

Little Comets

LEARNING CENTER

Parent Handbook of Policies & Procedures



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Please **SIGN** and **RETURN** the last page.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Little Comets Learning Center. We are a high-quality childcare and preschool center caring for children ages 4 weeks to 12 years old. Our school is licensed for a maximum of one hundred children. In addition to our childcare and preschool programs we have both before and/or after school care for the Delavan Darien Schools District and other private schools in Delavan. To facilitate greater understanding between parent(s) and provider, we have created this handbook covering childcare philosophies, business policies and expectations. Please read this carefully, and feel free to discuss with the director or owner any questions that you may have.

CHILDCARE PHILOSOPHY

Our focus is to provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment that will shape the social, emotional, and intellectual development of children with varying abilities in partnership with families and the community. We aspire to maintain a developmentally appropriate environment that encourages individual creativity and respects academic and cultural diversity. Together we support our children by holding each child to high expectations in hopes they become compassionate lifelong learners.

ADMITTANCE POLICY

Parents wishing to enroll their child(ren) to Little Comets, must first schedule a tour of our facility and interview with our director or owner. Our school is small and close-knit, and it is imperative that any new family accepted to our program understands and believes in our philosophy and environment. Communication is of the most importance, not only for the betterment of your child's care and education, but for the school environment as well. Educators are on the same team as parents, and if the dynamics of the two groups do not flow effectively, your child will not develop to his/her potential. An interview allows both parties to decide if our school is the best fit for each family individually.

WAITING LIST

Little Comets offers high-quality care. Admittance to our school is in high demand. If our class is at capacity, you may place your child on our waiting list, and as soon as an opening becomes available, you will be contacted. If you are contacted and enrollment is not accepted, the applicant will be removed from the waiting list. If we do not hear back from you by the end of next business day, we will move on to the next family on the wait list. If later, it is decided that you want your child to attend our center they will be put back on the waiting list as a new inquiry.

ENROLLMENT POLICY

There are several forms that we must complete and, in our possession before we can assume the responsibility of caring for your child. All forms and policies will be provided to the parent at the time of enrollment. If parents request extra copies of policy books fees may apply. All forms listed are required by the state and if children's files are incomplete, it can cause us to lose our license. All forms must be updated every year, sometimes sooner, according to need.

The forms are as follows:

- Child's Enrollment & Health History Forms
- Child's Health Report (*MUST be filled out by physician – must be updated every 6 months or 2 years depending on child's age*)
- Immunization Form (*must be updated every 6 months or 2 years depending on child's age*)
- Intake Under 2 Years Form (*must be updated every 3 months*)
- Or
- Intake Over 2 Years Form
- Financial Contract
- Parent Handbook
- Sickness Policy
- Media Use Form
- Alternate Release (*school age only*)
- Sunscreen/Field trip Permission Slip (*during summer months*)

You are required to keep us informed of any change in addresses, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information listed on any/all the above forms. If you have any questions regarding the completion of these forms, please feel free to ask.



TRIAL PERIOD

The first two weeks from the first day of attendance (14 calendar days) of the child's enrollment will be considered a trial period. During that time, the parent or provider may terminate the childcare agreement at any time. After the trial period is complete, two weeks' written notice is required to terminate the agreement and payment is required. (See Termination Policy).

TUITION

- All fees below are subject to change. There will be at least a 2-weeks' notice given prior to any increases.
- Little Comets requires a set schedule and has a 3-day minimum.
- There is a 10% discount for families who have more than one child enrolled full time in our program. (This does not include school-age children)
- Delavan Darien District employees will receive a 15% discount on daily tuition. All other center fees and policies apply.
- Tuition is due on THURSDAY for the week ahead.
 - Payments can be made by ACH payment, Cash, Check, Money Order, **Credit Card/Debit Card (3% fee applies)**.
 - Payments can also be made online on our website **LittleCometsLearningCenter.com**
- All families must pay for their contracted days. If children do not attend, those days must still be paid for. We do not switch or do "instead of" days. If there is room and you would like to add a day, we will bill your account for the additional day.

Daily rates include 9 hours of care. Anything over 9 hours of care is billed for each additional hour at a rate of \$7 per hour.

Infants up to age 2.....	\$62/day
Children 2-3 years of age.....	\$58/day
4-year-old children.....	\$56/day
(Potty trained)	
Half Day Rate.....	\$35/day
(5 hours) (6:30-2:30)	
Preschool Hours.....	\$20/day
(8:30-11:30)	
School Age Summer Camp/Full Day.....	\$52/day
(Ages 5-12)	
School Age Before/After School.....	\$10/hour
(1-hour increments)	
S/A Drop-in Care (no CCLS days).....	\$52
Registration Fee.....	\$60/child or \$80/family
(nonrefundable)	
Yearly Continuation Fee.....	\$60
(nonrefundable)	
Hot Lunch.....	\$4.50/day or \$7/day
Early Drop-off/Late Pick-up.....	\$15/15minutes
After Close Pick-up.....	\$15/15minutes
Schedule Change.....	\$10
Contract Change.....	\$25
(Limit 3/year)	
Late WI Share Payment.....	\$25/every 5 days
(For funds not released)	
Late Payment.....	\$25/weekly
Returned Payment.....	\$50
Sleeping Bag/Laundry Fee.....	\$15/day
Diapers and Wipes Fees.....	\$1/diaper, \$1/wipes daily
Clothing.....	\$5/each article of clothing

TUITION/PAYMENT PROCEDURES

Your specific rates will be outlined in your financial contract. Tuition is payable in advance and is due no later than **Thursday at 5:30pm** every week. We do not deduct for days your child(ren) is not in attendance if it is one of their scheduled days to attend. The daily rate is a flat fee and is due each week. Before and after school children will pay full-time rates on school breaks and in the summer. If school closes due to inclement weather and the center is still open school age families are still expected to pay their normal tuition unless they request a full day, then a full day rate will be applied. Payment may be in the form of cash, credit card (Visa or MasterCard), check, or weekly ACH.

