



# Parent Handbook

Revised December 2021

LaRee Jessop

Director

Khristina Hanchett

Assistant Director



Table of Contents	
Timeline	<b>6</b>
Mission Statement	<b>6</b>
Philosophy	<b>6</b>
General Center Information	<b>7</b>
Administration	7
Hours of Operation	7
Programs	7
Ratios	7
Licensing	8
5 Stars to Quality	8
Tuition and Payments:	8
State Funding and SELC Rates:	8
Weather-Related Closings	8
Dismissal Guidelines	8
Updating Enrollment Records	9
Confidentiality	9
Curriculum	<b>9</b>
Daily Schedule and Activities	10
Free Play	10
Outdoor Play	10
Nap/Rest Time	10
Multimedia	11
Webcasting	11
Photographs	11
Toothbrushing	11
Weapons/Violent Play	11
Pets and Visiting Animals	12
Assessments	<b>12</b>
Parent Teacher Conferences	12

Assessment Portfolios	12
Field Trips	<b>12</b>
Rules Related to Transportation	12
Meals and Snacks	<b>13</b>
Food from Home	13
Food Allergy Action Plan	14
Infant, Toddler and Two-Year-Old Program Information	<b>14</b>
SIDS	14
Clothing and Items from Home	<b>14</b>
Play Clothes	14
Items from Home	15
Arrival and Departure	<b>15</b>
Arrival	15
Departure	15
Attendance	16
Health and Safety Policies	<b>16</b>
Illness	16
Notice of Exposure and Reporting Disease	17
Covid-19	17
Head Lice	18
Hand Washing	18
Medications	19
Immunization Records	19
Documentation of Accident/Incidents	19
Documentation of Health Incidents	19
Documentation of Allergies	20
Documentation of Special Health Care Needs	20
Emergency Medical/Dental Procedure	20
Transportation	20
Sunscreen	21

Pets and Visiting Animals	21
Cloth Diapers	21
Mandatory Child Abuse Reporters	21
Non-Discrimination Policy	22
Tobacco Use	22
Access Policy	22
Affidavit Policy	23
<b>Guidance Strategies</b>	<b>23</b>
Reasons for Misbehavior	24
Preventing Misbehavior	24
Responding to Misbehavior	24
Useful Phrases	25
<b>Biting Policy</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Home and School Partnership</b>	<b>27</b>
New Family Orientation	27
Daily Sheets	27
Communication	27
Open Door Policy	28
Room Transitions	28
Transition into SELC/ Transition out of SELC	28
Parent Participation	29
Parent-Teacher Conferences	29
Program Evaluations	29
Questions/Concerns	29
<b>Enrollment</b>	<b>29</b>
Part-Time Enrollment	29
Multiple Child Discount	30
Late Pick-Up Fee	30
Returned Checks/Insufficient Funds	30
Delinquent Accounts	30

Abuse/ Neglect Policy	30
<b>Emergency Procedures</b>	<b>31</b>
Emergency Medical/Dental Procedure	31
Emergency Preparedness	31
Blizzard/Severe Weather	32
Reunification	32
Missing or Abducted Child	32
Power Failure	33
Weapons	33
<b>Parent Code of Conduct</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Community Resources</b>	<b>36</b>
Food Pantries	36
Rent and Utility Assistance	36
Clothing and Furniture	36
Subsidized Housing	36
Counseling and Support Programs	36
Medical Resources	37
Child Care Services	37
Employment Assistance	37
Adult Education	38

This handbook is intended to familiarize families with current Sapphire Early Learning Center policy, practices, and standards. Electronic copies (PDF) of the handbook are available on our website at [www.sapphireearlylearningcenter.com](http://www.sapphireearlylearningcenter.com). Print copies are available upon request. Sapphire Early Learning Center reserves the right to revise its policies, practices and standards as deemed appropriate by the Director. Families will be notified of updates to the handbook.

## Timeline of SELC

- June 2020: During pandemic-induced uncertainty, the congregations focus on its Strength and Rock and enthusiastically approve a massive facility expansion and commitment to families of Bitterroot Valley with Sapphire Early Learning Center (SELC).
- Fall 2021: SELC and congregation volunteers' partner with teachers, families, and students to provide distance learning facilitation and after-school programming.
- February 2021: Construction begins.
- September 2021: SELC opens its doors to young learner

## Mission Statement

At Sapphire Early Learning Center, we believe in the value and uniqueness of each child we serve. Our childcare experience is designed to promote each child's own individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development.

As caregivers and educators, our mission is to provide a safe and developmentally appropriate learning environment, which fosters a child's natural desire to explore, discover, create, and become a lifelong learner.

## Philosophy

Our program is built around the concept that children are born ready to learn. As caregivers, we strive to create a learning environment that is safe, stimulating and encouraging. The following principles are excerpted from the Montana Learning Standards (2006) and serve as the foundation for our curriculum.

- Children develop an awareness of and appreciation for the similarities and differences between themselves and others.
- Children develop imagination, inventiveness, originality, and interest as they explore and experience new things.
- Children develop skills to interact and communicate with others in effective ways.
- Children use all the senses to explore the environment and develop skills through sight, smell, touch, taste, and sound.
- Children develop an understanding that each place has its own unique characteristics. Children develop an understanding of how they are affected by- and the effect that they can have upon- the world around them.
- Learning begins in the family, continues in early care and education settings, and depends on parent involvement and caregiver guidance.
- All children have the potential to achieve the Montana Early Learning Standards with appropriate support and instruction.

# General Center Information

## Administration

**Director: LaRee Jessop**  
director@bitterrooteearlylearningcenter.com  
Office: (406) 625-2660

**Assistant Director: Khristina Hanchett**  
assistantdirector@sapphireearlylearningcenter.com  
Office: (406) 625-2660

## Hours of Operation

Sapphire Early Learning Center is open Monday through Friday from 7:00am to 5:30pm. The center is closed for the following holidays:

- April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Easter Weekend
- May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 - Memorial Day
- July 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 2022 – Independence Day and Summer Break
- September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Labor Day
- October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Closed from 12pm-5:30pm. (Parent Teacher Conferences)
- October 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 – Closed for Professional Development Days
- November 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Thanksgiving Break
- December 26<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2022 – Winter Break
- SELC closes at 5:00PM the second Tuesday of every month for staff meetings

## Programs

There are 6 childcare programs offered at Sapphire Early Learning Center. They are,

- |                    |                        |             |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------|
| • Infants          | 6 weeks to 12 months   | 8 children  |
| • Junior Toddler   | 12 months to 24 months | 8 children  |
| • Senior Toddler   | 24 months to 36 months | 8 children  |
| • Junior Preschool | 2 years to 3 years     | 8 children  |
| • Senior Preschool | 4 years to 5 years     | 10 children |
| • School Age       | 5 years to 12 years    | 20 children |

In addition, Sapphire Early Learning Center provides half-day preschool to children 3 years old to 5 years.

## Ratios

At Sapphire Early Learning Center, we maintain the following staff-to-child ratios in our classrooms:

**Age of Children                      Minimum Ratio of Staff to Children**

2 weeks to 2 years	1 staff for every 4 children
2 years	1 staff for every 8 children
3 years	1 staff for every 8 children
4 years	1 staff for every 10 children

### Licensing

Sapphire Early Learning Center is a public program voluntarily licensed to serve 83 children by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. A copy of the licensing rules are available for review in the office, and on the web at [www.dphhs.mt.gov/qad/Licensure/LBCCL.aspx](http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/qad/Licensure/LBCCL.aspx)

### 5 Stars to Quality

Sapphire Early Learning Center is a participant in the Stars to Quality Rating Scale. To learn more about this please visit [www.dphhs.gov/hcsd/ChildCare/STARS.aspx](http://www.dphhs.gov/hcsd/ChildCare/STARS.aspx)

### Tuition and Payments:

Tuition will be posted each Monday and due each Friday. Tuition rates in this contract may be modified upon SELC giving the parents **one month written notice**. Because our costs remain constant, there is **no rebate for absence** due to illness, holidays, vacations, or other causes. SELC will not refund any tuition. The enclosed tuition rate sheet is a complete list of the basic and optional services we offer and the rates for these services as of this date.

