



Early Learning Program Family Handbook 2022-2023



Dear Family:

Welcome to the Early Learning Program of Early Childhood Alliance. Your children are our community's most important assets. Our staff is committed to providing quality early childhood education, meeting the individual developmental needs of your child.

This handbook is prepared especially for you. In it, we share our philosophy, our program guidelines, and our policies. Use it as a reference and discuss any questions you have with the Early Learning Program Managers.

We want to partner with you in your child's growth and development. The Early Learning Program is a positive extension of your family's home environment, and you are always welcome here.

We encourage you to share ideas, offer suggestions, and spend time with us.

Sincerely,
The ECA Team

Early Childhood Alliance selects officers, directors, committee members, volunteers, employees and persons served on a non-discriminatory basis with respect to age, gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or any other barriers to participation.

Contents

4	Early Childhood Alliance
4	Early Learning Programs
5	Hours of Operation
5	Admission Policy
6	Tuition Policy
7	Extended Leave
7	Withdrawal Policy
7	Arrival and Departure
8	Health and Safety
8	Emergency Closing Procedures
9	Safety Lock Down Procedures
10	The HighScope Educational Approach
10	Sample Daily Schedule
11	HighScope for Infants and Toddlers
12	Assessment of Children’s Development
12	Classroom Transitions
12	Inclusion of Children with Special Needs
13	Family Engagement & Education
14	Family Communication Technology (Kaymbu)
14	Teachers
15	Dress Code
15	Safe Sleep
16	Diaper Changing and Toilet Learning
17	Nap Time
17	Positive Guidance and Discipline Policy
18	Expulsion Policy
19	Biting Policy
20	Food and Nutrition
20	Hand-Washing Practices
21	Illness
22	Medication
22	Injury
22	Child Abuse and Neglect
23	Grievance Procedures
23	Our Services

Early Childhood Alliance

Early Childhood Alliance (ECA) is a non-profit, United Way agency, committed to meeting the needs of children and families. The mission of ECA is *to build better futures for young children by promoting and providing excellence in early childhood care and education.*

We believe that achieving this mission is a shared responsibility, and we work with others by providing access to comprehensive information for community decision making. Our partners include families, employers, child care providers, social service organizations, neighborhood and religious groups, educators, funders, and policy makers.

With more than 68 years of service, we have established a tradition of responsiveness to community needs, collaboration with other service providers, and advocacy for children and families. These values are the foundation on which the philosophy of our programs is formed:

- Commitment
- Empathy
- Integrity
- Respect
- Innovation

Early Learning Programs

ECA assists families in providing their children with the foundations for success in school and life. To support this effort, ECA operates two licensed and accredited Early Learning Programs* in Fort Wayne and one family childcare program in Warsaw. Families may ask to see a copy of the Indiana Licensing Rules for Childcare Early Learning Programs at any time. At each Early Learning Program, children are provided with a high-quality, comprehensive early childhood education program in a healthy, caring environment.

The purpose of the Early Learning Program is to help children reach their full potential.

Based on principles of child development, our program fosters in children an understanding of self, others, and community. In this warm and caring environment, each child is encouraged toward self-motivation and self-discipline. Our Early Learning Programs provide opportunities for confidence-building and success. Activities are planned to help children learn through their senses, acquire problem-solving abilities, and develop language and motor-perceptual skills.

**Our Early Learning Programs are licensed by the State of Indiana through Family and Social Services Administration, Bureau of Child Care. Each Early Learning Program is also accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). To meet the strict standards of NAEYC accreditation, a Early Learning Program must be in substantial compliance with multiple criteria. Our Early Learning Programs are on Paths to QUALITY™ Level 4, the highest level of quality. Paths to QUALITY™ is Indiana’s quality rating and improvement system.*

Hours of Operation

ECA Early Learning Programs are open 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday-Friday, except holidays* when the Early Learning Programs and Administrative office will be closed:

- Martin Luther King Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving & day after
- Christmas Eve & Christmas
- New Year’s Eve & New Year’s Day

Early Learning Programs are also closed:

- Two Professional Development Days* (February and August).
- Some days during Christmas and New Year’s weeks.

**If the holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, we will observe it on a Friday or Monday.*

There will be no reduction in your weekly tuition for holidays. However, your weekly tuition will be prorated for our two Professional Development Days.



