

Wild Roots

Nature-based Early Childhood Family Collaborative

Parent Handbook

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A Welcome from the Site Supervisor



Over my twenty-year career as an educator, my ideas about how young children learn and the educational approaches that can shape programs to meet these needs have been challenged and are still evolving. In recent years, a few events have spurred another transition and ignited an interest in nature-based education.

Thinking about my own childhood outdoor play experiences brings back vivid memories that are easily conjured up even after 50 plus years. Often I roamed about the fields, creeks and forests with a neighbourhood gang of children; at times our play was boisterous, joyful, adventurous, challenging sprinkled with a little danger and fear. Other times we were still and contemplative. I remember one particular sunny afternoon watching water walkers skim along the surface of a pond with my friends. No one spoke; the sounds of crickets, the pungent smell of the pond and warmth of the sun on my skin are still with me today. Memories like these made me wonder how program experiences like these can be offered to today's children who live in a such a fast-paced, scheduled and technology-driven world.

With this in mind, I embarked on self-designed study tours of nature-based programs in Germany, Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, workshops, training with Claire Warden (Forest School and Nature Kindergarten and trainer) and a Master's thesis on the topic. These have affirmed that nature-based early childhood programming offers young children meaningful opportunities to learn more about themselves and the world around them. It also creates a space where we can explore different ways to be in the world.

I am really looking forward to working with you to create this type of programming in our community.

Andee

Welcome to
Wild Roots - Nature-based Early Childhood Family Collaborative
a program offered by *Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre*

The Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre Board, CEO and Staff would like to extend a warm welcome to all families. We hope you will find this handbook informative and ask that you consider it carefully. We have provided a hard copy of portions we will work with in our orientation sessions. Other sections are posted on-line under the Wild Roots name. This is outlined in the table of contents.

Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre is a Non-Profit Charitable Corporation, guided by the Board of Directors, CEO and educators. The task of the Board of Directors is to support the school in all financial, legal, fund-raising activities and provide expertise in business ventures. We are licensed by the Ministry of Education to accommodate children from 6 months to 12 years in various programs offered at our twelve locations.

We are excited to offer a new program, Wild Roots, in your community. This innovative program will offer your child an opportunity for growth in development, to foster an ecological consciousness, and build healthy relationships with others including the rest of the natural world. But it's also an opportunity for you to be part of and learn with a community keen to explore a nature-based early childhood approach.

Wild Roots will be run as a parent cooperative. In this model your family will work together with the educators, children and the rest of the natural world to provide a unique learning environment for all.

This introductory program will be open to preschoolers; 2.5 – 5 years of age. We can certainly explore the offering of programming for other age groups in the future.

This handbook provides information for all families and facilitators (duty parents). It will also be available on the Little Lions website. Throughout this document reference will be made to policies. These will be available on-line along with other supporting documents.

The handbook will serve as a starting point for conversations to shape our program.



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A Collaborative Process

One of the unique features of our program is the opportunity to collaborate with each other. There is no 'cookie cutter' recipe to make this process run smoothly; it will require work and transparency. And the benefits will be well worth it – we will learn, support each other, build ideas and community (in the larger sense of the planet) and create spaces where the children can thrive.

To create a safe place where we can share ideas and questions, I would like to propose the following 'Tips for Respectful Discussions' (From: Wolpert, E. (2005). *Start Seeing Diversity*. St. Paul: Redleaf Press.) as a starting point for our conversations. We can certainly add to these suggestions.

1. **Accept that what's 'in your face' obvious to some may be utterly invisible to others**

Those of us don't see any offense are not stupid or mean. Most of us are simply unequipped to do so. We have been bombarded by misinformation. Most of us are products of an educational system and life experiences dominated by singular perspectives that have not prepared us to be open to or even aware of diverse perspectives or to be critical observers or thinkers.

And don't forget that we learn by expressing our ideas and getting feedback from others. Holding back for fear of making mistakes can mean lost opportunity for growth as well as unfairly leaving the risk-taking responsibility to others.

2. **Listen actively to one another**

Listening means turning off the doubting and defending mechanisms long enough to really understand (and that can take a while).

3. **Allow for diverse conversational styles**

Diverse conversational styles may require some thoughtful negotiation. Some feel that a dynamic discussion means more than one person talks at once, using loud voice and interrupting. Others feel that one should wait until a speaker finishes. Some are direct and others are indirect. You can see how conflicts can arise. It is important not to dismiss these and other differences as simply differences in style. We need to become more aware of our own styles and preferences, and how these influence our interactions and our perceptions of the discussions we are in.

4. **Expect disagreement and practice conflict management**

Disagreement in some form is inevitable where there are diverse views and experiences – but disagreement doesn't mean disrespect. Conflicts may be unsettling to some group members, but often it is more important to acknowledge the conflict that exists and explore the differing perspectives than it is to try to resolve the conflict.

5. **Assume that we'll all have a desire for knowledge and growth**

We all have a lot to learn – and are always learning. We're not all in the same place. Some of us may have a great deal of knowledge in some areas but not much in others. We can support each other's learning and growth rather than judge or try to 'one-up'. Remember we were each once, and will be again, the one who hadn't 'gotten it' yet.

6. **Use "both/and" rather than "either/or" thinking**

Rather than one perspective or solution being the good or right thing and another the bad or wrong thing, allow for more than one simultaneously valid perspective or solution. Exploring two or more perspectives is often more productive than trying to reconcile them.

If at any time there are things that you are not sure should be addressed with the group please contact me and we can discuss it personally. We can determine if and how it can be presented to the group.