Billing is performed electronically. **Please provide the email(s) through which you wish to receive billing information.**

### State Funding and SELC Rates:

If your childcare is paid for by the state and there is a difference in Sapphire Early Learning Center Inc.'s fees and the state's funding rate for your child, you are required to pay the difference. You are also required to pay any other necessary fees charged by Sapphire Early Learning Center Inc. that the state does not cover. Your balance after scholarship payment has been made will be due 7 days after payment is received.

### Weather-Related Closings

Sapphire Early Learning Center will remain open during the most severe weather. The Director and/or Assistant Director will monitor the weather and local news stations to determine when it is appropriate to close the center early or cancel care for the following day.

If Sapphire Early Learning Center closes early or cancels care for the following day, parents will be contacted and informed of the situation. Children should be picked up in a reasonable amount of time to ensure all parents, children, and staff can travel safely home.

### Dismissal Guidelines

- 1) Nonpayment of tuition for 2 weeks or more will result in termination until payment is received.
- 2) Any parent or child that causes harm or threatens the safety, health, and or well being of a staff member or another child will result in termination of care.
- 3) Any parent or child that has reckless disregard for the policies of the center and the state agencies that govern child care providers and/or cause undue stress to center staff or operations will result in termination of care.



- 4) If the center cannot meet the physical, mental, or emotional needs of the child it will result in termination of care.

## Updating Enrollment Records

Each fall, Sapphire Early Learning Center completes an audit of enrollment records. At the conclusion of this audit, families will be notified if anything needs to be updated. Some forms must be updated every year, including the Emergency Contact and Medical Consent form.

Other records must be updated throughout the year, such as immunizations records. When visiting your child's physician for a yearly "well-child" appointment, please request a copy of your child's most recent immunization record. You may bring these items in yourself or have your physician fax them to us at 406-961-6800.

In addition, anytime a family's information changes, such as address, place of employment or health insurance provider, a new Emergency Contact and Medical Consent form must be completed.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality is a top priority for Sapphire Early Learning Center. All personal information about families' financial circumstances, family problems, health problems, and/or actions of parents or children is confidential. Primarily, only the director has access to the children's files. Files are considered property of the center and the director has the responsibility for the security of them. The bureau of licensing does check a random sampling of the files to ensure that they contain all the information that is required by its agency. Neither the director nor the employees will release or discuss any information to a third party without written permission from a parent. Employees will not disclose or knowingly permit the disclosure of any information concerning the child or their family, directly or indirectly, to any unauthorized person. Though the state requires that we keep certain documentation for several years, you may request any and all paperwork that you have provided to us back when you feel our services are no longer needed. A copy will be made of papers the state may require us to keep.

## Curriculum

Curriculum at Sapphire Early Learning Center 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. Sapphire Early Learning Center uses the play-based curriculum and the project approach. Each classroom has weekly lesson plans, posted in the classroom. These plans contain several activities, designed to foster each child's development, and the development of the group. Lesson plans may be changed in order to accommodate the children's changing interests.

Each classroom is set up in centers, which includes 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 can choose which center or activity he/she participates in. This promotes creative expression and development of important social skills.

## Daily Schedule and Activities

The classroom teachers work cooperatively to create a daily schedule and plan activities that meet each child's developmental abilities and needs. 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 will 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.

## Free Play

"Free-play" (also called child-initiated activities, free choice, self-selection) activities are incorporated into the morning and afternoon schedule. During free-play, teachers actively participate with the children 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. Free play is another opportunity for a child to grow socially and cognitively through the development of relationships.

## Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is incorporated into the daily schedule for both the morning and afternoon. There is less structure in an outdoor learning environment; however, 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 can choose their friends and who to interact with.

Children will go outside year-round, including winter. Only during extreme weather conditions will the children remain indoors. It is important for parents to send their children in appropriate clothing and outerwear for the weather conditions (e.g., coat, snow pants, boots, gloves, etc.). Please clearly label all articles of clothing with your child's name. Sapphire Early Learning Center has a few extra hats and mittens, but not enough for every child. If a child is not dressed appropriately for the weather, he or she may have to remain inside. Please ask your child's teacher if you have any questions about weather-appropriate clothing.

## Nap/Rest Time

The Montana Department of Health and Human Services requires that all children must be provided a regularly scheduled nap or resting time. Children will not be forced to sleep but may be encouraged to lie quietly for a period. 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 will be provided alternative quiet activities if unable to rest.

Children are encouraged to bring a familiar item from home to use during nap/rest time, such as a small blanket or stuffed animal. These items will be stored in your child's cubby or on his/her cot or mat; there

is limited space for storage of such items. Please take this into consideration when deciding which items to bring. All items should be clearly labeled with your child's name, as all class laundry is washed weekly.

## Multimedia

The use of multimedia in our program is an extension of the teaching and learning that takes place in our classrooms. Teachers may select movie, television, and computer game titles based upon weekly themes. Children are not required to view part or all of a video, or to play computer games. Instead, the activity is offered as one of several centers. All multimedia must have a rating of "PG" or "G" and must possess an educational theme. Children are limited to a specified amount of time per week they may use or view multimedia.

## Webcasting

SELC utilizes the webcasting services of Watch Me Grow, thereby utilizing live video, recordings, and/or audio of my child while in the center for observation/security purposes. Any parent of an enrolled child can register for an account to be approved by SELC management. Any relative of an enrolled child can register for an account to be approved by the parent. The quality of viewing depends on your personal internet connection speed. Watch Me Grow can be accessed by any internet connected device. SELC maintains a 30-day log, with sound, of all classrooms. By choosing to opt into this program, an extra fee of \$20 per family will be added to your account.

## Photographs

We do take pictures of the children and sometimes we may even video them. These pictures are to be used by the children to connect with their environment. The pictures might be on bulletin boards within the center or used in learning projects. We also use the pictures on our social media pages and website. The pictures will not be published or used for advertisement without the written consent of all parties. You will have an option on your enrollment paperwork to decline the use of your child's photograph.

## Toothbrushing

Sapphire Early Learning Center will provide a toothbrush for each child. At least once a day, all children will practice brushing their teeth after a meal. A toothbrush will be discarded immediately if contaminated. All toothbrushes are replaced on the first of the month. Toothpaste will not be used with the children.

## Weapons/Violent Play

There is a strict policy of allowing no weapon play at Sapphire Early Learning Center. 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 Sapphire Early Learning Center, 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 and 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 Sapphire Early Learning Center without first notifying and receiving permission from the Director and/or Assistant Director. Once approved, 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.

## Assessments

The ASQ, Ages and Stages Questionnaire, is the assessment tool used by the programs to evaluate and track each child's individual development during their time at Sapphire Early Learning Center. It is an ongoing assessment system, meaning that teachers are continually watching, observing, and documenting each child's development. The same tool is used from birth through kindergarten, to allow a more complete picture of your child's development. By tracking a child's development, our teachers can plan activities that are appropriate for each child's developmental abilities.

## Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher conferences will typically be held twice per year. The goal of the conference is to gain insight into your child's development both in the center setting as well as the home setting. During conferences, your child's development, and any goals you may have for your child will be discussed. Parents are encouraged to request conferences whenever they feel it necessary.

## Assessment Portfolios

A permanent assessment portfolio will be kept for each child and passed to the next teacher when a child transitions to the next classroom. Assessment portfolios will contain a variety of items, including photographs, examples of artwork, assessment profiles, and parent-teacher conference forms. Portfolios may be periodically taken home by families but should be returned promptly. When a child leaves Sapphire Early Learning Center, the assessment portfolio will be given to the family.

## Field Trips

Sapphire Early Learning Center offers a variety of experiences, both at and away from the center. As a participant in our childcare program, your child may participate in short, unannounced field trips including but not limited to walks as a class around the perimeter of the building and/or nearby neighborhoods, trips to local playgrounds and/or trips to local businesses.

Teacher-child ratios are always maintained. A "Parent/Guardian Permission" form must be completed at the time of enrollment for this type of field trip.