Admission Policy

All enrollment forms and an orientation interview must be completed and returned with registration fees and tuition before your child can begin attending the Early Learning Program. We also require a pre-enrollment visit for the family and child in the designated classroom. At that time, you will have the opportunity to talk with your child's teacher regarding the developmental/physical needs of your child.

To maintain the standards of quality education to which we are committed and to adhere to state licensing guidelines, we must limit the number of children in the Early Learning Program. Our license from the State of Indiana determines the number of children we can accommodate. Because we cannot fulfill all requests for service, a waiting list has been established for each age group. When an opening occurs, families with the earliest request date will be contacted about enrollment.

Children are accepted regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or any other barriers to participation. If it is determined that the Early Learning Program cannot make reasonable accommodations for your child, we provide families/guardians information about this region's Resource & Referral program to assist you in finding a program to fit your needs.

Tuition Policy

All families are required to pay a non-refundable enrollment fee of \$50 per family when the enrollment application is picked up from an ECA Early Learning Program and again each August at the time of re-enrollment. Enrollment fees and vacation days will be pro-rated for enrollments that occur after June 1.

Weekly tuition is based on family income. Proof of income must be provided each year in August and February; the Early Learning Program Manager must be notified immediately of any change in income. Families whose tuition is subsidized must provide the required verifications based on previous month's pay or pay full tuition.

Weekly tuition must be paid in advance. If the tuition is not paid by the Friday before each new week, a 10% late charge will be added. If the tuition is left unpaid for two weeks, the child will be withdrawn from the Early Learning Program. **There will be no reduction in tuition for absent days or holidays.** Families with weekly payments or co-pays will receive two weeks of vacation per year to be used for days their child is not in attendance.

Families who receive vouchers are responsible for swiping their voucher card daily to document their child's time in and out. Families who do not record hours correctly, resulting in less or no tuition covered, are responsible to pay ECA the difference. Failure to pay will result in termination of enrollment. Families are also responsible for ensuring that time recorded is accurate. ECA will not be a

party to fraud. If we see inaccurate swipes, we will delete the recorded hours and report the fraudulent activity to the voucher agency.

Extended Leave

At times situations arise when a child needs to take an extended leave from the learning center. Upon approval from ECA management, a child may take up to two consecutive weeks away without a cost to the family (weekly tuition or vacation days). A family requiring additional time away must meet with ECA management to determine a reentry plan and associated costs. Any family who does not return to full-time care within five weeks of the initial absence will be required to pay full tuition or withdraw from services.

Withdrawal Policy

Two weeks' notice is required to end the enrollment of your child at our Early Learning Program, or the family is responsible for two weeks' tuition. When a family plans to withdraw their child, they need to complete a withdraw form from the front office. The family will also be asked to complete an evaluation form which will help ECA continue to improve its services.

Arrival and Departure

To help keep child(ren) and classroom routines consistent, children need to be dropped off **no later than 11:30 a.m.** If your child(ren) is/are going to be late due to an appointment, please message or call the Early Learning Program so that we can hold a lunch for your child. If we do not receive a message/call, and your child is not at the Early Learning Program by 11:30 a.m., you will NOT be allowed to drop off your child(ren) for that day.

This new policy allows for all children to be engaged in our program before lunch, which will create a smooth and successful transition between lunch and nap. This consistency provides children with the benefits of our educational curriculum. To keep an accurate record of hours in the Early Learning Program, your child's teacher will record your child's daily attendance via our Family Communication Technology (see page 15). However, you must walk with your child to and from their classroom upon arrival and departure. This allows staff to have daily contact with you and ensures that your child is carefully supervised.

Children cannot be dropped off and allowed to enter the Early Learning Program alone. Also, we will not release a child to anyone for whom the family has not given written permission for us to do so. Any guardian listed on your child's birth certificate will be granted permission to pick up your child unless you have given legal documentation to the Early Learning Program Manager stating otherwise. Anyone picking up a child is required to have a photo ID.

When your child is not picked up by 6 p.m., a LATE FEE of \$25 per 15 minutes will be charged. This late fee must be paid within one week or your child cannot attend until it's paid. For instance, there will be a \$25 fee added to your account when your child is picked up between 6:05-6:15 pm, \$50 between 6:16-6:30 pm, and so on. A call will be made to Child Protective Services if staff have not heard from you by 7:00 p.m.

