**Parent Handbook**

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CHILD CARE & PARENT INSTITUTE

**MISSION STATEMENT**

We are committed to striving for the highest possible standards in childcare and early education programs and, in so doing, supporting the children, families, students and professionals of the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute. At Nest, children are encouraged to explore the world around them and we are motivated to help them discover their world by providing a space that is emotionally secure, physically safe and fun!

**VISION**

We strive to be a dynamic, professional force dedicated to improving the lives of young children through providing consummate care and early education for children, support systems and resources for families, model training, and development opportunities for early childhood educators.

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**Welcome**

Thank you for choosing the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute for your childcare needs. It is our commitment to provide your child with a warm, safe and developmentally sound environment. Please take the time to read this handbook. This will give you an understanding of our centers as well as explain our policies.

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute is a non-profit corporation devoted to the overall care and development of children and their families. Our spacious and colorful facilities provide care for children ages five weeks to twelve years.

Please familiarize yourself with the information in this handbook. It should give you a clear understanding of our guiding philosophy while detailing policies and procedures that we use on a daily basis. Feel free to ask lots of questions and, once again, WELCOME!

**Philosophy Goals and Mission**

The quality of the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute programs and staff can best be defined by the mutual values which bind us together. Foremost among these is an abiding respect for each individual child in our care. **We strive for consistency in our program, be it in the style of interaction, richness and breadth of activities offered, or the reflection in our daily program of the diversity of families we serve.** Our shared philosophy, goals and objectives provide a guiding framework from which teachers expand using their own experience and creativity.

Philosophy

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute provides quality childcare programs for infants and toddlers, preschool and school age children as well as education for families. **Our hope is to be a significant source of support for each family while providing a caring learning environment for each child.** The goals of the program strongly reflect an abiding sense of respect for children, their unique cultures and individual development.

All of the Institutes classroom environments offer a rich variety of spaces, materials and activities organized to promote children's active exploration and mastery. Although classrooms often appear informal, they are the result of careful planning and structuring to ensure that the needs of each child are met in a supportive and nurturing way. **Our teachers encourage curiosity and enthusiasm for learning, promote cooperative social interactions, support individual creativity and diversity and provide opportunities for children to use their growing bodies to develop a sense of autonomy and self-worth.** Children spend the majority of their day involved in a variety of activities: art, block building, dramatic play, music, sorting and matching games, listening to stories, movement activities, science activities and large motor play.

Because we wish the Institute to be an extension of a child's family life, we offer a variety of ways for parents to become involved in children’s classroom experiences and in Institute concerns. Conferences are scheduled at least twice a year, or more frequently at parent or teacher request. Parents are invited to share in their child's daily activities, to volunteer for field trips, special events or to just come in for a visit. The Institute plans several social events, parent meetings and work parties each year. In addition, all parents are members of the Parent Advisory Council that meets quarterly.

Values & Guiding Principles

We strive to integrate our values at all levels in the overall organization so that they govern our interactions and decisions with not only the children and families we serve, but with one another and the greater early childhood education and health communities as well.

* Respect all individuals, honoring their competencies while offering support and resources for growth
* Embrace the diversity in our world, creating a welcoming, safe and inclusive environment that encourages all to thrive
* Promote a safe, supportive and caring community
* Foster and create environments and dispositions that instill the desire and ability to be a life-long learner
* Form and nurture a well-educated, experienced and caring staff of early education professionals
* Have fun and find joy in what we do

**Center Programs**

Our Nurturers

Our centers are staffed by an outstanding group of dedicated teachers and professional caregivers. They are trained in early childhood education and can provide the environment and activities appropriate for our children. All staff possess a minimum of Child Development Associate (CDA), First Aid and CPR Certification.

Our Locations

**Nest Detroit Nest Inkster Nest Madison Heights**

5000 Conner 30001 Pine St. 27852 John R.

Detroit, MI 48213 Inkster, MI 48141 Madison Heights, MI 48075

(313)331-1444 (734)727-1444 (248)543-7500

**Nest Southfield**

17517 W. Ten Mile Rd.

Southfield, MI

(248)281-4192

Education Standards

Our curriculums are derived from the HighScope Educational Research Foundation**. The research based and child focused HighScope Infant-Toddler and Pre-School Curriculum uses a carefully designed process of learning through discovery, called active participatory learning.** **During active learning, caregivers encourage children to discover the world around them by exploring and playing.** Children’s interests and choices are at the heart of HighScope programs. They construct their own knowledge through interactions with the world and the people around them. Children take the first step in the learning process by making choices and following through on their plans and decisions. Teachers, caregivers, and parents offer physical, emotional, and intellectual support. In active learning settings, adults expand children’s thinking with diverse materials and nurturing interactions. Learning and development are anchored by long-term, trusting relationships with caregivers, who are close at hand to support children as they play.

Ratios

**At the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute we maintain (1:4) for children under age 3 and (1:8) ratios for children over the age 3 at all times in our classrooms.** Children of different age groups may be combined if the following guidelines are followed:

* Infants are never combined with children over the age of 18 months, except in certain circumstances (e.g., at open or close of the center, if children are siblings).
* Children 18 to 24 months may be combined in a classroom with children three years of age, as long as the ratio of 1:4 is maintained.

Our Commitment to Non-Discrimination

Our Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes provides equal enrollment, employment, and service opportunities to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, gender, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, marital status, membership in any labor organization, political affiliation, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local law.

Our Commitment to Child Abuse and/or Neglect

All staff of the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected abuse, neglect, or maltreatment on the part of an employee, parent, or volunteer. Any abuse or maltreatment of a child, either as an incident of discipline or otherwise is prohibited. Any means of corporal punishment will not be tolerated. Additionally, withholding or using food, rest or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. If any type of abuse or neglect is suspected, it will be reported to the State Central Registry at the mandated number –1-855-444-3911.

Great Start to Quality Rating System

The Office of Great Start in the Michigan Department of Education provides the funding and direction for Great Start to Quality. **Great Start to Quality helps parents find the best childcare and preschool for their children, and helps providers improve the care and education they provide for children.** A consistent set of standards are used to rate childcare and preschool programs to ensure that Michigan’s youngest children have high quality early learning experiences. A 5-star system is used in rating each program. A 4-star program demonstrates quality across almost all standards. A 5-star program demonstrates highest quality. **Nest Child Care and Parent Institute Programs provide at least a “4 Star” quality education to prepare children for kindergarten.**

Early Head Start Child Care Partnership

Our program is funded by the Order of the Fisherman Ministry Early Head Start Child Care Partnership and through childcare subsidy funded through the Department of Human Services (DHS). *Early Head Start Child Care Partnership programming is provided currently only at our Detroit location.* With this partnership, we are able to provide families:

* Full day, year-round program
* Enrolled children receive Early Head Start services and some assistance with childcare costs
* Families receive two Parent/Teacher conferences and two Home Visits
* Child Care Teachers are trained to deliver Early Head Start services to their child
* Child Care Teachers are supported in their efforts to provide individualized lesson planning based on each child’s level of ability using COR assessment tool and parent input
* Enables children to be in one location all day – easier on child and parents

Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP)



The Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) is Michigan's state-funded preschool Program for four-year-old children with factors which may place them at risk of educational failure.  The program is administered by the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Great Start.  Funding is allocated to each intermediate school district to administer the program locally. *GSRP programming is provided currently only at our Inkster location.*

Research on preschool programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality preschool experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality preschool program.