Community Tool Box is an organization that supports those engaged in community development. You can check out their resources at <https://ctb.ku.edu/en>

Roles and Responsibilities

| | NOTES |
|--|---|
| <p>The Site Supervisor will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • facilitating orientation and continuous learning and planning sessions • creating and reflecting on pedagogical documentation • developing and facilitating curriculum that meets the needs of children • ensuring that policies and procedures are adhered to • ensuring equipment/materials are in good working condition and available • inspection of playspaces • liaising with community partners and government agencies • assessing the program • nurturing relationship building and collaboration • communicating with Little Lions administration • ensuring all certifications are kept up-to-date | |
| <p>The Facilitator (Duty Parent) will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being part of a team that facilitates the nature-based preschool program. This will mean that they will be on program duty 3 -4/month during which time they will supervise, observe and engage with all the children. When they are on duty they cannot bring other children. • being actively involved in curriculum review and implementation • arriving on time for scheduled duty times. The ECE and at least one parent must be present at the start of the session. • arranging a replacement if they cannot facilitate on their scheduled date, from the duty parent list. Once a replacement is confirmed they will notify the site supervisor 45 minutes before the session begins. (the adult/child ratio of 1:4 must be maintained at all times) • taking part in nature-based early childhood orientation sessions • participating in two continuous learning and planning sessions/month • sharing their expertise and learning new skills to support the program • reviewing and adhering to all relevant policies (documented verification required) • submitting the following <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Criminal Record Check with Vulnerable Sector Check ○ Standard First Aid Level C (a free course will be offered by Little Lions for duty parents on March 24 – 25) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Immunization Record and Medical Consent Form ○ Proof of completion of the following (these can be completed through Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ WHMIS | <p><i>Times will be posted on the schedule.</i></p> |

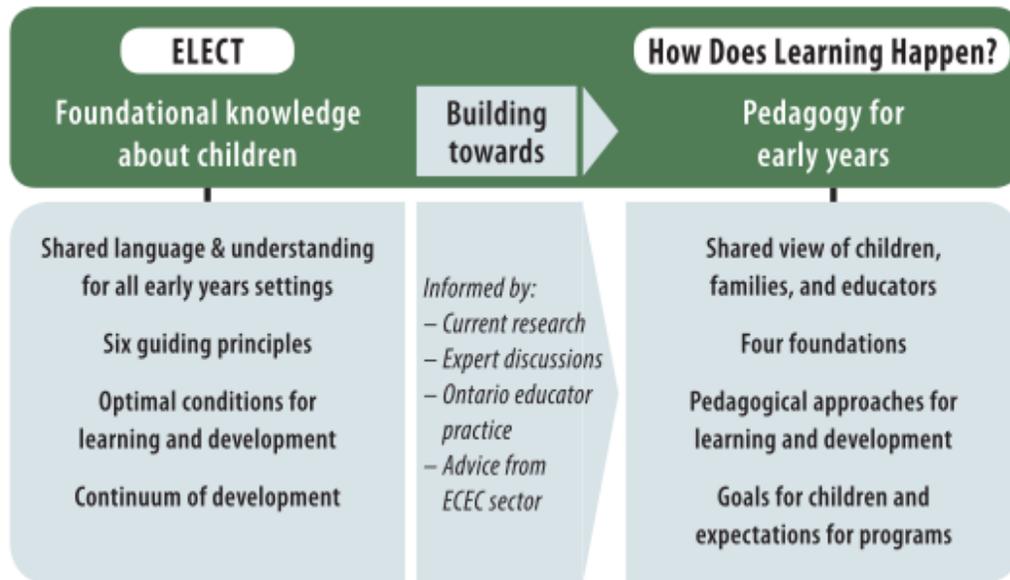
- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ AODA Customer Service and Understanding Human Rights▪ Occupational Health and Safety▪ Bill 132 and 168 | |
|--|--|

Foundations

Pedagogy is “the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that support that understanding of learning”. Curriculum (the content of learning) and pedagogy (how learning happens) in early years settings are shaped by views about children, the role of educators and families, and relationships among them. (HDLH, 2014, p. 5)

Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA)

This document contains the regulations licensed childcare centres in Ontario must adhere to.



Excerpt from: Ontario Ministry of Education. (2014) . *How does learning happen? Ontario's pedagogy for the early years: A resource about learning through relationships for those who work with young children and their families.* p. 12. Toronto

Program Statement – a CCEYA requirement. It includes goals to guide programming and pedagogy and the approaches that will be implemented in our program. Our program statement can be found on the Little Lions website and at the end of this package.

