

Mystic Learning Center, Inc.
Mystic Early Learning Center, Inc.

PARENT HANDBOOK 2024-2025

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Introduction

The philosophy of the Mystic Learning Center, Inc. (MLC) is based on serving the needs of low-income children and families who live in the Mystic Public Housing Development and the surrounding communities. Our innovative parent and youth service model uses Mystic parents and teens to manage and design all aspects of our program to meet the needs of the community. The mission of the MLC is to improve the lives of low-income children and families living at Mystic. The organization aims to involve residents of all ages in various programs. By being active participants in the MLC residents have the opportunity to enhance their own personal development, have an impact on the development of the program, and make contributions to community life. The MLC brings residents together to make the Mystic neighborhood a healthier community. Through active involvement, tenants are able to support and encourage each other and they are able to acquire skills to overcome persistent poverty and to strengthen community.

Our services therefore attempt to serve the child and family on a number of levels. Through our school age childcare and enrichment components, we provide after school, evening and vacation time activities for some 80 children, grades PK-8, ages 2.9-13 (up to age 16 with special needs). The MLC after school program currently has a license for 40 children to attend on a daily basis. In order to meet the needs of the younger children within the Mystic Community, the MLC partnered with the Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS) to utilize Somerville Housing Authority's space and began the process of licensing the Mystic Early Learning Center (MELC) in 2020. The MELC was licensed in August 2021 and can serve 15 children 2.9-8 years of age to offer more age-appropriate services. Through youth employment in the enrichment component, we provide job training, income and meaningful employment to Mystic teens, ages 14-21 as Peer Leaders. Through parental involvement on the Board of Directors and in voluntary capacities, we encourage parents to participate in community life, while they in turn receive support and child care. Through involving children, teens and parents in the Center's activities, it is our overall purpose to improve life in the Mystic community by involving residents of all ages in educational, recreational and social programs. The Mystic community is a diverse population and all families are low to moderate income with approximately 52% dependent on public assistance and 85% headed by single females' heads-of-households. Mystic is a difficult socio-economic environment in which to raise a family. Low school achievement, drug abuse and domestic violence are serious issues affecting the community. The community and its members have many social service needs.

More specific goals for our preschool and school age childcare component are as follows:

- To enhance the educational and social development of children. Children will participate in reading/writing, STEM studies, crafts, team building groups, social studies and computers.
- To enhance the psychological and emotional development of children leading to the growth of positive attitudes toward self. Children will participate in self-awareness, values clarification and communication activities.
- To prevent children from moving along the continuum of drug abuse. Children will be involved in drug education/prevention activities.
- To expose children to the community and the world around them and to expand interests and horizons. Children will participate in field trip programs.
- To develop in children and understanding and appreciation of the world's peoples leading to the growth of positive attitudes towards others. Children will participate in multi-cultural programs.
- To develop in children healthy eating habits and lifestyles. Children will be provided meals and snacks, and participate in nutrition and cooking projects, as well as physical activities, games and gardening.
- To enhance in children an appreciation of the natural world. Children will participate in ecology and environmental studies, as well as related activities (like gardening, nature studies/crafts, hiking, camping and survival skills).
- To expose children to career opportunities. Children will participate in career awareness activities.
- To enhance in children an appreciation of the performing arts. Children will participate in creative drama, music, dance, video and photography experiences.
- To enhance children's community spirit. Children will participate in community service projects.

Program staff, resources and parents are organized in the following way to deliver our school age child care services. The Executive Director and Assistant director play the key role here. They train, orient and supervise all program staff. They work directly with the Parent Board of Directors and coordinate parental involvement. The Directors also network with other agencies at Mystic and the Somerville community at large to pool resources, support, information and referrals. Together staff, parents and community agencies are organized and brought together through the coordination efforts of the Directors. Lines of authority are clear; the staff is accountable to the Directors and the Directors are accountable to the Parent Board of Directors.

Information on the administrative organization of the MLC/MELC, including lines of authority and supervision and the identification of DEEC as the licensing Authority.

Administrative Organization –The Mystic Learning Center, Inc., is a MA non-profit corporation organized in 1986 to provide educational day care services to school age children of low-income families. The Center also provides youth employment, educational training, and enrichment services to the children of the Mystic Avenue Housing Development. The MLC is exempt from federal income tax under Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions to the Center qualify for the 50% charitable contributions limitation. The Center has been designated as a “publicly supported” organization. The Center contracts for services from various governmental agencies. The Commonwealth of MA/Department of Early Education and Care and Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provides funding for an educational day care program. The City of Somerville/Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development provides funding for cultural and tutorial enrichment services. The Somerville Housing Authority and other funders provide funds for family event programs and the Teen Choice Club, Pre-Teen Choice Club, and Books of Hope programs. The Center renders its services in facilities provided at low cost by the Somerville Housing Authority.

Lines of Authority – The final authority of the MLC/MELC lies with the Parent Board of Directors. The Center’s Director, Tracey Stearns, is employed full-time as the Program Administrator. She is accountable to the Board, has overall responsibility for the operation of the program and is authorized to act as the MLC/MELC’s agent.

Supervision – The Executive Director and Assistant Director supervise all program staff and volunteers on a daily basis. The Director I/II and/or Lead Teacher and Assistant Lead Teacher assists with supervision of program staff and volunteers as well as provide supervision of children and ensure the safety of the program spaces. The MLC employs 14 peer leaders year round. Together these staff supervise the child participants maintaining an on-site staff to child ratio of 1:13 and an off-site ratio of 1:10. Children are supervised at all times to assure their health and safety. Supervision includes the awareness of and responsibility for the ongoing activity of each child. The center employs a Family and Child Support Worker and a Mental Health Consultant to support the needs of the families, children, and staff. The Center also employs Adult Advisors who supervise evening activities, a Grant Writing Consultant, and Books of Hope Director. Lastly, we employ different seasonal staff for specialized programs.

