

**ALEXANDRA CHILDREN'S CENTRE**  
**A non profit organization**

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**Established 1971**

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**PARENT HANDBOOK**  
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## **1. MISSION STATEMENT**

Alexandra Children's Centre is a non-profit charitable organization that provides quality child care for children aged 10 months to 5 years of age in a warm learning environment supported by trained and experienced staff.

### **PHILOSOPHY STATEMENT**

The Early Childhood Educators, children and families of Alexandra Children's Centre work together in an atmosphere of mutual respect. This facilitates self-confidence and positive self-esteem.

The Early Childhood Educators of Alexandra Children's Centre believe that children learn through active hands on play and exploration of their environment. This follows the Emergent Curriculum philosophy which is implemented throughout the Centre. The Emergent Curriculum recognizes that children are active learners who learn best from activities that they plan and carry out themselves. The Teacher facilitates the program by providing and arranging materials, interest areas and opportunities for the children to plan and carry out their own activities.

Alexandra Children's Centre believes in fostering active learning, multi-culturalism, integration, creativity, independence and family involvement by providing experiences for positive interactions between children, staff, families, the Centre and community.

### **ADMISSIONS POLICY (REVISED March 2011)**

We recognize that families, for a variety of reasons, require daily care for their children. Due to a limited number of spaces, we give priority to working families and families attending school.

### **ADMISSIONS COMMITTEE**

The Committee will review matters related to eligibility, dismissal and behavior and make recommendations to the Board of Directors.

### **INCLUSION POLICY**

#### **General Principle**

The Centre supports the principle that all children, regardless of special need care requirements, are welcome and should be included in all aspects of the Centre's programming, respecting the diversity of each child's ability subject to the capacity of our staff and facility. Special need students will be able to participate in day to day program activities and have access to the same opportunities for early learning education available to other children enrolled in the program.

#### **Policy**

In recognition of the estimated proportion of approximately 10% of children in the population who

have special needs, Alexandra Children's Centre shall actively promote policies and activities that will open our program and be inclusive and welcoming for all children with special needs, and in the following way the Centre will:

1. Develop and implement an assessment process for the admission and program planning for children with special needs; establish record keeping that can be utilized by parents for current and future developmental activities.
2. Develop a communication process aimed at providing positive flow of information to family and staff regarding the needs of the child; maintain an information guide for parents outlining available resources in our program that will enhance participation in all aspects of our program.
3. Support staff will be provided to support the intensified efforts to understand and meet the needs of the children and their parent(s). This interest will involve leadership of the Executive Director and Program Coordinator in organizing, monitoring and coaching staff on building and maintaining knowledge and expertise.
4. Seek additional funding required to enhance and maintain the program through the government, foundations and NGO grants, etc.

## 2. **GOALS**

- An environment with friends in which social behaviour, skills and creative experience are developed
- Intellectual stimulation
- Emotional well-being
- Physical development
- A nutritionally balanced diet that provides  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the daily nutritional requirements for children as per Canada's Food Guide
- Protection of health, safety from disease, security

## 3. **STAFFING**

- 3.1 The Centre provides full day care and is staffed by a Director and Early Childhood Educators. All staff have Early Childhood Education training, current First Aid training and are screened through the Child Abuse Registry and Criminal Record check.
- 3.2 The Centre is licensed by the Government of Nova Scotia under the Day Care Act and Regulations and inspected annually by the Department of Community Services. The Centre complies with staff child ratio and the licensing standards of the Department of Community Services as well as the Nova Scotia Department of Agriculture Food Safety Section and the Halifax Regional Fire and Emergency Service. Please see the Parent Bulletin Board to view this information.
- 3.3 A Volunteer Board of Directors is responsible for the policy and overall management of the Centre. The Board meets on a monthly basis and consists of community members, including parent representation.

## **REGISTRATION PROCESS is as follows:**

On occasions when there are no current spaces available at the time of your enquiry all Clients are offered the opportunity of going on both our Baby and Mixed Aged waiting lists which are constantly updated and checked.

Full day child care spaces for children aged 10 months to 5 years are available.

- When spaces become available, the Director will phone the Parent.
- An invitation to meet with her and tour the building will be arranged.
- On completion of the tour and discussion with the Director, the Parent will then be handed a New Starter Registration Pack to complete which will include a Registration Fee of \$50. This fee secures your child's space. You will be asked to return the Forms on your child's first attendance day at the Centre for our Administrator to process.
- Families wishing to apply for a subsidy should contact the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Child Care Subsidy Program.