If the adult authorized to pick up a child seems disoriented or displays impaired judgment, staff has the right to call an emergency contact to pick up the child for his/her safety. If attempts to keep the child safe from the disoriented authorized adult are unsuccessful, the police will be contacted.

Verbal and physical abuse toward other adults or children is not tolerated on ECA's premises. This includes profanity and derogatory remarks. Video surveillance systems are used throughout ECA Early Learning Programs for the safety and security of children, staff, and families. Management has access to view the recordings at any time. ECA staff will contact the police when necessary.

Health and Safety

The State Board of Health requires all children to have a physical examination before attending the Early Learning Program. An annual physical is required up to age 3. We will provide a form for your family doctor to complete at the time of the exam. In addition to the physical, complete immunizations must be documented and updated regularly.

The ECA Early Learning Program is a smoke-free campus. No smoking is allowed anywhere on the property. Also, to keep our campuses as safe as possible, vehicles must be turned off when picking up and dropping off your child. Vehicles emit more pollution when idling for 30 seconds than it would to turn it off and on again. Never leave any child(ren) alone in your vehicle.

For the health and safety of our infants, we have a no-shoe policy. We ask that you either remove your shoes or place a foot covering over shoes before entering the infant classrooms.

Also, for the health and safety of our infants and toddlers, please do not allow older siblings into the infant and toddler classrooms.

Emergency Closing Procedures

In the event of an emergency closure, we will make every effort to reach each family to make them aware of the situation. No messages will be left; if the family cannot be reached, the child's emergency contacts will be called in the order they are listed. We will also notify families about the closing and reopening via our Family Communications Technology. This will help to prevent families from arriving

after we close, expecting child care. Families are responsible for making sure that ECA has the most up-to-date contact numbers.

Safety Lock Down Procedures

What is a lockdown? A lockdown is a precautionary measure in response to an alert from law enforcement that there is a threat in an area near or at the Early Learning Program. ECA Early Learning Program staff is prepared to respond quickly in the rare event of a lockdown and will work with law enforcement to keep everyone safe.

For the safety of the children and staff, procedures during a lockdown include: 1) Prohibiting children and staff from using outside play areas; 2) Not allowing anyone to enter or to exit the building until an all-clear is given.

During the lockdown:

- Families are encouraged NOT to call the Early Learning Program to check on a child; staff are busy maintaining a safe and calm environment.
- Families should refrain from arriving at the Early Learning Program to take a child home; doors will be locked until an all-clear is given.

How will I know if the Early Learning Program is on lockdown? Once a lockdown is in place, our priority is to ensure the safety of everyone in the Early Learning Program. Depending on the severity of the lockdown, families will be notified by text message, email, our Family Communications Technology notification, or paper notice after the all-clear is given. In more serious emergencies, families can call a special emergency line at 260-579-4443 to hear a pre-recorded message detailing the emergency and providing information as needed. When the emergency is over, the default message will indicate the “all-clear.”

Can I come to the Early Learning Program and take my child home? To ensure every one’s safety during a lockdown, no one is allowed to enter or exit the school. If you arrive at the Early Learning Program during a lockdown, you may not be able to enter the building, depending on the severity of the emergency. In this case, a red sign will be placed at the front door informing you of the lockdown. Once the “all-clear” is given, the red sign will be removed, and the front door unlocked.

Families: Be sure the Early Learning Program has your most up-to-date emergency contact information. In the event of a lockdown or other emergency, staff will use that information to contact you. If you did not receive a message regarding the lockdown, check your contact information with the

Early Learning Program.

The HighScope Educational Approach

ECA uses the HighScope curriculum at its Early Learning Programs. HighScope has been well-documented through leading research for four decades of implementation in early childhood programs across the nation. HighScope aligns with the Foundations for Young Children to the Indiana Academic Standards, developed to bridge the transition from preschool to public schools.

Central to the HighScope approach is the connection between high-quality early childhood education and children’s success in life. The elements of quality include a curriculum which actively involves children in their own learning. ECA classrooms ensure active learning by:

- Providing an environment which promotes decision-making, cooperation, creativity, and problem-solving.
- Establishing a daily routine which allows children to plan many of their activities, carry them out, and reflect on their experiences with supporting adults.
- Planning for children’s individual needs and interests by careful observation and documentation of children’s progress.
- Working with families to ensure each child’s success.