Enrollment Procedure – The MLC/MELC provides an opportunity for and encourages parents to meet with the program directors. We offer an orientation for parents and children to come to the center and visit and meet staff for an afternoon. This is the MLC/MELC’s first attempt in transitioning the family into the program. Children can participate in the program while parents are oriented about our services and work with the executive directors or appointed staff person to fill our required paperwork. The MLC has recently shifted to an online registration, utilizing Sandbox as the main registration software. The enrollment process includes obtaining information about each child’s and family’s interests and needs. We also require information about other therapeutic, educational, social and support services received by the child. At this point, if the family proceeds with enrollment the program will obtain consent forms from the parent/guardian and required documents. No child shall start the program until all required paperwork is complete.

Non-Discrimination Policy - The MLC/MELC will not discriminate in providing services to the children and their families on the basis of race, color, age, gender, religion, cultural heritage, political beliefs, national origin, disability, toilet training status, marital status, sexual identity, nor sexual orientation/identity. The MLC/MELC encourages enrollment of children from diverse backgrounds.

1. Procedures for parent visits, input, conference and communication, including procedure for handling parent complaint and parent visits to program [7.08 6(a)]

- Parent Visits – The MLC/MELC has an open door policy. Parents are welcome to visit the program unannounced any time their child is present.
- Parent Input – Parents have many opportunities to give input into the development of the program and its policies. **Once a child is enrolled in the program, parents are mandated by our bylaws to become a member of the parent Board of Directors.** If a parent misses one board meeting they will receive a written warning. If a parent misses a second board meeting their child will be suspended for one day. If a parent misses a third board meeting,

their child may be terminated based on a meeting with the Board of Directors. Parents must attend at least 75% of the board meetings within one fiscal year. In order to be excused from a board meeting you must have a note from a doctor, or some kind of document for other excuses. Parents can also be excused from attending Board meetings if they work or go to school when the Board meets, but they must document that they attend school or work and still participate on a subcommittee. The Board meets the second Monday of each month, from 6:00 to 7:30 PM, at the MLC. Childcare and dinner is provided. Sub committees alternate between monthly Board meetings. The two sub committees are the Personnel Improvement and Policy (PIP) and Family Events and Fundraisers (FEF). By participating on the Board and sub committees parents have every opportunity to give input into the development of the program and its policies. The MLC/MELC's Board, composed solely of parents, has final say over all program development and policies. They give direction and approval to all program development and policies. Parents are encouraged to participate and their input is always welcomed.

- **Parent Conferences/Reports** – Staff can request a parent conference if a problem is not resolved. See Child Guidance plan. Parents can request that staff be available for individual conferences. To arrange an individual conference, parents should speak to the Directors. Parents may at any time request a conference to discuss their child's progress report. There is a designated time on Monday nights from 6:00 to 7:00 which parents and staff can communicate.
- **Parent Communication** – Parents and staff have a variety of means to communicate regarding a child's progress in the program. Parents and staff should feel free to use the telephone at any time or written notes if a phone is not available. Parents and staff can also communicate in person at drop off and pick up times, or during parent visits. Parents can email staff at: info@mysticlearningcenter.org.
- **Parent Complaints** – If parents have any concerns whatsoever regarding the program they should follow this procedure:
 - They should set up a time to meet with the Directors
 - If they are not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting with the directors, they should request in writing to have their concern heard at the next regular meeting of the parent Board of Directors. Their concern will be placed on the agenda. After discussing their concern, the Board will have the final say regarding the matter.
 - Following the meeting with the directors and/or Board the outcome of the meeting(s) will be summarized in a written letter to the parent.

2. Program policy regarding children's progress reports [7.08 6 (b)]

Progress reports are prepared at least annually, at the midpoint of the child's program year. A copy must be given to the parent and kept in the child's record. All MLC/MELC staff attempt to practice that quarterly progress reports are done on all the children each year and reviewed and signed by parents each time. These reports address the child's growth and development in the program and at school. Progress reports are then used to adapt the program to the child, used as a communication tool with parents and school, and transition them in and out of age groups.

3. Program policy regarding administration of medication as in [606 CMR 7.11(2)(a-l)] [7.08 6 (c)]

Non-prescription medications are given only with written parental consent. Prescription medications are given with written parental consent and directions on the label per doctor. All medications are recorded on the medication log sheet placed in the Medication Log Book.

Medication Administration:

- a. The Mystic Learning Center Inc./Mystic Early Learning Center Inc. must have a written policy regarding administration of prescription and non-prescription medication. The policy must provide for the administration of medications ordered by a child's health care practitioner.
- b. All Medication administered to a child, including but not limited to oral and topical medications of any kind, either prescription or non-prescription, must be provided by the child's parent, unless noted in 606 CMR 7.11(2)(e)l.
- c. All prescription medications must be in the containers in which they were originally dispensed and with their original labels affixed. Over-the-counter medications must be in the original manufacturer's packaging.
- d. The MLC/MELC must not administer any medication contrary to the directions on the original container, unless so authorized in writing by the child's licensed health care practitioner. Any medications without clear instructions on the container must be administered in accordance with a written physician or pharmacist's descriptive order.
- e. Unless otherwise specified in a child's individual health care plan, the MLC/MELC must store all medications out of

the reach of children and under proper conditions for sanitation, preservation, security and safety during the time the children are in care and during the transportation of children.