## Rules Related to Transportation

- Children are not allowed to sit in the front seat under any circumstances
- Children under the age of six riding in a car or passenger van must be properly buckled in a federally approved car seat or booster seat. Older children and adults must be properly buckled in a seat belt.

- Doors should remain locked when the vehicle is moving.
- Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products is forbidden when transporting children.
- Children shall enter and leave the vehicle curbside unless the vehicle is in a protected area or driveway.
- Head counts shall be taken before leaving the center, after entering the vehicle, during a field trip, after taking children to the restroom, after returning to the vehicle, and upon returning to the center.
- When children leave the vehicle, the vehicle shall be inspected to ensure no children are left in the vehicle. Sapphire Early Learning Center has a fifteen -passenger van available for transportation to and from field trips. Staff members who operate the van must have a valid license. Individuals who volunteer to provide transportation for a Sapphire Early Learning Center event must be at least 21 and provide:
  - Proof of a valid driver’s license
  - Evidence of a safe driving record for at least 5 years, with no crashes where a citation was issued.
  - No record of substance abuse or conviction for crimes of violence or child abuse
  - No alcohol or other drugs associated with impaired ability to drive within 12 hours prior to transporting children.
  - No criminal record of crimes against or involving children, child neglect or abuse, or any crime of violence.

## Meals and Snacks

At Sapphire Early Learning Center, children are provided a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. Sapphire Early Learning Center participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and follows their nutritional guidelines. Menus will be posted on the bulletin board near the main entrance. You may request a copy to take home if you would like.

Children will be encouraged to sample all foods that are offered but will never be forced to eat. Please inform your child’s teacher if your child cannot eat a certain food or has different dietary needs (e.g. vegetarian, vegan, lactose intolerant) so a substitution can be made. For certain dietary restrictions, you may be asked to provide food from home for your child.

*“In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.”*

## Food from Home

Children are welcome to bring in special treats to celebrate a birthday or holiday. Due to various food allergies and dietary restrictions in our classrooms, we recommend supplying store-bought snacks still in the original packaging. Please check with your child’s teacher before bringing any homemade snacks.

## Food Allergy Action Plan

If your child has a food allergy, please complete a Food Allergy Action Plan form, available in the office. This form will be posted in your child's room, as well as in food preparation areas. If medication for an allergic reaction is provided, please have your physician sign the Food Allergy Plan as well.

## Infant, Toddler and Two-Year-Old Program Information

The following information is specific to the infant, toddler, and two-year-old program rooms:

- Sapphire Early Learning Center will supply diapers, wipes, diaper cream, food, and Kirkland formula. Bottles, formula (if not using Kirkland), extra clothing, pacifiers, blankets, and stuffed toys for rest time need to be supplied by parents. Please label all items with the child's name.
- Children may use pacifiers during rest time. To reduce the likelihood of spreading illness, pacifiers must be kept in a child's cubby or diaper bag during all other times of the day.
- If you are breastfeeding, please discuss with your child's teacher when your child should be fed breast milk, and when you would like to come in and feed your child.
- Breastmilk must be brought in ready to use containers. For health reasons, we are not able to store bags of frozen milk for extended periods of time.
- WE recommend that all new foods be tried at home first since a child could have an allergic reaction to foods they have not had before. Please inform your child's teachers of any new foods your child has tried.

## SIDS

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) is the unexpected, sudden death of a child under age 1 for which a cause of death cannot be identified. It is not known what causes SIDS; however, several sleeping practices have been linked to an increased risk for SIDS. Therefore, Sapphire Early Learning Center has a strict policy for infant sleep placement.

**All infants less than one year will be placed on their back to sleep.**

**Infants shall not be allowed to sleep in a car seat or swing for a period of longer than 15 minutes.**

Once a child has been placed in his or her crib for a nap, if the infant rolls from back to front-and is also able to roll from front to back- it is acceptable to leave the infant sleeping on his or her stomach. NO heavy blankets, stuffed toys, or pillows shall ever be placed in a crib. A request for alternative sleeping positions must be accompanied by a signed and dated physician note stating the reason for the request.

## Clothing and Items from Home

### Play Clothes

Please send your child to Sapphire Early Learning Center in comfortable play clothes and shoes. Play is usually active, and often messy; comfortable, washable clothes are important if your child is to participate fully in the program. Outdoor play is scheduled every day as an essential part of our planned curriculum. We expect all children to be dressed appropriately for both indoor and outdoor activities.

All children occasionally get their clothes wet and have toileting accidents. Whenever this occurs, it is best to change the child into an extra set of clothing provided by the family. Your child's teacher will request that you bring a complete change of clothing, including underwear, to be kept at school and

replenished as needed. Please be sure to clearly label all items of clothing. Let the teacher know whenever your child's clothing or other items cannot be located.

### Items from Home

Toys, stuffed animals, or other items from home may help your child feel more comfortable at school from time to time. However, it is often difficult for young children to share their special "treasures" with classmates. We ask that all items brought to Sapphire Early Learning Center from home be placed in your child's cubby shortly after arrival. Please clearly label all belongings brought from home. It is recommended that items of value, such as iPods or handheld gaming systems be left at home, due to the risk of damage or theft. Sapphire Early Learning Center is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

## Arrival and Departure

### Arrival

Parents are required to accompany their child into the center and into their child's classroom. Parents should also speak with the teacher in the classroom, if only briefly. We encourage parents to communicate with their child's teacher about their child's temperament that particular day, how he/she slept the night before, whether he/she has eaten that morning, etc. Most children go through periods of difficulty with separating from their parent(s). This is common and developmentally appropriate. Try these tips for a successful drop-off:

- Establish a regular, predictable routine. Whether you have a kiss and a hug and go, or help your child put his things in his cubby first, do it the same way every day. What often makes separating stressful for children is the uncertainty. If your child can predict what will happen, the separation will not be as difficult.
- Separate once. If you come back into the classroom again and again, it will increase your child's stress. Remember the moment of separation is the worst part of your child, so doing it more than once makes it more stressful for your child.
- Be reliable. Return when promised. Children who are picked up later than expected may have more difficulties separating. Phrase time in terms your child will understand. For example, you will be back after snack time or before nap time.

### Departure

Sapphire Early Learning Center closes at 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. If you will be late picking up your child, please provide us with as much notice as possible. Please note that there is a late fee for arriving after 5:30pm. If someone we are not familiar with is to pick up your child, it is essential that you inform your child's teacher in advance of the pick-up. This person must be listed as an authorized person on the Emergency Contact and Parent Consent forms. Remind the authorized person that they may be asked for identification such as a driver's license to ensure your child's safety. Even if the individual has picked up before, he or she may still need identification if the teacher in charge has never met him or her.

Be sure to say good-bye to your child's teacher so they know you are leaving. Once you have reunited with your child and are departing, Sapphire Early Learning Center is no longer responsible for your child. For safety reasons, please do not let your child run ahead of you inside or outside of the building. If

parents do not arrive to pick up their child from the program, staff members will first try to contact the parents.

## Attendance

Regular attendance is strongly encouraged for the benefit of the child as well as the classroom. If your child will be absent, please call the center by 9:00am so your child's teacher may make accommodations to the lesson plan.

If your child will be absent for an extended period (more than 2-3 days), the center must be notified in writing of the date the absence begins and the expected date your child will return. Enrollment will be terminated if a child is absent for a period of 2 weeks or more, and no notice has been received or contact made by the family.

## Health and Safety Policies

### Illness

Our priority at Sapphire Early Learning Center is providing a healthy, safe learning environment for all children. A child 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 of 101 or greater, until 24-hour symptoms free without fever reducing medications
- 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 for 24 hours OR the continued diarrhea is deemed not to be infectious by a licensed healthcare professional.
- Blood in stools not explainable by dietary change, medication, or hard stools.
- Vomiting. Until the child returns after the vomiting has been resolved for 24 hours or until a health care provider determines the cause 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. Until a physician determines that the symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease
- Pink eye (Conjunctivitis). Until after treatment has been initiated for 24 hours
- Scabies. Until after treatment has been completed
- Tuberculosis. Until a health care provider states that the child is on appropriate therapy and can attend childcare
- 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)
- Hand Foot and Mouth. Until all sores have dried and crusted and no fever
- Pertussis. Until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed
- Mumps. Until 9 days after onset of symptoms



- Hepatitis A. 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 accompanies another illness which requires exclusion.
- Herpes simplex, with uncontrollable drooling

A child who becomes ill while at Sapphire Early Learning Center, must be removed from the classroom to limit exposure of other children to communicable disease. An ill child will be sent to the office to wait for his/her parents to arrive. For this reason, we ask families to make every effort to pick up a sick child as soon as possible.