Licensing Notebook & Other Information

Nest Child Care and Parent Institute strives to offer a quality program for our families. We maintain a licensing notebook that is available for parents to review during our regular business hours. The notebook contains all licensing inspections as well as any special investigation reports and related corrective action plans. These reports, from the prior two years, are also available on the child care licensing website at [www.michigan.gov/michildcare](http://www.michigan.gov/michildcare).

**Admission and Withdrawal Policies**

Admission

**Children aged five weeks to twelve years are accepted for care on either a full- time or part-time basis.**

* **Full-time care** is defined as care that is delivered four or five days per week.
* **Part-time care** is defined as care that is delivered either *two* or *three* days per week.

Children are selected for enrollment on a first-come-first-served basis when they submit an application for vacancies within the appropriate age/development groupings at our centers. Occasionally, when more people wish to enroll than there are spaces for, there is a waiting list organized by date of application and age of child. A random selection process will be used to order names on the waiting list of those children within the same age group who have the same date of application. Selection for enrollment is made as quickly as possible to allow families time to prepare for the transition into our centers.

Transition visits of one to three days are scheduled for each new child to offer an adjustment period. During this transition period of one to three days, parents and/or center staff may decide that the relationship is not a good match and the family may withdraw without two weeks’ notice after informing the Executive Director.

Enrollment forms required to be completed and returned before enrollment are:

* *Enrollment Form*
* *Child Information Record*
* *Health Appraisal*
* *Current Immunization Record*

**Early/Head Start:** Applications for enrollment are collected all year for the program year. Children are enrolled based upon income level and when slots are open or become vacant throughout the program year.

**GSRP:** Beginning in the Spring of each year, families can begin to apply to participate in the GSRP classroom for the following school year. GSRP applications are collected through the Summer, children are enrolled in the program based upon income level, when the State of Michigan allows enrollment to begin. Children must turn 4 years old by December 1st of the current year to be eligible for GSRP.

Attendance

Early school success goes hand in hand with good attendance.

* Attending school regularly helps children feel better about school and themselves. Start building this habit so children learn right away that going to school on time, every day is important. Good attendance will help children do well in high school, college and work.
* **Make your child’s attendance in the program a high priority.**
* Call the classroom teacher when your child is going to be absent. The teacher does need to know the reason for the absence.
* We will contact you if your child is absent four days in a row or more than two days per month (less than 85% attendance).
* We will work with you to improve attendance, but a child who is absent for five days may need to be replaced by a child from the waiting list.
* Please become familiar with your child’s daily schedule. Classrooms have a set schedule when meal service begins and ends.
* It is very important to contact staff when a home visit must be missed. The home visitor does need to be informed as early as possible, so that the schedule can be adjusted without unnecessary travel.
* Let us know how we can help.

Your child’s regular classroom attendance is a high priority in our program. Full participation is encouraged. Full participation will maximize your child’s opportunity to feel like they are a part of the school family. Children are able to greet friends and staff at circle time, choose a classroom job, interact with children and adults during free choice and small group time, as well as have a good understanding of the daily schedule and planned activities. Full participation also enables children to build academic and essential life skills. We look forward to partnership with you during this important time in your child’s life!

Withdrawal

**A two-week written notice or e-mail message must be provided to a member of the office staff by the family before withdrawing a child from our centers.** Please include the reason for withdrawing the child from care. If you are moving or changing jobs and you will be transferring to another childcare center, please let us know and we will be happy to copy your child’s records for you. Tuition will be charged for this two-week period even if the child does not attend.

Disenrollment and Dismissal

A family may be asked to leave our centers for any of the following reasons, although there may be others. Each disenrollment/dismissal will be handled on an individual basis by the Executive Director.

* The child or parent(s) are not adjusting to our center.
* The parent(s) or child is disrupting the safety or well-being of children and/or staff.
* Parents have not completed and returned required enrollment forms promptly.
* Nonpayment or habitual late payment of tuition or fees.
* Habitual late pick-ups.

**HeadStart/GSRP:** Children enrolled in these programs will not be disenrolled, or sent home, due to emotional, learning or developmental needs. Additional supports are available and/or will be put in place to allow children to be successful.

Termination of Enrollment

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute reserves the right to terminate your child’s enrollment, if necessary. If care is terminated, you will receive a partial refund of tuition paid where applicable.

**Tuition and Fee Policy**

Tuition

Tuition rates differ per location. To understand the current tuition fees please contact the center where you plan to attend.

**Tuition is expected for days your child may be absent due to illness, family emergencies, doctor visits, hospitalizations, vacations, or any other reason.** Please note that tuition rates do not change in the event of a week including a holiday. Because our costs remain the same throughout the year, we rely on the specified tuition to be paid each week in order to meet our expenses. Consequently, as much as we might like to, we cannot make allowance for any days missed in your regular attendance schedule.

**GSRP:** The GSRP Program is a tuition free program, funded by the State of Michigan. When openings in the classroom remain, over-income families may be enrolled at the cost of $10 per month.

Method of Payment

Tuition, co-payments and family contributions can be paid by cash, money order, personal check or cashier’s check. Payments can also be made via CashApp at $NESTCHILDCARE or via PayPal at paypal.me/nestchildcare.

Fees

**Late payment fee** will be charged for late tuition payment. For monthly payments the fee will be assessed after the 10th day. For weekly payments the late fee will be assessed after 6pm on the second day.

**Late pick-up fee** will result in one or all of the following:

1. Late fee (to be paid upon arrival) of $1.00 per minute past 6:00 p.m. up to $30.00.
2. The staff member closing (usually the director) will call child protective services, usually in extreme cases only.
3. Repeated tardiness will result in disenrollment of your child.

In case of an emergency that will cause you to be late, you should notify the center as soon as possible. However, **even in case of an emergency, you are still required to pay late fees.** Please pick your child(ren) up on time.

**Return check fee** of $25 will be charged for any returned checks.

**Excessive hours fee** will be charged for any child who is in our care for more than 10 hours in one day will be charged an additional $20 fee for that day.

DHS

**It is important to obtain approvals and authorizations prior to your child’s start date**. Otherwise, parents who are receiving DHS childcare subsidy must pay the full regular tuition rate until the authorizing paperwork is received and we are able to process DHS billing. You are also responsible to directly pay us your DHS co-pay each month. These rates vary according to DHS disbursement and family income requirements.