- f. Notwithstanding the provisions of 606 CMR 7.11 (2)(e), emergency medications such as epinephrine auto-injectors must be immediately available for use as needed.
- g. The MLC/MELC shall have a written policy on medication disposal.
- h. When possible, all unused, discontinued or outdated prescription medications shall be returned to the parent and such return shall be documented in the child's record. When return to the parent is not possible or practical, such prescription medications must be destroyed and the destruction recorded by a manager or supervisor in accordance with policies of the licensee and the Department of Public Health, Drug Control Program.
- i. The MLC/MELC shall not administer the first dose of any medication to a child, except under extraordinary circumstances and with parental consent.
- j. Each time medication is administered, the MLC/MELC must document in the child's record the name of the medication, the dosage, the time and the method of administration, and who administered the medication, except as noted in 606 CMR 7.11 (2)(k)
- k. The MLC/MELC must inform the child's parent(s) at the end of each day whenever a topical medication is applied to a diaper rash.
- l. All medications must be administered in accordance with the consent and documentation requirements specified below. 606 CMR - 50.2

Type of Medication	Written Parental Consent Required	Health Care Practitioner Authorization Required	Logging Required
All Prescription	Yes	Yes. Must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed	Yes, including name of child, dosage, date, time, and staff signature. Missed doses must also be noted along with the reason why the dose was missed.
Oral Non-Prescription	Yes, renewed weekly with dosage, times, days and purpose	Yes in large and small group must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed	Yes, including name of child, dosage, date, time, and staff signature. Missed doses must also be noted along with the reason(s) why the dose was missed.
Unanticipated Non-Prescription for mild symptoms (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen, antihistamines)	Yes, renewed annually	Yes in large and small groups must be in an original container with the original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, including name of child, dosage, date, time and staff signature.
Topical, non-prescription (when applied to open wounds or broken skin)	Yes, renewed annually	Yes in large and small group must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed	Yes, including name of child, dosage, date time, and staff signature.
Topical, non prescription (not applied to open wounds or broken skin)	Yes, renewed annually	No. Items not applied to open wounds or broken skin may be supplied by program with notification to parents of such, or parents may send in preferred brands of such items for their own child(ren)'s use.	No for items not applied to open wounds or broken skin. No for items used solely for prevention, such as sunscreen, insect repellent and chapstick.

The MLC/MELC maintains Individual Health Care Plans for children diagnosed with a chronic medical condition as part of a child's record, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. The plan must describe the chronic condition, its symptoms, any medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, the potential side effects of that treatment, and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered.

(a) The MLC/MELC staff may administer routine, scheduled medication or treatment to the child with a chronic medical condition in accordance with written parental consent and licensed health care practitioner authorization.

- 1) Notwithstanding the provisions of 606 CMR 7.11 (1)(b)2., the MLC/MELC staff must have successfully completed training, given by the child's health care practitioner, or, with his or her written consent, given by the child's parent or the program's health consultant, that specifically addresses the child's medical condition, medication and other treatment needs.
- 2) In addition to the requirements for the routine, scheduled administration of medication or treatment set forth in 606 CMR 7.11 (3)(a), any unanticipated administration of medication or unanticipated treatment for a non-life-threatening condition requires that the MLC/MELC staff must make a reasonable attempt to contact the parent(s) prior to administering such unanticipated medication or beginning such unanticipated treatment, or, if the parent(s) cannot be reached in advance, as soon as possible after such medication or treatment is given.
- 3) The MLC/MELC staff must document all medication or treatment administration, whether scheduled or unanticipated, in the MLC/MELC, child's medication and treatment log.
- 4) The written parental consent and the licensed health care practitioner authorization shall be valid for one year, unless withdrawn sooner. Such consent and authorization must be renewed annually for administration of medication and/or treatment to continue.

(b) The MLC/MELC may, with written parental consent and authorization of a licensed health care practitioner, develop and implement an individual health care plan that permits older school age children to carry their own inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors and use them as needed, without the direct supervision of an educator. All educators must be aware of the contents and requirements of the child's individual health care plan specifying how the inhaler or epinephrine auto-injector will be kept secure from access by other children in the program.

(c) Whenever an individual health care plan provides for a child to carry his or her own medication, the MLC/MELC must maintain on-site back-up supply of the medication for use as needed.

4. Program policy for meeting potential emergencies, as in 606 CMR 7.11 (7)(f) [7.08 6 (d)]

Procedures for Emergencies That Require Evacuation

1. **SOUND ALARM** by either exit.
2. **EVACUATE**. Use the main entrance or emergency exit.
3. Directors/Site Coordinator will **CHECK ALL MLC ROOMS and Communicate** to make sure that all children have been evacuated.
4. **REMOVE** the first aid kit, Emergency Consent form book, daily attendance sheet, a cell phone and Medication Bags from the building.
5. **TAKE A HEADCOUNT** make sure that everyone is safely evacuated from the building.
6. **ELIMINATE DRAFTS** staff should close all windows and doors, if possible.
7. **CALL 911** after leaving the building.
8. Take the **CHILDREN** to the **BLUE PARK** at 45A Memorial Rd. In case of inclement weather; take children to **S.H.A. Office** located at 30 Memorial Rd. If the children cannot re-enter the site they will be housed at 30 Memorial Road. Parents will be informed of the emergency and will be asked to pick up the children immediately. Executive Director, Assistant Director, Site Coordinator, Preschool Director/Teacher, carry cell phones at all times and these # can be obtained by calling the direct line at **617-623-0110**.
9. **CALL PARENTS. SAFETY FIRST!**

Missing Child Policy: (On Site)

When a child has been determined "missing", while at program space, staff will implement the following procedures.

1. Directors/Lead Teacher/Site Coordinator will gather all children and staff in the program and ask them when they last saw the missing child. Staff will gather more information to be assessed by the Program Directors.
2. During the above process a designated staff will make a complete "sweep" of the building and the surrounding grounds. They will also follow up any "leads" from the other children/staff.
3. Parents will be notified. If unable to contact the parent the emergency contacts will be notified.
4. The Somerville Police Department will be notified.
5. The Somerville Housing Authority Police and Mystic Activity Center Building Manager will be notified.

Missing Child Policy: (Off site)

When a child has been determined “missing”, while outside of the program, staff will implement the following procedures. It is also important to note that when children are off site they wear a Mystic Learning Center t-shirt that identifies the program name, address and phone number. We also provide each child with a “safety bracelet” that provides Center Name, address and phone numbers for the program.

1. When off site on field trips, each child is matched with a staff.
2. Staff will gather all children and ask them when they last saw the missing child. Staff will gather and communicate information to be assessed by the Program Directors and Lead Teacher.
3. During the above process another staff will make a complete “sweep” of the location. They will then follow any “leads”.
4. Parents will be notified. If unable to contact the parent the emergency contacts will be notified.
5. The local Police Department for the off-site trip will be notified.