## **4. PROGRAM**

### **Our Mixed Aged Enrolment Model:**

Our change from peer grouping to family grouping was implemented in 2009. We have seen some great interactions between the younger children and older children from then until now.

Alexandra Children's Centre provides a multi-aged learning environment. Children are grouped with other children of various learning stages. Children aged 18 months to 5 years are cared for in a multi-aged group which allows toddlers and pre-schoolers to develop abilities and skills independently.

Grouping the children this way provides a family like feel to the child care setting. It permits a smaller class size allowing Educators more 1 to 1 time with each child. Our multi-aged program starts at 18 months of age and the child grows in this group until they leave for school. Each group has 6 children, a mix of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

- Multi-aged grouping allows the younger children to learn from the older children which promotes self-confidence in both groups.
- Children are able to stay with the same Educator which helps the Educator to have deeper bonds with each child. Having this deeper bond allows the Educator to understand each child's learning strategy, therefore enabling each child to obtain their highest learning potential.

Multi-aged classroom benefits include lower teacher to child ratio and smaller classroom enrolments. (Maximum of 18 children, versus 24.)

## **CURRICULUM MODEL**

### **Emergent Curriculum**

Emergent Curriculum is a non-traditional style of teaching that presents children with the gift of discovering the world around them by encouraging them to explore life through their own interests and passions. It is “child lead” or “child based” learning, as opposed to “teacher directed” learning. To implement Emergent Curriculum successfully within a classroom requires creativity, flexibility, observation, documentation, and patience.

### **The Role of an Educator**

Educators encompass many roles in the profession of Early Childhood Education, but within a childcare setting that promotes Emergent Curriculum, Educators take on the role of “Co-Learners” instead of Head Teachers. They are challenged to be sensitive and show a genuine openness to the children’s interests and ideas. As a result of following the lead of the children, the Educators then create a stimulating environment with the hope to further each individual child’s exploration and learning on a certain topic. The Educators collect and present the children with as much information as they can gather, revealing it through experiences such as: visuals, art activities, webs, stories, circle times, songs, field trips, and guest speakers.

Consequently, the Educators strive to expose the children to as many “hands on” experiences as possible. The Educators’ objectives through this method of teaching are to nurture positive social skills, encourage creative problem solving, support the developmental growth of a child and build a foundation on which children can stand during their lifetimes.

### **Emergent Curriculum What Should I Expect to See?**

At Alexandra Children’s Centre you will see an environment that promotes the delight of seeing things through a child’s eyes and presents this for everyone to experience! There are many ways to see this around our Centre such as:

- **Documentation**

Documentation is the tangible evidence of the progression that the children and Educator have followed during their explorations together. There are various forms of documentation including: photographs, art work, written observations, scrapbooks, quote walls, and room displays.

- **A Child Friendly Routine**

One of the beliefs of Emergent Curriculum is that children investigate their topic of interest to the full and without time restraints. The Centre’s daily routine reflects this with flexible open times during the day and with activities that recognize the vital physical needs of children.

- **Learning Centers**

Learning Centers are areas in the room designed to cultivate children's interests and encourage growth in their developmental skills. These areas are changed as the children's interests change.

- **Has an "Open Door" Policy**

The "Open Door" policy in our Centre is based on the belief that it takes a community to raise a child. There is an emphasis on parent involvement, family involvement and involvement of the community at large as key resources.

- **Uses Webbing as a Way to Prepare for Activities**

"Webbing is the process through which Teachers develop a diagram based on a particular topic or theme, highlighting key ideas and concepts. Webbing is a planning tool, which provides depth to and creates a map of possible activities and projects. By their very nature, webs foster an integrated curriculum approach and help Teachers extend children's learning and experiences. Webs should be displayed clearly, along side documentation so that parents can follow their child's growth process."

### **How is Emergent Curriculum Beneficial to My Child's Development?**

Emergent Curriculum validates children's curiosity in learning and enables children to follow their passions. It lets them have the character building satisfaction of discovering by themselves. Emergent Curriculum focuses on children's strengths while improving on their areas of weakness. It re-assures them that being unique and having an individual personality is a lifelong asset. It helps to create confident, self assured children who are hungry to learn about the world around them.

## **5. ARRIVAL / DEPARTURE & HOURS OF OPERATION**

5.1 The Centre operates from 7:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. There will be no supervision before 7:15 a.m. Families must pick up children by 5:30 p.m. A late fee of \$10.00 is charged for every 15 minutes after closure time and is strictly enforced. Parents who are continually late will receive written notice of warning which may include termination of the child care space.

