

PARENT HANDBOOK



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1. EARLY LEARNING CENTER PHILOSOPHY AND MISSION STATEMENT

At the Beth Shalom Early Learning Center, we recognize the importance of the early years in a child's development and acknowledge the impact that a quality early education experience can have on his/her future success. We believe that each child is an individual with a unique endowment, which is continually shaped by his/her social and cultural environments.

Beth Shalom's Early Learning Center strives to:

- Provide a developmentally appropriate program, planned and operated attentively by a sensitive and educationally qualified staff. This program encourages the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and linguistic development of the children.
- Create early exposure to Jewish culture and tradition so that Judaism becomes an integral part of each child's life.
- Act as a resource for parents, aiding them in understanding the developmental needs of their children.
- Promote healthy relationships among children, parents, and teachers so that a community is created to provide the optimal learning experiences for each child.
- Foster a sense of belonging for children and their families to our Early Learning Center community by establishing open communication, involving parents in Early Learning Center activities, and providing a warm, nurturing learning environment for the children to explore their strengths and abilities.
- Embrace a philosophy that upholds the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment based on the interests of the children through a self-guided curriculum.

A. Judaic Program

Based on an emphasis of Jewish heritage and culture, we provide an education in Jewish customs, rituals, and celebrations to children of all faiths. Our students learn Jewish history and practice through stories, art, and music; recite simple prayers; explore the synagogue; and have informal Kabbalat Shabbat services on a weekly basis with the rabbi and music specialist. We also celebrate Shabbat with our families at special Friday night services (Shababababa) and dinners and have family holiday celebrations at various times throughout the school year. Hebrew is used in our classrooms and integrated into songs, games, and circle time. Beth Shalom Early Learning Center children learn to see themselves and their families as an integral part of the Congregation and Early Learning Center family.

2. EARLY LEARNING CENTER CURRICULUM

Our program implements a curriculum that supports the principles of the Creative Curriculum and PA Early Learning Standards, with sensitivity to the environmental, cultural, and individual needs of our children and families. There are five components that framework our Early Learning Center Program:

A. Environment

The physical environment of our Early Learning Center is an important part of the curriculum. The Early Learning Center is housed within our synagogue building in bright, fully equipped, modern, air-conditioned classrooms. These classrooms are appropriately furnished and arranged to encourage thoughtful and creative play for each child.

The outdoor Wagner-Klein Early Learning Center Playground was professionally designed to safely accommodate the active play of the infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. The children have opportunities for climbing, sliding, and running in an enclosed, padded area. For indoor play, the Rice Auditorium (gym) is available for the children. We provide structured and unstructured large-motor activity time during which children can ride tricycles, play with balls, or organize their own games.

The Valinsky Art Studio is a Reggio Emilia-inspired space. Children ages three and older have the opportunity to visit the Art Studio based on a pre-set art schedule to experiment with a variety of natural materials. They are encouraged to explore and create with many different art media such as clay, paint, pastels, watercolors, etc. Children below the age of three are visited by the Art Specialist in their classrooms and get to explore with a variety of age-appropriate materials.

The school also uses many areas in the synagogue for specialized learning opportunities and programs, including the kitchen, the Zweig Library, the Hoffman Library, the Stofman Youth Library, the Jack and Esther Palkovitz Grand Lobby, the Samuel and Minnie Hyman Ballroom, the Eisner Commons, and the Faye Rubenstein Weiss Sanctuary.

Beth Shalom is centrally located in Squirrel Hill, which is the heart of the Pittsburgh Jewish community, and is easily accessible from any surrounding area. Our children learn about their community through walks in the neighborhood and visits to the supermarket, Carnegie Library, fire and police station, post office, playgrounds, and other places of local interest.

The classroom learning environments provide for the children to:

- Feel comfortable and safe.
- Explore and experiment with developmentally appropriate materials.
- Grow and develop at their own rate, encouraged and supported by our staff.
- Develop skills for daily problem solving.
- Learn to interact socially with their peers through a variety of play activities, including some specifically focused on emotions.
- Have freedom to express their feelings while learning appropriate ways of handling emotional responses.
- Have many sensory learning experiences such as baking, art, music, large motor, holiday preparations, and movement. The children enjoy the pleasure of learning through direct experience.
- Foster social, emotional, mental, and physical growth of each child by:

- Exposing the children to a variety of creative experiences.
- Encouraging children to become more aware of their surroundings.
- Enabling the children to develop their senses.
- Nurturing language development.

B. Language Development

(Taken from Creative Curriculum: Building Language and Literacy Skills)

One of the greatest achievements in the first three years is the development of oral language. This includes both the ability to understand spoken words and the ability to put one's own ideas and feelings into a communicable form. Infants, toddlers, and twos need intentional communication experiences every day in order for them to acquire the building blocks of language and literacy. These include experiences that enable them to acquire vocabulary and language skills, hear the different sounds and rhythms of language, enjoy books and stories, and explore writing.

In the threes and pre-k classrooms, the teachers thoughtfully and purposefully interact with children and plan experiences that support emerging literacy skills. A print-rich environment that allows children to practice literacy skills in real-life experiences, combined with explicit instruction of key concepts, is the foundation of literacy learning in our program. The components of literacy for Early Learning Center children include: increased vocabulary and language, phonological awareness, knowledge of print, letter and word recognition, reading comprehension, and understanding books and other texts. Most importantly, our program strives to portray building literacy skills as an enjoyable adventure.

As our ELC instills an emphasis on Jewish culture and heritage, the Hebrew language is naturally infused into our classrooms and curriculum. It is important to immerse children in a language-rich environment to build their skills, for both the native speakers and those learning the language. Bilingual learning has been shown to enhance a child's learning experience. At this young age, children's brains are still developing, giving more flexibility in learning the principles and sounds of both languages. This builds a stronger sense of phonological awareness, a key component to literacy skills. A teacher fluent in Hebrew is in the classrooms regularly throughout the week. As a Jewish Early Learning Center, Judaism is an integral part of our curriculum and environment. Hebrew is used in the classroom for ritual purposes (i.e. reciting a bracha (blessing) over our food before we eat) and as a spoken language (i.e. use of Hebrew for classroom objects, in songs and as a "special" activity). Using Hebrew in the classroom is important. Many of our families use Hebrew in the home for either ritual purposes or as a spoken language.

C. Children

The children's interests, developmental levels, personalities/temperaments, and individual needs all shape the learning experiences provided in the classroom. The principles of child development, along with the teachers' understanding of each child's needs, defines the curriculum and implementation of teaching strategies used in the classroom.

Our infant classrooms are based on the understanding that infants need dependable caregivers that will provide attention, concern, and care on a consistent basis. The infant classrooms build attachment between the child and his/her caregivers. Early positive, responsive, quality care is the foundation of the child's sense of attachment, leading him/her to feel secure in the learning environment and confident in exploring his/her surroundings. The infant classrooms are designed to foster social, emotional, physical, linguistic, and cognitive development, as the babies meet the goals and objectives of our curriculum.

The toddler/twos classrooms offer developmentally appropriate learning experiences that support the sequential attainment of skills, assessed and aligned with the curriculum objectives. Our program offers an environment designed for learning to occur naturally and progressively. Opportunities are provided for multisensory experiences aimed at engaging problem-solving skills. Self-help skills are emerging, and our staff encourage the children to achieve mastery of these skills.

The threes and pre-k classrooms are diverse and engaging, and the learning environment is thoughtfully planned. Language, social/emotional, physical, and cognitive domains are all supported in the learning experiences provided, as the curriculum is designed to foster growth and development based on the outlined objectives. The children in these classrooms take part in developmentally appropriate individual and group activities that include: fine/gross motor development, dramatic and creative expression, math and language development, art, music, literature, and science. Our program strives to provide an environment that supports development of the children's communication and problem-solving skills.

D. Families

Home and school are a child's two most important worlds. Children must bridge these two worlds every day. If home and school are connected in positive and respectful ways, children feel secure. We strive to work in partnership with our children's parents, communicating daily to build mutual understanding and trust to ensure the welfare and optimal learning experience for each child.

E. Teachers

Our program offers a highly qualified, experienced, caring, and nurturing staff. All staff members are required to participate in annual ongoing professional development training, courses, and programs. All staff members are screened by the state for previous records of child abuse, criminal record, (NSOR) National Sex Offender Registry, and an FBI background check. All staff members undergo testing for tuberculosis and biannual physical examinations. Each staff member is trained in pediatric first-aid training and CPR.

By implementing a comprehensive curriculum that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, our children will build the skills and gain the knowledge to be successful thinkers and explorers. In our application of developmentally appropriate practice, we highlight the

importance of applying the knowledge of child development with the information gained by forming a relationship with each child and family.