OUTSTANDING DEBT COLLECTION POLICY

Families remain financially responsible for all tuition, fees, and other charges incurred during their child's enrollment at Little Comets Learning Center, regardless of whether their child is currently enrolled.

If a family leaves the center with an outstanding balance, the following procedures will apply:

- A final statement of account will be provided, showing the total amount due.
- **Late Fees:** Beginning the first week after the payment due date, a **late fee of \$25 per week** will be added to any unpaid balance. Late fees will continue to accrue each week until the account is paid in full, an approved written payment arrangement is established and maintained, or the account is referred to a third-party collection agency.
- The responsible party will be given thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the final statement to pay the balance in full or contact the center to establish a written payment arrangement approved by management.
- If payment is not received, and no approved payment arrangement has been made within the thirty (30) day period, the account will be considered delinquent.
- Delinquent accounts may be referred to a third-party collection agency without further notice. Once an account has been placed with a collection agency, all communication and payment arrangements regarding the debt must be made directly through the collection agency unless otherwise authorized.
- Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to pursue any additional legal remedies available to recover unpaid balances, including filing a claim in small claims court when appropriate.
- To the extent permitted by applicable law and any signed enrollment agreement, the responsible party may be held responsible for any reasonable collection costs, court costs, attorney's fees, or other expenses incurred in recovering the unpaid debt.

Little Comets Learning Center values the relationships built with our families and encourages anyone experiencing financial hardship to contact the office as soon as possible to discuss payment options before an account becomes delinquent. However, failure to resolve an outstanding balance may result in the account being referred to a collection agency for recovery.

ACCOUNT STANDING AND FUTURE ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY

To ensure fairness and maintain the financial stability of Little Comets Learning Center, all family accounts must remain in good financial standing.

A family account is considered to be in good standing when:

- All tuition, fees, and other charges have been paid according to the established payment schedule.
- There are no past-due balances on the account.
- Any approved payment arrangements are current and being followed.

Families whose accounts are not in good standing may not be eligible to participate in optional programs or services, including but not limited to:

- Hot Lunch Program
- Field Trips
- Special Events requiring an additional fee
- Optional extracurricular activities
- Any other fee-based programs offered by the center

In addition, families with an outstanding balance or delinquent account will not be eligible to register or reserve a space for:

- Summer Program
- Before and After School Care
- The upcoming school year
- Any future enrollment or re-enrollment at Little Comets Learning Center

Registration requests and classroom placements will not be accepted or guaranteed until the account has been brought into good standing by paying the outstanding balance in full or through an approved written payment arrangement that is current and in compliance.

Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to deny enrollment, re-enrollment, or continued participation in optional programs and activities until all financial obligations have been satisfied.

WISCONSIN SHARES PAYMENT

Parents enrolled in Wisconsin Shares are responsible for releasing their funds by no later than the 5th of each month. Failure to release funds by the 5th will result in a \$25 late payment fee each week when funds are not released, and care may be terminated immediately, and your spot will be filled. Parents will be given a receipt after payment is applied and given a copay breakdown for weekly payments that will be due no later than Thursday at 5:30pm. **WI Shares Families must have a zero balance by the last business day of every month.** A \$25 late payment fee will be added if copay is not paid, and services will be terminated. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to make sure that you are up to date with your Wisconsin Shares and a laps in your paperwork or childcare funds will result in termination.

AUTOMATIC PAYMENT

Credit card (Visa or MasterCard) or ACH from a checking or savings account may be set up for automatic weekly withdrawal. Please note if using a credit or debit card there will be a 3% processing fee automatically added to your weekly amount due.

NSF CHECKS

If a check is returned for non-sufficient funds, you will be required to pay all fees that are incurred because of the returned check and a \$50.00 service charge. Childcare services will be immediately halted until full payment of tuition and NSF charges has been made, in CASH.

REGISTRATION FEE AND LATE PAYMENT FEES

There is a registration fee of \$60 for one child or \$80 for a family due at time of registration and a \$60 continuation fee every September 1st thereafter. The registration fee is good for 2 weeks after the agreed start date. If child/ren does not start the registration fee is now void and a new one will be billed if you wish to start later. If you register between May 1st and August 31st, you will not be charged another registration until the following September. A late fee of \$25.00 per week will be added to your account if tuition is not received by the due date. Repeated past due payments are grounds for termination of services.

EARLY DROP-OFF/LATE PICK-UP FEES

It is very important for families to follow their contracted scheduled drop-off and pick-up times to assure our center is appropriately staffed, allowing us to follow state required staff to child ratios. **There is NO grace period for drop off and pickup times.**

A \$15/per child fee will be applied for every 15-minute interval that a child is either dropped-off earlier or picked-up later than their contracted hours. If picking up after **closing hours**, there will be a **double charge** with an additional \$15/per child fee applied for every 15-minute interval. Late fees will be added to your account and must be paid with the following week's tuition.

Example: 1 - 15 minutes late, you owe \$15 per child; 16 - 30 minutes late, you owe \$30 per child. If closing time is 5:30PM and you are picking up at 5:35PM, there will be a \$15 late fee plus the additional \$15 after closing late fee added, so you would owe \$30 for one child. This will be strictly enforced, and habitual tardiness may result in termination of services. Last child should be out the door at 5:30pm not parent walking in at 5:30pm PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR CONTRACTED DROP OFF AND PICK UP HOURS ARE UP TO DATE.

Our center is only licensed to be open from 6:00am to 5:30pm. Having children in our care outside of business hours (special after school events excluded) puts us out of compliance and our license at risk. If a parent or other pre-authorized person cannot be reached after closing and your child remains at our center longer than 30 minutes past closing, the Delavan Police Department will be contacted to assist us in the matter and to do a well check. CPS will also be contacted to take the child into their care.

ABSENCES

There will be no refunds or adjustments made for days missed due to illness or days off. A place has been reserved for each child that cannot be filled on a short-term basis, so **it is necessary for you to pay for all days scheduled whether your child is in attendance or not unless sick/vacation time is requested.**

SICK DAYS

All families are allowed 3 sick days per year per child (September 1 to August 31). These can be for days your child/ren are out sick. They may not be used if accounts have outstanding balances, for paid holidays, and must be enrolled for at least 90 days. To use sick days, they must be requested within 1 week of the day the child was out due to illness. Sick days cannot be used in 2 weeks' notice.