Field Trip Emergencies:

The key to handling emergencies is staff preparedness. All staff will be trained in first aid and/or CPR as stipulated in licensing regulations. All staff will be trained in emergency procedures for field trips. All staff will follow the procedures listed above as means of prevention. In addition, should an emergency arise on a local or bus trip, the staff will respond. One will take care of the emergency, the other (s) will care for the remaining children explaining the situation and reassuring them as needed. The staff person trained in first aid and/or CPR will assess the nature of the injury. First aid will be provided as needed or emergency support called upon. Located in the Medical bag will be a first aid kit/emergency consent form book and program attendance sheet. Staff must respond calmly and quickly contacting support, parents and/or alternatives. If medical attention is required one staff will accompany the child to the emergency facility with that child’s emergency consent forms. Parents will be instructed to meet there. The staff should also contact the Center or an officer on the Board to report an emergency is at hand. Parents must be verbally informed of any injuries on the day they occur at pick up time. At the end of the day an injury report must be filled out, logged, placed in the child's folder and a copy given to the parent within 48 hours. The Directors will report immediately to DEEC hospitalization, emergency medical treatment, serious injury or death with a written report within 48 hours.

In the event of an emergency on bus trips similar procedures will be followed, the bus evacuated, if necessary, and children escorted to safety. On bus trips emergency equipment (first aid kit, toys, fire extinguisher, water, trash bags, etc.) will be used as needed. In the event of a breakdown, it will be the driver's responsibility to arrange alternative transportation. In the event of a medical emergency, it will be the trained staff's responsibility to deal with the medical concerns, while others care for the children.

Extra Note

All emergencies require that parents must be verbally informed of any injuries on the day they occur at pick up time. At the end of the day all injury reports must be filled out, logged, placed in the child's folder and a copy given to the parent within 48 hours, if emergency medical treatment is sought or for serious injuries or there is an emergency incident. The Directors will report immediately to the Board of Directors and DEEC any hospitalization, emergency medical treatment, serious injury or death or emergency incident with a written report within 48 hours.

5. Program Transportation Plan [7.08 6(e)]

TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Name and telephone number of transportation coordinator and contact person during transportation times:

Tracey Stearns, Executive Director (781) 526-4729
Jessica Ruggiero, Assistant Director (617) 201-7521
Darien Rodriguez, Site Coordinator MELC (857) 247-7537
Stephanya Estrella, Site Coordinator MLC (857) 417-6243
Mystic Learning Center (617) 623-0110

1. Sub-Contractor - FIELD TRIPS ONLY

Local Motion of Boston for Summer purposes
Address: 66B Rocsam Park Rd Braintree, MA 02184
Phone: 781-535-6344

updated 11/20/2024

Drivers

- | | |
|--------------|---------|
| 1. Name: TBD | Cell #: |
| 2. Name: TBD | Cell #: |

The MLC/MELC must have written parental consent for each child's transportation plan. The MLC/MELC keeps accurate and timely arrival and departure attendance records, as well as a bus log during transportation to ensure children are transported safely. Children's safety, behavior, and attendance and parent notification of children who do not arrive, plus post-trip inspection of vehicles (when used) is the Center's Staff responsibility. Center staff always travel with the children during transportation. At any time, the driver can communicate to the staff any behavior or medical concerns, or call center directors. It is the MLC/MELC Staff's responsibility to remove all children from the bus at all times. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the Center if a child is going to be absent or late. Failure of a parent to notify the Center of a child's absence may be grounds for termination and dismissal from the program.

Written Plan

Arrival Transportation:

When school is open:

1. The MLC/MELC does not transport children via motor vehicle on a routine basis nor does it use vehicle transportation lasting for periods longer than forty-five minutes to or from their home, school, and the program.

2. Walking Healey School: At promptly 2:35, (12:00 on early release Wednesdays) the end of the school day, the children are dismissed to the school gym, where they are greeted by program staff, and signed into attendance. At this point the responsibility for the children belongs to the MLC/MELC program staff. When all children are accounted for on the program attendance sheet they then walk to the MLC/MELC. Children are instructed to wait at each of the street corners, so all cross together when the program staff gives permission. This walk usually takes 10 to 15 minutes. They are counted again as they enter the program space.

3. Walking Winter Hill School: At promptly 2:35, (12:00 on early release Wednesdays) the end of the school day, the children are dismissed to the school office, where they are greeted by program staff, and signed into attendance. At this point the responsibility for the children belongs to the MLC/MELC program staff. When all children are accounted for on the program attendance sheet they then walk to the MLC/MELC. Children are instructed to wait at each of the street corners, so all cross together when the program staff gives permission. This walk usually takes 5 to 10 minutes. They are counted again as they enter the program space.

4. Walking CAAS/Head Start Programs: At approximately 11:30 and 1:15, at the end of school the children are dismissed where they are greeted by program staff, and signed into attendance. At this point the responsibility for the children belongs to the MLC/MELC program staff. When all children are accounted for on the program attendance sheet they then walk 1-2 minutes to the MELC. They are counted again as they enter the program space.

5. Busing to Healey School: These children are transported to the main entrance of the Healey School. At promptly 3:00, (12:30 on early release Wednesday) the end of the school day, the children are brought to the Healey School by bus. Once children get off the bus, once greeted by program staff and signed into attendance at this time responsibility for the children is given to the MLC/MELC program staff. When all children are accounted for on the program attendance sheet they then walk to the MLC/MELC. Children are instructed to wait at each of the street corners, so all cross together when the program staff gives permission. This walk usually takes 5 to 10 minutes. They are counted again as they enter the program space.

6. All Other Schools: Some children and children with special needs are transported by school bus drop off at the MLC/MELC with supervised walk, or 9 and older walk unsupervised. The MLC/MELC assumes responsibility once the children get off the school bus and are greeted and signed into attendance by MLC/MELC Staff. Or when their transportation person arrives at the MLC/MELC, and is greeted by MLC Staff and signed into attendance.

7. Children cannot walk to the MLC/MELC unsupervised without prior written permission and signed contract for youth over 9 years of age.