Absences

Your cooperation in notifying us of both planned and unexpected absences helps us to operate our center more efficiently. **If you know in advance that your child will be absent, please notify the office.** In the case of unexpected absence, please call the center by 8:00am. If your child is ill, please notify us of the nature of the illness. Co-Pays and Family Contributions will be due on the regularly scheduled day during all absences. This is to ensure that your child will have a place within the center upon returning. Two weeks of absence without notification will be accepted as notice of withdrawal. Withdrawal after two weeks of absence, in lieu of a two-week written notification, will still require tuition payments.

**Operating Policies and Procedures**

Hours of Operation

Hours of operation vary at each location. Please see your Director regarding your site’s hours of operation.

Holidays

Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes are closed in observance of the following holidays:

* New Year’s Day\*
* Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
* Presidents’ Day (Teacher in-service)
* Memorial Day
* Independence Day\*
* Friday before Labor Day (Teacher in-service)
* Labor Day
* Thanksgiving Day and the day after
* Christmas Eve Day\*
* Christmas Day\*
* New Year’s Eve Day\*

Celebration of Holidays

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes celebrates holidays non-religiously through weekly units, art projects, discussion groups and parties.

Center Celebration Policy Guidance

We believe that holiday traditions are family events which are celebrated differently from home to home. Putting emphasis on the historical aspects of holidays is not age appropriate for most children. **Staff will not plan activities specifically related to the religious, cultural or commercial holidays.**

This is what we CAN DO. We:

* Can have all kinds of books and read by request or choice
* Can have music in a wide variety of styles
* Can celebrate the seasons
* Can use seasonal items ex: pumpkins, pinecones, gourds, etc.
* Can send valentines home when brought in by a child
* Can talk about different types of homes, families, work and foods
* Can display multicultural posters
* Can have multicultural dolls
* Can have authentic musical instruments
* Can have multicultural cooking items
* Can learn and share words in another language
* Can set up the class environment to represent diversity
* Can include multicultural clothing in dramatic play
* Can have parents share about their culture and traditions…if they ask to do so
* Can have parents contribute to housekeeping – sending in empty boxes, cans, etc. from foods they eat
* Can have multicultural puzzles – including disability puzzles
* Can display multicultural artwork or artwork covering a variety of periods and styles

Vacations

**Once your child has been enrolled for six (6) months, he or she is allowed one week for vacation**. Written notice is required at least a week in advance.

Unexpected Closings

We make every effort to keep our children and staff healthy and safe, so please be aware that our centers may also close for unforeseen circumstances, including (but not limited to):

* When we lose power, heat, or water for an extended period of time.
* When we are unable to maintain state teacher-to-student ratios.
* When the Health Department or licensing agency determines there is the threat of a contagious disease or illness.
* When hazardous weather prevents so many teachers from coming to work that we cannot maintain state teacher-to-student ratios. Our centers’ management team makes its best efforts to adhere to a “we only close if the State of Michigan offices close” policy. However, it may be necessary to close our centers on some additional days. If you have questions as to whether or not the center will be open, please call the center or pay attention to local radio and television stations for closing announcements.

If our centers will be closed for any of these emergencies, the management team will make every effort to notify each family in advance, via phone or e-mail.

*Tuition, Family Contributions and Co-Pays are due for each day a child is enrolled in our childcare programs, whether enrolled on a full-time or part- time schedule. There is no credit for sick days, holidays, unexpected closings, or vacation days.*

Communication

Proper communication between our parents and the teachers and staff of Nest Child Care and Parent Institute is extremely important. Teachers will be sending home information on a regular basis. Infant and toddler parents will receive daily reports. You are welcome to call to arrange a meeting with your child’s teacher – even just to become better acquainted! Concerns about any aspect of our program, or your child’s care, may be expressed to the center director. Each child is provided with a mailbox and/or cubby. Families with two households will be provided two mailboxes. Please check these daily for notes, newsletters and daily reports. Our centers also use HiMama!, an online parent engagement app that allows parents to engage with our centers throughout the day. Important messages as well as snapshots of your child’s development will also be shared with families on HiMama!

Remember to communicate in writing any changes in your child’s schedule. **We must be informed, in writing, regarding any changes in the person picking up your child.** You may add or delete names of authorized adults allowed to pick-up your child on the *Child Information Record.*

The center must be informed of any of the following changes:

* address and/or phone numbers, or e-mail address
* parent/guardian employment,
* health/immunizations up-dates, or;
* other pertinent information related to your child.

Illness

A child is to be kept home if:

1. They have a high temperature (100 Fahrenheit or above).
2. They have conjunctivitis.
3. They have any rash that cannot be identified or has been diagnosed by a physician.
4. They have diarrhea, vomiting, severe cold with sneezing and nose drainage.
5. The child is on an antibiotic for less than 24 hours when diagnosed with ear or throat infection.
6. They have been diagnosed with a contagious disease or infection.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedures

**Parents/guardians are required to sign each child in and out every day with the accurate time of drop-off or pick-up.** A clipboard with the sign-in sheet is located near the entrance of each classroom. Sign-in sheets are used to ensure all children are accounted for when the classroom moves from the classroom to the gym or playground, and they are required by the State of Michigan licensing agency. **After a child is signed out at the end of the day, he or she is the responsibility of the parent, and is no longer in the care of our center or staff members, even if he or she is in the building.**

Authorization for Pick-Ups

If someone other than the child’s custodial parent or guardian will be picking up the child from the center, prior authorization, in writing, must be given. Your child will only be released to individuals at least 18 years of age. **A photo ID is required before releasing a child to someone other than his/her custodial parent or legal guardian.** The parent or guardian is the only person who can authorize the center to release the child to another individual. At the time of registration, the parent or guardian must provide the names of a least two other adults who have permission to pick up the child in case of an emergency. This authorization is given on the enrollment form and child information card and must be periodically updated. It is your responsibility to keep the authorization list current and accurate. If an unauthorized person should arrive at the center to pick up a child, security will be notified. Parents will also be called immediately and the child will not be released until an authorized person arrives at the center.

Any staff member suspecting a parent/guardian to be under alcohol or chemical substance influence will immediately inform a member of the management team. If the parent insists upon taking the child the local police department will be notified immediately.

Incident Reporting Policy

Parents/guardians will be notified when the center observes changes in the child’s health, a child experiences accidents, injuries or incidents, or when a child is too ill to remain in the group. If a child is too ill to remain in the group that child will be placed in a separate area and will be cared for and supervised until the parent arrives. All items and facilities used by an ill child or adult will not be used by any other person until washed, rinsed and sanitized. If the center becomes aware that a staff member, volunteer, or child in care has contracted a communicable disease, the center will notify parents of both the names of communicable disease and its symptoms.

Custody Orders

**Until custody has been established by a court action, one parent may not limit the other from picking up a child in our care.** The center must be notified immediately of any changes in custody orders. Certified custody orders must be given to the center director.

Child Abuse and Neglect

**All staff members at our centers are mandated by Michigan law to report any suspected child abuse and neglect.** If a Nest employee suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, they are obligated to report their suspicions to Child Protective Services.