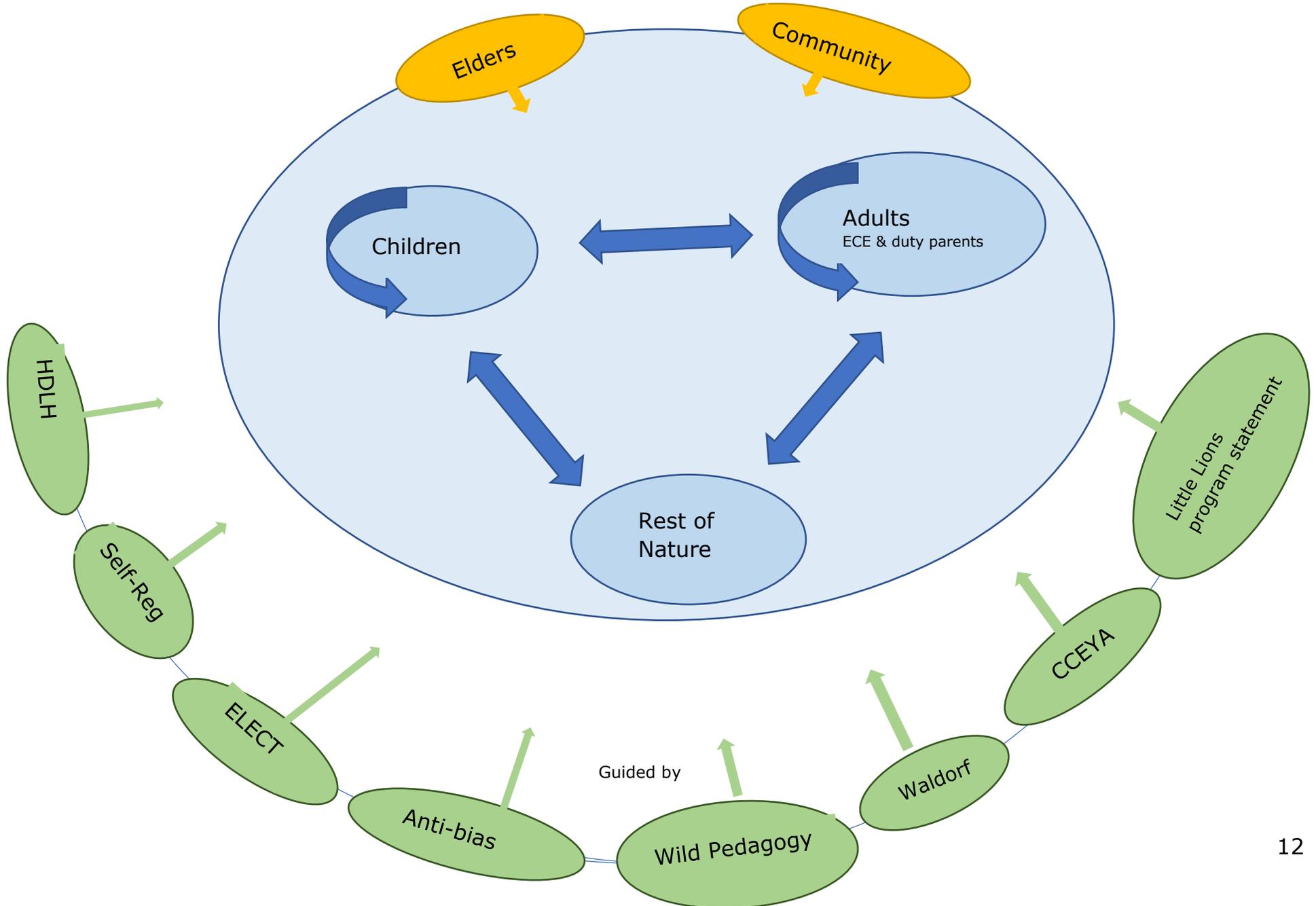
Waldorf approach - includes creating an atmosphere that is beautiful, calm and welcoming, where children are invited daily to participate in meaningful tasks and creative experiences. Movement features prominently as does free play and the development of imagination. Young children learn by imitation and for that reason, adults are expected to be worthy of imitation in thought, word and deed. Children learn through direct experience - education of the head, heart and hands. You can learn more about this approach by visiting Little Lions website. <http://www.littlelionswaldorf.ca/>

Anti-bias approach ... promotes attitudes of respect and acceptance within an inclusionary atmosphere of diversity. There are several areas of diversity; ability, age, appearance, belief, gender, race, culture, sexual orientation, family composition, class
For more information check out *Start Seeing Diversity* by E. Wolpert (2005). It, along with other books, is in our library.

Wild Pedagogy ... challenges dominant cultural ideas about control—of each other, of nature, of education, and of learning. It rests on the premise that an important part of education can include intentional activities that provide a fertile field for personal and purposeful experience without controlling the outcomes, and hence wild pedagogies. You can learn a little more at <http://wildpedagogies.webs.com/>. More will be posted on our website.

Self-Reg decades of research have shown that self-regulation is the foundation of healthy human development; adaptive coping skills; positive parenting; learning; safe and caring educational programs; and vibrant communities. Visit The Mehrit Centre <https://self-reg.ca/>

The Wild Roots Program – a flow chart



The Flow of The Morning – A Proposal

In keeping with our program statement, our time together with the children will offer them with many play opportunities to explore, discover and make meaning of their world. There will also be opportunities for all to come together to share ideas and learn from each other. Throughout the morning we will support children by guiding self-regulation, being inclusive, being worthy role models and building respectful relationships with each other and the rest of the natural world.

The rhythm of our morning gives the children a sense of security, relaxation, and predictability.

| FLOW | NOTES |
|---|--------------|
| <p>8:45-9:05 am Arrival Time We will work together to make the arrival transition comfortable for all children; recognizing that it differs for each child. After their good-bye, the children are free to play within the ‘Gathering Place’. Books and drawing materials will be available. The ECE and at least one duty parent will be on site at 8:30 to discuss the day. The rest of the children may be dropped off at 8:45. When you arrive with your child to begin their day, ensure that a staff member is aware of your arrival. An educator must acknowledge your arrival by signing in your child. A toilet station will be setup. The wagon/sleigh and packs will be ready to go. Family and children’s libraries will be open for sign in/out.</p> | |
| <p>9:10 am Snack and Morning Circle Our morning circle is a time to welcome the day, acknowledge the presence of each other and the rest of the natural world and make plans for the day. This may be done through song, poetry, stories, movement and music. The intent is to spark a sense of wonder, respect and appreciation to carry the children through their morning. During this time we will collectively decide which area we would like to spend time in. A short snack will be incorporated. Children will bring their own snacks, preferably packed in reusable containers. Snacks will follow the guidelines outlined in Policy 9.2.3 (Policies can be found on the Little Lions Website). Once done the children will pack up their bags and they will be stored, along with some of the activities, in the educator’s vehicle until the end of the day. The toilet station and circle blanket will be packed into the wagon/sleigh just before we head off to our playspace destination.</p> | |
| <p>9:45ish Walk to Playspace We will split into small groups (also part of our emergency procedures – see Policies) as we walk to our playspace. One adult will lead the group and one will cover the rear. When we reach our destination, we will walk and mark the perimeter of the space. Hazards will be identified and ways to manage risks will be reviewed. Children will be invited to help set up the tool wrap, tarp shelter, toilet and wash station.</p> | |

| Flow | Notes |
|--|-------|
| <p>Playspace Children are offered an uninterrupted time to play. Our role during this time is to provide a warm, supportive and unobtrusive presence, offering assistance when needed. We will be keen observers, recording stories of the children's (and our own) explorations, discoveries, learning that we can later discuss. During this time adults may offer different learning experiences (eg. creative arts, science). One adult may work on handwork or other meaningful work.</p> | |
| <p>11:50ish Clean-Up Time and Closure We will gather for a sharing of stories and cleanup time. The walk back to the 'Gathering Place' will be the same as previously described.</p> | |
| <p>12:10 – 12:30 Departure Families will be waiting at the Gathering Place when we arrive. Snack bags will be picked up and once again the libraries will be available. Please confirm that a staff member is aware of your departure. An educator must acknowledge your departure by signing out your child. The ECE and at least one duty parent will be on site until all the children leave.</p> | |

More Notes

Terminology

- Pedagogy is “the understanding of how learning takes place and the philosophy and practice that support that understanding of learning “. (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 5)
- Curriculum (the content of learning) and pedagogy (how learning happens) in early years settings are shaped by views about children, the role of educators and families, and relationships among them. (MoEd. 2014, p. 5)
- Duty Parent – we will use the term **facilitator** in our daily language. It is more inclusive (for all family members or friends who might take on the role).