As a result of this HighScope educational approach, children in the Early Learning Programs:

- Gain knowledge and skills in social and emotional development, physical development and health, language, literacy and communication, mathematics, creative arts, science and technology, and social studies.
- Become independent, responsible, and confident—ready for success in school.

Sample Daily Schedule

6:00 a.m.	Early Learning Program opens; quiet play
7:30 a.m.	Snack
8:00 a.m.	Greeting Circle
8:15 a.m.	Planning Time
8:30 a.m.	Work Time
9:15 a.m.	Recall Time
9:30 a.m.	Breakfast
10:00 a.m.	Small Group Activities

10:20 a.m.	Outdoor Activities
10:50 a.m.	Large Group
11:30 a.m.	Lunch
12:00 p.m.	Nap/Rest Time
2:30 p.m.	Snack
3:00 p.m.	Large Group
3:15 p.m.	Plan-Do-Review
4:30 p.m.	Outdoor Activities
5:00-6:00 p.m.	Quiet play; Early Learning Program closes

HighScope for Infants and Toddlers

ECA uses the HighScope Infant/Toddler approach with infants through two-year-old children. The HighScope curriculum is a well-documented approach, based on infant and toddler needs for active learning opportunities. Adults caring for infants and toddlers at ECA support children’s development by building trusting relationships with children and families, by carefully observing children in their development, and by providing materials and activities to support their development.

Each child has a primary caregiver who provides individualized care, plans daily for the child, and records observations. The HighScope Infant/Toddler key developmental indicators provide caregivers with a framework for their observations. The key developmental indicators are organized around six areas of infant and toddler learning:

- Approaches to learning
- Social and emotional development
- Physical development and health
- Communication
- Language and literacy
- Cognitive development
- Creative arts

An important part of infant and toddler care is the trusting relationship and effective communication with the family. Infant and toddler teachers seek and share information with families regularly to build and enhance that relationship.

Assessment of Children's Development

Child and program assessments are an important part of measuring child development and evaluating quality. Upon enrollment, each teacher begins gathering information on the child through notes and pictures and collects various pieces of children's work. Teachers then use this information to complete an assessment of the child twice a year, using COR Advantage. This assessment tool aligns with the High Scope curriculum to assess all areas of children's development and learning, including cognitive skills; gross and fine motor skills; language development; social and emotional development; approaches to learning; and health and physical development, including self-help skills.

The results of the COR Advantage assessment report are shared with families in writing, during teacher conferences in June and December. At that time, families can discuss the results with their child's teacher and ask questions. With family permission, assessment results may also be shared with professionals who are working with a child when necessary.

Classroom Transitions

When your child's age and stage of development indicates that it is appropriate for a move to another classroom, we will begin the process of transitioning your child. To support you and your child during this transition, we will provide a schedule outlining the process. This includes a time for families to meet with the new teacher(s) to get to know one another and learn about the classroom. Your child will begin visiting the new classroom (with a teacher if needed) for short periods during several different parts of the day until she/he is comfortable. You will be informed when your child can be dropped off in the new classroom, completing the transition.

Inclusion of Children with Special Needs

Early Childhood Alliance accepts children with special needs and will make adaptations to ensure full inclusion of the children in everyday routines and activities. Guidance about recommended adaptations and any procedures necessary to ensure the children's health, safety, and inclusion will be solicited from the child's family and medical and/or educational service currently providing services to the child and his/her family. A release of information must be signed by a family before consultation with any services or individuals other than family occurs. Within one week of enrollment, a special care plan and emergency information plan will be completed by the child's family.

All staff that have contact with the child with special needs will receive training to facilitate inclusion. Referrals to school and /or community programs that may provide additional support for children with special needs and their families will be made.



Family Engagement & Education

Children learn and have success in school when early education educators build strong relationships with families. ECA recognizes the importance of building strong family provider partnerships and will focus on strengthening, assisting, empowering, and supporting families.

The goal of each Early Learning Program teacher is to become your partner, so together we can offer the best growing environment for your child. Your child's teacher in the Early Learning Program can help you learn to listen to, talk to, and play with your child in ways that nurture development.