**** Any child that is absent from school or not accounted for within 5 minutes of their regular arrival time, will be marked absent and phone calls home will be made home. If there is no answer from the parents/guardians and the school cannot confirm a dismissal/ absence, we start calling the emergency contacts until we get through to a person.**

Arrival Transportation: When school is closed:

It is the parents' responsibility to drop off their child at the MLC/MELC and greet staff, during school closings between 7:30-9:00 AM. Parents must enter the program and the child must be accounted for on the attendance sheet. At this time the MLC/MELC assumes responsibility for the child. Children must be here by 9:00 AM unless pre approved by directors. By 9:30 children will be marked absent for the day, and phone calls will be made for unsupervised walkers after 9:00 to inform parents of absence. Children over the age of 9 can arrive on their own with parent permission. Children under the age of 9 must be dropped off by a parent/guardian, or someone over 16 years old on their authorized drop-off/pick-up list.

Arrival Transportation: When school is open:

If the parent drops off their child at the MLC/MELC after school. Parents must enter the program and the child must be accounted for on the attendance sheet. At this time the MLC/MELC assumes responsibility for the child.

Departure Time

At program departure 5:30 pm, children are released or picked up by parents, depending on the child's transportation plan. Children are released to other people only upon written permission of the parent and if they are 16 years old. If the staff does not know the person they will request an ID to ensure they have been authorized by the parent to be released too. Children are allowed to walk home independently only with written parent permission and they are of the age of 9. In case of emergency some DCF children only will be escorted home on foot by a staff member. Once the child/parent has signed out they are no longer in the program's care.

Emergency

In the case of a bus emergency, bus breakdown, accident, or moving violation the staff will notify program directors by cell phone, who will then notify the bus company to send substitute drivers to further continue transportation services. Based on the incident the directors will follow through with any other notifications or reports that must happen. A copy of this plan goes with staff at all times, located in our emergency book, a copy hangs on our staff wall and everyone is provided a hard copy during orientation, and upon request can be provided again.

Medical Emergency

In a medical emergency child/ren will be transported to a medical facility with MLC/MELC staff by ambulance.

Field Trips

Occasionally during the program year, more so in the summer, the MLC/MELC rents school buses for special field trips and beach trips. At other times, again mostly in the summer, public transportation, or even walking, is used for local field trips. Children are instructed on buses to sit, with no hands, heads, or litter out the window. They are also informed on the use of emergency exits and that they are personally responsible for any vandalism to the bus. Children must wear seat belts when provided. Any child transported in any other way must have written parental consent.

For all trips the following rules apply:

- 1) Children must be adequately supervised, a 1:10 ratio maintained. Staff must sit and travel with the children they are assigned.
- 2) Parent must sign permission slips.
- 3) Children and staff must wear MLC bracelets identifying the program they are with and the program's phone number.
- 4) Children must travel safely using crosswalks, streetlights, and staying with the group.
- 5) Staff must act as role models, traveling safely, reviewing and enforcing safety rules/discipline.
- 6) On every trip two staff will be designated as the trip leaders. One must be trained in first aid and be responsible for the first aid kit and Medical Bag containing the emergency consent book.

- 7) The trip leaders must know the route to travel or have maps, bus schedules, have a list of all in attendance, permission slips on site, be responsible for paying trip fees, know the time of departure, return and overall schedule for the day, and make sure children have what they need for the trip.
- 8) The group is expected to travel quietly and orderly. Travel will be stopped if the group becomes unruly.
- 9) Head counts must be taken multiple times during the day; at departures, lunchtime, before leaving or returning, from any location. When public transportation is used head counts must be taken at each interchange. When school buses are used roll calls and head counts will be taken before departing and before return departure. All staff must assist with head counts and roll calls by keeping the children they are responsible for seated and/or with them.
- 10) Children and staff must wear seat belts when provided. On school buses all must sit if seats are available. If seats are not available all must hold on. At no time will hands, heads or litter be put out windows or property vandalized. Staff must assist with cleaning up after eating. Staff must make children aware of emergency exits and how to use them. When riding on public transportation all must ride in the same bus or train car. No one shall ride a different train car or bus.
- 11) It is strongly advised that staff carry toys or books to entertain the children or at least use songs or games. (within Covid Guidelines)

Vehicle and Driver Requirements

When the Mystic Learning Center rents school buses for field trips it is the Directors' responsibility to see that drivers and buses are licensed, inspected and insured according to law. All drivers must be licensed according to law and that drivers/monitors have staff files, CORI checks, and everyone including children and parents are instructed in this transportation policy. One particular driver is assigned to the MLC and there is a plan for the use of substitute drivers. This policy is further reviewed, and revised every 6 months or as needed. Yearly the program directors will ensure that all drivers/monitors and staff will retake the Drivers Role and Look Before You Lock EEC trainings and review our Transportation Plan. The directors will also annually update driver/monitor files and bus inspections and insurance paperwork. The center's staff/monitors are responsible for having current CPR and First Aid, they are also responsible for the bus log, carrying the emergency contact book, first aid kit and medical bag containing medications. The MLC/MELC staff are to report any pre-bus inspection problems, driver concerns, incidents, or accidents to directors immediately. The directors will report any reportable incidents to the state and parents in accordance with reporting laws and requirements.

6. Program transition practices [606 CMR 7.04(3)(a)(b)]

For New Enrollees

During the enrollment process, the executive or assistant director will schedule a time for the child to visit with the parent. This visit will be about an hour long and provides an opportunity for the child to interact with his/her new classmates and educators, and familiarize him/herself with the program while in the presence of the parent. This allows for both child and parent to experience the routine of our after-school program in a safe and comfortable way. This visit is mandatory.