Sapphire Early Learning Center 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 healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious.

**Please contact Sapphire Early Learning Center at 961-0123 by 9:00am, whenever your child is ill.**

### Notice of Exposure and Reporting Disease

If your child is exposed to a communicable disease, a notice will be sent home with your child. Additionally, families who have provided an email address will receive email notifications of the illness. If your child or anyone in your household becomes ill with a communicable disease, please notify the Director immediately.

In the event a child is reported to have a communicable disease, the Director will notify the health department.

### Head Lice

At SELC it is our goal to ensure that your child does not experience any loss of learning opportunities and your family can participate in your normal day to day business should head lice become a problem in your household. Here is the procedure we follow to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of our staff and students:

1. If a student is found to have a live infestation of head lice, the parent/guardian will be notified via phone and information on head lice will be given to the parent/guardian at the time their child is picked up.
  - a. The student must be picked up promptly after notification by phone has been made.
  - b. All the child's belongings must be sent home to be thoroughly cleaned.
  - c. The affected student is not permitted to return to school until 24 hours after they have used a medicated lice shampoo treatment or until no *live* lice are present. (The 24 hours allows time for the elimination of all live lice and for nit combing to be executed thoroughly.)
  - d. It is ultimately the parent/guardian's responsibility to manage head lice by checking for live lice daily and before returning to school, as well as checking and combing out nits daily for 14 days following the first treatment.
2. Students found to have nits are permitted to remain in school. If a student is found to have nits/eggs, parent/guardians are encouraged to comb the nits out with a fine-toothed comb daily

for the following 14 days and reminded to complete the follow-up medicated shampoo treatment in 7-10 days from the first shampoo treatment

3. If a student with an active infestation of head lice has siblings enrolled at SELC, they will be checked for head lice discreetly in the office.
4. Families of the children in the affected classroom will be notified of the discovery in a confidential manner and encouraged to screen their children for lice in the privacy of their home. In addition, they will be required to take all their children's belongings home to be cleaned.
5. The classroom will be thoroughly vacuumed and all soft items such as pillows, blankets, or stuffies will be bagged for 14 days.

## Hand Washing

Frequent handwashing with soap and warm running water is the most effective way to reduce and prevent the spread of illnesses commonly found in childcares such as the flu, diarrhea, and pink eye. Parents are encouraged to assist their child in the hand washing process upon arrival. Other times your child (and staff members) will be expected to wash their hand:

- Upon arriving at the center or when changing classrooms
- After each diaper change or using the toilet
- Before and after mealtimes
- Before and after administering medication
- After handling bodily fluids (mucus, blood, vomit)
- Before and after using the sensory table
- After coming indoors from the playground
- After handling pets and other animals
- After cleaning or handling garbage

Warm, running water (no cooler than 60-degree F) and soap must be used. Hands must be rubbed vigorously for at least 20 seconds, including the backs of hands, between fingers, under nails, and under any jewelry. A disposable paper towel should be used to dry hands and turn off faucets. Help reinforce the importance of hand washing by encouraging frequent hand washing at home as well.

## Medications

Prescription and over the counter medications must be given to a staff member in the original container, clearly labeled with the child's full name and birth date. Sapphire Early Learning Center staff will not administer any medication without a signed Medication Authorization Form. Forms can be obtained from your child teacher or from the Director and/or Assistant Director.

Medications are stored in a location non-accessible to children (refrigerated medications) or in a high cabinet (non-refrigerated medications) while in use at Sapphire Early Learning Center. The Medication Authorization Form must always remain with the medication. Unused medications must be immediately returned to the family and will not be stored at Sapphire Early Learning Center. Medications are administered by Lead Teachers, the Director, or Assistant Director. When a medication is given, the teacher will document the type of medication administered, the dosage, and the time it was given.

## Immunization Records

Each child must have a current physical and immunization record on file at Sapphire Early Learning Center. Immunization records must be updated whenever a new immunization is received. Updated immunization records may be faxed to Sapphire Early Learning Center directly from your healthcare provider. Sapphire Early Learning Centers fax number is 961-0123

## Documentation of Accident/Incidents

Staff members shall document accidents and incidents that occur at Sapphire Early Learning Center using an Accident/Incident Report. Please document all biting incidents as accidents. If a biter breaks the skin of another child, an accident/incident report needs to be completed for the biter as well as the child who was bitten. Use 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 Accident/Incident reports must be given to the Director and/or Assistant Director to be placed in the child's permanent file.

## Documentation of Health Incidents

Each time a parent is contacted regarding an ill child or symptoms of illness, a Health Incident Form will be completed. A copy of the form will be given to the parent and the original to the Director and/or Assistant Director to be placed in the child's permanent file. All parents will be notified of any communicable illnesses present in the center via a sign posted on the main entrance to the center explaining the illness. In addition, parents with children in the classroom of the infected child will receive an email regarding the illness.

## Documentation of Allergies

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 a Health Incident Form.

## Documentation of Special Health Care Needs

An Emergency Care Plan will be on file for any child with special needs (seizures, etc.) A Copy of the Emergency Care Plan must be kept in the classroom emergency binder. All staff working in the classroom must familiarize themselves with his plan, should an emergency arise. If necessary, staff will receive training regarding a child's specific health care need.

It is important that parents complete and update, as needed, an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form. This form contains contact information for both parents as well as the individuals authorized to pick up the child in the event of illness or emergency. In addition, the form allows Sapphire Early Learning Center staff members to seek emergency medical or dental care from authorized care providers in the event of serious injury. **It is the responsibility of the parent to complete this form and to make corrections to this information when necessary.**

## Emergency Medical/Dental Procedure

If a child becomes ill or injured after arriving at the center, the Lead Teacher will attempt to contact the parent(s) at all available telephone numbers. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed as

emergency contacts/authorized pickup persons on the Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form, will be called.

Children who are ill or seriously injured will be sent to the office and remain under the supervision of the Director and/or Assistant Director until a parent arrives. If the child requires immediate medical attention:

- The staff member who witnessed the emergency will remain with the injured child and instruct someone else to call 911. If no one is available, they will first ensure the child is stable and if possible, bring the child with them to call 911.
- A staff member who witnessed the emergency will accompany the child to the hospital, bringing the child's physical exam, immunization records, and Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form.
- The Director or Assistant Director will contact the parent(s).

### Transportation

Sapphire Early Learning Center has a fifteen-passenger van available for transportation to and from field trips. Staff members who operate a Sapphire Early Learning Center van must have a valid driver's license. Individuals who volunteer to provide transportation for a Sapphire Early Learning Center event must be at least 21 and provide:

- Proof of valid driver's license and current insurance
- Evidence of a safe driving record for at least 5 years, with no crashes where a citation was issued.
- No record of substance abuse or conviction for crimes of violence or child abuse
- No alcohol or other drugs associated with impaired ability to drive within 12 hours prior to transporting children.
- No criminal record of crimes against or involving children, child neglect or abuse, or any crime of violence in addition, the following guidelines must be strictly adhered to when transporting children:
  - Children are not permitted to sit in the front seat of a vehicle under any circumstances.
  - Children under the age of 6 riding in a car or passenger van must be properly buckled in a federally approved car seat or booster seat. Older children and adults must be properly buckled in a seat belt.
  - Doors must remain locked when the vehicle is moving.
  - Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products is forbidden when transporting children.
  - Children shall enter and leave the vehicle curbside unless the vehicle is in a protected area or driveway.
  - Head counts shall be taken before leaving the center, after entering the vehicle, during a field trip, after taking children to the restroom, after returning to the vehicle, and upon returning to the center.
  - When children leave the vehicle, the vehicle shall be inspected to ensure no children are left inside.