VACATION DAYS

Vacation days are to be used for a planned day off with at least two weeks' notice. Vacation days cannot be used until 90 days of enrollment from the start of their vacation time.

- Children attending 3 days (more than 4.5 hours a day) a week will receive three vacation days.
- Children attending 4 days (more than 4.5 hours a day) a week will receive four vacation days.
- Children attending 5 days (more than 4.5 hours a day) a week will receive five vacation days.
- School age children will not receive any vacation days. School age children will not be charged for no school days. If your child is attending the "no school" day camp, you will be required to pay the full day rate for that day.
- Vacation days go from September 1 to August 31st. Vacation days must be used by August 31st every year. You may not carry them over from year to year. Vacation days are non-refundable if not used.
- Vacation days cannot be used if tuition has an outstanding balance and may not be used for paid holidays.
- vacation days cannot be used as a part of your 2 weeks' notice.

ELOPEMENT AND CHILD SAFETY POLICY

Purpose

The safety and well-being of every child at Little Comets Learning Center is our highest priority. Children are expected to remain with their classroom group and under the direct supervision of staff at all times.

Running away from staff, leaving a designated classroom or activity area without permission, attempting to exit the building or playground, or refusing to remain within supervised areas creates an immediate and serious safety risk to the child, other children, and staff.

Because our first responsibility is to protect every child in our care, elopement is considered a major safety violation and will be addressed accordingly.

Definition of Elopement

Elopement is defined as any situation in which a child intentionally leaves or attempts to leave the supervision of staff, including but not limited to:

- Running away from a teacher during indoor or outdoor activities.
- Leaving the classroom, playground, or designated group without permission.
- Attempting to exit or exiting the building or fenced playground.
- Running into parking lots, roadways, neighboring properties, or other unsafe areas.
- Hiding from staff or refusing to remain within supervised areas.
- Any behavior that requires staff to leave the supervision of other children in order to pursue the child.

Staff Responsibilities

To prevent elopement, staff are expected to:

- Maintain active supervision of all children at all times.
- Position themselves strategically near exits, hallways, gates, and transition areas.
- Conduct frequent head counts throughout the day, including during transitions and outdoor play.
- Ensure all classroom doors, playground gates, and exterior doors remain secured according to center procedures.
- Immediately intervene when a child attempts to leave a supervised area.
- Notify management immediately of any attempted or successful elopement.

Response to Elopement

If a child attempts to elope or successfully leaves staff supervision:

1. Staff will immediately pursue the child while ensuring the remaining children are supervised by another staff member whenever possible.
2. Management will be notified immediately.
3. The child will be returned to a safe supervised area as quickly as possible.
4. Parents or guardians will be notified immediately.
5. A written incident report will be completed and maintained in the child's file.
6. Management will determine whether the child can safely remain in care.

Immediate Safety Review

Because elopement places the child, other children, and staff at significant risk, any elopement incident will result in an immediate review by management.

Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to require an immediate parent conference before the child returns to care.

Depending on the severity of the incident, the child's age, the level of risk created, and the center's ability to safely supervise the child, the center may implement additional supervision, require outside evaluations, suspend care, or terminate enrollment immediately.

Immediate Termination of Care

Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to immediately terminate childcare services if a child:

- Leaves the building or playground.
- Runs into or toward traffic, parking lots, or other dangerous areas.
- Repeatedly runs from staff despite interventions.
- Creates a situation in which staff must leave other children unsupervised to pursue them.
- Demonstrates behavior that the center determines cannot be safely managed within required staff-to-child ratios.
- Places themselves, other children, staff, or the public at risk of injury.

The decision to terminate care due to elopement is made solely at the discretion of Little Comets Learning Center. Immediate termination may occur without prior warning if management determines that the child can no longer be safely supervised within the group care setting.

Parent Partnership

Families are expected to work collaboratively with the center to address behaviors that place a child at risk. Failure to cooperate with recommended safety strategies or continued elopement behaviors may result in suspension or immediate termination of care. Little Comets Learning Center is committed to providing a safe environment for every child. While we strive to support children with challenging behaviors, we cannot compromise the safety of the child, other children, or our staff. The center reserves the right to determine whether it can safely meet a child's supervision needs, and enrollment may be ended immediately when those needs exceed what can safely be provided in a licensed group childcare setting.

TERMINATION OF SERVICE

This contract may be terminated at any time, for any reason, by either party with proper notice. Proper notice will consist of a written notice to the provider no less than two weeks prior to the child's last day of care. At the time your written notice is given to the provider you will also be required to pay the last 2 weeks of your tuition. If services are suspended it is at the discretion of the owner or the director if the payments to Little Comets Learning Center will be required. If there is an investigation of any kind that involves your child/ren, we may suspend services until the investigation is complete. Upon completion of the investigation Little Comets Learning Center has the right to terminate services if deemed appropriate. Please note that you have 30 days after termination to pick up any of your child's items that may have been left behind.

Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to terminate for the following reasons (but not limited to):

- Failure to pay
- Failure to complete the required forms
- Habitual early drop-offs and/or late pick-ups that are outside of the contracted time
- Lack of parental cooperation
- Failure of child to adjust to the center after a reasonable amount of time
- Our inability to meet the child's needs
- Physical or verbal abuse of any person or property
- Verbal and/or written defamation on public platforms
- Lack of compliance with handbook regulations

A written 2-week notice of termination will be given to the family. Whether the child is in attendance or not, the remaining 2 weeks and any previous balance must be paid in full by the child's last day. Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to give written notice of immediate termination if the circumstances are extreme and affect the well-being of the staff or other children in attendance. In this situation, the two weeks payment of tuition is at the discretion of the owner.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Normal hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 6:00am to 5:30pm. We are strictly licensed between those hours only and cannot have children in our care outside of those hours (special after school events excluded).