We offer two conferences yearly during which the teachers share observations and assessments, and work with families to set goals. In addition, we offer, family educational opportunities and classroom activities as opportunities to be involved in the world of their child at the Early Learning Program. Classroom doors are always open to families, and your child's file is also always available to families.

Check with your Early Learning Program Manager for information about ways you can be involved and help support your child and our organization. After your child is enrolled, ECA's Family Advocacy Manager will reach out to you at 2- and 4-week intervals to talk about how your child is doing, to answer any questions, and to share additional information as needed. This family participation form will show a list of ways that you can be involved in your child's school success, either from home or helping at the

Early Learning Program. The Family Advocacy Manager also holds routine group sessions about topics surrounding topics of relevance to families based on their communications.

To this end, our daily communications and interactions will be with that family who provides authorization for all matters involved with the child. Therefore, when families experience conflicts at home that may extend to our Early Learning Programs, our primary responsibility is to safeguard the children and our staff. ECA does not get involved in any familial discourse, and we would take direction from the family/guardian with whom we have been working.

Please recognize that our foremost responsibility is to ensure quality care and safety for all children under our care.

Family Communication Technology

Through email, text or the Kaymbu app, families can communicate daily with their child's teacher at ECA Early Learning Programs. Families will receive updates on their child(ren)'s day in a report at the end of the day or in real time through the Kaymbu App. Updates may include photos/videos, portfolios, observations, storyboards, messaging, and Daily Notes. Daily Note information includes check in/check out times; meals, naps, diapering (for infants to 2-year-olds), incidents, medication, supply needs, and notes.

Teachers

ECA Early Learning Program classrooms each include primary teachers, who are primarily responsible for the children's daily care and individualized planning, as well support teachers. Support teachers allow for primary teachers to take time off from the classroom for various reasons. *All* teachers in your child's classroom work together as a team and are available to meet the needs of all the children in their care.

Early Learning Program teachers have education and/or experience in early childhood education and participate in continued in-service training and professional development. All primary teachers have or are working on an early childhood credential and are required to have a minimum of 20 in-service training hours/professional development per year.



Dress Code

A wide range of activities are planned each day, so it is recommended that children be dressed in appropriate cloth for the weather that is washable and comfortable. To help your child play safely while outside, open-toed sandals, flip-flops, and strapless shoes are not allowed. Sneakers are the best option for footwear. Coats, gloves, and hats must be worn for outdoor play in colder weather (snow boots are highly recommended since the children like to play in snow). Remove strings from outerwear as they pose a choking hazard. All items should be labeled with your child's name.

Safe Sleep

As Safe Sleep Ambassadors, providing your infant with a safe environment in which to grow and learn is a top priority for us. To that end, our child care facilities have implemented policies and procedures to create a safe sleep environment for your infant.

We follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Safety Commission for safe sleep environments to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is "the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough case investigation, including performance of a complete autopsy, examination of the death scene, and review of the clinical history." Our written policy is as follows:

- All infants will be placed on their backs in a safety-approved crib unless an alternate sleep position is needed for a medical reason documented by a written note from the infant's health professional. This note needs to include the medical reason and to what degree the mattress needs to be inclined in centimeters/inches.
- Infants will not sleep on water beds, sofas, soft mattresses, or other soft surfaces.
- Soft materials, such as pillows, blankets, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and loose bedding, will not be placed in infants' sleep environments.
- Infants will not share a safety-approved crib with other children.
- Supervised "tummy time" will be observed while the infant is awake.

Since the start of the national Safe Sleep campaign, the number of infants dying of SIDS has decreased significantly.

Diaper Changing and Toilet Learning

ECA Early Learning Programs base toilet learning practices on the following philosophy:

- Learning to use the toilet is an important self-help skill for children.
- Toilet learning is a process that will help children gradually master toileting as a self-help skill. The toilet learning experience at ECA Early Learning Programs is stress-free, appropriate to each child's individual development, and involves the child, the family, and the classroom teachers. ECA believes that when children are in group care, teachers and families must work as partners so children can be comfortable, confident, and successful while they learn toileting skills.