## Sunscreen

Between the months of March and October, all families will be required to supply sunscreen for the child/ren for outdoor activities. A permission slip must be on file before sunscreen is applied to a child. Sunscreen must be SPF 15 or above and will be applied by classroom teachers regularly throughout the day.

## Pets and Visiting Animals

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 Sapphire Early Learning Center without first notifying and receiving permission from the director and/or assistant director. Once approved, 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.

## Cloth Diapers

Cloth diapers are permitted at Sapphire Early Learning Center. They will not be cleaned or rinsed at the facility. Families must provide a container for storage of soiled cloth diapers while at the center.

## Mandatory Child Abuse Reporters

As childcare professionals who interact with children daily, each staff member of Sapphire Early Learning Center is a Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect Reporter and must contact the Montana Department of Human Services whenever abuse or neglect is suspected.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g. Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the Agency (State or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2. Fax: (202) 690-7442; or 3. Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

## Tobacco Use

Cigarettes and smokeless tobacco products are prohibited on Sapphire Early Learning Center premises, including parking lots and outdoor play areas. Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco products is also prohibited in Sapphire Early Learning Center vehicles or in personal vehicles being used for the transportation of enrolled children, and while on field trips.

## Access Policy

Any person in the center who is not an owner, staff member, substitute, or subcontracted staff or volunteer who has had a record check and approval to be involved with childcare shall not have unrestricted access to children for whom that person is not the parent, guardian, or custodian, not be counted in the staff to child ratio. Unrestricted access means that a person has contact with a child alone or is solely responsible for childcare.

Persons who do not have unrestricted access will always be under the direct supervision and monitoring of a paid staff member and will not be allowed to assume any childcare responsibilities. The primary responsibility of the supervision and monitoring will be assumed by the Lead Teacher unless he/she delegates it to the Full Time Assistant Teacher due to a conflict of interest with the person.

Center staff will approach anyone who is on the property of the center without their knowledge to ask what their purpose is. If a staff member is unsure about the reason, the Director or Assistant Director will either approve or deny the person to be on site. If it becomes a dangerous situation, staff will follow the "Dangerous Adult" procedure. 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.

A sex offender who has been convicted of a sex offense against a minor (even if the sex offender is a parent, guardian, or custodian) and is required to register with the Montana Sex Offender Agency:

- Shall not operate, manage, be employed by, or act as a contractor or volunteer at the center.
- Shall not be on the property of the childcare center without written permission from the Director, except for the time reasonably necessary to transport the offender's own minor child to and from the center. The Director is not obligated to provide permission and must consult with their DHS licensing agent first.

## Affidavit Policy

At times families may be dealing with difficult situations at home. When legal matters are present in the home, families may need to collect affidavits for their legal team. Due to the nature of the relationship between caregiver and child, families may choose to ask a Sapphire Early Learning Center staff member to provide such a statement. Our program's priority is providing the best possible care when children are away from home and our focus will remain on the child, making sure all their needs are met during what could be a difficult time at home. Sapphire Early Learning Center staff members will not provide written statements or affidavits of a professional nature to families.

## Guidance Strategies

Every adult who cares for children has a responsibility to guide, correct and socialize children toward appropriate behaviors. These adult actions often are called child guidance and discipline. Positive guidance and discipline are crucial because they promote children's self-control, teach children responsibility, and help children make thoughtful choices. The more effective caregivers are at encouraging appropriate child behavior, the less time and effort adults will spend correcting children's misbehavior.

Effective guidance and discipline focus on the development of the child. They also preserve the child's self-esteem and dignity. Actions that insult or belittle are likely to cause children to view their caregivers negatively, which can inhibit learning and can teach the child to be unkind to others. However, actions that acknowledge the child's efforts and progress, no matter how slow or small, is likely to encourage healthy development. Teaching children self-discipline is a demanding task. It requires patience, thoughtful attention, cooperation, and a good understanding of the child. Sapphire Early Learning Center staff will use **only** positive guidance techniques.

When interacting with young children, staff should ask themselves the following questions:

"Am I..."

- Validating feelings?
- Asking open ended questions?
- Encouraging problem solving?
- Respecting children's choices?
- Using praise and positive reinforcement?
- Talking with children-not at them?
- Circulating throughout the classroom?
- At the child's eye level?

### Reasons for Misbehavior

If caregivers understand why children misbehave, they can be more successful at reducing behavior problems. Listed here are some of the possible reasons why children misbehave.

- Children want to test whether caregivers will enforce rules.
- They experience different sets of expectations between school and home.
- A child does not understand the rules or are held to expectations that are beyond their developmental levels.
- They want to assert themselves and their independence.
- They feel ill, bored, hungry, or sleepy.
- They lack accurate information and prior experience.
- They have been previously "rewarded" for their misbehavior with adult attention.

### Preventing Misbehavior

Child misbehavior is impossible to prevent completely. Children, usually curious and creative, are likely to do things parents and other caregivers have not expected. However, there are many positive steps caregivers can take to help prevent misbehavior.

- Set clear, consistent rules. (e.g., walking feet, gentle touches)
- Make certain the environment is safe and worry-free.
- Show interest in the child's activities (e.g., participating in activities with the children so they stay interested in longer periods)
- Encourage self-control and independence by providing meaningful choices (e.g., "You may pick up the blocks or art center.")
- Focus on the desired behavior, rather than the one to be avoided (e.g., "Please use gentle touches with your friends.")
- Build children's images of themselves as trustworthy, responsible, and cooperative.
- Give clear directions, one at a time.
- Say "Yes" whenever possible.
- Notice and pay attention to children when they do things right. (e.g., "Joey is playing so nicely. I like it when you keep the blocks on the table.")
- Encourage children often and generously.
- Set a good example. (e.g., using a quiet voice when children should be quiet)
- Help children see how their actions affect others.

## Responding to Misbehavior

Below are strategies Sapphire Early Learning Center staff will use to respond to child misbehavior. Remember, however, that it is always a good idea if the rules are explained fully and clearly understood before misbehavior occurs. Whenever possible, involve children in making rules for the classroom.

- **Redirection**- This strategy will be used most frequently with working with young children. If a child is not following the rules or being uncooperative, teachers will quickly get the child attention and introduce another activity. For example, "Kate, please help me water the flowers. You've been riding the bike for a long-time and now its Logan's turn."
- **Logical Consequences**- These are structured consequences that follow specific misbehaviors. The child should be able to see how the behavior and the consequence are related. For example, Andrew is standing on his chair at lunch. His teacher will remind him that if he stands on his chair, he could fall and get hurt; this will make him sad.
- **Participate in the solution**- If a child damages something, he/she needs to help in fixing it or cleaning it up. If a child causes someone distress, he/she should help in relieving that. For example, "It made Brandon sad when you told him he wasn't your friend anymore. Please apologize and help me make him feel better."
- **Natural Consequences**- Allowing children to experience the consequences of their behavior is also called learning the hard way. For example, Laura does not put her books back in her school bag after she finishes reading. One day she loses a book, and therefore must find a way to replace it. We will only use natural consequences when they will not endanger the child's health or safety.
- **"Take a break" or "Calm down chair"**- In some instances, a child may need to be removed from a situation in which he/she has become overwhelmed or violent. The child should be directed to "take a break" or sit in the "calm down chair". This strategy gives the child a chance to calm down, regain control, and reflect quietly on her or his behavior away from others. Once the child has calmed down, staff will talk with the child about the actions that led up to and resulted in needing a break or being sent to the calm down chair. For example, "Hannah, we have talked



often about how hitting is not acceptable. But because you hit John, please leave the blocks center, and go to the calm down chair. I will talk to you when you are ready.”

If these actions do not help in reducing or changing behavior, the following will take place:

1. Staff will report behavior and what strategies have been attempted to the Director and/or Assistant Director.
2. The Director and/or Assistant Director will observe the child and meet with the Lead Teacher to develop a behavior management plan.
3. The behavior management plan will be discussed with the parent and then put into practice.
4. The Director and/or Assistant Director, Lead Teacher, Assistant Teachers, and parents will evaluate the behavior management plan. If needed, adjustments will be made.