Discipline Policy and Guidance Strategies

It is the objective of our centers to provide quality childcare and educational services to the community. In doing so, one must realize the importance of discipline and its effect on the children we serve. The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute’s discipline policy makes great use of positive behavioral supports. Whenever possible, staff members use the technique of positive redirection, distraction, or humor to change unacceptable behaviors. Teachers try to avoid power struggles by focusing on children’s expressed desires and capabilities. Children also have the opportunity to remove themselves from the situation in order to regain control or have quiet time. With our guidance strategies, our goal is to encourage the children to become creative, independent, responsible and socially mature human beings. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices. We will make every effort to work with the parent or guardian to ensure a cooperative approach for children having difficulties with behavior. We are here to serve and protect all of our children!

Dressing Your Child for School

We have a few suggestions about dressing your child for school:

* It is great when children wear comfortable play clothing (that can get dirty) to school. We do lots of messy things in preschool.
* Because of outdoor play, girls may find it works well to wear pants, shorts or tights under dresses.
* For playing outside in the winter, it is important to have your child come to school with a snowsuit, mittens, hat and boots each day. Put your child’s name on these items, please. Movement activities are a required part of our program and a vital part of your child’s whole development.
* Shoes that tie, Velcro, or stay securely on your child’s feet (like athletic shoes) will help prevent accidents.
* Clothes that are easy for your child to fasten and unfasten can help them be more successful at toileting independently.
* Children grow so fast. Feel free to DONATE OUTGROWN CLOTHING TO THE CENTER. We find that accidents can and will happen and having extra clothes to give to families helps in the smallest way.

Photographs and Publicity

**Photographs of the children in our programs may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, brochures, advertising, social media outlets as well as other publicity materials.** Your permission for photographs of your child, to be used without compensation, is part of this agreement.

Special Needs

**Our centers strives to respond to the needs of all children and families by providing a positive learning environment for all children enrolled in the program regardless of ability, special needs or learning style, and we work with families whose children require special accommodations to meet their needs and allow children the chance to participate in the least restrictive environment.** We will provide these accommodations to the greatest extent possible without undue hardship on the program. We may find that our program does not fit a child’s needs. If behaviors or the developmental needs of a child exceed our early childhood knowledge, or if they prevent us from maintaining the mandatory teacher-child ratio, we will meet with parent(s) to discuss alternatives such as outside intervention. Appropriate efforts will be made with the family to determine the best course of action for all involved.

**Through the screenings, assessments and observations we perform, children are sometimes found to have a need for further evaluations with a specialist trained to evaluate children in the area of concern such as oral language/speech or motor/movement skills.** If your child is found to have a need for an evaluation, you will be informed immediately, and you will be asked to give written permission for further evaluation. The Teacher will work with you throughout the process to be sure all of yours and your child’s needs are met and you are aware of your rights every step of the way. If all of the above steps fail to resolve the issue, our centers reserve the right to make the final decision on whether continued enrollment is advisable. The center will provide the family with a two- week notice, except where such notice is not reasonable because of safety concerns. Center staff will offer to assist the parent(s) in obtaining alternative care.

Diversity and Cultural Competency

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes are committed to providing a culturally competent and responsive experience. **Our program adheres to a strict non-discrimination policy in both employment and enrollment, and our teachers are dedicated to providing a learning environment that is relevant to all children who are currently enrolled, and to their families.** Annual training on issues related to diversity and appropriate practice help our teachers to continually grow in their practice.

**Our centers know that in order to be culturally relevant and responsive in the classroom, communication with families is paramount.** We recognize that the backbone of a strong relationship with both children and families relies on an ability to communicate in ways that are most meaningful to each family and child. We strive to communicate with families in a variety of ways including home and program surveys, direct teacher communication, e-mails, blogs, and newsletters.

Inclement Weather Policy

The center will follow the Public School guidelines for inclement weather closures. Please watch the local news for closures.

**Health and Safety**

We work hard to not share communicable disease between the children or staff. Please take all precautions and follow all guidelines to ensure a healthy school environment.

Illness

**Our first priority at Nest is providing a healthy, safe learning environment for all children.** Children will be sent home as soon as possible if any of the following is experienced: an illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities (as determined by the staff); an illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can reasonably provide without compromising the health or safety of other children in the classroom; or a child is experiencing any of the following conditions:

* **Fever** accompanied by behavior changes or other signs/symptoms of illness
* Signs/symptoms of severe illness, including: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, inexplicable irritability or persistent crying, difficulty breathing, and/or wheezing
* **Diarrhea** (not associated with diet changes or medications) until diarrhea stops or the continued diarrhea is deemed not be infectious by a licensed health care professional.
* Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools
* **Vomiting** (two more instances in past 24 hours) until vomiting resolves or until a health care provider determines the cause for vomiting is not contagious and the child is not in danger of dehydration
* Persistent abdominal pain (continues more than 2 hours) or intermittent pain associated with fever or other signs/symptoms of illness
* Mouth sores with drooling, unless a health care provider determines the sores are not contagious
* Rash with fever or behavior change, until a physician determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease
* **Pink eye** (conjunctivitis) until after treatment has been initiated
* **Head lice**, from the end of the day until after first treatment
* **Scabies**, until after treatment has been completed
* **Tuberculosis**, until a health care provider states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend child care
* **Impetigo**, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated
* **Strep throat**, until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever
* **Chicken pox**, until all sores have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)
* **Pertussis**, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed
* **Mumps**, until 9 days after onset of symptoms
* **Hepatitis A virus**, until 1 week after onset of illness
* **Measles**, until 4 days after onset of rash
* **Rubella**, until 6 days after onset of rash
* Unspecified respiratory tract illness accompanied by another illness which requires exclusion
* **Herpes** simplex, with uncontrollable drooling

Illness Exclusion

**A child who becomes ill while at Nest must be removed from the classroom in order to limit exposure of other children to communicable disease.** An ill child will be sent to the office to wait for his/her parent to arrive. **Nest reserves the right to make the final determination of exclusion due to illness.** Any exceptions to our illness policy will require a written note from a licensed health care professional stating that the child is not contagious. *A child taking antibiotics must have been on the medication for over 24 hours before they will be allowed to return to the Center. A child who has had a fever reducer before school should not be accepted.*

Communicable Disease

**If present in any classroom, each family will be provided with written information about the illness including symptoms and number of days the child should remain at home.** Some examples of common communicable diseases are chicken pox, hand-foot-mouth, pink eye and lice. Teachers must inform the office staff and sister classrooms of known and suspected communicable illnesses in their classrooms.

Notice of Exposure & Reporting Disease

**If a child or staff member is found to have a communicable disease, a notice will be posted on the door of all affected classrooms.** Additionally, families who have provided an email address will receive email notification of the illness. Written communication will be placed in the child’s mailbox to the notify the parents of the communicable disease.