3. INTEGRATING AND ADAPTING THE CURRICULUM

Everything from the physical layout of our classrooms to our materials, activities, and themes is informed by our curriculum. Our Early Learning Center uses Creative Curriculum as a flexible framework for our teachers to support the development of daily plans and learning experiences. In addition, they draw from our rich Jewish heritage and other educational resources to enhance these experiences. Finally, our teaching staff look to our children and their families for their interests and needs, incorporating everything from language considerations to a child's favorite color into their daily planning.

4. ASSESSMENT

Child assessment is an integral part of any early childhood program. At Beth Shalom Early Learning Center we use informal and formal assessment methods to support every child's learning. Informal assessments happen daily, and anecdotal notes are recorded by our teachers. These assessments are informed by daily observations of the children and their families. We use Teaching Strategies as a framework for our formal assessments. All assessments are done on site and take into consideration a child's strengths, challenges, and home environment.

The staff begins the assessment process by observing the child in social and emotional, physical, cognitive, and language development. While the teachers observe the children and construct a variety of anecdotal notes, the teacher references Teaching Strategies to begin the yearly assessment process. After the information is gathered in the social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language domains, the staff refers to Teaching Strategies developmental checklists. In the late fall and early spring, the parents and staff meet to discuss the child's progress in these domains. During the meetings with the parents, Teaching Strategies reports are discussed and then signed by the parent. Parents are given a copy of the report to keep for their records, and the signed report is filed in the child's confidential folder, which can be found in the Early Learning Center office.

Although formal assessment meetings are planned for late fall and early spring, the teachers maintain the assessment process throughout the year by completing and maintaining the Teaching Strategies developmental checklists and observational notes. The teachers frequently refer to their observational notes and checklists during their weekly planning to individualize the classroom lesson plans. The lesson plans are then constructed using the assessment information, creative curriculum assessment domains, and the students' interests. In this way, the assessment methods also provide teachers with a clear idea for curriculum development, daily planning, and an accurate picture of all children's abilities and progress.

The director of the ELC regularly reviews the school's assessment methods to be certain they are providing useful information.

A. Assessment Plan

All assessment notes and information are confidential and are not to be shared with anyone outside the teaching team without the parent's written consent. In addition to our annual back-to-school professional development that includes instruction on assessment, mandatory staff meetings are held prior to parent-teacher conferences to review specific assessment policies, their purpose, value, and uses in our school.

Teachers engage with families regularly to learn from their knowledge of their child's interests, approaches to learning, and the child's developmental needs and also to learn about their concerns and goals for their children. This information is incorporated into ongoing classroom planning. Ongoing communication with families about assessment and curriculum objectives is essential. Teachers use a variety of methods of communication including email, parent information boards, weekly newsletters, and conversations to inform parents and solicit input from families about curriculum activities. Teachers keep assessment notes and communications with families as part of the child's files. This information is considered confidential, always kept in a secure location in the classroom, but is made available to administrators or staff who have parental consent, the child's parents or legal guardian(s), and regulatory authorities, by request.

5. ENROLLMENT POLICIES

ENROLLMENT and WAIT LIST PRIORITY ORDER

1. Siblings of currently enrolled children of members of Congregation Beth Shalom.
2. Children of members of Congregation Beth Shalom.
3. Siblings of currently enrolled children (not members of Congregation Beth Shalom).
4. Children of teachers at the Early Learning Center and employees of Congregation Beth Shalom.
5. Children of at least one Jewish parent.
6. All other children.

If a family is not yet expecting a child, they may put down a deposit to hold a spot on the wait list but they may not hold a spot in the classroom.

A. DEPOSIT

Beth Shalom ELC requires a nonrefundable deposit of \$200 to enroll your child. This deposit will be applied to total tuition cost. The deposit is not refunded if a spot does not open or if a spot opens and the spot is declined. The deposit would still apply to a future placement in an older classroom as long the child remains on the wait list.

B. POLICY FOR OLDER INFANTS THROUGH PRE-K

At the time of enrollment for the coming academic year, a spot in a class can be held for a **maximum of 90 days** after the start of the school year as long as no one is on

the wait list. All payments begin August 1 on a prorated basis, regardless of a child's start date. Payments will be determined based on the hours a child is signed up for when s/he starts. If a family signs up for fewer hours before a child starts and then increases the hours when the child starts, the family will be responsible for the cost difference dating back to August 1.

If a spot becomes available midyear, but the family wants to delay the child's start, the family will pay tuition prorated from the day the slot becomes available. If the child does not enroll at the agreed upon date, the tuition will not be returned. The child will be placed at the bottom of the wait list if the family continues to desire eventual enrollment.

When a child is on the wait list, if a spot is refused but the family still wants the child to eventually enroll in the ELC, the spot will be offered to the second child on the wait list and the first child will be placed again at the top of the wait list. If the family is offered a spot a second time and refuses it, the child is moved to the bottom of the wait list.

C. POLICY FOR YOUNGER INFANTS

The same enrollment and wait list priority order applies. When all other things are equal, spots are filled based on the date the deposit was made (first come, first serve). All families must identify their baby's start date for the coming school year by March 31 of the prior academic year to hold a spot. There is a minimum annual tuition for the young infant room of \$10,000.00. Tuition payments, based on the days and hours of enrollment, will begin in August. In the event of a miscarriage, any money paid would be refunded. Families must contact the ELC office within two weeks after the baby's birth to confirm and guarantee a spot on the wait list. Failure to do so may jeopardize the baby's enrollment or necessitate placement on the wait list. Families should contact the ELC office as soon as possible if they no longer desire a spot in the classroom.

D. ENROLLMENT TIMELINE

January through February: Enrollment forms go out to currently enrolled families and to families on the wait list, including the coming year's tuition rates. Families re-enrolling a child or a sibling must submit the enrollment form and a deposit to secure a spot in the future year's class. If no form is submitted, a space is not guaranteed. Families on the wait list do not need to submit a new enrollment form or deposit, but do need to update child information for upcoming year.

End of March: The ELC office will contact families on the wait list to let them know if there is an open spot in the classroom.

Admission continues on a rolling basis.

6. FINANCIAL POLICIES

- Because our program and licensing requirements force us to employ staff based on the number of children enrolled, we cannot give tuition refunds for periods of time when a child is absent.
- Beth Shalom Early Learning Center requires a nonrefundable deposit of \$200.00 to enroll a child. This deposit will be applied to total tuition cost.
- Membership in Congregation Beth Shalom is not required. Members receive a \$500 discount.
- Signing the Agreement Form indicates a commitment to the entire year's tuition fee (Academic Year or Full Year).
- Beth Shalom Early Learning Center has three payment methods for parents' convenience.
 - Full payment of tuition by August 1st for the upcoming school year.
 - Monthly payment by ACH money transfer on the 1st of each month beginning August 1st, directly from a checking account. Ten payments for 10-month Academic Year enrollees (3 year olds, 4 year olds, and Pre-k), and 12 payments for Full Year enrollees.
 - Monthly payments by credit card charged on the 1st of each month beginning August 1st. Ten payments for 10 month Academic Year enrollees (3 year olds, 4 year olds, and Pre-k) and 12 payments for Full Year enrollees. **A 3% convenience fee will be charged at the time of processing.**
- Additional childcare hours are available, space and staff permitting, at \$10/hour per child with 24 hours' notice and \$20/hour per child without notice. Partial hours are billed as a full hour.
- Payment for additional days/hours is due the day of service. Unless cash or check is remitted that day, the amount will be charged to the credit card listed on the ELC Agreement Form. **The 3% convenience fee will apply if paid by credit card.**
- Permanent changes to your program are only available with the approval of both the Early Learning Center director and the Accounting Department. The first change of program is free. Additional changes to each child's program are \$50.00 per change and will increase by \$50.00 with each additional change after the first. Thus, the first change is free and the second change costs \$50.00.
- Families with 3-year-old, 4-year-old, and pre-kindergarten children have the option to sign up for summer camp.
- No substitution of days or hours is permitted.
- If your employer reimburses for Dependent Care, contact the Early Learning Center office and we will be able to supply you with a receipt on a monthly basis.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

The Beth Shalom ELC has several tuition assistance programs available to families.

1. Beth Shalom Funded

The synagogue sponsors its own private tuition assistance program based on financial need. Those interested can request an application from the ELC office.

Once completed the application will be reviewed by the Tuition Assistance Committee. All awards will be deducted from tuition. There are no cash payments made to families.

2. Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh (JFED)

JFED sponsors a program through the Pittsburgh Jewish Pre-Kindergarten Educational Improvement Foundation. Applications are online only and accepted from December through April for the following school year. The child must be 3 years old by August 31 to be eligible. Additional restrictions may apply. Awards are paid directly to the Center and are applied to the tuition obligation of the recipient families.

3. Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC)

The ELRC is a public entity run through Allegheny County to assist families in need. Application is online only. Families are expected to pay the tuition monthly. Benefit checks are payable to the Center, not individuals or families. Any support sent to the Center on behalf of recipient families is documented by the Accounting Department which will generate a payment, for the full amount, payable to the family.