For Children Transitioning Out of the MELC

When children are nearing their graduation date, the MLC/MELC program begins the discussion of other older activities in which to transition. The following activities are examples of how we do this:

1. Each child can make a personalized "good-bye book" with Educators
2. Announcement time addresses which children will be moving on and where they are going with a special dessert.
3. Each kid, if they choose, is put in the "hot seat" for personal goodbyes.
4. Kids and Parents get a collection of any kid's art work and personal items.
5. Collaborate and share information between the MLC or other programs with parental permission.
6. The program will assist with the transition in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.
7. If the MELC chooses to suspend or terminate a child for any reason the program must provide written documentation to the parents of the specific reasons for the proposed suspension or termination of the child, and the circumstances under which they may return, if any.

For Children Transitioning Within The MLC/MELC

1. Each child spends short periods of time mingling with the older group.

2. Collaborate and share information between educators.
3. Kids can make a countdown calendar to their official moving up day.

Daily Transition Practices

When a child enters the program at the start of the day, make sure to greet them and touch base with them. Some children may wish to jump right into an activity, some might need some alone or quiet time to adjust, some may be hungry and want a snack. Assess the child's mood and desires and accommodate them accordingly.

Transitions during the day occur for every item on the daily schedule (i.e. from Choice time to homework to Clean-up/meal times). Educators may use their judgment and expertise for how to best facilitate transitions, but should include techniques such as giving advance notice, lights-off, transition songs/games, etc. Providing concrete transitions between activities is a best practice. It mitigates children's anxiety that some children may experience and the resulting behavioral issues that can sometimes occur at these times.

Transitions Between Activities

Transitions will be completed in a safe, timely, predictable and unhurried manner.

1. Activities will be planned and organized in advance to avoid children waiting
2. Children must be informed about transitions prior to their occurrence
3. Transitions between activities must be smooth and flexible
4. Children must not always be expected to move as a group from one activity to another
5. Visual, verbal and auditory cues must be used to support children's transitions

7. Program electronics policy

Student Policy

In the past, we have found that many children view the phones as a toy or as a means to communicate with other students during the program. Many students just cannot avoid playing with the phone during this time and it becomes a distraction and a nuisance and possibly worse if the camera phone is used for inappropriate purposes such as taking inappropriate pictures with camera phones, sending and receiving text messages while in the program, and making unnecessary phone calls while in the bathrooms or during free-time. The site has this policy in place to prevent the above listed incidents from occurring.

According to the MLC policy, students are allowed to bring electronic policy. It is 100% the students responsibility if anything happens to personal electronic devices. The MLC accepts no responsibility for devices and we will not hold devices for students.

Any personal electronic devices brought by a student can only be used during specified times. Staff will make it clear to students when a device can be used.

In the event a student uses a personal electronic device during a non-device time, there is a consequence. Students will receive one warning to put the device away. If a student refuses to put the device away when asked they will receive a written incident. This will be documented in the students' file for the parent and staff. If a student receives a second warning and incident report for misusing an electronic device, then they will not be allowed to bring a personal electronic device to the center.

The MLC highly encourages students to leave personal devices at home to eliminate any problems with a device being damaged or lost at the MLC.

If a child must call a parent or a parent needs to get in touch with their child, phones are provided at the site for calls to be made and received.

8. Program plan for rest time and diapering/toileting [606 CMR 7.11(18)(c)1]

- No child shall be punished, verbally abused or humiliated for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.
- No child shall be forced to remain in soiled clothing, forced to remain on the toilet, or subjected to unusual or excessive toileting practices.
- Children must be supervised in the bathroom at all times, with respect given to the child's privacy needs.

- Children must wash their hands with soap and running water or approved hand sanitizer after toileting and before meals.
- Staff members must also wash their hands with soap and running water or approved hand sanitizer after assisting children with toileting or toileting themselves. Individual paper towels shall be used to dry hands.
- Clothing soiled by feces, urine, vomit, or blood shall be double-bagged in sealed plastic bags and stored apart from other items.
- A change of clothes shall be available for each child. MELC owned clothing must be laundered after use and returned as soon as possible.
- Cases of diarrhea should be noted. If two or three children have diarrhea at the same time, the health care consultant should be contacted.
- Teachers will work with families in toilet training.
- Rest time for full day children is designated as a nap/quiet time. Each child will be provided with a mat and encouraged to rest quietly during that time. Please provide a labeled blanket that will be sent home at the end of each week to be laundered.

9. Program calendar noting closed days and hours of operation [7.08 6 (f)]

The MLC/MELC is open year-round. During the school year the program is operational from 11:30am-5:30pm Monday through Friday. During the summer the MLC is operational from 7:30 am until 5:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

See Appendix 1 Holiday and Closures

10. Program's fee schedule, including any fees for late payment, late pick-up, trips or materials [7.08 6 (g)]

Fee Schedule

The Mystic Early Learning Center's daily rate for preschool age childcare is \$80.13 for a full day and after school. The Mystic Learning Center's daily rate for school age childcare is \$52.03 for a full day and \$27.89 for after school. It is the policy of the MLC/MELC to charge private paying parents the same daily rate as that charged to the Commonwealth. It would be against state procurement law to charge private paying parents less than we are charging the Commonwealth for subsidized paying parents.

Parent Fees

Parent fees will be determined at the time of registration. There is a 2-week deposit due before the child can begin the program, which covers the first week of service and the final week of program enrollment. Payment is due at least two weeks prior to service. For example: if your payment option is monthly, then the payment is due two weeks prior to the 1st of the month. If you cannot make your Initial Deposit or your scheduled payment by the due date, please contact the office to create a payment plan. The MLC accepts money orders, cash, checks, and Zelle payments (info@mysticlearningcenter.org). Make payable to Mystic Learning Center, Inc. and mail/bring payment to 530 Mystic Ave. Room 103 Somerville, MA 02145. Please write your child(ren)'s name on the payment. The MLC is in the process of inquiring about credit card payment methods.*

Late Pick-Ups

The MLC/MELC does not charge parents for late pick-ups. We do however ask that parents call the MLC if they are going to be arriving late to pick up their child. If a parent is continuously late the program Director or Lead Teacher will discuss the problem with the parent. If late pick-ups continue, the child could be suspended for one day from the program. If the above two interventions happen and the problem continues the child could be terminated from the program.