If there are any other words/phrases that you would like to discuss in terms of clarity or tweaking/changing please send Andrea a message. We'll include it for discussion at our next meeting

Timeframes

- Time Period – April 30 – June 30
- Days will be determined through a survey. You will have a choice of days. We can offer the program if we have a minimum of about 6 children/day. You do not need to sign up for all the days the program is offered.
- Daily timeframes (see pp. 11 – 12 for more detail):
 - 8:45 – 9:05: drop off at Gathering Place
 - 9:15 – 9:45ish: morning circle and snack at Gathering Place
 - 9:45ish: walk to playspace
 - 11:50ish: Clean-Up time and Closure
 - 12:10 – 12:30 Departure from Gathering Place
- Facilitator Sessions – Dates will be determined through on-line survey.
All facilitators will need to be present for all sessions.
(see next page for more detail)
- Optional – A visit with your child so we can get to know each other. Ideally this could be done at St. Kateri or at your home. We can schedule a time between April 16 – 27.

Facilitator (Duty Parent) Sessions

All Facilitators will need to participate in these sessions to ensure that our program runs smoothly and evolves to meet the needs of the children and families.

1. Orientation Sessions

These sessions start the process of building our collaboration and help to shape a unified approach.

DATES

- Feb 12
 - Review of the handbook
 - Dates and schedules ... and flow of the day and year
 - Meeting government expectations
- March 24 – 25 - First Aid Level C offered by Little Lions location TBA. If you already have this certification please provide proof.
- Two further sessions will be scheduled based on an on-line survey. One will be held on a Saturday morning and one long evening session. Some interactive on-line options will be available
- Topics include; Self Reg, review of roles and key policies, exploring the role of risk in children's play, benefit-risk assessments, wild pedagogy, emergency procedures, and hopefully a presentation from elders. We will try to do as much as possible outdoors.
- Saturday April 28. (9:15 – 12: 10) Family session – It will be a very practical way to review our roles and make adjustments. Together we will 'run through' a program day, including morning circle, snack, discussions about risk, perimeter walks, emergency drill and of course lots of time to play. It's also a way for your child to meet facilitators and other children, become familiar with the space and the flow of the morning.

2. Continued Learning and Planning Sessions

As adults working with the children, we always try to find a balance between seeking the deeper meaning in what we are doing while at the same time keeping a fresh "beginner's mind" that allows us to be in the moment with the children. We will meet twice a month to support each other's growth, to encourage self-reflection, to integrate what we know with what we experience, and to get feedback in order to expand our awareness of our personal edges and how our work with the children can improve. At the same time we are not striving to be perfect and in fact, appreciate our imperfections, as they are often our best teachers. We think it is wonderful for children to see the adults in their life working with their rough edges, continuously growing and changing.

Some ways that this might be achieved is through pedagogical documentation, guest speakers, assessing the program and discussing ideas and issues that arise.

To ensure that all voices are heard and that we are collectively making decisions, and learning together both orientation and continued learning and planning sessions are mandatory.

DATES/Location/options to participate on-line will be discussed at our next session. Start time – 7:15 pm

Engaging with children: A Few Tips

We can help to provide an environment that encourages children's curiosity, creativity, critical thinking, imagination, interdependence and autonomy by engaging with children in a respectful manner. The following tips can help us meet this goal. Please ask if you have any questions or other suggestions that could be added to the list.

- When speaking with a child, get down to their level so that you are face-to-face.
- Be warm and positive in conversation: focus on what is needed instead of what not to do
- Try using descriptive or acknowledging statements/comments that help children recognize their emotions and accomplishments. Example: "I noticed that you stacked all the rocks on top of each other. That must have taken a lot of patience." Or "I see that you are crying. It seems like you are very sad". Hollow phrases like "Good Job" don't provide children with information and encourages children to seek out praise.
- Follow the child's lead. Rather than jumping right in and directing the play, stand back and watch what the children are doing. Then you can step in and make comments or ask questions that relate to what the child is doing. The child might invite you to join in their play too.
- At times, especially when the children are fully immersed with others or an experience, we can 'step back' and observe. You can make notes or take a photo (you'll find tools in your waistpack) and then talk with the child about what you saw later on. It's not always easy to know when to step in and when to step back. Time and practice and chatting with others will help develop these skills.
- You do not need to be the 'knower' or 'conveyor' of all knowledge. Children have lots of ideas and theories so we can ask questions that help tease out their thinking. When children ask a question you can respond with "That's an interesting question. What do you think?". You can also provoke thinking with "I wonder" questions or questions that don't have a 'yes/no' response or 'right answers' (example rather than asking "What colour is the frog?" you could ask "Why do you think frogs have such big eyes on top of their head?" Naturally your questions have to match the children's language and cognitive stage.
- There is a place for you to bring activities or 'provocations' especially ones that interest you. Chat with your ECE and try them out. Don't be discouraged if the children are not interested. It may need a tweak or need to be tried again at another time.

- Remember that children are also watching you. They will absorb and imitate what they see and hear.
- Helping children sort out conflicts can be uncomfortable. These six steps from the HighScope approach will be a helpful guide.

6 STEPS IN RESOLVING CONFLICTS

- **Approach calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.** Place yourself between the children, on their level.
- **Acknowledge children's feelings.** Say something simple such as "You look really upset." Let children know you need to hold any object in question.
- **Gather information.** Ask "What's the problem?" Do not ask "Why" questions.
- **Restate the problem.** "So the problem is..."
- **Ask for ideas for solutions and choose one together.** "What can we do to solve this problem?"
- **Be prepared to give follow-up support.** Acknowledge their accomplishments (e.g., "You solved the problem!") Stay nearby in case anyone is not happy with the solution and the process needs repeating.