*If a child's behavior becomes threatening to themselves, other children, staff or teachers, the child will be removed from the classroom and possibly the program for a period.*

## Useful Phrases

The following phrases are useful when problem solving with children:

<b>Instead of Say</b>	“No” or “Don’t” “Please stop”, “I don’t like that”, “That’s not ok”, or “That is not a choice”.
<b>Instead of Say</b>	“That’s not nice.” “That’s not ok”, “Please use gentle touches”, or “That hurts Jordan”.
<b>Instead of Say</b>	“No running” “I need you to use your walking feet” or “You may run when we go outside”.
<b>Instead of Say</b>	“Stop crying” “I need you to use your words and tell me what’s wrong”.
<b>Instead of Say</b>	“Can you put away your toys?” (If it is not a choice, do not pose it as a question) “You may help me pick up the blocks or help Alyssa pick up the puzzles”.
<b>Instead of Say</b>	“I said yes” (when a child tells you “no” “It is not a choice, I need you to...”

## Biting Policy

Biting is a behavior that usually appears between the ages of one and three years. While biting is an age-appropriate behavior, it is important to remember it is also an unacceptable behavior in a childcare environment. Children bite for a variety of reasons: teething, sensory exploration, cause and effect, imitation, crowding, seeking attention, frustration, and stress. Biting is not something to blame on children, their parents, or their teachers. There are a variety of strategies we implement at Sapphire Early Learning Center to prevent and stop biting. This is the process followed when a child bite:

- The biting child is stopped and told, “Stop biting. Biting hurts”, in a firm voice. Teachers should remain calm, being careful not to show anger or frustration toward the child.
- The biting child is removed from the situation. Depending upon the observed motive for the bite, the separation may include re-direction or meeting the child’s needs. As little attention as possible will be placed on the biting child to avoid reinforcing the behavior.
- Appropriate first aid will be provided to the child who was bitten. Bite will be washed with soap and water; cold compress will be applied to reduce pain and swelling. A bandage will be applied if necessary.

It is important to explore the reasons for biting when it occurs. Teachers need to work with parents to gather information about the child’s behavior and begin observations to determine the reasons for biting. Examples of triggers would be communication deficits, transitions, hunger, lack of sleep, need for oral stimulation or teething pain. Once triggers are identified, staff can work on prevention strategies and start teaching replacement skills. Below are the steps the teacher will take to identify triggers and replace the behavior:

1. The teacher will examine the context in which the biting is occurring and look for patterns. The following questions should be asked.
  - a. Was the space too crowded?
  - b. Were there too few toys?
  - c. Was there too little to do or too much waiting?
  - d. Was the child who bit getting the attention and care he/she deserved at other times?
2. The teacher will change the environment, routines, or activities if necessary.
3. The teacher will work with the child who is biting to resolve conflicts and frustrations in more appropriate ways.
4. The teacher will observe the child, to get an idea why and when they are likely to bite.
5. The teacher will identify children likely to be bitten and make special efforts to reduce their chance of being bitten.
6. The teacher, parent, and Director and/or Assistant Director will meet regularly to regulate an action plan and measure outcomes.
7. If being bitten continues, the teacher will observe the group more closely and work with the parents to seek out additional resources as necessary to shadow the child who is biting.

All information is confidential, and names of the children involved in the incident are not shared between parents. In addition, biting is always documented on an Incident/Accident Report which is completed and signed by a teacher and parent. A copy is provided to the parent and the original kept in the child’s permanent enrollment file in the office.

## Home and School Partnership

### New Family Orientation

Each family is strongly encouraged to schedule a time with the Director to complete a “New Family Orientation.” This orientation is a great time for parents to drop-off routine care items (diapers, bottles, etc.) as well as an opportunity to participate in a portion of classroom activities with their child, familiarizing themselves with their child’s routines at Sapphire Early Learning Center. Important policies

and procedures are also reviewed with the Director at this time, as well as the paperwork required for enrollment completed. Typically, “New Family Orientation” is scheduled one week prior to the start date.

### Daily Sheets

Keeping our families involved with school has always been a priority of ours. We are currently using a tool called HI MAMA. The HI MAMA program allows teachers to capture special moments, take photos, and videos of children in action as well as send classroom information. You will receive your daily reports via email.

Each classroom will be equipped with an iPad that is specifically used for the HI MAMA program.

We consider all information captured using HI MAMA to be private communication between our school and our families. No personal information is shared with any external parties and as a parent you will only receive information specifically about your child.

We will be using the email address we have on file to communicate via the HI MAMA program. Please keep us updated if this should change.

### Communication

The building of a relationship between parents and teachers is the foundation for the child’s positive experiences at the center. We encourage you to talk openly with teachers to establish this relationship. Continuity between home and SELC is essential to providing a meaningful experience for your child. It is important that you tell us about any changes or special activities in the home. The more familiar we are with your family, the more understanding, supportive and helpful we can be. Please inform teachers of ANY changes (e.g., one parent must take a trip, illness, or death in the family, moving (even a short distance), parents changing jobs, etc.) before or when they happen. Changes at home often lead to changes in behavior at the center. We can care for and work better with your child if we are aware of the changes at home. It is of utmost importance that you notify the assistant director or the director of any changes in address, phone numbers at home and at work, caregivers, or emergency phone numbers.

### Open Door Policy

SELC maintains an open-door policy. Families including extended family members (i.e. grandparents, aunts, and uncles) are welcome and invited to come in and observe any area you wish. We do ask that you use discretion and not disrupt normal activities. Just check in with the office and a staff person will accompany you.

### Room Transitions

Your child will transition to a new classroom when he/she has reached the developmental milestones for a classroom. As the time for a transition to a new room approaches, you will receive a letter containing information about your child's transition into his/her new classroom. Both your child’s current and future teacher are available to address any questions or concerns you have during the transition process.

Before the transition into a new classroom has been completed, parents are encouraged to schedule a meeting with the new teacher to familiarize themselves with the new classroom, children, and curriculum.

## Transition into SELC/ Transition out of SELC

Families considering enrolling their children are invited to visit the Center for a tour. During this tour, families learn of our approach to teaching and learning (philosophy), see our learning environments, meet our teaching staff, and have opportunities to have their questions answered. The goal of this visit is to make sure that our Center is a “good fit” to prospective families.

We will need to work together, share information that we have about the child and what support he or she needs. Transitioning into new care includes a few visits if possible, to acclimate the child to the environment, meet their caregiver(s) and peers. Additionally, days may need to be shorter to begin with, to allow children to have a positive experience, and to have as little stress placed upon them as possible. We ask that parents have some flexibility during these first days of transition and attendance.

When leaving our program to attend Kindergarten or transferring to another childcare center you will receive a survey where your input will help us improve in areas within our program. If needed to help with the transition out, we will supply any documentation needed by the new facility. Our staff will also be available as needed to communicate with new caregivers or teachers in the effort to create a smooth transition.

Our transition process is designed to build trust between the children, their teachers, and their parents. Our focus on trust builds community. Everyone helps everyone to provide an environment where our children can relax, observe, learn, and grow.

## Parent Participation

Parent participation is strongly encouraged in our program. Some possible opportunities to participate and contribute to your child’s Sapphire Early Learning Center experience:

- Field trip transportation and supervision
- Leading or assisting special projects (sewing, carpentry, cooking, etc.)
- Construction or collection of raw materials for art projects, dramatic play props, etc.
- Eating lunch or snacking with your child-please inform the teachers one day in advance.
- Volunteering in your child’s classroom

## Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher conferences will typically be held twice per year, as well as each time your child transitions classrooms. The goal of the parent-teacher conference is to gain insight into your child’s development both in the center setting as well as the home setting. During conferences, your child’s development, and any goals you may have for your child will be discussed. Parents are encouraged to request conferences whenever they feel it necessary.

## Program Evaluations

Sapphire Early Learning Center asks parents to complete a program evaluation annually. The information gathered from these anonymous surveys is used by the staff to develop goals for our center and to

improve the overall quality of care at our center. A parent's point-of-view is different from that of a teacher, therefore, parent feedback on the program evaluations is especially important to the success of our program and satisfaction for our families.