ECA will take the following steps to support the best possible toilet learning experience for you and your child:

- We will work with families to ensure that toilet learning is consistent between home and our program. We will use written material and conferences before a child begins the process. Families will maintain communication about progress and will share any concerns or questions they have.
- We will consider beginning the toilet learning process when there are indications that your child is ready.
- We will never force a child to sit on the toilet.
- We do not bribe children to use the toilet. We cannot cooperate with families' attempts to promise children treats or rewards if they use the potty.
- We will not punish or shame children in any way for accidents. We recognize that accidents are part of the learning process and may be attributed to many factors. Children will never be forced to clean up the mess because they made it.
- We will not allow children to remain in wet or soiled clothing following accidents. We will change them immediately into dry clothing. This demonstrates respect for the child, acceptance that accidents are inevitable, and understanding that young children do not learn by intimidation, fear, or shame. We will need an adequate supply of clothes during the toilet learning process to keep your child dry all day, and we will give you clothing guidelines.
- We will not agree to practices that violate state regulations about toilet learning or that conflict with our philosophy and toilet learning practice.

Nap Time

Children should bring a small blanket to use at nap time, and may bring a small comfort item, such as a stuffed animal. Leave other toys at home to prevent loss or damage. We are not responsible for any personal property, including jewelry.

Positive Guidance and Discipline Policy

The goal of ECA Early Learning Programs is to provide a positive environment in which a child can succeed and further their development, including socially and emotionally. A child cannot be successful academically if they have not developed the social-emotional skills needed to identify and self-regulate their emotions, resolve conflicts, persist at tasks, take risks, or work cooperatively with others.

ECA Early Learning Program staff strive to work in partnership with families to support the social-emotional development of every child. This is accomplished by practicing Positive Guidance in the classroom learning environment.

Positive Guidance provides children a chance to learn from a situation, gain self-control, take responsibility for their actions, and regulate their emotions. Positive Guidance is not something adults do to the child, but something adults do with the child. To successfully support the social-emotional development of the child, it is the teacher's responsibility to determine the *why* behind the behavior. To do this, teachers use a variety of Positive Guidance strategies to support the individual social-emotional needs of the children in the classroom:

- Observe the child and the behavior BEFORE reacting and responding
- Allow the child the autonomy to make some decisions and choices. Support the child in learning how to make a positive decision/choice
- Provide consistent rules and boundaries
- Be consistent in the adult's responses to the child and the behavior
- Redirect the child's behavior
- Allow the child to learn from the natural consequences of their actions when appropriate and safe
- Acknowledge and encourage positive behavior
- Model and support the child through the Steps to Resolving Conflicts

The following actions are NOT allowed as guidance or discipline strategies:

- Corporal punishment (e.g., hitting, spanking, shaking, pinching, kicking, biting, etc.)
- Cruel, harsh, unusual, humiliating, or frightening methods
- Removal or reward of food of any kind

- Removal of a required part of the classroom’s daily routine
- Physically forcing a child to leave an area or room by dragging the child by the arm or other part of the body
- Physically picking up a child to remove them from an area or room when the child is NOT an immediate danger to themselves, other children, or the teacher
- Physical restraining a child through purposely limiting or obstructing the freedom of a person's bodily movement.



Expulsion Policy

Exclusionary measures will be taken with a child when a serious safety threat exists and can't be addressed with reasonable modifications and/or the use of positive behavioral supports. A child cannot be expelled due to behavioral challenges unless the procedures outlined in the suspension and expulsion policy have not been followed. The policy clearly defines the steps that must be followed when a child engages in challenging behaviors that cannot be resolved using ordinary classroom strategies. Action steps are:

- A meeting is scheduled with the family, the Early Learning Program Manager, the child’s teacher, and the Family Advocacy Manager.
- The group sets up a child support plan that must be signed by all parties, specifically stating which parties are responsible for what and the specific dates that the actions must be accomplished by each party.
- Teachers will continue to document how the child is doing in the classroom.
- Meetings will be held regularly until child is showing significant change in behavior.

If families do not follow through with their part of the plan or if the child still does not thrive in this learning environment, the child will be withdrawn from the Early Learning Program.

Biting Policy

Our program recognizes that biting is common among toddlers in group care. We are always upset when children are bitten in our program, and we recognize that biting is upsetting for families. We know that toddlers bite for a variety of reasons, most of which are not related to behavior problems. Our program does not focus on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. When biting occurs, these are our three main responses:

1. Care and help for the child who was bitten.
2. Help for the child who bites so that he or she learns other behavior.
3. Examination of our program to stop the biting.