Emergency Procedures

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute staff members are trained on emergency procedures when they are hired, and several update trainings are conducted for all staff each year. In addition, **fire and tornado drills are conducted on a regular basis to prepare children and teach them how to be safe in such a crisis.** Classrooms also take “field trips” twice a year to our evacuation site so both the teachers and children can learn the route and understand in advance where issues might arise, and each classroom is equipped with an emergency kit and a binder containing the center’s site emergency plan. This plan is available to parents upon request at any time.

**The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute’s emergency response policy extends to circumstances where a child’s parent/guardian appears to be too impaired to safely get the child home.** In cases such as this, the staff member alerts the director on duty who will manage the situation either by offering a ride home, contacting one of the adults designated on the emergency information form, or alerting the police.

Pandemics

**Our Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (available upon request) will be followed during any pandemic period.** The Center for Disease Control, Department of Health and/or Child Care Licensing Rules will be followed. Response will include, but is not limited to, monitoring symptoms in staff and students, practicing social distancing, following proper hygiene protocol, implementing any/new safety equipment, isolating staff and/or students infected, decreasing class sizes, and transparent communication with families and regulating agencies.

First Aid Kits

**At the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute, first aid kits are located in each classroom’s emergency backpack.** Emergency backpacks should accompany the class outdoors, on all walks and field trips. Supplies ARE checked regularly and replenished as necessary. Precautions for Blood Exposure are posted in each bathroom.

Medication Policy & Authorizations

**If a child is well enough to be in school but requires medication, the parent must complete the Authorization for Administration of Medication Form.** The parent must also provide all medications. Medication must be in the original container with drug name, manufacturer’s name and dosage listed clearly on the label. If the label does not specify dosage for the age of your child, or the requested dosage differs from that on the label, a doctor’s prescription with recommended dosage must be attached. Prescription medications must be in the original container and labeled with the child’s name with the pharmacy label attached. Only Lead Teachers may administer medication, documenting date, time and dosage on the Authorization for Administration of Medication Form. If a medication is needed for more than one week, the family must fill out a new log sheet every Monday. All medicines must be removed from the Centers when not in use or expired. Staff WILL NOT administer medication that may mask a fever (i.e. Tylenol, Motrin, aspirin) and these medications should not be given to a child prior to coming to school. We will not accept a child who has been given fever-reducing medications before their arrival.

Unused medications must be immediately returned to the family and will not be stored at Nest. Expired Medication Authorization Forms must be turned in to the Director to be filed in the child’s permanent enrollment file. Expired medications must be given back to the parent for disposal.

A *Non-Prescription Release* form for other applications such as diaper rash, sun block, soap, etc. will be signed upon enrollment.

Documentation of Accidents/Incidents

Every consideration will be taken to ensure the safety of your child while in our care. **Should an injury occur, Staff members shall document accidents and incidents using a Licensing Incident Report, Medication Incident Report, Illness Report, and Ouch Report.** We document all biting incidents as accidents on the Ouch Report. If a biter breaks the skin of another child, an incident report needs to be completed for the biter as well as the child who was bitten. We use great detail when explaining events, but never include other children’s names. If the injury is serious, a parent needs to be contacted before pick-up. The parent shall sign the report the same day as the incident. A copy may be given to the parent. All Incident Report must be given to the Director to be placed in the child’s permanent file.

In the event of a major medical emergency or accident, the center teacher or director will call 911 first. The child will be transported to the hospital noted on the Child Information Record (or the closest hospital). The parent/guardian will be called immediately.

Documentation of Allergies

Our centers maintain an ALLERGY-AWARE facility where children who have a range of allergies and food sensitivities receive care and special protection to the greatest extent possible. **A child with allergies must have an Allergy Action Plan posted in a visible location in the classroom.** If the allergy is food-related, an Allergy Action Plan must also be posted in the kitchen area. All staff working in the classroom of children with allergies must review the Allergy Action Plan to ensure understanding of emergency procedures should the child have an allergic reaction. All allergic reactions must be documented with an Incident Form.

If any signs/symptoms of an allergic reaction are perceived by center staff, the Nest’s management staff will be notified immediately and the emergency treatment will be implemented as necessary. Parents will be notified as well.

Immunizations and Physicals

All children who attend our childcare programs in Michigan are required by law to be fully vaccinated. **Nest requires all children enrolled in the program to be immunized.** Families must contact their local health department to obtain a current *immunization record* or a signed certified *Nonmedical Waiver Form* for delayed vaccines. A *Health Appraisal* form is required prior to enrollment. The Health Appraisal is a record of your child’s last physical exam that must be signed and dated by a medical examiner. **It is your responsibility as parent or guardian, to maintain up-to-date immunizations and physicals for your child(ren).**

Access Policy

**Persons who do not have unrestricted access will be under the direct supervision and monitoring of a paid staff member at all times and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities.** Unrestricted access means that a person has contact with a child alone or is directly responsible for childcare.The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the Lead Teacher unless he/she delegates it to the Assistant Teacher due to a conflict of interest with the person.

Center staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the Institute without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If a staff member is unsure about the reason, consult the Director to get approval for the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation, staff will follow the Intruder or Dangerous Adult procedure (found in Emergency Procedures section). Non-agency persons who are on the property for other reasons such as maintenance, repairs, etc., will be monitored by a paid staff member and will not be allowed to interact with children on the premises.

Visitors

All individuals who are visiting the center (i.e., someone who is not a parent or authorized pick-up person; or staff member) is required to sign in at the office before entering the center. The visitor is then required to sign out before leaving the building. Staff members should notify the Director and/or Executive Director if expecting a visitor.

Daily Grounds Check

Daily Grounds Check are conducted by the opening coordinator/teacher. In addition, each class should do a brief check before allowing children to play outside. Teachers should scan for hazards and contaminants. If anything is found (garbage, animal droppings, etc.), use gloves, double bag, remove surrounding dirt, spray area with diluted bleach solution. In addition, the Center Director should be informed of the hazard and its location.

Toy Washing

Toys mouthed or otherwise contaminated by children are placed in “toys to be washed” container immediately after child is finished with the toy. **Toys will be washed daily.** Toys that can be placed in a bleach and water solution are washed in the sink / plastic tub (please soak for 2 minutes, do not rinse); toys which do not fit should be sprayed with bleach solution (1 quart water to 1 TBSPN bleach) until glistening and allowed to air dry on paper towels.

Outdoor Play

**Outdoor play must be incorporated into the daily schedule for both the morning and afternoon, in almost all weather conditions.** In extreme temperatures or conditions, this time may be minimized or eliminated. However, families should make sure children have sufficient clothing and amenities, such as water bottles and snow boots, to make outdoor play possible. Teachers should refer to the Child Care Weather Watch poster to determine if it is too hot or cold to play outdoors.

There is less structure in an outdoor learning environment; however, it is expected that staff members actively engage in activities when prompted by the children. **Outdoor play is an opportunity for children to run, jump, climb and use their bodies in ways that would otherwise be unsafe in an indoor classroom.** In addition, a large amount of social interaction takes place when children play outdoors. Because they are engaged in fewer teacher-directed activities and more child-directed play, children are able to choose their friends and who to interact with.