5.2 Please notify the Centre if someone other than yourself is to pick up your child. For the safety of your child, this policy will be enforced with no exception.

**Identification will be required upon request.**

5.3 For your child's safety please make sure that you bring your child into the classroom each day. Our responsibility for children does not begin until she/he is in the care of a staff person.

## 6. ATTENDANCE

- 6.1 The policy of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Child Care Subsidy Program provides payment for actual days of attendance for those families using a subsidized space.

**Please let the Centre know of absenteeism of your child by calling the Centre.**

- 6.2 The Centre is closed on the following holidays:

<b>New Year's Day</b>	<b>Natal Day</b>
<b>Nova Scotia Heritage Day</b>	<b>Labour Day</b>
<b>Good Friday</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Day</b>
<b>Easter Monday</b>	<b>Remembrance Day</b>
<b>Victoria Day</b>	<b>Christmas Day</b>
<b>Canada Day</b>	<b>Boxing Day</b>

**Note: - The Centre closes at 1:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve.  
- In the event that any of the above days falls on Saturday or Sunday, the Centre will be closed the following Monday.**

- 6.3 In the event of storms, families are asked to use their discretion in bringing children to the Centre. Staff will make every attempt to arrive on time, however, we ask for your patience and co-operation.

## 7. FEES

- 7.1 Fees are payable in advance. Billing is done at the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month for the following month, i.e., January 1 bill for January fees. Fee payment is due by the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.
- 7.2 Families are billed for the space, not attendance. Payment is required for all days including absences, statutory holidays and vacation time.
- 7.3 A \$25.00 service fee is added to accounts upon return of a cheque.  
A late payment charge of \$25.00 will be added to unpaid fees.  
Failure to pay fees will result in suspension of service.
- 7.4 In order to eliminate financial loss to the Centre, vacancies must be filled immediately. Therefore:
- Two(2) weeks notice of withdrawal is required;
  - Notice is to be given to the Director (forms available at the office);
  - Please indicate your reason for withdrawal;
  - Failure to give two weeks notice results in billing to you of the total daily rate for a period not exceeding twenty (20) days.
- 7.5 Please see the Bulletin Board for current rates.



## **8. BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE POLICY (REVISED 2012)**

### **8.1 The following forms of discipline shall never be used:**

- X Striking a child directly or with any physical object
- X Shaking, shoving, spanking, or other forms of aggressive physical contact and
- X Requiring or forcing a child to repeat physical movements
- X Harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, Emotional or physical
- X Confinement of, or isolation of a child or children

### **8.2 Strategies for Creating Supportive Climates: Five Key Elements**

- Sharing of control between adults and children
- Focusing on children's strengths
- Forming authentic relationships with children
- Making a commitment to supporting children's play
- Adopting a problem-solving approach to social conflict

### **8.3 Prevention Strategies**

Establish clear, consistent and simple limits and provide explanations for limits.

1. State limits in a positive way and periodically remind children
2. Provide opportunities for children to make choices throughout the day
3. Focus on the behaviour, not on the child
4. Ignore minor incidents
5. Prepare children to transition
6. Model and encourage appropriate behaviour
7. Interact with children

### **8.4 Intervention Strategies**

- Physical closeness and touch
- Remind and re-direct if necessary
- Get child's attention
- Acknowledge feelings
- Assist children in problem solving situations

### **8.5 Any marked change in a child's behaviour will be discussed with the families. As well, behavioural difficulties may be documented by staff. Parental signatures will be required on any documentation. Reports will be kept in the children's files.**

In the case of extreme difficulty, the Director may request parental consent to seek outside assistance/counseling for the child or may require that the family seek out assistance/counseling for the child.

In the event that a child's behaviour is determined to be detrimental to other children or staff, a child may be dismissed from the Day Care Centre. The Admissions Committee of the Board of Directors will approve all dismissals.

