



Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy and Procedures

Purpose

This policy and the procedures will help support the safe arrival and dismissal of children receiving care in our preschool program.

This policy will provide educators, students and volunteers with a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities for ensuring the safe arrival and dismissal of children receiving care, including what steps are to be taken when a child does not arrive at the childcare centre as expected, as well as steps to follow to ensure the safe dismissal of children.

This policy is intended to fulfill the obligations set out under Ontario Regulation 137/15 for policies and procedures regarding the safe arrival and dismissal of children in care.

Note: Definitions for terms used throughout this policy are provided in a Glossary in the following section.

Policy

The safety of the children attending the It Takes A Village Preschool (ITAVP) program is one of our top priorities. We must work with parents, guardians, ITAVP teachers and our host location, Unionville Presbyterian Church (UPC), to ensure our children are safe. In response to increased public service announcements (PSA) regarding children being left in cars, a safe arrival strategy has been developed to ensure that no child is accidentally left in a locked car. Forgotten Baby Syndrome (FBS) refers to accidentally leaving a baby or young child in a locked car, often with tragic results. One of the prevention strategies identified in the research is to ensure that childcare programs have a system in place to connect with parents should a child not arrive in care when expected. Assertive communication is required to ensure all children are where they are supposed to be.

The safety and well-being of your children is a high priority for ITAVP. We ask parents to call the centre if their child is absent.

ITAVP will ensure that any child receiving care at the child care centre is only released to the child's parent/guardian or an individual to whom the parent or guardian has provided written authorization to the child care centre may release the child.

ITAVP will only dismiss children into the care of their parent/guardian or another authorized individual. The centre will not release any children from care without supervision. When a child does not arrive in care or is not picked up as expected, staff must follow the safe arrival and dismissal procedures below.

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Glossary

Individual authorized to pick-up/authorized individual: A person whose parent/guardian has advised the child care program staff in writing can pick up their child from care.

Licensee: The individual or corporation named on the licence issued by the *Ministry of Education* responsible for the operation and management of the child care centre and home child agency.

Parent/Guardian: A person having lawful custody of a child or who has demonstrated a settled intention to treat a child as a child of his or her family.

Regulatory Requirements: Ontario Regulation 137/15

Safe arrival and dismissal policy

50. Every licensee shall ensure that each child care centre it operates and each premises where it oversees the provision of home child care has a policy respecting the safe arrival and dismissal of children that,

- (a) provides that a child may only be released from the child care centre or home child care premises,
 - (i) to individuals indicated by a child's parent, or
 - (ii) in accordance with written permission from a child's parent to release the child from the program at a specified time without supervision; and
- (b) sets out the steps that must be taken if,
 - (i) a child does not arrive as expected at the centre or home child care premises, or
 - (ii) a child is not picked up as expected from the centre or home child care premises.



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Procedures

Accepting a Child into Care

1. When accepting a child into care at the time of drop-off, program staff in the room must:
 - Greet the parent/guardian and child;
 - Ask the parent/guardian how the child's evening/morning has been and if there are any changes to the child's pick-up procedure (i.e., someone other than the parent/guardian picking up). Where the parent/guardian has indicated that someone other than the child's parent/guardians will be picking up, the staff must confirm that the person is listed on the child's emergency file or where the individual is not listed, ask the parent/guardian to provide authorization for pick-up in writing (e.g., note or email);
 - Document the change in pick-up procedure in the daily written record; and
 - Sign the child in on the classroom attendance record.

Where a Child has not Arrived in Care as Expected

1. Where a child does not arrive at the child care centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or advised the closing staff at pick-up), the program staff in the classroom must:
 - Inform the Supervisor/on-site designated, and they must commence contacting the child's parent/guardian no later than 10:00 a.m. Program staff shall call the child's parent/guardian using the contact information provided by the parents. Program staff will try all contact numbers and ensure a message is left to the parent;
 - If the program staff has not received a response within 15 minutes from either parent/guardian, they will continue to contact the parent/guardian while contacting the emergency/authorized contacts on the list. If no response indicates the child is safe, the program staff will send an email. Program staff will contact emergency/authorized pick-up contacts for assistance in contacting the parent/guardian or to confirm the absence; and
 - If no confirmation of the absence has been received by 10:45 a.m., the police will be contacted.
2. Once the child's absence has been confirmed, the program staff shall document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence in the daily written record.



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Releasing a Child from Care

1. The program staff supervising the child at the pick-up shall only release the child to the child's parent/guardian or individual to whom the parent/guardian has provided written authorization that the child care may release the child to. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual):
 - Confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual; and
 - Where the above is not possible, ask the parent/guardian/authorized individual for photo identification and confirm the individual's information against the parent/guardian/authorized individual's name on the child's file or written authorization.