Our teachers express strong disapproval of biting. They work to keep children safe and to help the child who bites learn different, more appropriate behavior. When there are episodes of ongoing biting, we develop a plan of specific strategies, techniques, and timelines to address it. We do not use any response that harms a child or is known to be ineffective.

We give immediate attention and, if necessary, first aid to children who are bitten. We offer to put ice on the bite if the child is willing. If the skin is broken, we clean the wound with soap and water. If children are bitten on the top of their hands and the skin is broken, we recommend they be seen by their health care provider.

When children bite, their family is informed personally and privately the same day.

When children are bitten, their family is informed personally and given a copy of our incident form.

When we experience ongoing biting in a toddler room, we share the written plan we have developed with all families of children in the room.

Biting is always documented on our standard incident report form, which is completed and signed by a teacher and an administrator. It must also be signed by the family. One copy is given to the family, and the other copy is kept in the child's file.

We keep the name of the child who bites confidential. This is to avoid labeling and to give our teachers the opportunity to use their time and energy to work on stopping the biting.

Toddler caregivers attend a training session on biting. In addition, we have current resources on biting available for staff and families. We encourage families to bring their concerns and frustrations directly to the teachers.

Food and Nutrition

All food served at the Early Learning Program is carefully planned to meet the nutritional requirements of young children. Menus are posted in each room. We follow state guidelines and those set by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). We use the Healthy Kids Initiative as a guide when creating the menu.

We are also a nut-restricted Early Learning Program. If your child has food allergies or other special dietary restrictions, we can make arrangements for appropriate substitutions. Children requiring special diets (i.e. allergies, food sensitivities, supplements, or other changes outside state guidelines) must have a note from the physician. Special considerations are made for religious reasons. This, too, requires documentation from a family.

ECA provides Gerber Gentle and Gerber soy formulas to infants. If your infant needs a formula other than what we offer, you may bring in pre-made bottles from home. These bottles must be covered with a cap and labeled with your child's name, date, and time the bottle was made. Families of infants may also make changes to their children's feeding plans as their child becomes developmentally ready for food. A written order from your physician is needed to make these food substitutions and changes when they do not meet state guidelines, as well as to bring in formula from home. This note must be updated and signed each time dietary changes are made by the physician.

Birthdays are special occasions. You may arrange with your child's teacher to bring a NUTRITIONAL treat and/or party favor, and you are invited to join the group at celebration time. Please refer to the Healthy Snack Ideas sheet included in your enrollment packet. If there are other celebrations or special days throughout the year, see your child's teacher to sign up for items needed. These foods need to be commercially prepared and must be kept in the original container when brought to the Early Learning Program.

Other than special occasions, food may not be brought into the Early Learning Program. If your child is finishing a snack when he/she is on the way to the Early Learning Program, have him/her finish it before entering the Early Learning Program.

Hand-Washing Practice

Hand washing is the most effective way to prevent the spread of illness and disease not only for children, but also families and caregivers. At ECA, hand washing is an important activity to teach and to model. State licensing regulations include hand washing information for staff and children to follow. These also serve as good guidelines for families.

Hand washing is required before and/or after: preparing meals/snacks; feeding children; eating; bathing children; wiping noses; diapering and assisting with toileting; handling bodily fluids; coughing into hands; and handling pets. It's also important: after taking out the trash; when coming in from outside; after arriving at the Early Learning Program and before leaving; after sensory play with sand, water and other similar materials; before and after giving medications.

The most effective hand washing procedure includes making a good soap lather under running water, scrubbing for 20 seconds on both sides and around fingernails and rings, and drying with a clean disposable towel or wall-mounted drying device.

Illness

Children who are not feeling well cannot fully participate in the activities planned at the Early Learning Programs. For your child's well-being and the protection of other children, keep your child at home when he/she has any of the following symptoms:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhea*
- Severe cold, with cough
- Auxiliary (underarm) temperature of 100 degrees (without adding a degree)
- Child does not feel well enough to participate in the normal activities
- Undiagnosed rash
- Earache
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Runny nose not due to diagnosed condition