A. Daycare

The center is open from 8:00am to 5:00pm. All families must adhere to the schedule they set up with administration. Dropping off before or picking up after your child(ren) enrollment time will result in an additional fee. See the Late Pick-Up Policy for more information. In addition to scheduling for daycare on a regular basis, you can arrange for daycare at least one day in advance based on availability and child/staff ratio. There is an additional charge for this service.

It is important that you arrange for daycare at least one day in advance if you have not pre-registered for the year. You may do so by checking with personnel in the Early Learning Center office to make sure space is available. Please stop in or call 412-421-8857.

In an emergency, do not hesitate to call us the same day for daycare. We are always here to help you. The fee to add an additional day of infant care is \$123.60/day (8am to 4pm). The fee to add an additional day for preschool care is \$108.15/day (8am to 4pm).

B. Late Pick-Up Policy

If you are running late, please call the ELC office at 412-421-8857. With advanced notice the fee is \$10.30/hr., without notice the late fee is \$20.60/hr.

7. CHILD PLACEMENT POLICIES & GUIDELINES

The ELC will always place a child in the most appropriate classroom.

No child will be placed in a class or considered officially enrolled until all paperwork is received in the Early Learning Center office. Once all the paperwork is received, three factors determine placement in a classroom:

1. Age of child when the school year begins,
2. Developmental milestones, and
3. Teacher recommendations and assessments.

Please keep in mind:

- Requests for certain teachers and/or classrooms are considered but not guaranteed.
- Children in the toddler room MUST be at least 14 months old AND beginning to show signs of walking.
- The **minimum number of days and hours** any child can attend are listed below:

Infant:	4 days 8 hours/day
Toddler-Twos:	4 days 8 hours/day
Threes	5 days 8 hours/day
Prekindergarten	5 days 8 hours/day
- With the exception of significant extenuating circumstances, once assigned to a class, a child **will not be moved** until after the first month of school and until an initial review is conducted with the teacher, parent(s), and ELC director.

8. TRANSITIONING CHILDREN

The Early Learning Center strives to provide an organized and consistent classroom environment for each child. This includes minimizing staff turnover and limiting the transition of children during the school year. We have a tenured staff in place, many of whom have been with our Early Learning Center for more than 10 years. As we grow, we seek to employ qualified staff from a variety of resources including recommendations of our current staff, parents, and local Jewish and educational agencies. We are fortunate to have a good working relationship with Duquesne University, the University of Pittsburgh, Carlow University, and the Community College of Allegheny County who send us interns and students to do field placement, which helps us make connections for future employment.

The program is organized and staffed to minimize the number of group, teaching staff, and classroom transitions experienced by an individual child during the day and program year. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between teaching staff and children and among groups of children.

9. HEALTH & SAFETY

A. First Aid & CPR

CPR and pediatric first aid courses are required annually for all staff members. At least one staff member who has a certificate of satisfactory completion of pediatric first-aid training, including management of a blocked airway and providing rescue breathing for infants and children, is always present with each group of children.

B. General Health Care Policy

Each child must have a medical examination, and it must be recorded on a form provided by the office upon the child's admittance to the program. Immunizations must be current and recorded. A licensed physician must sign the form. No child may attend the Early Learning Center without a signed physical form and documentation of immunizations on file. Parents are asked to update these forms as necessary. Beth Shalom ELC does not accept medical or religious exemption for immunizations. **Failure to provide updated forms in a timely manner will result in the removal of the child from care.** The content of a child's health file is confidential but is immediately available to administrators or staff who have parental consent, the child's parents or legal guardian, and regulatory authorities by request.

We believe every child has the right to a healthy environment. If an illness prevents a child from participating comfortably in activities or creates a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children, or if we believe a child is contagious or exhibiting signs/symptoms of a contagious illness, a staff member will contact the child's parent or guardian immediately and send the child home. Parents/guardians should make every effort to pick up their ill child within an hour of this notification.

**** If a child is sent home after 11 a.m., s/he may not return until after a full day symptom-free at home.**

A child must be kept home or sent home for any of the following:

- Fever: a temperature of 100.4° within the past 24 hours. **A child must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication before returning to school.** An auxiliary temperature will be taken at the Early Learning Center.
- Unidentified skin rashes that have not been diagnosed by a physician. Children will need a signed note from the physician indicating they are not contagious before returning to school.
- Diarrhea: the frequent passage of watery or loose stools can be extremely contagious in the childcare setting. After the first episode, the child will be observed for further symptoms. **If further episodes occur, the child must be taken home and remain home for 24 hours after the last episode.**
- Vomiting due to an upset stomach or accompanied by flu-like **symptoms must remain home for 24 hours after the last episode**
- Severe colds with productive coughs and significant sneezing.
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) is considered extremely contagious. A child with these symptoms will be isolated until the parent/emergency contact person arrives. The child may return to the Early Learning Center 24-48 hours after the treatment is started.

- Head/Body Lice: once effective treatment has been completed and the infestation is gone, the child may return to Early Learning Center.
- Impetigo: blister-like lesions that later develop into crusted pus-like sores with an irregular outline. The child may return to the Early Learning Center after the sores are treated and no longer draining. The ELC may ask for a note from the physician.
- Streptococcal infections (scarlet fever or strep throat): parents must present a written note from a doctor that the child is being treated with appropriate antibiotic treatment. Medication must be provided in the original container and must be accompanied by written instructions for administration by a staff member. State law mandates that parents sign a form regarding the administration of any medication.
- Children with the following illnesses must be home for the specified number of days:
 - **Measles:** 6 days from the onset of the rash
 - **Chicken pox:** 7 days from the onset of the rash or until the entire rash is scabbed over. Only with permission from the child's physician may a child return earlier.
 - **German measles:** 5-7 days from the onset of the rash.
 - **Mumps:** 10 days from the onset of illness or until fever and swelling subside.
- If a child should appear ill (extremely fussy, pale, fatigued, lack of appetite, etc.) but has no definitive symptoms, the teacher will inform the administrative assistant and/or the director. The parent or emergency contact person may be contacted.
- If a child is having difficulty participating in the school activity, the child must be taken home. In all cases, teachers will consult with the director, who will make the final determination about whether the child needs to go home.
- The Early Learning Center reserves the right to request written medical clearance from a physician before a child can return to school following an illness.
- Teachers are required to follow the same guidelines as children when it comes to diagnosing illness, unless recommended differently by a doctor.

C. Communicable Diseases

If a child is diagnosed with a communicable disease:

- The child must be kept home from school until cleared in writing by a health care provider.
- All individual bedding and clothing will be sent home for a parent to launder.
- Any reportable infection will be conveyed to the Allegheny Health Department.
- Families will be notified in writing of any communicable or contagious illness in the classroom. Information about the illness, its signs, symptoms, and treatment will be shared. The confidentiality of the ill child and his or her family will be guarded by teachers and staff in all communications with other families.
- Teachers are required to follow the same guidelines as children when it comes to diagnosing illness, unless recommended differently by a doctor.

D. Medications

- Prescription or nonprescription medications may be accepted only in an original container and not a home-made remedy. The medication shall remain in the container in which it was received.
- Staff persons shall administer medication only if they have had specific training on how to administer the medicine.
- Staff persons shall administer prescription medicines only if specific written instructions are provided from the doctor who prescribed the medication. Instructions for administration contained on a prescription are acceptable.
- The label on a medication container shall identify the name of the medication and the name of the child for whom the medication is intended. Medication shall be administered only to the child whose name appears on the container.
- Medication shall be stored in a locked area of the facility.
- Medication shall be stored in accordance with the manufacturer's or health professional's instructions on the original label. Staff check to ensure medicine is not expired before administering it to a child.
- Parents shall provide written consent for administration on the form provided by the state.
- The lead teacher or assistant teacher is responsible for establishing and maintaining a medication log of when prescription or nonprescription medication is administered. A log shall include the following minimum information:
 - Name of the medication
 - Name of the child receiving the medication
 - Requirement for refrigeration
 - Amount of medication administered
 - Date of administration
 - Time of administration
 - Initials of the staff person who administered the medication
 - Special notes related to problems of administration

E. Required Vaccinations

We require all vaccinations per the academy of Pediatrics. We do not take any medical or religious exemptions.

F. Creams, Sunscreens, & Medications

Diaper creams, powders, sunscreens, or any medications must be in their ORIGINAL CONTAINERS and clearly identified with the child's name. These items MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A COMPLETE MEDICATION FORM SIGNED BY THE PARENT. Forms can be provided in the ELC office.

G. Emergency Procedures: Fire & Disaster Safety

- **In case of an actual fire or evacuation, the entire school will meet at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Squirrel Hill, 5801 Forbes Ave. Pittsburgh, PA 15217 412-422-9650**
- The children must understand, through classroom discussions, the importance and seriousness of fire safety procedures. There are fire extinguishers located on every

floor of the building. Staff members are familiar with their locations and operation. Every staff member must have fire safety training.

