\_\_\_\_ NO \_\_\_\_\_

I/we grant permission for Center staff to email me/us at:

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_