### Questions/Concerns

If you have a question or concern, do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of the teacher most directly involved. If the concern is not resolved, the Director, LaRee Jessop, can be reached at 961-013 or by email at [lareejessop@bitterrootearlylearningcenter.com](mailto:lareejessop@bitterrootearlylearningcenter.com). The Director is available to assist parents and staff in resolving concerns.

## Enrollment

Upon enrollment, and any changes to tuition, families are provided a Fee Policy and Financial Agreement. This agreement should be carefully reviewed and checked for errors.

### Multiple Child Discount

Families with two or more children enrolled full time at Sapphire Early Learning Center are eligible for a 4% discount to be applied to the total tuition.

### Late Pick-Up Fee

Sapphire Early Learning Center closes at 5:30pm, Monday through Friday. Parents will be charged \$1.00 for every 1 minutes a child is present after 5:30 pm. Teachers will record late fees for processing. The fee will be added to your payment the following day.

### Returned Checks/Insufficient Funds

All returned checks or direct debit payments rejected due to insufficient funds will be charged a \$35.00 penalty. Missed payments and late fees must be paid within 2 weeks. Repeated incidents of returned checks or insufficient funds notices could result in termination of childcare services. A payment plan should be discussed with the Director if a family is having trouble making tuition payments.

### Delinquent Accounts

Families that are more than 2 weeks behind in payments may have their childcare services terminated. For information about assistance programs that will help cover the cost of childcare tuition, please speak with the Director. A payment plan must be agreed upon between family and Center before an account will be considered "in good standing" and no longer eligible for termination.

### Abuse/ Neglect Policy

The employees of Sapphire Early Learning Center. are required legally and ethically to report child abuse in accordance with 37.95.171 of the Childcare licensing regulations. If an employee sees suspicious marks on a child or if a child says something that causes us to be suspicious, we are mandated to report this to the Child Protection Agency. Employees are not required to report to the director or any other source prior to reporting to CPS.

## Emergency Procedures

### Emergency Medical/Dental Procedure

It is important that parents complete and update, as needed, an Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form. This form contains contact information for both parents as well as the individuals authorized to pick up the child in the event of illness or emergency. In addition, the form allows Sapphire Early Learning Center staff members to seek emergency medical or dental care from authorized care providers in the event of serious injury. **It is the responsibility of the parent to complete this form and to make corrections to this information when necessary.**

- If a child becomes ill or injured after arriving at the center, the Lead Teacher will attempt to contact the parent(s) at all available telephone numbers. If a parent cannot be reached, the individuals listed as emergency contacts/authorized pick-up persons on the Emergency Contact & Parental Consent form will be called.
- Children who are ill or seriously injured will be sent to the office and remain under the supervision of the Director and/or Assistant Director until a parent arrives.

### **If the child requires immediate medical attention:**

- The staff member who witnessed the emergency will remain with the injured child and instruct someone else to call 911. If no one is available, first they will ensure the child is stable and if possible, bring the child with them to call 911.
- A staff member who witnessed the emergency will accompany the child to the hospital, bringing the child's physical exam, immunization records, and Emergency Contact and Parental Consent Form.

### Emergency Preparedness

Our childcare center's philosophy is to always keep your child(ren) safe when he/she is in our care. With recent world and local events, we have developed an emergency plan that will be put into place if special circumstances require a different type of care. Plans for these special types of care are reviewed annually. Staff is trained in the appropriate response and local emergency management is aware of these plans. The specific type of emergency will guide where and what special care will be provided.

#### SHELTER IN PLACE

This plan would be put into place in the event of a weather emergency or unsafe outside conditions or threats. In this plan, children will be cared for indoors at the center and the center may be secured or locked to restrict entry. If local authorities consider the outside air contaminated, the center will be locked and openings in doorways or windows will be sealed shut. A sign on the door will indicate "Shelter in Place" and NO PARENTS, CHILDREN, OR STAFF WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER OR EXIT THE BUILDING DURING A SHELTER IN PLACE UNTIL WE RECEIVE OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION THAT THE DANGER HAS PASSED. Any time a Shelter In Place is needed, the parent will be notified no later than at pick up time that day. Parents will be notified if they need to pick up their child before their regular time.

#### LOCK DOWN

There could be situations that may result in harm to persons inside the center, including shooting, hostage, intruder, trespassing, disturbance, or any other situation deemed harmful at the discretion of

the director or other safety personnel. In these cases, a “lockdown” procedure will be followed. In this plan, the children will be cared for inside their classroom or other designated safe location away from danger. The building will be locked, and NO PARENT, CHILD OR STAFF WILL BE ALLOWED TO ENTER OR EXIT THE BUILDING DURING THE LOCKDOWN. Any time a Lockdown is needed, the parent will be notified no later than at pick up time that day.

## FIRE

Fire drills are conducted once per month at various times of day. Should we have an actual fire, SELC will evacuate to designated spots that the SELC team has been trained to take to their classroom. The parents will be contacted through phone or text making them aware of the situation and informing them of where they can pick their child up at. Fire regulation procedures are posted near the exits in each classroom. Fire drills are conducted each month; all classrooms are required to participate.

## EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS

This plan would be put into place if it is not safe for the children to remain at the center. In this situation, staff has predetermined alternate sites for care. The choice of site is determined by the specific emergency and what would be an appropriate alternate site. In the event of an emergency located within the center, SELC will evacuate to neighbors’ homes to the North and South of the building. In the event of an emergency located outside of the center, requiring us to leave the center, we will evacuate to The Corvallis Firehall. The van plus any available employee or parent vehicle will be used to transport the children. No restraints will be used during transportation as we will need to do this quickly. The parents will be contacted through phone or text making them aware of the situation and informing them of where they can pick their child up at.

## Blizzard/Severe Weather

The Director and/or Assistant Director will monitor the weather and local news stations throughout the day to determine when it is appropriate to close the center early or cancel care for the following day. Routine classroom activities will continue until parents arrive.

## Reunification

During an emergency, children can become separated from their families. Please make every effort to list all phone numbers to contact you and your emergency contacts. Also please list any third-party persons to whom your child(ren) can be released on the Enrollment Mastercard. Please make every effort to keep all numbers and contacts current throughout the year. In the event of an actual emergency, these numbers listed are the only link between your child(ren) and you.

## Missing or Abducted Child

In the event of a *missing child*, the Lead Teacher will search for the child in the immediate area, while another staff member calls the Director and/or Assistant Director to help with the search.

- If the child cannot be found in a reasonable amount of time, the Director and/or Assistant Director will notify the **Ravalli County Police Department-911** and the child’s parents.

In the event of an *abducted child*, the Lead Teacher must **immediately** contact the Director and/or Assistant Director, the Ravalli County Police Department, and the child's parents.

### Power Failure

Staff members should remain in the classroom and if possible, proceed with activities as usual, or may go to the outdoor playground until power resumes.

If power cannot be restored within a reasonable amount of time, the center will close, and parents will be contacted.

- Activities will resume as soon as possible until parents arrive.

### Weapons

Sapphire Early Learning Center will not permit or tolerate the possession, display, or use of weapons by any person on school premises or vehicles, while the person is participating in or attending Sapphire Early Learning Center events and activities, or while the person is away from school grounds if such a conduct directly affects the good order and management of the District. Individuals who violate this policy may be subject to expulsion and/or other disciplinary action. Weapons shall be taken from individuals who bring them onto school premises, vehicles or to school activities. Violations of this section will be reported to law enforcement agencies in accordance with the law. Weapons under the control of law enforcement officials shall be exempt from this policy. The Director may allow authorized persons to display weapons for educational purposes on a limited basis.

Any object which could be used to injure another person, and which has no school-related purpose will be considered a weapon. An object which has a school-related purpose but which is used to threaten or inflict injury will also be considered a weapon. Weapons include, but are not limited to, knives of all types, guns, fireworks, explosives, or other chemicals, and simulated (including toy) weapons.

- Suspension for 3-5 days for possession of a weapon
- Suspension for 5-10 days for display of a weapon
- Suspension with recommendation for expulsion for displaying in a threatening manner or for use of a weapon to inflict harm or injury to another person or for placing others in imminent danger.