We maintain an open-door policy for parents during hours of operation. This does not mean our doors will be unlocked/open. They will remain locked for the safety of our children and staff. Open-door policy means that parents are always welcome to call or drop in to see their children. We would appreciate you taking into consideration the children's schedule when dropping in or calling and remembering that visitors usually cause children to react in an excited manner. If you call during the day, please be aware that we may be busy with the children and may not be able to answer the phone. If you leave a message, we will call you back as soon as possible.

Children must arrive within 1 hour of their contracted drop-off time. If for any reason your child is going to arrive more than an hour after your contracted time, you must contact the center and inform them of the child's expected arrival time. Children arriving after 10:00am, without prior notice, may be turned away for the day due to staff/child ratio. If we have low attendance for the day, staff may be sent home, which is why communicating your child's arrival time is very important. Parents will still be responsible for payment for that day even though the child cannot attend.

If the center is informed that your child/ren will not be attending on a specific day, they will be crossed off and expected not to show up. If they show up at the center that day, they will be turned away at the door. Payment for the day is still required unless vacation/sick days are used.

CLOSED HOLIDAYS

The following is a list of holidays that Little Comets Learning Center is closed. The underlined holidays are paid for.

- New Year's Eve & New Year's Day
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- 4th of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day & The Day after (Friday)
- Christmas Eve & Christmas Day



Please Note: If any of the above holidays fall on a Saturday or Sunday Little Comets will be CLOSED either the Friday before the holiday or the Monday after the holiday. (Ex: 4th of July falls on a Saturday we will be Closed on Friday July 3rd. 4th of July falls on a Sunday we will be closed on Monday July 5th.) If we are closed on a Friday or Monday in observance of the holiday you will still be required to pay for that day even though we are closed.

Unexpected Closure Days:

Parents will pay for up to 3 unexpected closure days per year (September 1 to August 31). Unexpected days may include inclement weather, building maintenance, or any reason we may have to close unexpectedly. We never plan to close unexpectedly; however, the safety of our families and staff are very important to us.

In the event of a closure prior to opening we will post on our Facebook page, send a message in ProCare app, and on Lake 96.1 radio station.

DAILY SCHEDULE

Young children enjoy a structured schedule that allows for flexibility. A schedule helps the day to flow more smoothly, allows the children to anticipate upcoming events, and aids in achieving a variety of goals. We will adhere to our written schedule to the best of our ability, keeping in mind that anything can happen when children are involved. There will be times when we must adjust the schedule. We appreciate families considering our schedule when picking up or dropping off their children.

The younger children have their own schedules, but slowly transition to our center schedule as they get older. Children 2 years and up follow our center schedule with each classroom's schedule being slightly adjusted for the needs of their age group.

5:30 – 8:30	Arrival/Free-Play
8:30 – 9:00	Morning Snack
9:00 – 11:30	Circle Time, Planned Activities, Outside Play
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch
12:30 – 2:30	Nap/Rest Time
2:30 – 3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:00 – 5:30	Free-Play/Departure

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

It is normal for some children to have difficulty separating from parents, or cry when dropping off. Please make your drop off brief as the longer you prolong the departure, the harder it gets. A smile, cheerful goodbye kiss, and a reassuring word that you will be back is all that is needed. In our experience, children are always quick to get involved in play or activities as soon as their parents are gone.

Our normal procedure is to release the child only to their parents/guardians, or someone else the parents/guardians designate. If someone other than the parent is to pick up the child, please notify us ahead of time. A verbal notice is fine on that day, if this person is on the list of people who are authorized to pick up your child. If the person is NOT on that list, we MUST have written permission to release your child. Please inform emergency contacts, or people designated to pick up your child, that if we do not know them, and the child is too young to recognize them ("Hi, Grandma!"), then we will need to ask for identification as well. We do not mean to offend but we take the safety of our children extremely seriously.

If a child is here one-half hour (1/2) past the closing time (5:30pm), and we cannot get hold of the parent/guardian nor the emergency contact, the Delavan Police Department will be contacted to assist us in the matter and to do a well check. CPS will also be contacted to take the child into their care.

By law, we must report to local law enforcement if we suspect the authorized pick-up person of being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, and/or marijuana.

SUPPLIES

You are responsible for supplying diapers, wipes, formula, bottles, sleeping bags (children over 1 year of age), a full change of clothing (including socks and underwear) appropriate for the weather, and any other supplies that your child may need. You may bring a whole package of diapers to be stored here and we will let you know when your supply runs low. Good clothing is not recommended. Soiled clothing will be sent home, and a clean change of clothes should be brought back the next day. We will request certain items for various times of the year, such as boots or snowsuits. All items need to be labeled with your child's initials. You must always maintain these items. Please keep in mind that if you do not bring a needed item, it may prevent your child from going outside or these items will be borrowed, and laundry/clothing fees will be applied.

PROCARE CONNECT

Little Comets uses Procare Connect to track children's attendance and log daily activities such as diaper changes, feedings/meals, what they did in class, etc. Our staff also uses Procare to communicate directly with families. We use the messaging feature to inform families of supplies needed for their children, any changes/events happening at the center, and it's also a great way for parents to communicate absences and late arrivals. We try our best to keep procare updated however, the children are our number one priority. If you ever have a concern or question, please call the center. Please note that if there is a concern we will call you. No news is good news.



It is encouraged for families, especially of infants, to use the *Drop-Off Notes* feature prior to signing their children in. This feature is used to inform the infant teachers of your child's wake time, last meal, diaper change/potty, and any other important notes you would like your child's teacher to be aware of for the day.

To ensure compliance with DCF 251.04 (6) (b), we require parents/guardians to sign their children in and out during drop off and pick up. This can be done at the sign in/out kiosk located near the office window using the 4-digit pin provided on the child's first day of attendance. (Please DO NOT let the children touch the tablets). This can also be done using the Procare app on your mobile device, but you must be in the building or curbside to do so.

Please be sure to download the app *Procare: Childcare App* and check it daily. Procare messages will only be replied to during business hours.