- In case of an actual fire, make every effort to avoid panic. The way in which the staff, parents, and other adults behave will have a great bearing on the way others react.
- We evacuate the building whenever the fire alarm sounds. In the event of a fire drill, fire, or other disaster, an escape procedure had been designed for each classroom. The procedure for each classroom is posted to familiarize everyone with the established system of evacuation. During an evacuation, go to the designated area.
- Each lead teacher takes a head count when leaving the room and counts again when the group is outdoors. Windows and doors must be closed and lights turned off. A designated team member is assigned to close the windows and doors, turn off the lights, and make a final check to make sure no one is left behind in the diaper room, classroom, or bathroom.
- Congregation Beth Shalom has an Emergency and Disaster Response Plan that governs emergency situations. A copy of the plan is available in each school room.

H. Outside Play & Appropriate Clothing

Active indoor and outdoor play is a regular part of our school day. Please dress your child in clothing that is suitable for running, climbing, and other vigorous activity, and that is weather appropriate. Because the children work with paint, clay and other messy materials, they should wear clothes that can be laundered easily. We go outside as often as possible. Please make sure that your child comes with appropriate outerwear every day. Sneakers or shoes with rubber soles are recommended. Special or dressy clothes should be reserved for use elsewhere. This type of clothing often inhibits a child from taking full advantage of the program.

I. Exposure Protection

To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, the program ensures the following:

- Children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth when they are outside in cold weather.
- When children are in the sun, they wear sun-protective clothing and teachers apply to exposed skin sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that parents provide. The children have the opportunity to play in the shade. Program staff apply sunscreen or sun block when provided by parents and a Medication Log is filled out. Written parental permission is required to apply sunscreen or sun block.
- When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to high risk of insect-borne disease, only repellents containing DEET are used, and these are only applied on children over 2 months of age. Staff apply insect repellent no more than once a day, but only with written parental permission.
- Program staff protect children from exposure to high levels of air pollution from smog or heavy traffic by limiting outdoor and physical activity as a precaution during smog or other air pollution alerts.

J. Helmets

According to Pennsylvania law, each child who will be riding a tricycle in the gym is required to wear a helmet. Please send a helmet with your child's name on it. Without a helmet, a child will not be permitted to ride the school's tricycles or other pedal and non-pedal cycles. Please make sure that your child's helmet is fitted properly and marked clearly with a permanent marker with his/her name.

K. Diapering & Toileting Policies and Procedures

Families must supply diapers for their children. Children's diapers are changed at least every two hours and as needed. Families may bring disposable or cloth diapers. If cloth diapers are to be used, families must also supply appropriate material for containing soiled diapers during the day. Families must provide a zip-sealed bag to contain the cloth diapers. Soiled cloth diapers must be taken home daily and laundered by the family. If cloth diapers create a greater need for care than the staff can provide and/or compromise the health and safety of the other children, the family will be asked to provide and use disposable diapers while in care.

Our diapering and toilet policy and procedures follow the State of Pennsylvania's Department of Human Services regulations. Diapering procedures are posted in each diaper changing area. Additionally:

- Staff check children for signs that diapers are wet or contain feces at least every 2 hours when children are awake and when children awaken.
- Diapers are changed when wet or soiled.
- Staff change children's diapers or soiled underwear in the designated changing areas only.
- The changing area is separate and in a defined area away from areas that children use.
- Staff post and follow changing procedures as outlined in the changing procedures table in the changing area.

L. Hand Washing Policy

Hand washing is required by all staff, volunteers, and children to reduce the risk of transmission of infectious diseases to themselves and to others. Staff may assist children with hand washing as needed to successfully complete the task. Children and adults wash their hands:

- On arrival for the day,
- After diapering or using the toilet (use of wet wipes is acceptable for infants),
- After handling body fluids (e.g., blowing or wiping a nose, coughing on a hand, or touching any mucus, blood, or vomit),
- Before meals and snacks, before preparing or serving food,
- After playing in water that is shared by two or more people,
- After handling pets and other animals or any materials such as sand, dirt, or surfaces that might be contaminated by contact with animals, and

- When moving from one group to another that involves contact with infants and toddlers/twos.

Staff must also wash their hands before and after feeding a child, before and after administering medication, after assisting a child with toileting, and after handling garbage or cleaning.

Proper hand-washing procedures are followed and include using liquid soap and running water, rubbing hands vigorously for at least 10 seconds (including back of hands, wrists, between fingers, under and around any jewelry, and under fingernails), rinsing well, drying hands with a paper towel, a single-use towel, or a dryer, and avoiding touching the faucet with just-washed hands (e.g., by using a paper towel to turn off water). Except when handling blood or body fluids that might contain blood (when wearing gloves is required), wearing gloves is an optional supplement, but not a substitute, for hand washing in any required hand-washing situation listed above.

Staff wear gloves when contamination with blood may occur. Staff do not use hand-washing sinks for bathing children or for removing fecal material. In situations where sinks are used for both food preparation and other purposes, staff clean and sanitize the sinks before using them to prepare food.

Alcohol-based hand rubs: Outside every classroom is an alcohol-based hand rub station. These stations are not intended for child/teacher use. Rather they are there for parents or visitors who will briefly be visiting the classroom (ex, to drop off or pick up their child). Longer visits require normal hand-washing procedures. It is recommended when these stations are used that hands be rubbed together for 15 seconds.

M. Water Play Safety

Children are not permitted to play without constant supervision in areas where there is any body of water, including sinks, water tables, tubs, pails, toilets, swimming pools, built-in wading pools, ponds, and irrigation ditches. Children are not permitted to use spas, hot tubs, or saunas. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water play does not spread infectious disease. No child drinks the water. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play. Fresh potable water is used, and the water is changed before a new group of children come to participate in the water play activity. The water is drained when the group of children allowed to use the table during the activity period completes the activity. Alternately, fresh potable water flows freely through the water play table and out through a drain in the table.

N. First Aid Bag

A complete first aid bag is available and prepared for the number of children in each class. The first-aid kit contains: an assortment of adhesive bandages, sterile gauze pads, tweezers, tape, scissors, bottle of water, hand soap and disposable nonporous gloves. Each bag will go with the classroom as they move about or leave the building.

O. SIDS Back-to-Sleep Policy

To reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), infants, unless otherwise ordered by a physician, are placed on their backs to sleep on mattresses that meet the standards of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in cribs. A sleep sack may be used. After being placed down for sleep on their backs, infants may then be allowed to assume any comfortable sleep position when they can turn themselves from their back.

P. Oral Health Policies

Beth Shalom Early Learning Center encourages good oral hygiene. Periodically, a dentist or dental assistant may visit our children to promote healthy oral hygiene practices. Since we do not serve two meals, we do not provide the opportunity for tooth brushing.

Q. Maintaining a Healthful Environment

Program staff protect children and adults from hazards, including electrical shock, burns or scalding, slipping, tripping, or falling. Floor coverings are secured to keep staff and children from tripping or slipping. The program excludes baby walkers.

The routine frequency of cleaning and sanitizing all surfaces in the facility is as indicated in the Cleaning and Sanitation Table. Ventilation and sanitation, rather than sprays, air freshening chemicals, or deodorizers, control odors in inhabited areas of the facility and in custodial closets.

A toy that a child has placed in his/ her mouth or that is otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion is to be washed by hand using water and detergent, then rinsed, sanitized, and air dried (or washed and dried in a mechanical dishwasher) before it can be used by another child. When spills of body fluids occur, staff clean them up immediately with detergent followed by water rinsing. After cleaning, staff sanitize nonporous surfaces described in the Cleaning and Sanitation Table. Staff clean rugs and carpeting by blotting, spot cleaning with a detergent/disinfectant, and shampooing or steam cleaning. Areas that have been recently painted, carpeted, tiled, or otherwise renovated are ventilated before they are used by children.

All rooms that children use are heated, cooled, and ventilated to maintain room temperature and humidity level. The maintenance staff or contractor certifies that facility systems are maintained in compliance with national standards for facility use by children.

Staff maintain areas used by staff or children who have allergies or any other special environmental health needs according to the recommendations of health professionals.

Classroom pets or visiting animals appear to be in good health and have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and that the animal is in good general health.

R. Other Important Safety Information for Parents

- Plastic bags: The Department of Human Services has advised us that parents are not to send any items for their children to school in plastic bags. Please send any items, such as extra clothing, in paper or cloth bags.
- Children must not be left alone in a car, in the classroom, or any other part of the building. They must always be within sight and sound of an adult. Teaching staff supervise infants and toddlers/twos by sight and sound at all times
- No staff member is permitted to drop off your child or take your child to your car. Parents and/or caregivers must legally park their cars and escort their children in and out of the building.
- Please make sure that the child's teacher is aware of his/her presence in the classroom when dropping your child off in the morning.
- Please make sure that you sign in and sign out your child each day and write the time.
- Once a parent or caregiver enters the classroom, the child is their responsibility. A child should not run ahead or out of the school building unattended.
- A parent or caregiver and child may not remain in the classroom by themselves before or after the child's assigned time when staff is not present.
- A parent or caregiver and child may not enter the Early Learning Center playground or gym when staff is not present.
- We make every effort to keep your child safe. Please help us by encouraging your child to follow all safety rules.
- Please call 412-421-8857 to get in touch with your child's teacher. A message will be relayed to the teacher, and your call will be returned when the teacher is not supervising any children. Remember that some of the staff work into the late afternoon and therefore might need to call you in the evening. If it is an emergency and there is no answer at our number, 412-421-8857, call the main Congregation Beth Shalom office at 412-421-2288.
- If you are concerned about something that has happened to your child at the Early Learning Center, you should discuss it with your child's teacher as soon as possible. You also may stop in or make an appointment with the director to discuss the situation.