Late Payments

The MLC/MELC does not charge parents for late payments. If a parent accumulates a balance over \$100.00, and has made no arrangements with the program director, they could risk termination from the program. There is a bounced check fee of \$35.

Extra Fee

During the summer program each child in the program is required to wear a MLC t-shirt. Parents are required to purchase one t-shirt for each child in the program at a cost of \$10.00. Parents have the option of purchasing additional t-shirts.

11. Discipline and Behavior Management Policy [606 CMR 7.05 1-8]

The MLC/MELC prides itself on supporting a space where we care for self, others and community. We engage youth and families in service-learning opportunities where giving back to the community is at its core. We believe that providing youth exposure to experiences that they might not otherwise have affords them the opportunity for personal growth and development while acknowledging the lifelong learner is us all. We ask that youth challenge themselves to reach new heights of achievement in a safe and supportive environment. And above all we love and accept all youth for the endless uniqueness and array of differences that we all bring to the tapestry of life. It is the policy of the MLC/MELC to promote children's growth and development, and to protect the health and well-being of children.

Praise and positive reinforcement are effective methods of the behavior management of children. When children receive positive, non-violent, and understanding interactions from adults and others, they develop good self-concepts, problem solving abilities, and self-discipline. Based on this belief of how children learn and develop values, the Mystic Learning Center will practice the following discipline behavior management policy.

We:

1. DO praise, reward and encourage the children.
2. DO reason with and set limits for the children.
3. DO model appropriate behavior for the children.
4. DO modify the classroom environments to attempt to prevent problems before they occur
5. DO listen to the children
6. DO provide alternatives for inappropriate behavior to the children
7. DO provide the children with natural and logical consequences of their behaviors.
8. DO treat the children as people and respect their needs, desires, and feelings.
9. DO ignore minor misbehaviors.
10. DO explain things to children on their levels.
11. DO use short supervised periods of "time-outs."
12. DO stay consistent in our behavior management plan.

We:

1. DO NOT spank, shake, bite, pinch, push, pull, slap or otherwise physically punish the children.
2. DO NOT make fun of, yell at, or threaten, make sarcastic remarks about, use profanity, or otherwise verbally abuse the children.
3. DO NOT shame or punish the children when bathroom accidents occur.
4. DO NOT deny food or rest as punishment.
5. DO NOT relate discipline to eating, resting or sleeping.
6. DO NOT leave the children alone unattended or without supervision.
7. DO NOT leave the children in locked rooms, closets or boxes as punishment.
8. DO NOT allow discipline of children by children.
9. DO NOT criticize, make fun or otherwise belittle children's parents, families, or ethnic groups

Discipline Procedures:

It is important that children respect themselves, other people and property. Discipline should be viewed in a very positive manner with appropriate activities, mutual respect, adequate planning, and consistent supervision contributing to a climate in which self-discipline can flourish. Discipline procedures shall be consistent and based on the understanding of the individual needs and development of each child.

Staff will set aside time during the first week to develop and discuss guidelines, procedures, and rules with the children. These will be reviewed as necessary throughout the year.

Occasionally children will need to be removed from a situation when they cannot act appropriately. The child may be taken to another place away from program activities to regain their composure.

If problems with a child seem to arise frequently, the parent will be notified and a conference scheduled to discuss these concerns. Persistent and/or severe misbehavior may result in the child being withdrawn from the program.

“Time-Out”
“Time-out” is the removal of a child for a short period of time (3 to 5 minutes) from a situation in which the child is misbehaving and has not responded to other discipline techniques. The “time-out” space, usually a chair, is located away from the program activity but within the staff’s sight. During “time-out”, the child has a chance to reflect on the misbehavior, which led to his/her removal from the group. After a brief interval of no more than 5 minutes, the staff discusses the incident and appropriate behavior with the child. When the child returns to the group, the incident is over and the child is treated with the same affection and respect shown the other children.
<i>Adapted from original prepared by Elizabeth Wilson, Student, Catawba Valley Technical College</i>

Children’s Core Rules

- 1. Be Respectful**
- 2. Use Self Control**
- 3. Show Self Discipline**

Suspension & Termination Policy 7.04 17(i)

The MLC/MELC must describe in writing the program’s procedures for avoiding the suspension or termination of a child from the program due to challenging behavior.

1. The MLC/MELC will provide an opportunity to meet with parents to discuss options other than suspension or termination.
2. The MLC/MELC will offer referrals to parents for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services.
3. The MLC/MELC will pursue options for supportive services to the program, including consultation and educator training.
4. The MLC/MELC will develop a plan for behavioral intervention at home and in the program.

Examples of Behaviors that may warrant suspension include but are not limited to the following:

- Swearing at staff or gross disrespect for staff
- Fighting or putting hands on others in an angry manner
- Name-calling in an excessive manner
- Stealing
- Bullying
- Disrespect towards other people, and/or their property (i.e., damaging property). Any time a child endangers themselves, another child, or a staff person this behavior may result in termination from the program.

It must be understood that every situation is different. Each incident will be dealt with on an individual basis with the determining factor being what is best for the Program and children involved. Consequences are at the discretion of the Assistant Director and Executive Director.

Extra Note

All incidents are reported to parents on the day they occur at pick up time. At the end of the day all incident reports must be filled out, logged, placed in the child's folder, and a copy given to the parent within 48 hours.

Parents will also be given a copy of the programs MLC Family Resource Guide; which is referrals to local agencies regarding: Parenting Services and Support, Adult Education, Crisis Intervention and Support, Domestic Violence, Substance Abuse, Mental Health Services, Teen Services, Housing, General Health, Food Security, Transportation, Employment Resources and Cultural Resources.

Termination Transitions

If the MLC/MELC chooses to suspend or terminate a child for any reason the program must provide written documentation to the parents of the specific reasons for the proposed suspension or termination of the child, and the circumstances under which the child may return, if any.

12. Program's criteria for excluding children from care due to serious illnesses, contagious diseases and reportable diseases in conformance with regulations and Recommendations set by the Division of Communicable Disease Control, Department of Public Health [7.11 9(a&b)]

Any child with the above condition will not be allowed to attend the facility. If it is a reportable condition, the Department of Public Health, as well as parents, will be called. Parents must provide a note from a Doctor prior to the child returning to the program.