COMMUNICATION

Good communication between parent and provider is essential to any childcare program. When a new family joins our class, it is imperative we communicate openly about any concerns or questions that may arise, as well as share a similar childcare philosophy. We welcome questions, feedback, or discussions of any kind that are oriented towards a positive outcome for your child(ren). Sensitive issues will be discussed in private.

To further facilitate communication between parent and provider we will provide daily updates through the Procare connect app, newsletters, emails, and daily discussions. These items will explain some of the activities and happenings within our classroom, the current curriculum topics, upcoming events, closures, or any other pertinent, fun information that may be of interest to our families. We will also post upcoming events, closures, or any other pertinent information on our Facebook page.

Communication Boundaries: We are happy to communicate during our business hours (6:00am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday) with our families. The use of ProCare Connect is very convenient. However, Little Comets Learning Center staff is not required and strongly advised not to communicate outside of business hours. If a message is received outside of business hours, please do not expect a reply until the center is open. Due to confidentiality laws and policies, we do not permit any form of communication regarding children and families on Little Comets Learning Center employees' personal social media (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.).

CONCERNS

If at any point you have a question or concern about your child that needs addressing, we encourage you to first discuss it with your child's assigned teacher. This can be done in person or through the parent communication app. If you feel that talking with your child's teacher did not resolve the concern, we ask that you bring the concern to a director immediately. This can be done in person, by phone, or via email. We do ask that families refrain from bringing concerns up to staff members who are not the child's assigned teacher or a director to be able to ensure the concern is handled both appropriately and within a timely manner.

Little Comets Learning Center reserves the right to terminate care for any potential defamation and/or safety and confidentiality concerns. This includes speaking with others in a poor manner about our childcare center, staff, and/or children as well as posts made to online platforms such as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, etc.

DISCIPLINE

We believe that children behave according to what is expected of them. If children know what rules are in place, they naturally will begin to follow the boundaries set forth. While they are in the process of learning those boundaries, we use redirection to help

guide them. This system uses the basic idea that children will make mistakes and should not always be punished for them. When children make a choice or use a behavior that is not allowed in the classroom the teacher will explain to the child why choice/behavior is not allowed and will redirect them to another area. If the behavior continues, then the child will be removed from the area and will have to do a teacher's choice structured activity at the table until his/her behavior improves. If a child uses a behavior/action that hurts another child or teacher, the child will receive a written warning. Little Comets will allow three written warnings after the second written warning a parent/teacher and owner conference will take place to discuss this behavior and how we can fix it. If after the meeting, we as a center do not see any improvement in the child's behavior the child will be terminated from the center.

We understand children strive for positive affirmations. To promote an encouraging environment within our classroom, teachers will show positive attention throughout the day to children that are demonstrating good choices with cleaning up, manners, sharing and any other behavior we believe to be good. It is human nature to want attention and we try to bestow positive words and rewards as much as possible within our classroom so that positive attention is what is strived for, and not negative. Under NO CIRCUMSTANCES will there be any spanking, physical abuse, verbal abuse, name-calling, or isolation used. Neither food nor sleep will ever be withheld from children as a means of punishment.

We understand that abusive treatment of children is prohibited by law and by the licensing regulations with which a childcare provider or authorized agent is required by law to report evidence or knowledge of suspected child abuse or child neglect.

CLEANLINESS/HYGIENE

We do our best to maintain strict cleanliness and hygiene standards. Children's hands are washed before and after meals, after toileting and several times throughout the day. We use paper towels for drying hands, so children do not have to use the same towel. Each child has their own sleeping bag which will need to be brought home once a week to be laundered. If the sleeping bag is not returned by the next day and your child needs to borrow a "center sleeping bag" we will charge you a laundering fee of \$15 per week. If your child soils his/her sleeping bag it will be sent home that day to be cleaned. We do not have a lot of extra sleeping bags so please make sure you return your child's sleeping bag the next day after it has been laundered.

Children use washable cups, plates, and utensils for each meal. You may bring in a labeled water bottle for your child to drink from throughout the day, whenever they choose. Water bottles must be brought home every night to be washed. Little Comets is not responsible for washing your child's water bottle. Children will also be provided with the use of a cubby, for their personal belongings to be kept. This maintains healthy sanitary conditions, while also providing the benefit of personal space for each child.

ILLNESS

Little Comets is a "well-child" facility. At no time do we provide sick childcare. The following illness policies will be strictly enforced, for the health, well-being, and safety of all concerned.

Sick Child Policy: See Sickness Policy handout (this is provided in all new student packets)

Symptoms Requiring Removal of Child from Day Care:

- Fever: Fever is defined as having a temperature of 100.4°F plus another symptom **OR** 101°F with no other symptoms, taken under the arm; (a child needs to be fever free for a minimum of 24 hours before returning to school, that means the child is fever free without the aid of Tylenol®, or any other fever reducing substance.)
- Barking and/or constant coughing, sore throat, wheezing
- Thick colored discharge from the nose
- Diarrhea: runny, watery, bloody stools, or three or more loose stools within the last 24 hours.
- Vomiting: once in a 24-hour period.
- Frequent scratching of body or scalp, lice, rash, or any other spots that resemble childhood diseases, including ringworm and pink eye. If a child has a rash on their body, we may require a doctor's note stating that they are not contagious and can return to daycare.

The sick child **MUST** stay home the following day after being sent home. They may return only after 1 or more of the child's symptoms have resolved. If the child had a fever of 100.4°F or higher, they may not return until they have been fever free without fever reducing medication for 24 hours.

If the child is showing communicable disease like symptoms (HFM, strep, flu, covid, etc.) all other children that reside in the same household must go home and remain home until all children in the household are symptom free.

If a child's symptoms are related to allergies, teething, or something else that is not contagious, please provide a doctor's note and your child may be allowed back upon the director's discretion.

Substitute Care: When teachers become ill, we will have a substitute teacher fill in for them. If you do not recognize the teacher that is in your child's classroom, please introduce yourself and your child to the teacher and they will explain where the regular teacher is and that they are the substitute for the day. All employees of our organization are certified to teach/care for children in any classroom, have current CPR/AED/First Aid training, and full fingerprints/background checks done.