Custody Situations

1. When parents are separated or divorced, ITAVP cannot follow a parent's request NOT to release a child to the other parent without a court order that says the other parent cannot see the child. A court order may also state what days and times the parent can see the child.
2. If a parent asks program staff not to release a child to the other parent but does not have a court order indicating this, program staff will follow these steps:
 - Tell the parent that you cannot stop the other parent from picking up their child unless you see a court order that says this. Only a court of law can remove a parent's right to be with their child;
 - If the parent is still concerned that the other parent may come, ask that the child not remain in care until this is sorted out; and
 - If the parent tells you that the other parent may be abusing the child, call the Children's Aid Society immediately.
3. If there is a court order with instructions on which days each parent has, and the parents want to switch days, a written note must be provided to the program staff indicating who is picking up on which day ahead of time. If a parent comes to pick up the child on a different day, program staff will follow these steps:
 - Inform the parent who has come to pick up the child that you must call the other parent to make sure it is okay to release the child;
 - Call the parent who is supposed to pick up the child on that day. Ask for permission to release the child to the other parent. You must get an email/text message permission note or a message on the voicemail from this parent agreeing to the

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change. **Do not release** the child until you receive the email /text or phone message;

- If the parent insists on taking the child without permission or begins to get upset, angry, or threatening in any way, release the child to them and call the police or 911. Inform the supervisor/designate as soon as the parent begins to get upset/threatening;
- If you know that there is a restraining order, condition of bail, or prohibition order that does not allow the person to be near the child, call the police immediately when that person arrives at the centre. You cannot let a parent visit a child if you know there is a court order against this, even if the other parent says it is okay;
- Call the Children’s Aid Society if the child tells you that someone who is not allowed to be near the child has been visiting or seeing the child; and
- Notify your supervisor that you have made the call.

Where a Child has not Been Picked up as Expected (before Centre Closes)

- Where a parent/guardian has previously communicated with the Program Staff a specific time or timeframe that their child is to be picked up from care, and the child has not been picked up, the Program Staff shall contact the parent/guardian by a phone call and advise that the child is still in care and has not been picked up;
- Where the Program Staff cannot reach the parent/guardian, they must call again and leave a message for the parent/guardian. Where the individual picking up the child is an authorized individual, and their contact information is available, the staff shall contact the individual to confirm pick-up per the parent/guardian’s instructions or leave a voice message to contact the centre; and
- Where the Program Staff has not heard back from the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was to pick up the child, the staff shall contact emergency contact, wait until the program closes and then refer to procedures under “Where a Child has not Been Picked up, and the Program is Closed.”

Where a Child has not Been Picked up as Expected and the Program is Closed

- Where a parent/guardian or authorized individual who was supposed to pick up a child from care has not arrived by noon, program staff shall ensure that the child is given an activity while they await their pick-up;
- One staff shall stay with the child, while a second staff proceeds with calling the parent/guardian to advise that the child is still in care and inquire about their pick-up time. Suppose the person picking up the child is an authorized individual. In that case, the staff shall contact the parent/guardian first and then proceed to contact the authorized individual responsible for pick-up if unable to reach the parent/guardian;
- If, after 15 minutes, the staff cannot reach the parent/guardian or authorized individual responsible for picking up the child, the staff shall contact the authorized

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individuals listed on the child's file. The child will be provided with a snack while waiting. Notify the supervisor or designate. If an alternate pick-up person is available to pick up, staff will confirm their identification before the child is released. Staff will leave a message on the parent's telephone to let them know who has picked up their child and at what time this occurred;

- Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file (i.e., the emergency contacts) by 2:00 pm, the staff shall proceed with contacting the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) (905) 895-2318 or 1-800-718-3850. Staff shall follow the CAS's direction for next steps;
- Staff will leave their name and phone number if they get an answering machine at CAS. Once the Children's Aid worker calls back, the staff will tell the Children's Aid worker that they are calling from Kids Come First and that the staff have been unable to reach anyone to pick up the child;
- Staff will wait for a Children's Aid worker to arrive. This may take several hours. Staff will not go out or drive the child anywhere. When a Children's Aid worker or police officer arrives at the centre, the staff will ask for identification before letting them in;
- If the parent arrives before the Children's Aid worker arrives, release the child. Call Children's Aid to report when the child was picked up. Also, let the Children's Aid Society know the reason given as to why the parent was late;
- Document the incident in the communication book:

Note: Do not follow this procedure if the parent reasonably explains why they are late. An example of a reasonable explanation would be a bad accident on the road, and the parent is stuck in traffic.

Dismissing a Child from Care without Supervision Procedures

Staff will only release children from care to the parent/guardian or authorized adult. Under no circumstances will children be released from care alone.