**** Refer to Health Care Policy**

13. Program procedures relating to children's records as in [606 CMR 7.04(7) – (10)]

All children's records are confidential and stored in a secure location. Information is only released to other agencies or individuals with the written consent of the parent. Parents are required to fill out and enrollment packet containing: Child Information, Copies of legal orders pertaining to child, Transportation Plan, Medical and First Aid Consent, Off Site Activities', Consent to Leave, Consent for Observations of Non-Program Staff, Written Consent for Unanticipated Medical Treatment, Physicals & Immunization Records, Individual Healthcare Plans and Parent Handbook Signature Page

14. Notice that child educators are mandated reporters and must, by law, report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families [7.11 4 (d) d]

Because MLC/MELC staff have almost daily contact with children they are in an excellent position to identify abused or neglected children and to insure the welfare of children. According to state law (G.L. c. 119, sec. 51A) childcare workers are mandated reporters. If a childcare worker has reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected they must file a report. Abuse is defined as the non-accidental commission of any act upon a child that causes or creates substantial risk of serious physical or emotional injury or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth. Neglect is defined as the failure, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to adequately care for, but is not limited to failing to supervise children or failing to regulate access to children by non-staff.

In Massachusetts mandated reporters are immune by law from civil or criminal liability for filing a report, even if the investigator does not confirm abuse. This means that even if someone sues you for reporting, the court will dismiss the case when it is revealed that you are a mandated reporter, acting in good faith. Failure to report may cause punishment by a fine of up to \$1,000.00, or may result in civil liability if a child is harmed after failure to report.

It is the policy of the MLC/MELC that any staff member shall report to the Director if they know or have reason to believe abuse has occurred. Failure to report may result in disciplinary action against the staff person. If a report must be made the Director will report to the Department of Children and Families (868-1400, 24 hour hotline 1-800-792-5200) by oral and written communication. However, if a child is in immediate danger the police will be called 911 (625-1212). It is the staff responsibility to provide a written report containing as much detailed information as possible. The Director will

follow up on the report to learn the results of DSS' investigation and any services the Department intends to offer the child and family.

The MLC/MELC staff will attempt to prevent abusive situations by noting early warning signs. Parents will be made aware of community services and knowledge of child development and child rearing techniques will be shared with parents. Our concerns for children will be shared with parents. At the same time the MLC/MELC will educate children about their right to say "NO". Children will be taught their rights to stop abuse and the need to tell a trusted adult about the experience. In order to prevent institutional abuse good screening of staff will be conducted. This screening will include researching applicant experiences/qualifications, conducting Background Record Checks, interviewing, reference checking, providing adequate supervision of staff, a probationary period, parent observations and sharing policies regarding relationships with children and this abuse/neglect policy. It is further a policy of the MLC/MELC to not hire staff previously found guilty of abuse/neglect.

If a staff member is suspected of abusing or neglecting children in the program the incident will likewise be reported to the Department of Children and Families, and the Department of Early Education & Care. The accused staff member will not be allowed to work with children in any capacity while the investigation is in progress. If a staff member is found guilty of accusations they will be terminated.

15. Notice that the program is licensed by EEC, including the telephone number and address of the EEC regional office responsible for the program [7.08 6 (m)]

Department of Early Education and Care is the licensing authority for:

The Mystic Early Center located at 17 Memorial Rd C Somerville, MA 02145 and the Mystic Learning Center located at 530 Mystic Ave. Room 103 Somerville MA 02145; (617)-623-0110

16. Program statement that parents may contact EEC for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history [7.08 6 (n)]

If a parent would like to obtain further information on our program's regulatory compliance history they may contact.

**Department of Early Education and Care
1250 Hancock Street
Suite 120
Quincy MA 02169
617-472-2881**

17. MLC/MELC TEMPORARY COVID PROTOCOLS

We will do our best to remain open and provide care to the families we serve through the COVID-19 surges. If the MLC is made aware of a positive COVID test result, staff will both stay late and arrive early the next day to deep clean both centers per CDC, DESE, EEC, and the local board of health guidelines. The MLC will follow protocol and notify families, schools, the local board of health, and EEC if there is an outbreak. In the rare event that the agency must shutdown for any amount of time due to multiple positive COVID results, negative staff will be expected to work on those days that the MLC/MELC is closed to students.

If a Staff Member/Student tests positive:

Everyone, regardless of vaccination status:

- Individual should isolate and stay home for 5 days
- Individuals must provide proof of positive PCR test result
- If individuals have no symptoms or symptoms are resolving after 5 days, they can return to the MLC on the 6th day wearing a mask until day 11
- If individuals are symptomatic, they must isolate for 5 more days and reassess on the 10th day. If symptoms are resolving (fever free for 24 hours) they can return to the MLC

- If individuals have a fever, continue to stay home until the fever resolves for over 24 hours (without fever reducing medication)

If a Staff Member or a Student is exposed to a COVID positive individual:

Quarantine is no longer required nor recommended for children or staff, regardless of vaccination status or where the exposure occurred. All exposed individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic. Those who can mask should do so until Day 10, and it is recommended that they test on Day 6 of exposure. If symptoms develop, follow the guidance for symptomatic individuals listed below.

- Symptomatic individuals can remain at MLC if they have mild symptoms, are tested immediately onsite, and that test is negative. They will be required to wear a mask until symptoms are fully resolved. For symptomatic individuals, DPH recommends a second test within 48 hours if the initial test is negative.
 - If the symptomatic individual cannot be tested immediately, they will be sent home and allowed to return to the MLC if symptoms remain mild and they test negative, or they have been fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and their symptoms are resolving, or if a medical professional makes an alternative diagnosis.

I acknowledge that I have read, and understand all information provided in the parent handbook. A copy of this page will be provided to you for your records and a copy will be kept in your child's file.

Parent Signature

Printed Parent Name

Date