MEDICATIONS

If your child is on a prescription medication which needs to be given while your child is in our care, we must have a written authorization for us to administer ANY medication. All medicines must be in their original container with pharmacist or manufacturer's label, child's name, dosage instructions, current date, name of medication, and times to be administered clearly written. Medication and medical devices must be handed to our staff for proper storage. We will not administer or store any over-the-counter medication. If parents must bring medication or medical devices to and from the facility daily, they are responsible for making sure they receive all items brought in. Little Comets is not responsible for misplaced or forgotten medications or equipment. If your child is starting a new prescription medication, they must stay home so parents can monitor them in case there is any reaction. If our staff is notified that they have started a new medication we will not allow the child to stay for the day.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

Minor bumps and scratches are inevitable, but we make every effort to keep the children safe through supervision and childproofing. Minor injuries receive appropriate first aid, and if an emergency injury or illness occurs, you will be contacted as soon as possible. If necessary, your child will be taken to the nearest hospital where you will be asked to meet us. If you are not going to be at your usual place of employment, please make sure that we have a number where you can be reached.

Parents are responsible for all costs involved in emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation, if required. Little Comets Learning Center will not be held liable for any sickness or injury of either parent/guardian or child while on the premises, or while the child is in the company of the provider during field trips or outings.

CURRICULUM

We know that in most cases, this may be your child's first experience away from home. Home is a safe, fun place where mom and dad tell us what we can and cannot do. School should just be an extension of this. If it is not fun, safe, or nurturing, your child will associate school with negatively, and fail to thrive and grow to their potential. At Little Comets, we make learning fun. Strategically planned curriculum creates easy avenues for your child to learn without a negative association. We set the foundation for positive school experience that they will take with them through the rest of their education.

We have encountered so many parents who fail to realize their child's potential. It is not because they do not love their child, but it is hard to see their baby as anything other than just that, their baby. That is where we come in. Little Comets has carefully developed daily schedules that provide for the developmental level of each group of children. We will be providing a theme-based curriculum. The daily programs provide each child with experience that promote self-esteem, positive self-image, social interaction, self-expression, communication skills, creative expression, large and small muscle development, a variety of cultural experiences, and intellectual growth. The program schedules provide flexible balance of activities. Routines are planned and implemented to avoid keeping children waiting in line or assembled in large groups for extended periods of time. Stations are set up to provide a variety of experiences available for the children to select their own activities. The daily routines are continually monitored to protect children from excess fatigue and over stimulation. An outside time is planned daily except during inclement weather or when not advisable for health reasons. Throughout the day, all teachers and assistants make it a priority to provide each child with individual time and attention.

Please note: When children leave our 4-year-old program we will have taught them several basic skills. Here is a list of skills that we have taught. Not all children will be at the same level of learning, some children may know more than what is listed while others may not have mastered everything listed below. Please keep in mind every child learns at a different pace so please do not take this list and think that just because your child has not mastered all these skills they cannot move on to kindergarten.

1. Proper pencil grip
2. Holds scissors correctly
3. Imitate a crayon stroke (circle, horizontal line, vertical line)
4. Stack a tower of 1-inch blocks
5. Use the bathroom independently
6. Put coat on all by themselves
7. Zip, button, snap by themselves
8. Can take turns with a friend
9. Can sit for 10 minutes with minimal redirection
10. Wait their turn for teacher direction



11. Manages feelings-self control
12. Follow one step direction without assistance
13. Know their colors
14. Know the four basic shapes (circle, triangle, square, rectangle)
15. Understands big and little; in and out; on and off; over and under; in front of and next to
16. Count to twenty
17. ID name
18. Spell first name
19. Sort by color and size
20. Recognize and know upper- and lower-case letters
21. Recognize and know numbers

INDOOR/OUTDOOR PLAY

Indoor play: We provide a variety of age-appropriate toys for indoor play. We encourage children to use their imagination and creativity during free play. We believe this to be a fundamental part of your child's education. After play time, all toys will return to their designated areas. These activities help promote good health in our children. We try to instill a love for physical movement early on, so that they carry it with them into adulthood.

Outdoor play: We will play outdoors every day that weather permits. We have a wonderful play area, equipped with several different activities. We also have sidewalk chalk, paintbrushes and other tactile toys making outdoor time an enjoyable event for your child. Other outdoor activities will include walks, and water play (sprinkler and small pool during summer). When the weather does not permit outdoor play, great lengths will be taken to do more music and movement and physical activities inside.

Please make sure that your child is appropriately dressed (always see Clothing/Attire section) for outdoor play.

MEALS

If your child arrives BEFORE 7:30am you may bring breakfast for them. Any child that arrives after 7:30am must have breakfast before they arrive.

We provide both a morning and afternoon snack. We have a hot lunch program for an additional cost if you wish for your child to have a hot lunch. Menus can be found near the office and in your child's classroom. We will provide children 2 years and older (hot or cold lunch) with 1% milk and children under 2 years with whole milk. Alternative milks must be brought in by parents and labeled with your child's name.

If you choose for your child not to take part in our hot lunch program, you must provide them with a cold lunch every day. Cold lunches must include protein, grain, vegetables, and fruit (2 vegetables are acceptable). If any of these food groups are missing, we are required to provide those items to your child, and a hot lunch fee will be applied to your account. Our teachers will not heat up/microwave food, please put warm items in a thermos. Our classrooms have limited refrigerator space, so lunches must include an ice pack if needed to keep cool.

INFANTS - When providing foods for infants please make sure all the food were previously tried at home first due to unknown allergies.

NAPS/QUIET TIME

There will be a designated nap/rest time each day (see Daily Schedule). All children must either nap or rest quietly during this period. Rest time gives everyone a much-needed break during the day. Without rest time, some children are argumentative in the afternoon, short-tempered with others, and not happy when they go home in the evening. Children must have a sleeping bag that is brought home weekly to be washed. If a sleeping bag is not supplied, a laundry fee will be applied to your account each day one is borrowed.