Conditions That Require Temporary Exclusion

- Children younger than four months or with special health conditions may be excluded with only a fever if it exceeds 100 degrees taken under the arm.
- Vomiting is not usually a normal response of healthy children. Occurrences more than twice in a 24-hour period due to illness could result in exclusion.
- Diarrhea in infants and toddlers in excess of two liquid stools in an eight-hour period, or an increased number of stools compared to the child's normal pattern may be a symptom. (Diarrhea consists of excessive liquid in the stool that cannot be contained in the diaper). Diarrhea in preschool children that is not contained in the toilet and/or in excess of two liquid stools in an eight-hour period is also not a normal response in healthy children. Also, children with blood in the stools, not explained by dietary changes, medications or hard stools, will be excluded. Children need to be excluded until diarrhea is gone for 24 hours.
- Conjunctivitis/Pink Eye is defined as pink or red conjunctiva (i.e. whites of the eyes) with white or yellow eye mucus drainage (signs of bacterial infection), often with matted eyelids or skin

around the eye. Children must be restricted until treatment has started. (Viral conjunctivitis usually has a clear, water discharge that may not require exclusion).

- Lice. Children with lice will be excluded until after treatment.

Notify the Early Learning Program when you are keeping your child at home because of a contagious illness. This allows us to post a notice for other families to watch for symptoms in their children should the illness happen to spread. Also, notify us whenever your child is on any medications or has had any immunizations so we can provide appropriate care for your child.

When symptoms are present that cause us to be concerned about the health of your child or other children in the group, the Early Learning Program Manager may restrict the child. If your child becomes ill at the Early Learning Program, you will be notified.* If a family/guardian is unable to come within an hour, other arrangements must be made with someone else to pick up the child. We need written notice to release a child to someone other than the family.

**Illness report: You will receive an illness report that will inform you of your child's symptoms, action taken by the teacher, and when your child may return to the Early Learning Program.*

Medication

If your child is on medication, you must complete a Prescribed Medication Consent Form. Medications must be prescribed by a physician and be brought to the Early Learning Program in pharmacy-labeled containers. Non-prescription medications can be given provided a family/guardian submits an Over-the-Counter Medicine Consent Form. Families must provide unopened packages of medicine to be kept in the classroom. Sunscreen and bug spray require an over-the-counter medicine consent form to be completed the family/guardian. Unopened containers of sunscreen and bug spray need to be brought into the Early Learning Program for safekeeping.

Injury

In the event of a minor accident, your child will be given first aid and the family will be informed via the Family Communication Technology. Further medical treatment is your responsibility. In the event of a medical emergency, the EMS will be called and the family will be contacted immediately at the number listed on your Emergency Contact form.

Early Childhood Alliance provides for an Excess Policy. This means that, in the event of an accident or injury, our policy pays for all medical bills not covered by your own insurance.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Early Childhood Alliance is your partner in ensuring your child's safety. Annual training is required for all staff. If you suspect child abuse or neglect is happening to your child, it is important that you immediately report it to Early Learning Program management, local authorities, and to Child Protective Services (CPS). Early Learning Program management is available to assist you with the reporting process, if need be. You can also report directly to the Statewide Institutional Abuse hotline at 1-800-562-2407.

Grievance Procedures

Any family/guardian who believes that he/she has a justifiable request or complaint should discuss the concerns with the teacher caring for his/her child. If the issue is not resolved, it should be discussed with the Early Learning Program Manager. Every effort will be made to reach a mutually satisfactory solution of the matter. If the resolution is not reached through the above process, the CEO may be contacted.

It is the commitment of ECA to resolve conflicts in a timely manner.

Our Services

Early Childhood Alliance is committed to meeting the needs of children and families by providing comprehensive child care services. Our mission is to build better futures for young children by promoting and providing quality early childhood education and services for families, early childhood professionals, and the community. We serve families and children throughout northern Indiana.

Founded in 1953, Early Childhood Alliance continues in its efforts to improve the availability, affordability and quality of child care and is dedicated to promoting the importance of early childhood education. We support our mission through the following services:

- Early Childhood Care and Education
- Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Family Engagement
- Professional Training and Support
- Corporate Consultation

As a non-profit organization, we depend on the contributions of individuals and organizations throughout the community to continue services for children and their families. For information on

giving opportunities or planned giving, contact the Development Director at (260) 458-0125 or (800) 423-1498.

ECA Administrative Office
3800 N. Anthony Blvd.
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(260) 745-2501 / (800) 423-1498
www.ECAAlliance.org

ECA Learning Early Learning Program Locations

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516 E. Wayne Street
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