(excerpt from HighScope Educational Research Foundation. (2018) Curriculum Components. Retrieved from: <https://highscope.org/curriculum/preschool/details>)

- If you have any questions, need clarification or reassurance please seek out support from the ECE and other parents. We are all here to support and learn from each other.

Evaluation of the Program

How can we reflect on the ways our program has impacted our lives and our relationship with community and the rest of the natural world?

This question is being posed for us to consider at the end of the spring session. Please keep this question in mind. We'll come back to it at future continued learning / planning sessions.

One suggestion is that we define key thematic areas. We can ask ourselves

- What are the areas that are foundational to the program and its effective delivery?
- Why are they relevant?
- How can we best address these?
- When is it most important to address these?

These might include the following:

- Program content
 - How did the program evolve? (what was planned, delivered, was it as expected, etc.)
 - What are the specific program components? Clearly identify
 - What influenced change from plan (if a change)? (people, circumstances, weather, etc.)
 - How did nature act as a co-teacher?
 -
- Collaborative process
 - How were issues identified? By whom? When: in a timely way so as to be addressed?
 - How were the issues brought forward and/or resolved? By whom?
 - What can we say about the decision-making process? Did it follow our steps? Was it balanced and collaborative? If not, how not? If so, what was the outcome in terms of the decisions made and collaborate process?

Pedagogical documentation is one 'tool' that we might use to help with this process.

A FEW MORE DETAILS – some are open for discussion and tweaking

| | Notes |
|---|-------|
| <p>What to Wear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For children (see Policy 12.9.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clothing appropriate for all weather conditions is a must. Warm hats, snow pants, mittens and neck tubes (for safety reasons, SCARVES AND MITTENS ON STRINGS HAVE BEEN BANNED) are needed for the winter, rubber boots and splash pants for the wet season and hats for sunny days. ○ Layers are encouraged – 3 on top and 2 below. Consider fabrics that wick away ○ Sturdy, closed-toed footwear with lots of room for toes to move around ○ Pants are worn at all times, preferably pants that are tight around the ankles ○ No necklaces, bracelets, or other jewelry items that may catch on things ○ Please clearly mark your child’s name on all clothing items. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A little note: Wearing clothing with particular media characters may encourage rough or inappropriate behavior. Please consider clothing/backpacks that do not include these items. We do have some plain backpacks available for children. Please let Andrea know if you are interested. 2. Since we are not using toys in our program, we ask that you not bring toys from home. 3. If you are interested in a rainsuit rental program please let Andrea know. | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For adults – (see Policy 1.1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There is an expectation that all staff and facilitators will present themselves as a model in terms of comfort, practical apparel for all weather conditions and appearance. ○ Consider wearing layers ○ Pants are worn at all times, preferably pants that are tight around the ankles ○ Care is taken to ensure that tattoos and logos are not offensive (if unsure please check with the staff) ○ Sturdy, closed-toed footwear ○ Visible small studded body piercings are acceptable. | |
| <p>Items to be packed into your child’s backpack</p> <p>Plastic bags for wet clothing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water bottle • Plastic bags for wet clothing • Small hand towel • One extra complete change of clothing (to lighten this load you can leave a labeled bag that we can store in our large waterproof backpack) <p>Remember that food will not be taken into the forest.</p> | |
| | |

| | Notes |
|--|-------|
| <p>Items facilitators (duty parents) should bring</p> <p>Since you are part of the child/adult ratio, you won't be able to leave the site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A water bottle ○ Optional - Extra clothing ○ Ensure that you do not have food in your pack or clothing <p>You will be given a waistpack with important materials to carry out your role. Some will also be carrying our group waterproof packs.</p> <p>Your cellphone WILL be turned OFF (see Social Media policy). Photos may be taken with the camera in your waistpack only.</p> | |
| <p>Sharing Spaces</p> <p>Children enrolled in the Wild Roots program will be encounter many different kinds of plants and may encounter animals. Learning more about plants and animals through first-hand observations helps children to gain a deeper understanding of the world around them. Section 11 – Sanitary outlines a strategy to reduce the risk of harm or injury to all sharing the space</p> | |
| <p>Weather</p> <p>Weather is checked each day. If the program is underway and extreme conditions arise, the program will be moved indoors to a room at the St. Kateri site. These include strong winds (80km/hr), thunderstorm/hail, snowstorm, tornado, temperatures above 30°C and below -20°C (with wind chill). (See Policy 12.9.1)</p> | |
| <p>Parking</p> <p>Drive slowly when approaching the parking area. Once parked, please do not call your children from the parking lot.</p> <p>Idling free zone. In keeping with our ecologically sound practices, we request that you turn off the motor of your vehicle while it remains in the parking lot.</p> | |
| <p>Photography and Videotaping</p> <p>Part of the duty parents' role is to collect stories about the children's and our own learning so that we can create pedagogical documentation. Each duty parent will have a waistpack. It will contain a camera and notebook. Photos and videos may be taken with these cameras only. The photos and videos will be downloaded by staff. We will discuss how we can share these stories within the requirements of the social media policy.</p> <p>When taking photos of children be as unobtrusive as possible, taking care not disrupt their play. We will talk with the children about the purpose of the photos/videos. Children may ask to use cameras to document their own stories.</p> | |

Adult Participation on a non-Facilitator day

This is an opportunity for non-facilitating family members to participate and/or bring their other children (in this case the non-facilitator must be responsible for these children). Care will need to be taken to ensure that children are not dominated by adults, to ensure how children interact with each other and the rest of the natural world is not altered. Please speak with the site supervisor at least one day before to discuss this option.

Elders

We are very fortunate to have two elders working with us. Ted and Barbara will join us periodically to spend time in the forest. They will also share their knowledge and understandings about young children and connections to the rest of the natural world from a First Nation worldview at some of our duty parent sessions.