TOILET TRAINING

Toilet training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. Toilet training cannot begin until the child is old enough to have independent urges. The child must also be ready in three areas. First, the child must be physically ready (meaning he or she can "hold on" for a period of at least an hour or more, although several hours is a better indicator of readiness.) Second, the child must be intellectually ready (that is, he or she understands when and how to use a toilet). And third, the child must be emotionally ready (in other words, he or she must be willing to use the toilet). When the three areas of readiness occur together, toilet learning is typically easy and rather quick. When the time is right for your child, and until he/she is successful in his/her toileting, he/she should wear clothes that promote their independence. In addition, your child must have two complete changes of clothes (do not forget the socks!) The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists, or dresses. Try to avoid tight clothing, pants with snaps, zippers, belts, overalls, and onesies. These are difficult for children to remove "in a hurry".

We ask that you begin toilet training at home during a weekend or vacation after which, we will follow through and

encourage your child here. When a child is ready, the process should go quickly. Putting a child in diapers part time, and training pants part time, can be confusing and delay the training process. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the potty, more so than at your home. Our teachers have several children in their classroom; therefore, they may not have time to “remind” your child every 15 minutes to use the potty. For us to potty train your child must be able to announce that he/she must use the bathroom and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement. Your child's readiness is something we can discuss because consistency between home and center will be especially important. This is a special time for your child, a sign that he/she is growing up. Toilet training should be a pleasant experience.

Please note: In order to ensure the health, safety, and readiness of all children in our programs, children must be potty training to move to our 3K classroom and potty independent to move into our 4K classroom.

If a child is not potty training (3k) or potty independent (4k) by the time of their scheduled classroom transition, we may need to delay the move until readiness is achieved. If continued care is not possible in the current classroom due to space or staffing limitations, care may be paused or terminated until the child is ready.

***Potty training** is defined as a child showing interest and will use the toilet when prompted by an adult.

***Potty independent** is defined as a child who does not require any assistance with going to the bathroom (pulling their pants down/up, wiping, flushing, handwashing, etc.), has little to no accidents, and does not wear a diaper/pull-up.

CLOTHING/ATTIRE

Children should arrive dressed for play. We like to have fun! Having fun involves outdoor play and lots of messy activities, so make sure that your child is dressed appropriately. Please do not dress your child in nice clothing and expect them to be spotless when you arrive to pick them up. Clothing should be comfortable and seasonally appropriate for outdoor play. Make sure to include hats, mittens, boots, and coats for cold weather. You will be expected to provide an extra change of clothing for your child. Accidents will happen, and it is always helpful that when they do, there is clothing that we can change your child into. If we do not have extra clothing for your child when an accident happens you may be called to come pick up your child as we only have so many “extra center clothes.” PLEASE MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD ALWAYS HAS EXTRA CLOTHES IN THEIR BIN, so you do not get that phone call.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

We ask that children do not bring toys from home. Little Comets is NOT responsible if your child brings in something from home and it gets lost or broken. If we have a special show and tell day, we will allow the children to take their show and tell out only during show and tell time and then they must return it to their backpack.

PACIFER USE

We allow the use of pacifiers in our infant and toddler rooms. Once children transition to our 2-year-old room, we no longer allow the use of pacifiers in the classroom and encourage a stuffed animal and/or blankie for nap time. The use of pacifiers while in preschool can prevent the development of both social and emotional skills as well as speech and language.

EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS AND MOVIES

Occasionally we may turn on a learning/educational video for the children to watch. At no time will a child be forced to watch the program/movie. In cases where a child does not want to watch the educational video they will be redirected to another area. During holidays and summer months, we may play special PG movies for children 3 years of age and older, which we require permission for in advance from the parent/guardian.

BIRTHDAY AND HOLIDAY PARTIES

Birthdays are a special time, and we really like to celebrate them! Feel free to send treats that they can share with all their classmates. Please check with your child's teacher to see how many children are in their classroom. We also celebrate most holidays and have classroom parties. Teachers usually post a sign-up sheet for special treats and welcome goody bags to pass, but they're not required.

FIRE/TORNADO SAFETY

We have a written fire evacuation and tornado shelter plan, and we incorporate both fire and tornado safety curriculum into our program. We have a practice fire drill once a month and a tornado drill between the months of April and October so children will know the routine if there were to ever be a need for evacuation or to take shelter.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

In the event of an emergency concerning the safety of the children in our care, such as a fire, flood, or evacuation of the center for any natural or unnatural reasons, we will take the children out of the affected area to a safe place. Parents will be notified by

telephone of the emergency and any additional information that needs to be given regarding their child's safety. In the case of a lost child, the authorities will be notified first, and then the parents. A conscientious effort will be made to secure the safety and well-being of your child(ren) and you will be notified as soon as possible of any such emergency and the location in which we are at.

All doors are locked for security purposes, but lockdown drills are becoming more common as individuals continue to attack schools and school grounds. In the case of an intruder or other criminal emergency, we will take the children to a safe place and call for help. All windows and doors will be locked and secured until law enforcement assures us that it is safe to come out. During lockdown, parents can be contacted but will be unable to pick up or drop off children. This type of drill will be practiced several times throughout the year.

DISASTER PLAN OUTLINE

Tornados: If a tornado warning occurs, we will take the children to an area where there are no windows. We will maintain a tornado/hailstorm kit (flashlights, blankets, books, radio, water, snacks) that we can use to get through the storm. Maintaining a calm environment in all emergency situations is essential. Communication between us will be maintained through telephone as much as possible.

Fire: If a fire should occur in the center, we will immediately evacuate the children to the end of the parking lot and use a cell phone to call the Fire Department and notify parents. If it is inclement weather, we will wait at a nearby store or business until parents can arrive.

Severe Thunderstorms: In the case of a severe thunderstorm, we will take the children to an area where there are no windows. Once the storm passes, we will return to our classrooms. We feel that during a severe storm children become more upset if they can see the wind, hail, rain, thunder, and lightning. We feel that by taking their attention away from the windows the storm will be the best for everyone involved. We will have activities for the children to take part in until the storm passes, or we feel the children will not be upset.