### Parent Code of Conduct

Sapphire Early Learning Center provides an open, welcoming & safe environment. We believe that all parents & staff play a vital role in the effective operation of the center & enriching the overall program. This code of conduct for our center outlines the expectations we hold for our students, staff, and families here at SELC to ensure the safety and well being of everyone we serve. "We are Safe, healthy, Kind, and Growing." These are the designated expectations for our entire center. Children, staff, and families are expected to act in a manner that exemplifies these expectations while at SELC.

**Safe:** This is our primary concern for our staff and students. All procedures and policies that are in place ensure that everyone in our center is safe. Please help us in adhering to these safety procedures by



- Checking your child in/out upon arrival/departure to ensure we have an updated list of the children in our care for that day.
- Informing staff of unexpected absences/illnesses
- Be aware of our emergency evacuation procedures and aware of your role should we need to activate them.
- Ensure that the front office has current contact information for all who are authorized to pick up your child.

**Healthy:** Our center focuses on the health of all our students, staff, and families and ask that you assist us in creating a healthy environment by participating in the following practices:

- Please assist your child in washing their hands as they enter their classroom.
- Adhering to all health and safety policies including illness, exposure, medication, immunization, documentation, and all other health policies found in your parent handbook.
- Adequately informing admin and staff of your child's special health and dietary requirements

**Kind:** Our entire staff is trained on the importance of building relationships with your children. There are many key components to those relationships, but one we primarily focus on is respect. When we treat each other (staff, teachers, students, and families) with respect we can work together to meet other goals for growth and development. Just as we expect our staff and students to be kind, we expect this of our families as well

- Be on time to pick up your child. Please be respectful of our teacher's time. They put in long hours and are ready to close up for the night at 6pm. It's important that they are able to leave on time and get the necessary rest to come back refreshed the next day.
- Please address any concerns you have with the appropriate person. If you are concerned about a situation in the classroom please practice good relationship building techniques by addressing this concern with your child's teacher. If further assistance is needed, please seek a member of the administration team. If your concern is with billing situations please contact the office. Just as we teach your child, we work through problems best with open, respectful communication and problem solving. Please do not hesitate to express your concerns, it is our goal to make sure you and your child have the most positive experience possible at SELC.
- It is expected that families will collaborate with their child's educator/s, working together to support the child in their learning and development.
- Be mindful and respectful of every family, student, and staff member at SELC. Acceptance and respect of all forms of diversity are essential to the community goals we are working towards.

**Growing:** We expect our students to try their best and make choices that will aid them in healthy growth. We encourage and model healthy choices, and we continuously assess their growth and development. You can help us meet this expectation by:

- Completing assessments on your child that we provide for you (Ages and Stages Questionnaires) in a timely manner.
- Working in partnership with the SELC team to interpret assessment results and seek the care and resources necessary to help your child succeed.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to adhere to this code of conduct and all policies contained in the SELC Parent Handbook.

---

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

---

Signature of parent/guardian

Date

## Community Resources

The following is a brief list of resources available to individuals and families living in Ravalli County.

**WIC**                                **406-375-6685**                                **205 Bedford St. Suite P Hamilton**  
Fax: 406-375-6690

### Food Pantries

<http://ravalli.us/21/Women-Infants-Children-WIC>

**Bitterroot Valley Calvary Chapel**                                **406-363-3431**                                **700 N 4<sup>th</sup> St. Hamilton**  
[http://bitterrootvalleycalvarychapel.com/th\\_event/food-bank/](http://bitterrootvalleycalvarychapel.com/th_event/food-bank/)

**Haven House Food Bank**                                **406-363-2450**                                **316 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St #162 Hamilton**

**Pantry Partners**                                **406-777-0351**                                **3614 ALC Way Stevensville**

**Salvation Army**                                **406-210-1453**                                **126 W. Main St Hamilton**

### Rent and Utility Assistance

**TANF and SNAP**                                **1-800-706-1535**                                **310 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St Hamilton**

### Clothing and Furniture

**Clothes Closet**                                **406-961-4614**                                **3862 ALC Way Stevensville**

**Ravalli Services Thrift Store**                                **406-363-3573**                                **950 N 1<sup>st</sup> St Hamilton**

**Habitat for Humanity**                                **406-375-1926**                                **131 Old Corvallis Rd Hamilton**

### Subsidized Housing

**Mountain View Apartments**                                **406-363-5787**                                **300 Stonegate Dr Hamilton**

**Section 8 Housing**                                **1-888-706-1535**                                **310 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St Hamilton**

**Valley Villas**                                **406-363-6854**                                **819 River St. Hamilton**

## Counseling and Support Programs

### Bitterroot Valley Counseling & Educational Center

406-363-3882

217 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St Hamilton

### Full Circle, Youth Case Management and Care Coordination

[www.fullcirclemhc.com](http://www.fullcirclemhc.com)

406-529-6543

112 Houk Lane Stevensville

### Riverfront Mental Health Center

406-532-9101

209 N 10<sup>th</sup> St Hamilton

### Western Montana Addiction Services

[www.westernmontanaaddictionservices.org](http://www.westernmontanaaddictionservices.org)

406-532-9140

209 N 10<sup>th</sup> St Suite C Hamilton

### Child and Family Services

24 Hour Child Abuse Hotline

406-363-1961

866-820-437

108 Pinckney St Hamilton

<http://dphhs.mt.gov/CFSD/childfamilyservicescontacts>

### Jennifer Knell, RN, MA, LCPC

#### Child and Family Counseling

406-363-8006

217 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> St Ste C  
Po Box 96 Hamilton

Email: [jenknellcounseling@gmail.com](mailto:jenknellcounseling@gmail.com)

### Emma's House-Children Advocacy Center

<http://www.emmashousecac.org>

406-363-7216

800 N 2<sup>nd</sup> St Hamilton  
PO Box 2034 Hamilton

### Anna Green

#### Linda Massa Youth Home

Email: [agreen@youthhomesmt.org](mailto:agreen@youthhomesmt.org)

406-363-0619

196 Providence Way

### Hotel/Motel Emergency Shelter Salvation Army

406-210-1453

126 W Main St Hamilton

### S.A.F.E

24/7 Hotline

Email: [safe@safeinthebitterroot.org](mailto:safe@safeinthebitterroot.org)

Contact: Rachael Shea, Shelter Advocate

406-363-2793

406-363-4600

## Medical Resources

### Marcus Daly Memorial Hospital

[www.mdmh.org](http://www.mdmh.org)

406-363-2211

1200 Westwood Dr Hamilton

### Ravalli Public Health Dept.

406-375-6670

205 Bedford St Hamilton

### Medicaid/Healthy MT Kids

Email: [hshscsoparavalli@mt.gov](mailto:hshscsoparavalli@mt.gov)

1-888-706-1535

310 N 3<sup>rd</sup> St Hamilton

## Child Care Services

### Best Beginnings Scholarship Child Care Resources

[www.childcareresources.org](http://www.childcareresources.org)

406-728-6446

500 N. Higgins Ave  
Suite 202 Missoula

## Employment Assistance

### District XI Human Resource Development Council

Email: [info@hrcxi.org](mailto:info@hrcxi.org)

406-363-6101

303 N 3<sup>rd</sup> Hamilton

[www.humanresourcecouncil.org](http://www.humanresourcecouncil.org)

### Tapper Creek Job Corps Center

406-821-3286

5139 West Fork Rd Darby

[www.trappercreek.jobcorps.gov](http://www.trappercreek.jobcorps.gov)

### Montana Work Solutions

406-777-7287

115 W 3<sup>rd</sup> St. Ste 6 Stevensville

## Adult Education

### Bitterroot Public Library

406-363-1670

306 State St Hamilton

### Darby Community Public Library

406-821-4771

101 S Marshall St. Darby

[www.darbylibrary.net](http://www.darbylibrary.net)

### Bitterroot College

406-0100

103 S 9<sup>th</sup> St Hamilton

[www.umt.edu/bitterroot-college](http://www.umt.edu/bitterroot-college)