Arrival and Departure

When you arrive with your child to begin their day, **confirm that a staff member is aware of your arrival.** An educator must acknowledge your arrival and be aware of the child before a parent departs.

At the end of the day, we assume responsibility until you have approached a staff member and have greeted your child. This is especially crucial at moments when there may be a number of other children and parents in the process of departing. Since parents on occasion may take a few minutes of the educator's time to see how their child's day went, the educator may not be aware of your arrival. **IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT YOU SPEAK WITH A STAFF MEMBER PRIOR TO LEAVING** and departure time is recorded by the staff. If not, staff will need to report a missing child. (see Policy 7.3 and 7.4)

Releasing a Child

We will not release a child to anyone other than the person or persons listed on the application form. If you are unable to pick up your child and have alternate arrangements, please contact the educator prior to departure time. A description of that person will be required and they will be asked to show identification when arriving to pick up a child. We will not release a child to anyone who is not on the pick-up person list (or otherwise authorized by a parent/guardian). You may add or delete people from this list at any time, but for the sake of security, please do it in person and in writing, not by telephone.

- It is the policy of Little Lions to uphold family law. Therefore, we are obliged to release a child to either parent regardless of whether or not they are listed on the pick-up list, unless we have a copy of any custody papers on file. In the event of one parent not being allowed to pick up a child, please inform the Program Director immediately and see that the appropriate documentation is on site. (see Policy 7.4)

In the event that a child is not picked up

If the parent/guardian and emergency contacts cannot be reached by 1:00 pm, as a last resort, staff will contact the appropriate Child Protection Agency.

Health and Safety

Safety is of prime concern to us. In the event of an emergency, please be assured that every effort will be made to contact you. If we are unable to do so, the name given as an emergency contact will be called.

Illness

We ask, out of consideration to other families in our program, that you keep your child at home if she/he is ill with a contagious condition or a fever. If your child becomes ill while attending a program, he/she will be cared for until arrangements for pickup have been made. Please ensure that your emergency contact information is updated and complete, including phone numbers.

According to guidelines set by the Algoma District Health Unit, designed to protect all children, your child must be kept home when any of the following occur:

- Fever, runny red eyes, diarrhea, head lice, impetigo, swollen glands, ear ache
- Persistent itching, vomiting, sore throat, jaundice, undiagnosed or contagious rash
- Thick mucus or pus draining from the eyes or nose, heavy or persistent cough
- Grey or white stool, dark (tea coloured) urine, sores with crusty yellow or green drainage.

A manual from the Algoma District Health Unit is available at the centre if you would like to review it. Little Lions adheres to the guidelines set out by the Health Unit regarding procedures for all communicable diseases that may arise periodically.

Please call to let us know if your child will not attend for any reason, including illness, as it will allow the program to continue with the planned activities and not wait for your child's arrival.

Please understand that your call may not be answered directly and you will have to leave a message on the voice mail. (See Policy 9.2)

Administration of Medication

The medication policy of this program is to not administer any medications, prescribed or over the counter drugs.

If you wish your child to have such a medication, you are welcome to come to the daycare to administer the medication. If you are sending a friend or family member to administer the medication, then **written consent** must be provided so that the staff is aware that this person has been given your permission to do so. (See Policy 10.1)

The exception is for anyone who has anaphylaxis. In this case, the staff will administer the required EpiPen. (See Policy 10.2)

Sunscreen Policy

It is suggested that all children have wide-brimmed sun hats (5" wide on all sides) In the summer months, health units recommend that your child (and you) should be dressed in loose fitting, tightly woven, lightweight clothing that covers arms and legs.

Emergency Management

In the unlikely event of an emergency evacuation procedure the main building at St. Kateri will act as our emergency shelter. Little Lions has extensive policies and procedures on emergency management up to and including a Pandemic Plan (See Policy 12 and Policy 9.6)

A walkie-talkie system will be used. The ECE will each carry one in their waist pack. Teachers working in the St. Kateri program will also receive one. These will be used to both communicate danger and to notify an "all clear" with a "release code" (where needed).

All sites have an emergency contact sheet for every child in the centre. Using these sheets, when an evacuation occurs, or any emergency requiring that your child be picked up from the centre, staff will call parents first, then the people listed as your emergency contacts. Please inform us of any change of contact information, address, phone number, change of place of employment, change of emergency pick up people, etc. It is essential that these forms are current so periodically you will be asked to update your information. Be assured that staff will remain with your child until you or your alternate pick up person arrives.

Emergency Situation Drills

We will conduct drills (fire, shelter in place, hold and secure, lockdown) monthly. Children are assured of their safety and handled with care. Please review Emergency Procedures 12.3.14, 12.12.13,

Emergency Closures

When the School Boards close all schools within city limits due to inclement weather, we will also close. Please listen to the radio for the announcement.

Nutrition

Please pack a snack for the morning circle by following these guidelines (See Policy 9.2.3)

- Clearly label the carrying container
- In keeping with our ecologically conscious practice please use reusable containers
- Food is expected to be healthy and meet Canada Food Guide guidelines. We can share healthy snack ideas - free of additives, preservatives or high sugar content.
- No items that need to be re-heated
- Allergen conscious – we'll share information about any foods that are problematic

Aromatherapy

The option to use lavender oil on children's hands when they are distressed is available.