10. ENSURING THE NUTRITIONAL WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN

A. Lunch & Snacks

NO MEAT OR SHELLFISH LUNCHES ARE TO BE SENT TO THE EARLY LEARNING CENTER. LUNCHES MUST BE DAIRY OR PARVE (vegetarian) ONLY. A refrigerator and microwave are available in each classroom.

- Parents provide all meals and snacks for their child from home. Parents are informed of the dietary requirements and are to bring dairy or parve food.
- **Glass containers and bottles are not permitted to be sent in.**
- Meals and snacks occur at regularly established times. Meals and snacks are at least two hours apart but not more than three hours apart. Staff work with all families, from infants to prekindergarten, to ensure foods brought from home meet the food requirements of USDA's CACFP and that they meet the child's individual nutritional needs based on his/her development.

- All foods and beverages brought from home are labeled with the child's name. Staff check food that is brought from home and requires refrigeration to be sure that the food is still cold until served. Staff discard foods with expired dates. For children who have special feeding needs, program staff keep and provide families with a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes.
- Four drinking cups, sippy cups, or bottles are requested.
- Any fruit or food that needs to be cut should be prepared at home. No frozen entrees. Food should be cooked at home so teachers can re-heat in a microwave. Staff sits at the table with the children, family style, guiding them through the meals and snacks.
- Staff do not offer the following foods to children under the age of 4: hotdogs, whether whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hunks of raw carrots; hard pretzels; spoonfuls of peanut butter; and chunks of food larger than can be swallowed whole. If parents do not cut food, it will not be served and will be sent home.
- The program protects children with food allergies from contact with the allergen. The ELC asks families of a child with food allergies to give consent and then, if consent is given, posts information about that child's food allergy in the food preparation area and in the areas of the facility the child uses as a visual reminder to all those who interact with the child during the day.
- Clean sanitary drinking water is made available to children throughout the day.
- Liquids and foods that are hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach of children.

B. Microwave Policy

Microwaves are available for use in all of our classrooms. We heat all food on paper plates. **Absolutely NO formula or milk (of any kind) is warmed in the microwave.**

C. Infant Care

Infants require additional thought and attention when it comes to food preparation and meals.

For families who are breastfeeding:

- We have the ability to store fresh breastmilk (for up to 48 hours) or frozen breast milk (for up to 3 months). Please label with child's name and date it was expressed.
- Breast milk is gently mixed, not shaken, to preserve its components.
- Mothers who want to nurse their child on site are welcome, and arrangements are made with the teaching staff to best coordinate visits. Comfortable places are available for breastfeeding.

For families who use formula:

- We have the ability to store ready-to-feed powder and baby food prepared by the manufacturer's instructions (unless otherwise directed by the child's health practitioner and/or parent/guardian). Containers must be sealed, labeled with child's name, and have a clear expiration date.
- Staff is required to dispose of expired formula and baby food.

- Bottle feedings do not contain solid food unless recommended by the child's health practitioner.

Teaching staff warm formula and milk to no more than 120 degrees F for no more than 5 minutes. They are never warmed in the microwave. If unused formula or milk is left out for more than one hour it is discarded.

Teaching staff do not offer solid foods or fruit juices to infants under six months without the recommendation of the child's health practitioner and written approval of the parents or guardians. Teaching staff do not offer cow's milk to infants under 1 year old and will only serve whole milk to children 12-24 months unless a child's health practitioner and parent/guardian instruct otherwise.

D. Health Concerns/Allergies

The school strives to create a healthy and safe environment for the children and staff and regularly accommodates children and staff with allergies. If a student or staff member has an allergy that requires special consideration, the school will, within reason, accommodate the special needs of that individual. A written note from the treating physician must accompany the request for this adaptation of the classroom. When the school takes this action, parents will be informed of it and be given guidelines for accommodating this change. Any questions or concerns that a parent/staff member may have should be directed to the director of the Early Learning Center or the executive director.

11. IN-SCHOOL BIRTHDAY PARTY POLICY

A. Requirements and Recommendations

- Check with the lead teacher to see if the date and time you are requesting is available. If you would like to host a "Lunch Party," come to celebrate at lunch time (check with teacher for your child's lunch time) for about 45 minutes to an hour.
- **CHECK WITH THE LEAD TEACHER ABOUT CLASSROOM ALLERGIES AND FOOD RESTRICTIONS.**
- Even though cake is acceptable, we strive to provide healthy options for our children. Please consider small cupcakes or donut holes for sweet treats and small pieces of fruit, veggies, pretzels, sorbet, and fruit popsicles as healthier alternatives.
- **ALL FOOD AND DRINKS MUST BE CERTIFIED KOSHER** (with a kosher symbol – or hekshur). They can be purchased from Giant Eagle bakery (Squirrel Hill only), Costco, Murray Avenue Kosher, or Dunkin Donuts on Forbes Avenue. Entenmann's Baked Goods are kosher, too. **Homemade treats are not permitted.** ALL pizza must be kosher and purchased through Milky Way (currently the only kosher pizzeria).
- We recommend the use of natural juices such as apple or white grape. Please avoid flavor and color additives or dark-colored juices.
- Please bring plates, cups, napkins, flatware, and tablecloths.

- You may also bring party decorations if you choose to, but no balloons as they present a choking hazard.

B. Further Information

- We do not have all-day parties, as we work with the children to establish regular routines.
- Some children are frightened when adults wear character outfits. We request that all adults attending the party wear regular clothes.
- Please avoid party bags with candy. Many parents have expressed that they do not want their children to have sweets.
- Family members and siblings in other classes are welcome to attend an in-school birthday celebration. Friends from other classrooms should not attend because it disrupts the classes and may cause hurt feelings for the children not invited.

If you have any questions, first speak with your child's lead teacher. Children whose birthdays occur during summer are welcome to celebrate a half-birthday at school (we would prefer not to schedule half-birthdays during the last two weeks of school due to a hectic schedule at that time of year). You may choose to honor your child on his/her birthday by presenting the class with a book, puzzle, or a donation in their honor to the Fern Moscov Scholarship Fund or the Early Learning Center Fund.

12. OUT-OF-SCHOOL EVENT POLICY

Given that the Early Learning Center is a Jewish school and part of a Conservative synagogue, school events, including PTO events and events scheduled by room parents (including class playdates, parent meetings, etc.) may not be scheduled during Shabbat (from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday) unless the event is related to celebrating, and in the spirit of, Shabbat.

A. Birthday Party Recommendations

- Some children will not be able to attend a party scheduled on Shabbat or a Jewish holiday.
- In order to create an inclusive environment, invitations to birthday parties may not be distributed in school unless the entire class is invited.
- If half or more of the class is invited to a birthday party, it is recommended that the entire class be included.
- Please be sensitive to dietary restrictions, including food allergies/sensitivities and Jewish dietary laws (kashrut). Offering a vegetarian option will satisfy most families' kashrut requirements.
- Please reach out the ELC director with any questions or for resources on getting kosher food.
- Invitations to any parties and/or holiday cards of any kind may not be distributed or placed in lunch boxes unless each child in the classroom is included. This is to ensure that none of the children feel left out; it also avoids hurt feelings.

13. FAMILIES

The Early Learning Center has an open-door policy when it comes to welcoming families into our school. Parents are a very important part of our ELC and are welcome in our school during normal operating hours. We do ask that parents respect the classroom environment and discuss visiting opportunities with teachers. If a child has a transitioning challenge, the teacher will work with that child and his/her parents/guardians to help make for the smoothest transition possible.

Staff are encouraged to interact with families on a daily basis as much as possible. Arrival and dismissal times are natural opportunities to touch base with families, but weekly emails, letters home, and invitations to class activities or events are also wonderful ways to learn more about our families and encourage their participation in our program. As educators, we use information about our families to adapt our program environment, curriculum, and teaching methods to best serve the needs of our children.

If a parent is concerned with something that has happened at the Early Learning Center, he/she should discuss it with the child's teacher as soon as possible. Parents also are always welcome stop in or make an appointment with the director.

In the event there is a conflict or disagreement among parents, it is the policy of the Early Learning Center to keep a child in his or her current classroom throughout the school year.