Oral Health

**At least once a day, children over 1 year of age will practice brushing their teeth after a meal.** Nest will provide a toothbrush for each child. Toothbrushes must be labeled with the child’s name, allowed to air-dry before being stored using sanitary methods, and should not come into contact with other toothbrushes. Storage containers will be washed and sanitized weekly. Toothbrushes must be discarded if contaminated. Children under age 1 will have their gums cleaned with gauze by their caregiver.

Sun Safety

**Our staff members regularly receive training on sun-safety practices to prevent skin damage during outside play time.** Parents are encouraged to provide appropriate clothing to protect children from sun exposure, including hats (for cold and hot weather), sunglasses, and coverings for arms and legs. Parents are also welcomed and encouraged to provide non-aerosol sunscreen with their child’s name on it to be used for outdoor play.

**Meals and Nutrition**

Food Policy and Nutrition Plan

**The Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes participates in the child and adult care food program (CACFP**). Because of our participation, we are issuing a non-discrimination statement: *In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agricultural Policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (202)720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

Meals and Nutrition

The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute serves nutritious and balanced breakfast, morning and afternoon snacks, lunch and/or supper that follow the Child and Adult Care Food Program’s (CACFP) Child Care Meal Pattern guidelines. **Families are not required to provide a lunch or snacks for children.** Nest follows the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutrition and practice guidelines for meals and snacks.

* Prior to each meal, tables must be washed with soapy water. Each table must then be sanitized with bleach water and either air-dried or wiped clean with a dry paper towel.
* All staff and children must wash hands before and after each meal, for at least 20 seconds.
* Staff shall sit with children at the tables and supervise all mealtimes. Staff should encourage conversation by asking questions or talking about the food; good table manners should be modeled.
* First-serving child sized-portions will be provided for all staff. Each staff member is expected to eat the meal provided, in order to model good eating habits.
* Children will never be forced or bribed to eat. Children must have every food on their plate. However, if a child states that he/she does not like a particular food, they may place just a small amount (ex: one or two peas) on their plate.
* Following every meal, tables and chairs must be washed with soapy water and sanitized with bleach water.

Food From Home

**Due to various food allergies and dietary restrictions in our classrooms, we do not allow outside food or food from home in the classrooms.** Special treats and snacks must be arranged in advance and approved by the Director.

Child Care Nutrition is Routine

**In order to limit time away from the children and to promote healthy eating habits, food is available only at scheduled times.** Children who choose not to eat will be offered food again at the next scheduled meal or snack. Meal and snack times are planned so that no child will go more than three hours without being offered food. Scheduled meal times are 8:30-9:30, 11:30-12:00, and 2:30-3:00. Although fast food and outside food is convenient, please do not offer your child fast food or outside meals or drinks as this undermines efforts to teach healthy habits to the children.

Weekly Menus Promote Child Care Nutrition

The weekly menus have been reviewed by a Registered Dietician and are planned with optimal nutrition in mind. **Each menu is designed to provide a wide variety of foods that are different in color, shape, size and texture.** Menus include a wide variety of foods, including those that are the children’s favorites, new or unfamiliar, culturally diverse, and seasonally appropriate. In addition, menus are planned with children's ages and developmental abilities in mind. A six-week rotation of menus changes seasonally to provide the children with a balance of variety and familiarity. Past menus are kept on file.

Child Care Nutrition is Supported by the Food Program

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a Federal program that promotes healthy meals and snacks to children in child care programs. **As part of the CACFP, providers serve meals and snacks that meet specific guidelines and record children's attendance at meals and snacks.** In return childcare providers are reimbursed a set amount per meal or snack. Providers also receive home visits several times a year, up-to-date information about feeding young children, a monthly newsletter, and various other support materials. The childcare food program plays a vital role in improving the quality of childcare and helping children get a healthy start in life.

**Our Curriculum**

Curriculum

Curriculum at Nest includes the child-initiated and teacher-directed activities and experiences offered to young children that support and enrich their development physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. **Nest uses the High Scope Curriculum as guides for planning the curriculum in each of its program rooms.**

Each classroom has weekly lesson plans, posted in the classroom. These plans contain a number of activities, designed to foster each child’s development, and the development of the group as a whole. Lesson plans should be changed in order to accommodate the children’s changing interests.

Each classroom is set-up in learning centers, which include blocks, dramatic play, books, gross motor, fine motor, and art. Outdoor play is important to a child’s physical development and must be included in both the morning and afternoon schedule. Self- selection or “free-play” is a daily part of the curriculum and means a child has the opportunity to choose which center or activity he/she participates in. This promotes creative expression and development of important social skills.

Daily Schedule and Activities

The Lead Teacher and Teacher work cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child’s developmental abilities and needs. Every staff member is responsible for carrying out the schedule and activities. The daily schedule and activities create a balance between active and quiet times; large and small group, and individual activities; small and large muscle activities; indoor and outdoor play times; as well as times for self-selection and teacher-directed activities.

Consistency from day-to-day is particularly important to the overall well-being of the children and classroom environment. **Children thrive on consistency!** Routines should be maintained whenever possible for arrivals and departures; meals and snacks; resting or nap times; personal care routines like diapering/toileting and hand washing; and transitions.

**Lesson plans and the daily schedule must be posted in the classroom and visible at all times.**

Activities / Environment

**We value comfortable, inviting, rich environments which welcome children to explore, create or relax as they need.**Classrooms should be kept clean, attractive and well organized so that children can actively participate in choosing their own activities as well as maintaining the environment. Each classroom (within developmentally appropriate guidelines) shall have the following components always present:

* Cozy, soft elements throughout the room with a *specific area designed for comfortable ‘quiet’ resting/play.* Generally, this is combined with a book area. Books should be rotated on a regular basis and include picture books, non-fiction (ie. science, nature, family, community), wordless books, books with rhymes, alphabet books, and books in the children’s home languages.
* Private area for one or two children to play undisturbed.
* Self-help writing / art center, as age appropriate.
* Interactive science ‘table’ activity.
* Routine care areas set up to facilitate adult child connections.
* Sensory tub/activity, dramatic play area and art activity.
* Music and instruments including small and large manipulatives including a block area with a variety of props – dolls, animals, cars, furniture, puzzles.
* Reflection of diversity and anti-biased curriculum, as age appropriate.
* Parents should be heartily encouraged to share foods, traditions, projects, songs, interests, photos or other items.
* Supplemental activities like field trips, visitors, joint class projects are incorporated into the regular tapestry of each class as well. This may range from an infant accompanying his/her teacher to the office, to sister preschool classes harvesting garden vegetables for the Institute. Your fellow teachers are the *best* resources for brainstorming ideas and building on old favorites.

Lesson Plans

**Lesson plans are worked each week during daily planning sessions for the upcoming week**. Lesson plans should be approved and posted by Monday morning on your classroom parent board. These should note specific plans including art, sensory, music, cooking projects, special stories read, field trips, outside activities, etc. for that day/week. The Lead Teacher is responsible to give completed lesson plans to a parent at the end of each week for signature for the upcoming week.