Toileting and Diapering

A plan is in place. Please see Section 11 – Sanitary for a detailed description.

| | Notes |
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| <p>Meaningful Work We will explore ways that we can engage in meaningful work related to the outdoors. Faculty from Queen’s University are interested in working with us.</p> | |
| <p>Exploring the role of risk in children’s play We will explore ways that we can offer children opportunities to encounter risky situations in their play, confront danger, challenge their limits and overcome fear. Policies for water play (Section 9 – Health and Nutrition), use of fire and tools will offer guidance. Benefit – risk assessments will be conducted.</p> | |
| <p>Program Fee The cost of this introductory spring program is \$10.00/day. This offer is made possible because of a collaborative project with Sault College. Fees will be paid directly to Little Lions through an on-line system. More information will be made available at the First Aid course in March.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If my child is ill, do I still have to pay?</i> Unfortunately, the answer is yes. We are a non-profit organization so you can be assured that this is not for the sake of a bigger profit; it is so that we remain financially viable. If we do not stay financially sound, your program could be at risk. • <i>If I keep my child home for personal reasons or for an appointment or holiday, do I still have to pay?</i> Some early childhood programs charge a set monthly amount with no discount for missed days. Instead, we have opted to give parents a chance to lower their fees if they know in advance that they will miss a day. We have chosen to waive the fee if we are given two weeks’ notice in writing, because, with adequate notice, we can adjust the duty parent schedule or can offer that spot to another family. • <i>If I pay at the beginning of the month and then give you 2 weeks notice about a missed day, am I reimbursed?</i> The amount will not be reimbursed. Instead you will get a credit which will apply to the next month’s bill. Reimbursement would apply only if you gave 2 weeks’ notice. <p>Details on how to make payments are posted in the second part of the parent handbook, which is located on the website.</p> | |
| <p>Pre-program Visit An individual visit in your home or at the Wild Roots site can help your child feel more comfortable with the educator and contributes to the beginning of a positive, cooperative relationship between your family and the educator. Alternately you may also choose a home visit after your child has started the program.</p> | |
| <p>Insurance Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre carries insurance coverage with The Co-Operators.</p> | |

The Flow of the Year

| | Notes |
|--|-------|
| <p>Holiday Closures</p> <p>We are offering our introductory spring program. We can discuss how, when and where we would like to offer future programs. We will be closed for any statutory holidays. There may be additional closures for professional development. Parents are given at least two (2) months' notice to enable them to make other arrangements.</p> <p>We will be closed on May 21, 2018.</p> | |
| <p>Festivals and Celebrations</p> <p>Little Lions believes that celebrations of festivals throughout the year provides us with rich nourishment for our inner selves and contributes to the well-being and stability of our program's community. They celebrate Festivals and other special days that are part of our multi-cultural heritage. Some examples of these are our Harvest Fair, Enchanted Garden, Lantern Walk, Christmas Dinner, and May Day. Would we like to integrate or create celebrations that recognize our connections with the rest of the natural world that follows the seasonal rhythm of the year? Or not include these in our program.</p> | |
| <p>Birthday Celebration</p> <p>Little Lions sees birthdays as a very special day in a young child's life. How would we like to acknowledge this day in our program?</p> | |

A Review of Key Policies

(you will be signing a form that will be kept in your records)

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE AND PROHIBITED PRACTICES

Section 1: Personnel and Working Conditions 1.52 and 1.53

CONFIDENTIALITY and INTERNAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Section 1: Personnel and Working Conditions 1.2 (relevant pieces)

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Section 1: Personnel and Working Conditions 1.21

SOCIAL MEDIA

Section 1: Personnel and Working Conditions 1.48

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Section 1: Personnel and Working Conditions 1.16

Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre acknowledges that conflict is a normal part of the life of any organization where services are purchased. Parents may have views or goals which are different from the beliefs and value system of the child care centre. It is important that both sides have the opportunity to voice their opinion or point of view in hopes that open communication will lead to understanding. It is important that these discussions are respectful, timely, in the spirit of collaboration and focussed on the best interests of the child. The following steps are to be followed when an issue has come up between staff and parents.

1. The matter should be addressed expediently through direct communication with the parties involved. This should be done within 5 business days, at a time that is convenient to both parties, and not in the presence of the child. Depending on the issue, the involvement of outside agencies may be requested by either party. The other party will be informed. This first meeting will be documented.
2. If the parents are dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting, they may request a meeting with Little Lions Human Resources department, with or without the presence of the program staff. This meeting will be documented.
3. If the parents are not satisfied with the outcome of the second meeting, they may appeal, in writing, to the Board of Directors. The board will review the documentation and respond within 10 business days. The Board's decision will be final.
4. The staff may receive further direction from HR in regards to the decision if it is related to their competency. An action plan may be required.

5. At all times, staff will avoid triangulation (discussing with a third party) as this will be considered gossip. A high degree of professionalism is required during times of conflict.

RETENTION OF RECORDS (pieces relevant to your files)

Section 14: Retention of Records 14.1

1. Children's files and attendance records will be retained in a locked filing container at the home of the site supervisor. During program hours they will be kept in the site supervisor's locked vehicle.
Staff and Ministry of Education program advisors will have access to these files. Algoma Public Health will have access to the Immunization Records. Information that is relevant for duty parents will be shared with parental consent. Children's files will be kept at the head office for two (2) years from the date of withdrawal and in storage at the head office for five (5) years. Withdrawal dates must be on each child's file.
2. Duty parent files will also be retained in a locked filing container at the home of the site supervisor. A copy will also be kept at the head office. Adult files will be kept at the head office for two (2) years from the date of withdrawal and in storage at the head office for five (5) years. The Site Supervisor, Ministry of Education program advisors and Little Lions administration will have access to these files. Withdrawal dates must be on each adult's file.
3. All financial records will be retained for a period of seven (7) years.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY (an excerpt – please review the whole of **Section 05B: Child Abuse**)

Child abuse is a criminal offence. Little Lions Waldorf Daycare & Kindergarten cannot condone child abuse and/or neglect, including serious illness, of any kind. Abuse of a client may include physical, emotional psychological and economic abuse. Both parents and children are considered clients. In the case of abuse of a parent, or child witnessing abuse, a call must likewise be made immediately to the Children's Aid Society or its equivalent.

5.11.1 Duty to Report

In accordance with the Child and Family Services Act, it is the responsibility of every person in Ontario, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, to immediately report to a Children's Aid Society if she/he suspects that a child abuse has occurred or if a child is at risk of abuse. This includes any operator or employee of a day nursery. An individual's responsibility to report cannot be delegated to anyone else.