A. ELC Committee & Parent-Teacher Organization

Parents are encouraged to join the PTO and may be invited to serve on the ELC Committee. The ELC Committee is a subcommittee of the general synagogue Board. It oversees programs and policy in conjunction with the school administration. A teacher representative (chosen by the staff) is invited annually to sit on this committee as a nonvoting member to ensure the voice of the teachers is heard and considered.

The PTO is open to all parents regardless of synagogue membership. The PTO's three-pronged mission is to foster community, fundraise, and appreciate teachers. The PTO also organizes room parents in each classroom to be a liaison for communication with PTO and organize class-specific play dates. The co-chairs of the PTO also sit on the ELC Committee to ensure open communication between both groups.

B. Special Needs

We make every attempt to include children with special needs in our Early Learning Center. Please speak to the ELC director if you have a child with special needs. When program staff suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this possibility is communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner and with any related documentation or an explanation of the concern. Suggested next steps and information about resources for assessment also will be shared. The

director is available to sit in on conversations or conferences involving a child with special needs. When a child has an outside specialist who has developed an IFSP, IEP, or other individualized plan for that child, our staff ask for a copy of these documents so we, along with families and specialists, can address these needs and implement the recommendations of the professionals involved.

We encourage the continuity of any special services a child is receiving while in our care. We will share our observations and recommendations with other agencies and programs only with parental consent.

C. Program Evaluation

Each spring, our Early Learning Center uses NAEYC's Family and Staff surveys to formally evaluate our school's program, establish goals for continuous improvement and innovation, and plan for overall program quality.

D. Babysitting Policy

Our educators have a duty of professionalism both within and outside the Early Learning Center setting. This policy is for staff and parents who wish to arrange for babysitting outside school hours:

- It can be a conflict of interest for an educator to babysit a child currently in his/her classroom.
- Confidentiality of children, families, and other staff members must be adhered to and respected. A breach of this confidentiality is grounds for dismissal from the ELC staff.
- Beth Shalom Early Learning Center has no control over the conduct of staff outside his/her position of employment, and the ELC's duty to safeguard children does not extend to private arrangements.
- Beth Shalom Early Learning Center does not take any responsibility for health or safety issues, conduct, grievances, or any other claims arising out of the staff member's private arrangements outside school hours.

In the event that babysitting duties are viewed to interfere with any aspect of the staff member's employment, including any preferential treatment of a child, the Early Learning Center may require that the arrangement be terminated as a condition of the staff member's continued employment at Beth Shalom.

E. Professional Consulting Support

The emotional and developmental health of our children is as important to us as their physical health. For that reason, we have arrangements with local professionals who will work with our teachers and administration to enhance the educational experience we provide for your child. These professionals usually will not work with individual children but will be available to consult with staff as needed and will occasionally spend observation time in classrooms. No child will ever be observed on an individual basis without prior written consent of the parent. For early intervention services, we use The

Alliance for Infants and Toddlers and, for ages 3–5, the Pittsburgh Public Schools. In addition, we use Early Childhood Mental Health services.

F. Confidentiality

Confidentiality is an essential characteristic of a positive learning environment. Confidentiality is extremely important in our school because it permits our students to be treated without stigma, retaliation, disapproval, or damage in other relationships. Our school is open to parents. This creates situations where there is the possibility that individuals not directly connected to a child or classroom may know private information about a child or classroom. When parents, staff, or others connected to the school disclose private information to others, this raises doubts about the school's integrity and ultimately, the safety of our children to be treated in an equitable manner. It is our policy that private information about a child, parent, staff member, classroom procedure, or school situation is confidential and privileged. It may not be shared without the parent's written consent. This means that if this information is shared with others, it will be considered a breach of confidentiality. If this occurs, the executive director will speak to the person(s) who have violated the confidence. A determination will be made about correcting the violation of confidentiality and may include, but is not limited to, an oral or written apology or other action deemed appropriate to prevent this from occurring again. If there is repeated violation of this policy, the executive director may restrict or terminate the individual's relationship with the school.

G. Orientation of New Children

In August during open house, the child and the parents meet the teachers, get introduced to the classroom, and learn about classroom procedures. Children entering the school at a different time during the year are permitted to have a period of orientation when a parent or caregiver can spend some time in the classroom with the child so he/she becomes familiar with the teachers and space.

14. PROGRAM OPERATION & SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

We are open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The academic hours are from 9:00am-2:00pm for infants-3 year olds. The pre-kindergarten academic hours are from 9:00 a.m. 3:00 p.m. The hours before and after academic hours are referred to as daycare hours.

When a parent requests that a child remain for daycare hours not already registered for, the parent must check with the personnel in the Early Learning Center office at 412-421-8857 to be sure that daycare can be provided.

A. Drop-Off Policy

To allow teachers to best manage their classrooms, all students must be dropped off and be in school by **10am each day**. If a student has a scheduled medical appointment or other scheduled event, please contact the ELC office for permission to drop off past the

10am deadline. If a child does not obtain approval for a late drop off, the child will not be permitted to stay.

B. Snow Closings and Delay Policy

The following policy applies to ALL of our children. Beth Shalom ELC delays and closings are made on an individual, case-by-case basis and take into consideration the following:

- Road conditions and significant weather that impacts roads/travel.
- Accessibility of our school to families and staff.
- Delays and closings of surrounding school districts.

Beth Shalom reserves the right to modify programming in order to meet state, NAEYC, and Keystone requirements.

Remember that a safety-first approach should be your first consideration regarding inclement weather and your decision whether or not to attempt to get to school.

C. Notification of Delays/Closings

Every effort will be made to notify families by 6 a.m. the day of the delay or closing. When delayed, Beth Shalom will make every effort to remain open for the rest of the day, however **it is the responsibility of families to check for any change in status from “delayed” to “closed.”** All delays and/or closings will be broadcast in the following way:

- Email message to families through Tadpoles
- Text via Tadpoles to families

D. Field Trips

During the school year, students as a class, or the school as a whole, may leave the premises on special field trips. Parents sign a permission slip that grants permission for their child to attend these external events and accept the school’s responsibility, within the limits of the law, to protect the welfare of their child while ensuring appropriate adult supervision. Teachers are required to inform parents ahead of time when these occasions will occur. Regular walks in the immediate community, which are considered part of the usual Early Learning Center activities, do not require permission slips. ALL field trips (walks included) require staff to have a communication device (i.e., cell phone), first aid kit, and emergency bag with all pertinent child information in it.

15. STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND POLICIES

A. Teaching Staff

All teaching staff are trained in using ethical guidelines in their conduct as members of the early childhood profession. Each teacher is required to sign the NAEYC Statement of Commitment after their training.

All new teaching staff and volunteers participate in an initial orientation to our school and program. The orientation includes a tour of the facility and opportunity to meet with the primary staff that teacher will work with. Each new staff member receives Early Learning Center and Congregation Beth Shalom staff handbooks. During orientation the handbooks are reviewed. All employees must sign the last page of the handbooks indicating that they have read and understand the policies and procedures as well as the school's values and philosophy. Follow-up trainings are conducted throughout the year. Annual end-of-the-year or back-to-school staff meetings assess and review the handbooks and address any new policies and procedures.

Every staff member is required to submit the following paperwork before the start of employment:

- PA Child Abuse History Clearance
- Request for Criminal Record Check
- FBI Fingerprint check
- National Sex Offender Registry Clearance
- Disclosure Statement
- A Day Care Staff Data Sheet
- Copies of (when applicable): high school diploma, college diploma, college transcript
- Two letters of reference
- Child Care Employment Verification Forms (2,700 hours are required for all teachers)
- Staff Health Assessment (required every other year) and testing for tuberculosis by the Intracutaneous Mantoux Method (required at time of hire)

All staff shall annually obtain a minimum of 12 hours of childcare training.

B. Volunteers

One of the benefits of congregational affiliation is the number of dedicated synagogue members who volunteer in the school. The volunteers work individually with children, lead small group games, read stories, and generally help teachers as needed. All volunteers meet the same clearance standards as described above. Community volunteers are also an important part of our Early Learning Center family. Dentists, physicians, firefighters, police officers, veterinarian assistants, librarians, shop owners, and crossing guards have given their time to help our children learn about community members.

C. Substitutes

Substitutes are required to have all of the clearances, completed medical forms, and qualifications that are required of regular Early Learning Center staff. All responsibilities will be assumed for whichever position they are hired for on that particular day. The Early Learning Center director or designated representatives obtain substitutes.

D. Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in the building at any time. Smoking is permitted only in designated outside areas located away from children's outdoor play areas.

E. Perfumes, Colognes, & Body Scents

A child's skin and sense of smell are more sensitive than an adult's. For the health and comfort of our children, all staff members and volunteers should refrain from wearing perfumes or colognes, using scented soaps and cosmetics, and totally refrain from smoking immediately prior to working with children. Staff who choose to smoke in designated areas should bring an extra blouse or shirt to change into before entering or re-entering a classroom.