Style of Interaction / Guidance

Interactions between teachers and children are the fundamental basis for nurturing care and positive learning experiences. **Respect and concern for the well-being of children in our care is shown through our actions as well as our speech.** The Nest Child Care and Parent Institute considers the quality of teacher/child interaction to be one of the most important aspects in caring for children. In order to maintain safety and proper supervision, teachers should always position themselves and direct teaching assistants to ensure that all of the children can be seen *and heard* at all times.

Free Play

“Free-play” (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) must be incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. Teachers are expected to actively participate with the children during free play activities by asking questions about what the children are doing, participating in their pretend play, reading books when prompted, encouraging children to try new activities or play with a new toy, etc.

Nap/Rest Time

**The Michigan Department of Human Services requires that all children be provided a regularly scheduled nap or rest time.** Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to lie quietly for a period of time. The length of time a child should have to remain resting varies by child. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the maximum amount of time a child should have to remain resting. Children should be provided alternative quiet activities if unable to rest.

Multimedia

The use of media is not allowed in the classrooms unless it is incorporated in the lesson plan and approved by the Director. This includes cell phones.

Weapons/Violent Play

**There is a strict policy of allowing no weapon play at Nest.** Children are not permitted to play with weapons of any type or size or to pretend that other items are weapons, including their fingers, hands, or blocks. Redirection should be used when a child is engaging in weapon or violent play. If a child brings a weapon to Nest, the weapon should be placed out of sight and sent home the same day with a note explaining the policy about weapons.

**Competitive behavior is minimized in our programs. In young children, competition often increases negative behavior and decreases acceptance of others.** Bullying is not considered acceptable behavior; all efforts will be made to guide children in finding appropriate ways to interact with others.

Pets & Visiting Animals

Staff may introduce a class pet to the classroom. Pets and visiting animals that are brought into the classroom must be carefully considered for their temperament, health risks, and appropriateness for young children. **No animal may be brought into Nest without first notifying and receiving permission from the Executive Director.** Once approved by the Executive Director, pets and visiting animals must have documentation from a licensed veterinarian or animal shelter to show that the animal(s) is fully immunized and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.

Assessment and Monitoring Methods

Teachers learn about each child through screenings, observations, assessments, parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and through spending individualized time with each child. The knowledge gained from these experiences is shared with families and used to individualize the program for each child. **Our Child Care and Parent Institutes uses Brigance Developmental Screening, Ages and Stages (ASQ), and work-sampling. Brigance and ASQ screenings are used to provide snapshots of a child’s development at any given time while work-sampling is used to monitor and assess each child’s ongoing progress.**

Work sampling is based on teachers’ observations of children at work in the classroom learning, solving problems, interacting, and creating products. Samples of the child’s work overtime are gathered in a portfolio, along with photographs and anecdotes captured by the teaching staff to chronicle the child’s progress.

Work sampling is a curriculum-embedded assessment, rather than an “on demand” set of tests. Instead of providing a mere snapshot of narrow academic skills at a single point in time, work sampling is an ongoing documentation and evaluation process designed to improve both the teacher’s instructional practices and the student’s learning. At least twice per year (usually coinciding with the parent-teacher conferences), our teachers share the work with the parents and review a work-sampling family report to provide the family with a sense of the child’s developmental attainment. Teachers in each classroom give the “completed” portfolio to parents when a child transitions to the next classroom, and the new teachers begin a new portfolio on the child.

Our programs also use COR Advantage. COR Advantage is an observation-based assessment instrument for children from birth through kindergarten. It is designed to measure children’s progress in all early childhood programs. It is divided into 8 major categories that are critical for school success. Teaching staff collect anecdotes for completing the COR during the normal daily routine, so the assessment process is seamlessly integrated with early childhood teaching and planning. The results provide detailed reports that analyze progress towards goals and developmental milestones. Along with a completed work-sampling portfolio these reports are shared with the family to provide a sense of the child’s total development.

**HeadStart/GSRP:** Children enrolled in these programs are assessed with ASQ once at the beginning of the year typically during enrollment. COR Advantage is used throughout the program year to measure children’s progress.

Transitions

Transitions between different aged classrooms are very important at our centers. Not only are children growing up and getting ready for the next level of programming (moving from an infant room to a toddler room, for example), but they are also preparing to meet exciting changes as they move. **Transitions often mean that children begin to interact with new teachers, move to a new physical environment, and meet new friends.** We know this is a very big change in a small person’s daily routine, so we handle room-to-room transitions thoughtfully.

When it is time for a transition, our teachers consult with parents and directors to ensure the best and most appropriate fit for each child. The directors sometimes make additional recommendations based on a child’s birth date and the available space in different classrooms.

Children are prepared prior to the transitions taking place through visits to the new group over the course of several weeks; these visits grow in small increments of time. **Children make transitions individually as well as in groups based on the developmental needs of the child.** Parents are an integral part of the transition process; as such, parent requests for a particular classroom and/or primary caregiver will be honored whenever possible.

Special Needs

At least 10% of the children enrolled in Early Head Start have been diagnosed with a disability. **Through the screenings, assessments and observations we perform, children are sometimes found to have a need for further evaluations with a specialist trained to evaluate children in the area of concern such as oral language/speech or motor/movement skills.** If your child is found to have a need for an evaluation, you will be informed immediately and you will be asked to give written permission for further evaluation. The Teacher will work with you throughout the process to be sure all of yours and your child’s needs are met and you are aware of your rights every step of the way.

Fields Trips

Field trips are an integral part of your child’s experience at our centers. **You will be notified by the classroom teachers in advance of any field trip your child takes and you will be asked to sign a field trip permission slip.** Parents are welcomed and encouraged to attend any of our center’s field trips.

**Parent/Teacher Communication and Relationships**

Our Nest Child Care and Parent Institutes are designed to provide children with a positive developmental experience that enhances and supports, but does not supplant, the family in fostering child growth and development. Therefore, we strongly encourage good communication between parents and staff**. It is important for parents and staff to share information about those things which may have an impact on the child’s day or evening.** When possible, it is best for parents to communicate directly with the child’s teacher or with the center’s Executive Director.

Parents may expect communication from the center in any of the following ways:

* Many classrooms will utilize HiMama! to highlight center activities and useful family information.
* Our website contains center information, a center calendar, downloads and information about your child’s classroom.
* Our social media presence (Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest) provides families with photographs and timely information about early learning and events that are relevant to followers.
* A white board by the front entrance posts upcoming events and items to take note of.
* Parent-teacher conferences are held at least twice per year for families to talk in-depth with staff about their child’s development. Additional conferences may be requested as needed.

Confidentiality

At the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute, parents and families are encouraged to share information regarding their child’s day-to- day activities, as well as any situations or experiences the child may be having that are new, stressful, fun, or exciting. **Many times, families share important, but PRIVATE information with staff for the benefit of their child. Staff members are expected not to divulge any information regarding a child to anyone but that child’s parents.** This means that staff members do not discuss confidential information regarding children with other staff members (unless it directly concerns another staff member’s care of that child), release or discuss any family information volunteered by parents, or discuss any child or family outside of the center. In essence, nothing you tell us can be discussed with anyone outside the agency unless we ask your permission. We expect that families will also respect the rights of others in this manner when visiting the center and attending program activities. This may include child to child conversations, behaviors, as well as staff and family information.