## **9. HEALTH/ILLNESS**

- 9.1 Children who are generally unwell should be kept at home.
- 9.2 The Centre follows the N.S. Department of Health and Wellness *Guidelines for Communicable Disease Prevention and Control for Child Care Settings*.
- [http://www.novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Guidelines\\_CDPC\\_Child\\_care\\_Setting.pdf](http://www.novascotia.ca/dhw/cdpc/documents/Guidelines_CDPC_Child_care_Setting.pdf)
- 9.3 If your child becomes ill while at the Centre, staff will contact the family to pick up your child.
- 9.4 **Please call the Centre if your child is staying at home due to a “sick” day.**
- 9.5 The daily program includes out-door play for all children, except when weather is too severe.
- 9.6 Staff will attend to minor injuries such as cuts and scratches. Parents will be contacted in case of emergency. **Please ensure your contact information is up to date.**
- 9.6 In order to administer any medication (non-prescription or prescription) to a child, a parent must provide a signed Permission to Administer Medication form. All prescription medication must be in the original container which includes the dosage and time to be given on the label.
- 9.7 Non-prescription medication requires a note from a doctor with the dosage and time to be given indicated in the note.
- 9.8 Please report diet, allergies or health problems when you register your child.

## **10. PERSONAL POSSESSIONS**

- 10.1 Please do not bring toys to the Centre.
- 10.2 Children should wear comfortable clothing to allow them to participate in all aspects of the program. Footwear must be provided daily, e.g., boots for outdoors play, sneakers/shoes for indoors play.
- 10.3 Labels on clothing avoids loss of items and assists us in locating items.
- 10.4 Provide a complete change of clothing to be left at the Centre in case of spills/accidents. Check the locker daily to take home dirty clothes and replace items as needed.
- 10.5 Please provide a box of wipes, diapers (if necessary), and a sheet and blanket for rest time.

## **11. FOOD**

11.1 The Centre provides two (2) nutritious snacks and a full hot meal at lunch time. Please check the Bulletin Board for a complete copy of the menu. Any special allergies should be reported at time of enrolment.

**Please do not bring food into the Centre other than for children's specific allergy requirements.**

11.2 The Centre welcomes breast feeding mothers. When requested, the Centre will provide a comfortable space for breast feeding mothers.

11.3 Staff allow infants to explore their food, feed themselves and respond to hunger and fullness cues. Snacks and meals outside the regular schedule may be required.

11.4 Staff provide a relaxing and enjoyable meal environment. Children are not forced to finish food that has been served.

11.5 Staff will model healthy eating practices.

11.6 Foods that have been donated to or purchased for a facility must:

- i. be labeled with the name of the source of the food
- ii. include a list of ingredients and any special preparation, storage or serving instructions and
- iii. be in accordance with Standard 6 (special dietary considerations).

## **12 COMMUNICATION**

A Parent Committee exists to provide information as needed. Membership consists of 3 parents, 1 staff member and the Director. Names of the Committee members and minutes of meetings will be posted on the Centre Bulletin Board. Parent Meetings are held twice a year and we encourage you to attend.

Communication is an important part of quality child care and the partnership between families and Teachers. Families are welcome to ask questions and staff will be available to provide you with resources as needed.

Any concerns should be discussed with staff or feel free to contact the Director.

## **13 GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

13.1 After discussion with staff and the Director, if the family is not satisfied with the resolution of a problem, the matter can be referred to the Board of Directors. Families should state their concern in writing and direct it to the Chairperson of the Board of Directors. The Director will forward the complaint to the Board of Directors on or before the next scheduled Board Meeting.

- 13.2 The Centre strives to build effective partnerships with families. No one will be disruptive or disrespectful to children or adults. Harassment of staff will be documented and a letter of suspension will be issued to the family(s) by the Executive Director. The Board of Directors will determine continuation of the child care space based on the recommendation of the Admissions Committee.

## **14 CHILD ABUSE ALLEGATIONS:**

- 14.1 Alexandra Children's Centre follows the Protocol for Reporting & Investigating Allegations of Child Abuse and Neglect manual provided by the Department of Community Services.

### **14.2 Allegations Outside the Child Care Facility (Against Parents)**

Children have a right to be protected from abuse and neglect.

Child Care Teachers have a legal duty to report indications of physical, sexual, emotional abuse or neglect directly to a Children's Services Agency.

### **14.3 Allegations inside the Child Care Facility (Against Staff)**

Staff members involved in allegations of abuse will be suspended from duty with pay pending the outcome of an investigation by a Children's Services Agency. Disciplinary action up to and including criminal charges may occur as a result of the investigation finding.

## **15 BULLETIN BOARD**

The following information is posted on the Centre's Bulletin Board:

- i. A copy of the Act
- ii. A copy of the Parent Handbook
- iii. The license for the Centre
- iv. The recent inspection of the Centre
- v. Behaviour Guidance Policy
- vi. Current Menu
- vii. Daily program plan and routine
- viii. A list of the names of the current members of the Parent Committee
- ix. The most recent Minutes of the Parent Committee
- x. Notification of funding providing by Minister