F. Suspected Child Abuse

All childcare workers are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse and must complete an approved Mandated Reporter Training within 90 days of hire. Staff who report suspicions of child abuse or neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action unless it is proven that the report is malicious.

If a staff member at the Early Learning Center is accused of abuse or neglect of a child in the program, it must be reported immediately to the ELC director or the executive director for further investigation.

- A.** In all cases involving abuse and/or neglect, the confidentiality of the child, family, reporter, and accused are protected unless legally obligated to disclose such information.

G. Personnel Differences of Opinion Policy

All staff persons in the Early Learning Center are expected to treat their colleagues and our families with respect. All families, regardless of family structure, socioeconomic background, race, religion, cultural, gender, abilities, or preferred language, are included in all aspects of the program, including volunteer opportunities. Should a staff person have a disagreement with a colleague or parent/guardian, the following policy should be followed:

- Always be honest with the teacher, parents, and other staff members. If you have a problem, talk with the person(s) involved before or after school. Open communication makes the best working situation. Never argue in front of the children, parents, or other caregivers. When an occasion arises that involves different points of view between parents, teammates, or other staff members, seek resolutions. Everyone included in the situation has a responsibility to work things out to facilitate a peaceful environment. Here are suggestions to find resolutions:
 - Sit down **privately**.
 - Take turns explaining your viewpoint to the other person(s) involved.

- Let the other person speak without interruptions.
- Use "I" statements rather than "You" comments.
- Express how you feel with a calm attitude.
- Keep to the immediate subject. Do not bring up old issues.
- Avoid using "always" and "never" in your expressions.
- Be respectful.
- After really listening to each other, perhaps an apology may be forthcoming or a compromise can be arranged. Do not campaign for support from others.
- If you are at an impasse and cannot reach satisfaction, make an appointment to discuss the issue with the Early Learning Center director. Personal information that is said during any meeting remains strictly confidential.

H. Conflict Resolution

While it is expected that each employee will work cooperatively with the Early Learning Center director and staff, it is understood that conflicts can sometimes develop between staff and parents, staff members, or between the director and staff. In the event that such a conflict occurs, a resolution process may be used to address the conflict and to prevent disruption of the efficient operation of the program. To ensure an optimal environment for the children, each employee is responsible for his/her conduct while working in the program and interacting with children and parents. Professional behavior, consistent with the principles of employees at Beth Shalom Early Learning Center, is required at all times.

- If a conflict occurs or there is a complaint about an employee or the director, the director will attempt to resolve the issue informally. The staff member or parent is encouraged to address the concern with the director and work with the director to resolve the complaint. The director will review the facts as presented by the staff member and/or parent to determine a suitable process for resolving the matter. If the director cannot resolve the matter informally, the staff member or parent will be required to put the complaint in writing to the director. If the director observes a conflict or has a complaint about a staff member, the director is required to inform the staff member of the complaint and they will work together to resolve the problem. If the initial process does not alleviate the situation, then the director will inform the staff member in writing of the problem and a formal resolution process will take place.
- When a complaint is put into writing, the Early Learning Center director will work with the employee or parent on a written plan of action to address the specifics of the complaint. The plan will identify behaviors and corrective actions. The plan will identify the specific responsibility of each individual for resolving the complaint. The plan will include the time required for completion. The process shall include, but is not limited to, the following steps:
 - Review of the complaint.
 - Investigation of the facts presented, which may involve a meeting or discussion with the parents, staff members, witnesses, or other employees directly related to the issues of the complaint.

- Consultation with the Beth Shalom executive director and others as deemed necessary.
- If the plan of action is unsatisfactory to the staff member or parent, within five working days of receipt of the written decision, the staff member or parent may ask the Early Learning Center director to move the process to the purview of the Beth Shalom executive director (the order of the presentation will depend on the individual situation).
- The staff member or parent must inform the Early Learning Center director in writing of his/her reason for requesting the resolution process be moved to the purview of the Beth Shalom executive director. Within 15 days, the Early Learning Center director will meet with the executive director and present the written complaint. The executive director will review the pertinent facts and will meet with the individual(s) involved. Within 15 days, the executive director will issue a written decision to the Early Learning Center director and staff member or parent. Decisions issued at this level constitute closure of the internal due process procedure for the resolution of complaints and are binding on all parties.

The ultimate goal of the program is to ensure the children and parents receive the highest quality service in a safe, caring, and supportive environment that provides superior opportunities for developmentally suitable physical, emotional and cognitive growth. To achieve this goal, the program believes that every staff member should clearly understand what is expected and be given every opportunity to meet those expectations. Through the conflict resolution process, each staff member is supported and encouraged to maintain superior performance, behavior, and attendance standards.

16. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN

For safety reasons, teaching staff spread out across the room. Wherever there are one or two children, a teacher needs to be in that area immediately. Spreading out ensures better observation. Teaching staff **MUST** supervise **ALL** children by sight and sound at all times. **ALL** teachers, assistant teachers, or teacher aides should be aware of and positioned so they can hear and see any sleeping children for whom they are responsible, especially when they are actively engaged with children who are awake.

Read the Vital Class Information packet in your child's classroom. It contains: state regulations, procedures for reporting abuse, first aid information, who to contact when the director is out of the building, etc. All staff members are responsible for this posted information.

A. Staff-Child Ratios

Beth Shalom Early Learning Center maintains state required staff-child ratios at all times during all hours of operation including indoor time, outdoor time, and during transportation and field trips. The child-staff ratio for awake children is as follows:

Infants (up to 12 months):	1 staff person to 4 children
Toddlers (12-24 months):	1 staff person to 5 children

2-3 Years:	1 staff person to 6 children
3 and Older:	1 staff person to 10 children

The number of children in any group never exceeds the state's maximum capacity for the room except for special programming.

B. Release of Children

No child will be released from the program to a person or circumstance that school determines is dangerous. This includes, but is not limited to, the release of a child to a sibling under the age of 16, the release of a child to a person unknown to the staff except with written permission from the child's parent/guardian, release to an adult thought to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol, release to an adult who may appear to be out of control physically or emotionally, and/or release to a person who has been restricted by the parent/legal guardian from taking temporary custody of the child.

The ELC is not permitted to release any child or children to anyone who is not listed on that child's Emergency Contact form. Whenever a person who staff do not know comes to pick up a child, the child will not be released until the group leader checks to see if the person's name is on the Emergency Contact form. If it is not, staff contact the Early Learning Center director or the executive director immediately and do not release the child. When there is no note, staff call the parent for verbal confirmation and permission to release the child. Once permission is given, identification is asked for and all pertinent information written down. The person signs the dismissal sheet with their full name, phone number, and the time they took the child from school. A Verbal Release Form is completed with appropriate signatures.

C. Restroom Procedures

Two staff members must be present at all times when diapering takes place, or the staff member diapering must be within view of another staff member. If a child or staff member needs to use the bathroom while outdoors on the playground, he or she may use the bathroom adjacent to a classroom where staff is present.

17. DISCIPLINE

The ELC staff helps children to become independent problem solvers and self-disciplined members of a classroom community. This is, of course, a long-term effort. While working toward that end, the children are encouraged to solve as many of their own problems as best they can. A framework is provided by making sure that they understand what behavior is expected of them. When a child's behavior is disruptive, unsafe, or hurtful, staff employ a variety of techniques to help children understand a better way to behave. **STAFF DO NOT, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES, EVER USE PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT.** Discipline is not administered by withholding snacks, food, or humiliating any child. Parents will be advised of any issues that arise. The ELC director is available for discussion about this at any time.

It is never appropriate for staff or parents to use harsh, abusive, or punitive discipline techniques when responding to a child's behavior. Our goal regarding discipline is to teach children new skills and give new knowledge to help respect appropriate limits. Healthy relationships are at the core of good and responsive behavior. To achieve this, the staff always focus on the child's positive behavior, which is encouraged through praise, recognition, and reinforcement. If a child is having problems following or accepting a limit, the child is told what the limit is and how he or she can achieve or comply with the limit. This is always done in a gentle and consistent manner. We do everything possible to help each child succeed. When needed, a social worker is available to the staff for consultation and guidance.

A. Policy on Biting

Young children progress through certain developmental stages. One stage that is often troublesome for parents and teachers is the biting stage. It is typical for children age 6 months to 6 years to use their mouth for exploring the world and for expressing feelings. Sometimes children express strong feelings by biting other children and staff. The policy on biting behavior at Beth Shalom addresses the needs of both the child who bites and the child who is bitten. The mission of the school is to enhance and promote positive development and growth. Should a child bite another child or staff member, the following guidelines will direct our interventions and responses:

1. The immediate medical needs of the child bitten will be addressed. Comfort and an ice cube generally are sufficient to speed recovery. If the skin is broken and blood is drawn, the bite will be treated like any other injury. Our General Injury Policy is as follows:
 - a. Clean the area injured with soap and water.
 - b. Apply cold compress.
 - c. Assess if further medical attention is needed.
 - d. Notify director; call 911 if necessary.
 - e. Notify the child's parents.
2. Once the child has recovered, the teacher will examine and provide possible interventions to prevent further biting behavior. This might consist of a personal lesson on sharing or resolving conflict. Intervention will be based on circumstances.
3. After the bitten child receives appropriate medical attention, the parents will be informed of the incident by the school and what interventions will be put in place. In accordance with our confidentiality policy, parents will not be informed of the name of the child who did the biting.
4. The parents of the child who bit will be informed of their child's behavior. Recommendations will be made to these parents on ways to prevent future biting behavior, including referrals to specialists if necessary and/or requested by either the school or the parents.