Parent Council

**All families are welcome to be active members of the Nest’s Parent Council when their child enters school.** This group meets quarterly and is an integral part of the operation of the Center. The Parent Council is involved in the decision-making process, including reviewing policies and procedures, sponsoring fundraisers, social gatherings, parent education meetings.

Parent Board

Maintain a neat, attractive parent board with posted daily schedule, weekly activity sheet, notices of upcoming center events and classroom and center newsletter.

Orienting New Families

Every effort is made to ensure a smooth transition as a child enters a classroom, whether they are new to the program or currently enrolled. Repeated visits to the new room, written and verbal communication with the parents, ‘personal information sheets’, Infant and Toddler Family Information Needs and Services Plans and intake interviews are all designed to take away some of the unknown elements in this change and help the child and family become familiar with their new class. Remember, oftentimes parents need as much, if not more, reassurance than the child throughout this process.

Visiting the New Classroom

All families are strongly encouraged to visit their new class prior to the child’s first day of enrollment. If children move within the Center, their current teachers will take the child for a visit or two to their new class; parents also accompany their child on visits to the new class. These visits should take place in the two weeks prior to the move. The child may choose a new cubby during one of these visits. Visiting parents are asked to save questions for the Program Coordinator and for their intake conference rather than trying to talk to the teachers during visitations.

Intake Conference

Prior to meeting with the parents, please *review the child’s file (if continuing from within the Center)* and *read the Child Information Sheet or Needs and Service Plan*. Please ask parents to complete a new Child Information Card whenever changing classes. Ask parents to bring extra clothes to this meeting. Use the time to briefly explain the classroom (schedule, general activities, goals for children) and answer parents’ questions. To learn about their child and family goals for the center, work with families to complete Intake Conference document. Ask, *“what should I know about your child and family so that I can better meet your child’s needs?”* Express your willingness to work *with* the parent in the best interest of their child and invite parent to visit as frequently as they would like. Use the Parent Handbook to familiarize the parents with necessary forms including medicine permission, late notice, accident reports, infant daily reports, special health care needs plan and policies, etc.

Parent Handbooks are given to each family when they enroll. Please familiarize yourself with your copy of the parent handbook. It is helpful to refer to this handbook when you need to discuss a policy issue with a family and to answer family questions.

Parent Conferences

After the intake conference, two parent conferences are held each year. In the fall, Lead Teachers meet with parents during regular hours; eight hours of teacher assistant sub time is given so that most conferences can be conducted during class time with the remainder scheduled during prep time. The spring conferences are held on an all-school closure day during Spring Break. **Generally this is your opportunity to share some of the special qualities you enjoy in each child, review the child’s developmental assessment, encourage the parents to share any concerns or questions they may have and to help you gain an insight into their home life (bedtime routines, discipline, relationships).** Any serious issues should be addressed in meetings with the parents *as the issue arises* and are not ‘saved’ for regular conference times. A parent teacher conference record is to be completed by the classroom Lead Teacher within one week of the conference (see forms). The original is given to the Program Coordinator and will be reviewed then returned for the child’s portfolio. The Program Coordinator is always happy to meet with you about any problem that arises with a child.

**HeadStart/GSRP:** Children enrolled in these programs will have two home visits and two family conferences per school year. These may be held virtually depending on the ongoing safety & health concerns within the State of Michigan.

Parent Participation

Parent participation is considered critical at our centers. Our centers are a parent cooperative organization, which means parents participate in the governance and upkeep of the center. While we understand that each family is pressed for time, we also know that a close relationship between the center and the family results in better care and continuity for the children. Our programs could not exist without tremendous parent involvement and interest in the program. Parents are the most important participants in the program just as they are the first and most important teacher of their child. Thanks to all parents who lend their strength to the program.

Parents have the right to make decisions about the operation of the program through:

* Becoming active at your center.
* Talking with other parents and staff about the program and ways that each person can help.
* Early Head Start/GSRP parents can support and assist their Policy Council Representatives with center information and concerns or actually serving as a Policy Council Representative.
* Using the suggestion box to share ideas or thoughts about the program.

Parent participation in the program:

* Gives you an understanding of what the program is doing for your children and how you can help.
* Shows your child that you care about school.
* Gives the staff an opportunity to know you better and learn from you and from them.

Parents may help in developing their own activities:

* In response to specific needs expressed by parents.
* To create awareness of community problems of common concern, (for example, housing, recreation, health, etc.).
* Donate books, toys, art project materials, or nutritional snacks. Such donations are tax deductible. Please see the Executive Director for more information.

Parents may also request assistance from staff in implementing fun educational activities in their own homes. Staff members will help parents with skills they need to keep the program “ongoing” at home.

Cooperative Problem Solving

Occasionally families have suggestions for improvement or questions about center program and policies. Our centers always encourage open communication between its staff and families. **If an issue arises that needs clarification or information, working together is important.** Options for solving problems include any one or a combination of the suggestions below.

* Families should attempt to clarify facts and/or concerns with the teaching staff directly, in person, on the phone, or via e-mail. A private conference can be scheduled with prior notice.
* The Executive Director is available to discuss issues with parents, particularly ones involving policies, fees, and center procedures.
* Our centers are licensed by the State of Michigan through the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Child and Adult Licensing. Families can initiate an investigative process by contacting a licensing consultant within that department.

A meeting with the staff and parent to discuss the issue and explore solutions, which may involve, but are not limited to:

* Monitoring the situation
* Teacher training
* Disciplinary action

Events

There are many informal social gatherings that allow children, parents and teachers to enjoy one another’s company in different settings.

**Parent Acknowledgement**

*Please note that the policies and procedures in this handbook are subject to revision as deemed necessary by the Nest Child Care and Parent Institute.*

**“I HAVE READ AND I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND POLICIES OF NEST CHILD CARE AND PARENT INSTITUTE AS SPECIFIED IN THE PARENT HANDBOOK.”**

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to the Tuition and Fee Policy for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to the Discipline and Guidance Strategies for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to the Medical Policy for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to the Assessment Policy for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute. I will complete an Ages and Stages Questionnaire on a yearly basis, provided by Nest.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I have read and agree to the Special Needs Policy for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute. I will seek assistance for my child if concerns of cognitive/social/emotional needs arise. Nest will work with me as a team and provide support and resources.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for Nest Child Care and Parent Institute to use photographs/videos of my child for advertising, training and education purposes, and to be put on HiMama!, social media platforms and company website.

Please sign below and return this form prior to enrollment.

CHILD’S NAME(S): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*(Mother or Legal Guardian)*

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *(Father or Legal Guardian)*

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 *(Owner or Director Child Care and Parent Institute)*