CENTER DISASTER PLAN
Tornado: Children and Staff will go to hallways or bathroom(s).
Intruder or dangerous situation outside: Remain in rooms lock doors and windows
Primary Emergency Meeting Place during an evacuation of the center: Back by baseball field
Secondary Meeting Places: Main parking lot (in back corner)

Blizzard/Power Outages: During a blizzard or power outage, we shall remain calm and go about our daily business as best as possible. If the power outage is for longer than an hour, or the heat in the center is no longer retained (whichever may come first), we will notify parents that they must come and pick up their child.

Emergency Substitute Care: In case of an emergency near opening or closing hours when one teacher may be in the center alone she will call for our on-call emergency teacher which will be to the center within 5 minutes of the call.

In an emergency where we must evacuate the area around us, we will call the local bus company to provide the transportation. This will only be in an extreme emergency evacuation situation.

BITING POLICY

Biting can be a very difficult time for parents of the biter, both the child getting bit and their parents, as well as the staff involved. It happens so quickly, and often when our back is turned for 2 seconds, and suddenly, a child bites another child, leaving us with very little time to react. We want families to understand and respect that this is just as hard on us, if not harder, because we must work with both families and children in the hopes to find successful solutions.

Unfortunately, biting is normal, and it usually occurs due to....

1. Children trying to communicate
2. They have short attention spans
3. Frustration

4. Fighting over a toy
5. Trying to get another child's or an adult's attention
6. Family situations at home
7. They have 2 languages within the household that can create communication issues
8. Other...

Kids don't usually bite because they enjoy it, but because they don't know any better and it's their way of communicating. This can be hard because it can take a while for children to understand that it's not ok. We believe that working together with parents and staff is crucial to improving the biting issue. We have found in the past that when parents and staff work together, the biting improves.

We believe in finding other solutions such as,

- Having teachers offer different/fun activities during the day.
- Have teachers get down to the child's level and talk to them about what they did and show them what they did to the other child.
- The child biting can be placed in another environment with an activity.
- Redirect them to another activity, move them to another classroom (if able)
- Different room arrangement.
- Bring new toys to the classrooms.
- New routine for the classroom.
- Making the environment feel more comfortable with softer lighting and colors.
- Encourage positive reinforcement or any solutions that parents and staff find that work.

We are always open to any suggestions; however, we will not use punishment as a solution. Our main goal is making sure parents, staff and director are all aware of the situation and are cooperating in working to find a solution. It's important for all parties to keep an open mind in situations such as this.

If the parents of the child that is biting do not cooperate and are not working with us to find solutions, the family may be asked to take a suspension leave for a certain time (to be determined based on the situation).

The family that has the child that is getting bitten must understand we are trying our very best to resolve the problem and that our main goal as childcare providers is to keep your children both safe and happy. It is also important for us to use this opportunity to guide the children that are biting and to work with them on better ways to communicate their feelings.

All incidents will be documented in detail. This will include the progress being made, conversations with parents and what changes were made or are being made. **Keep in mind that we cannot prevent biting from happening just like we can't prevent a child from tripping and hitting their head, we can only find ways to make it better.**

Steps we take to help the situation when biting has become an issue.

- We consider it to be an issue when a child bites more than 2-3 times a day within a week's time frame and/or blood is drawn.
- Parents will be called to have them picked up within 1 hour each time.
- Figuring out what could be causing the biting by observing the biter and the child getting bitten.
- Documenting the incidents as detailed as possible.
- Try any of the above classroom techniques listed above.
- Talk to the parents of the child that is biting and find out what the teacher and parents could be doing at home and at school to help improve the biting.
- Talk to the parents of the child getting bit and give them suggestions to work with their child's verbal skills so they learn how to let others know when they don't like someone hurting them.
- Give reading handouts to both families about biting and have parents sign them saying they had read it and they understand it.
- Have constant communication with parents and teachers about what is going on in the classroom.
- Have parents observe with the cameras.
- If the child biting has already been sent home for biting, the child may have to take a suspension leave for 1-2 days.

If it gets to a point where either family is having a hard time dealing with this, we may conclude that this may not be a good fit for your family or child. This could either be a mutual or an individual decision. We will gladly have the family back when the parents and child are ready.

SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

As a licensed center, we are required to report all suspicions of child abuse to our local police department and/or child protection agency.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

We have the use of surveillance cameras, which include audio, in each of the classrooms. The use of these cameras is to ensure the safety of our staff and children. Due to confidentiality purposes, if video footage is requested, all parties will be required to sign a form and an appointment will need to be made in advance to view. The video is kept for 30 days.

TAX INFORMATION

We will supply you with a year-end summary of all daycare fees paid during the year for tax purposes via E-Mail to the address provided on file. This will be given to you by January 31st each year. You may request a statement at any time throughout the year.

REVISIONS TO THE HANDBOOK/CONTRACT

All families will sign a yearly revision to this handbook and the accompanying contract each year. We reserve the right to make changes in rates and policies, as we deem necessary. You will be notified, in writing, of any changes that may occur. Every attempt will be made to give at least two weeks' notice of changes.



I acknowledge that I have a duty to read and understand the contents of Little Comets Learning Center Parent Handbook. Little Comets Learning Center admits children to programs on a space available basis, without regard to race, religion, creed, color, national origin, or sex.

I also understand that the policies and procedures stated within the Parent Handbook are guidelines, are presented as a matter of information only, and are not to be construed as a contract between Little Comets Learning Center and the recipient of this Parent Handbook. I also understand that Little Comets Learning Center, in its sole discretion, may change, alter, modify, amend, or rescind any of its policies and procedures stated in the Parent Handbook from time to time without prior notice.

I have received and read this Acknowledgment of Receipt, know, and understand its contents, and sign the same of my own free will.

(Please sign and hand into office)

☐ I acknowledge that I have received an electronic copy.

☐ I acknowledge that I have received a hard copy.

Child/ren's First and Last Name _____
Please Print

Parent or Legal Guardian's First and Last Name _____
Please Print

Parent or Legal Guardian's Signature _____

Today's Date _____