If the behavior becomes excessive and unmanageable, the school reserves the right to remove the child from the school.

B. Removal of a Child- Suspension/Expulsion

Beth Shalom Early Learning Center strives to provide high quality childcare and education to all students which it serves. Our goal is to limit the event of suspension and/or expulsion of any student. If the behaviors of a child become excessive and unmanageable in the classroom, the administration and classroom educators will contact the parents to set up a conference. During the conference, the center staff will discuss with the parents what is occurring in the classroom, what classroom management techniques have been used/ attempted with the child and identify what areas we see as needing further support. Together as a team, the parents and school staff will decide on the next steps including looking into early intervention services or other professional services. In the event a family is unwilling to cooperate with the school team, if the behaviors continue in the classroom jeopardizing the health and/or safety of the other children or staff, or the team decides it is in the best interest of the child, the Early Learning Center reserves the right to request that the child be removed on a temporary or permanent basis.

In the event a child exhibits behavior that jeopardizes the health and/or safety of the other children or staff, the Early Learning Center reserves the right to request that the child be removed on a temporary or permanent basis.

18. LANGUAGE

Modeling is the most effective way to teach children good behavior. Our use of language at the school models the ideal use of language to express not only ideas, but also emotions. The school upholds the standard that all language used in the school (classrooms, offices, hallways, elevator, playground, parking lot, and surrounding areas) be within the bounds of appropriate expression, tone, and affect for young children. While the school does not condone the restriction of free speech, it recognizes that children are impressionable and our words and how they are expressed can teach children good use of language and healthy expression of emotions. **Rude, abusive, attacking, and obscene language will not be tolerated at Beth Shalom regardless of the audience or intention.** This policy applies to students, staff, volunteers, parents, and any person in the school program. Should a person violate this policy, the director will request, pending the circumstances and nature of this abuse of language, that the person be required to make restitution for this violation of our language policy. Use of inappropriate language and expression may result in disciplinary action including but not limited to corrective action and/or expulsion of the person responsible from the program.

19. DANGEROUS, THREATENING, VIOLENT, OR ALARMING BEHAVIOR

Beth Shalom Early Learning Center is committed to providing an environment where students, teachers, staff, parents, and volunteers can freely engage in the pursuit of learning. We are a community of learners who will not permit, condone, sanction, or promote the use of violence in the education of children. Any dangerous, threatening, violent, or alarming behaviors will not be tolerated. Anyone engaging in such behavior(s) will be subject to discipline, up to and including dismissal, and may also be personally subject to other civil or criminal liabilities. This policy is not intended to supersede federal, state, or local laws, rulings and/or regulations, or the laws and governing

documents of Congregation Beth Shalom. An environment that is free of fear will be possible only if all members of the Beth Shalom Learning Community accept their share in this responsibility. All threats, dangerous, violent, and alarming behaviors should be taken seriously. **Any situation that poses an immediate danger to self or others must be reported to the police by dialing 911.**

Anyone who is the victim of, a witness to, or has knowledge of dangerous, threatening, violent, or alarming behaviors of any type or has reason to believe that dangerous, threatening, violent, or alarming behavior may occur at, or in connection with, Beth Shalom Early Learning Center activities must report the situation or incident promptly to the Early Learning Center director or her designated representative. The program director or her representative shall investigate all reports of threatening, violent, or alarming behaviors to determine the need for possible action. A full policy including steps to recognize and report dangerous, threatening, violent, or alarming behavior is on file in the office of the Early Learning Center. The policy was established with James A. Bozigar, ACSW, LSW.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Beth Shalom Early Learning Center will treat reports about dangerous, threatening, violent, or alarming behaviors or potential violence as confidential to the extent circumstances permit. Anyone reporting violent or potentially violent behavior is protected from retaliation.

20. PARENT INFORMATION BY CHILD'S AGE GROUP

Important reminders for all parents:

- **Label all items: clothing, including boots, caps, gloves; toys; blankets; etc. with the child's name clearly written. The Early Learning Center suggests using Mabel's Labels. See the Early Learning Center office for more information.**
- **No glass containers/bottles are permitted in the ELC**
- We cannot be responsible for lost or broken toys your child brings to school. Make sure that the toys he/she brings aren't valuable to the child and can easily be handled by many other children.

A. Infant Care

Infants registered in the infant program are at least 6 weeks of age.

Please bring the following items with you on the first day of school or to the Open House.

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Young Infants (Room 101)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongings home each day.
- Three (3) complete changes of clothes

- Two (2) pack -n-play sheets **(we follow safe sleep guidelines, these are required per DHS regulations.)**
- Baby sleep sack (we do not permit blankets, animals, or loose items in the cribs with babies under 1 year of age)
- Full bag of diapers and wipes-if you use cloth diapers you need to send in a zipper closed bag. It must be taken home every night and returned in the morning.
- Formula or breast milk
- Enough bottles so a clean one can be used for each feeding.
- Diaper cream: must be over the counter, no homemade products.
- Age-dependent:
 - o Baby food/Food
 - o Extra unopened **DRY** snacks to be stored at school
 - o Extra can of formula to be stored at school (if needed)
 - o Spoon and bowl
 - o Sippy cup
 - o Extra pacifier to stay at school (if needed)
 - o bibs

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Older Infants (Room 103)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongings home each day.
- Three (3) complete changes of clothes
- One (1) fitted crib sheet **(we follow safe sleep guidelines, and these are tighter on our mattresses)**
- & baby sleep sack (we do not permit blankets, animals, or loose items in the cribs with babies under 1 year of age)
- Full package of diapers and wipes- if you use cloth diapers you need to send in a zipper closed bag. It must be taken home every night and returned in the morning.
- Diaper cream: must be over the counter, no homemade products.
- Sunscreen
- Bring in daily:
 - o Lunch
 - o At least 2 snacks
 - o Enough water and milk (breastmilk, formula, or milk) cups for the day so a clean one can be used for each feeding.
- Optional:
 - o Extra unopened **DRY** snacks to be stored at school.
 - o Extra can of formula to be stored at school.

- Extra Pacifier (only if necessary)

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Young Toddlers (Room 104)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongings home each day.
- Full bag of diapers and wipes--if you use cloth diapers you need to send in a zipper closed bag. It must be taken home every night and returned in the morning.
- Diaper Cream: must be over the counter, no homemade products.
- Sunscreen
- Three (3) complete changes of clothes
- Extra pair of shoes
- Pack-n-play sheet, blanket, & sleep aid if necessary (i.e. - binky, stuffed animal, etc.)
- Two (2) cups for water
- Family photo (please send in a copy-photos will not be returned)
- One cup for milk/ One cup for water
- Extra **DRY** snacks to be stored at school.
- At least 2 snacks and lunch per day
- Optional: Bib

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Older Toddlers (Rooms 202 and 203)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongings home each day.
- Three (3) complete changes of clothes
- Extra pair of shoes
- Full bag of diapers and wipes--if you use cloth diapers you need to send in a zipper closed bag. It must be taken home every night and returned in the morning.
- Diaper cream: must be over the counter, no homemade products.
- Sunscreen
- Helmet (only for Twos)
- One (1) pack-n-play sheet and blanket.
- Two (2) sippy cups (one for milk, one for water)
- Bring in Daily: Lunch and at least 2 snacks.
- Family photo (please send in a copy – photos will not be returned)
- If your child is being potty-trained: shoes, socks, and extra underwear.

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Threes (Rooms 206 and 208)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongings home each day.
- Two (2) complete changes of clothes
- Extra pair of shoes
- Kippah: if you have your own, otherwise we can provide one
- Helmet
- Lunch and two snacks to bring daily.
- Water bottle and/or milk cup
- If needed: Full bag of diapers/pull-ups and wipes--if you use cloth diapers, you need to send in a zipper closed bag. It must be taken home every night and returned in the morning.
- Sunscreen
- Family photo (please send in a copy – photos will not be returned)

***** Please make sure everything is labeled*****
No Glass Containers

Pre-K (Room 201)

- Non-porous bag to store and carry belongs home each day.
- Two (2) complete changes of clothes
- Extra pair of shoes
- Kippah if you have your own, otherwise we can provide one.
- Lunch and 2 snacks to bring daily.
- Water bottle and/or milk cup
- Helmet
- Sunscreen
- Family photo (please send in a copy – photos will not be returned)