CFSA s. 72 (1) Despite the provisions of any other Act, if a person, including a person who performs professional or official duties with respect to children, has reasonable ground to suspect one of the following, the person shall forthwith report the suspicion and the information it was based to a society:

CFSA s. 37.2

- a) The child **has suffered** physical harm, inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's,
 - i. Failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protecting the child, or
 - ii. Pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for, supervising or protecting the child.
- b) There is a risk that the child is likely to suffer physical harm inflicted by the person having charge of the child or caused by or resulting from that person's:
 - i. Failure to adequately care for, provide for, supervise or protect the child, or
 - ii. Pattern of neglect in caring for, providing for supervising or protecting the child.
- c) The child **has been** sexually molested or sexually exploited, by the person having charge of the child or by another person where the person having charge of the child knows or should know of the possibility of sexual molestation or sexual exploitation and fails to protect the child.
- d) There is a risk that the child is likely to be sexually molested or sexually exploited as described in paragraph c.
- e) The child **requires** medical treatment to cure, prevent or alleviate physical harm or suffering and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child does not provide, or refused or is unavailable or unable to consent to the treatment.
- f) The child **has suffered** emotional harm, demonstrated by serious,
 - i. Anxiety,
 - ii. Depression,

- iii. Withdrawal,
- iv. Self-destructive or aggressive behaviour, or
- v. Delayed development,

and there are reasonable ground to believe that the emotional harm suffered by the child results from the actions, failure to act or pattern of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.

- g) The child **has suffered** emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i., ii., iii., iv., or v. of above paragraph and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child **does not** provide or **refuses** or is **unavailable** or **unable** to consent to, services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the harm.
- h) There is **a risk** that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i., ii., iii., iv., or v. of paragraph f resulting from the **actions, failure** to act or **pattern** of neglect on the part of the child's parent or the person having charge of the child.
- i) There is **a risk** that the child is likely to suffer emotional harm of the kind described in subparagraph i., ii., iii., iv., or v. of paragraph f and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child **does not** provide, or **refuses** or is **unavailable** or **unable** to consent to, services or treatment to prevent the harm.
- j) The child **suffers** from a mental, emotional or developmental condition that, if not remedied, could seriously impair the child's development and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child **does not** provide, or **refuses** or is **unavailable** or **unable** to services or treatment to remedy or alleviate the condition.
- k) The child has been **abandoned**, the child's parent has **died** or is **unavailable** to exercise his or her custodial rights over the child and has not made adequate provision for the child's care and custody or the child is in a residential placement and the parent **refused** or is **unable** or **unwilling** to resume the child's care and custody.
- l) The child is **less than 12 years old** and has **killed** or **seriously injured** another person or **caused serious damage** to another person's property, services or treatment are necessary to prevent a recurrence and the child's parent or the person having charge of the child **does not** provide or refuses or is unavailable or unable to consent to those services or treatment.
- m) The child is **less than 12 years old** and has on more than one occasion **injured** another person or **caused loss or damage** to another person's property, with the **encouragement** or the person having charge of the child or because of that person's **failure** or **inability** to supervise the child adequately.

Any suspicion of child abuse encountered by any staff, volunteers, support staff or students is to be reported to the Site Supervisor/Designate.

1. The Site Supervisor/Designate is to follow the Procedure for the Reporting of Child Abuse.
2. Any of the following objective data should be listed in the Suspected Child Abuse Reporting Form.
 - a. Description of the observed injury, including size, shape, colour and location on the body. (outline of body attached)
 - b. Any drastic changes or chronic problems with the child's health or behaviour.
 - c. Direct quotations related to child abuse from the child and/or staff member.
 - d. Dramatization or direct quotations by the child during fantasy play when the concern is suspected injury, neglect or emotional maltreatment.

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre is an organization which provides child care for children 6 months to 12 years of age according to the Waldorf philosophy or “Steiner” education. The following Program Statement is consistent with the Ministry of Education’s statement on programming and pedagogy issued under subsection 55 (3) of the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 and #46 of Ontario Regulation 137/15. It is the policy of Little Lions to review the program statement annually to ensure compliance and congruency with our own philosophy and policies.

VISION: Resilient and compassionate children in a healthy, vibrant community where love and wonder are the basis of learning and living.

MISSION STATEMENT: Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre Directors and Staff are dedicated to the principles of “Waldorf” or Steiner Education and Child Care. We strive to foster the realization of these principles through exceptional child care that nurtures the whole child, supports families, integrates varying aspects of a nature-based approach and strengthens the community.

GOALS Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre will endeavor to provide an environment and programs in which each child will flourish and grow through the early stages of development. Little Lions seeks to provide a warm, home-like atmosphere with tasks and domestic routines to follow. Programs will allow plenty of time for imaginative play with a nature-oriented environment as expressed and practiced in Waldorf education. Programs based in nature will integrate aspects of the above/along with nature and wild pedagogies.

These broad statements find expression in the practical application. To accomplish this, each caregiver is encouraged to further their professional learning based on Waldorf principles and the Ministry of Education’s policy statement on programming and pedagogy. We find that these two are compatible in that both demand that the caregivers themselves believe that children are capable and competent, full of curiosity which must be nurtured and that all children are rich in potential. Each child can learn and succeed given the right environment and so our focus is to create the opportunities for this to happen.

The Waldorf philosophy focuses on four main senses during the early years. These include the sense of touch, balance, self-movement (proprioception) and the life sense which is the sense of well-being that is critical for the healthy development of any child. We nurture these senses by our daily, seasonal and yearly rhythm, our sensory rich environment and the loving kindness expressed by all staff.

Children know that they belong in our program in many ways. For example, indoor programs will have individual cubbies and a chair that has their own personal chair cover. Children in outdoor programs will have a voice each morning to determine where the group will play. Most importantly, they know they belong because the caregivers can be trusted to make them welcome, to know them and to provide for their unique needs.

Each child is seen as an individual and we strive to see them for who they are. We strive to recognize their strengths and find the opportunities to further their development. Frequently this happens through play-based assessment or through the keen observation of trained, caring staff. Relating to children respectfully involves taking into account what they need and want. Encouraging them to express and act out on their preferences builds and strengthens a sense of responsibility for themselves and supports the idea that children are active contributors to their own and other's experiences. Children's participation in play is a valuable way to support their development and learning. Making decisions and having choices are very important elements in the daily experience. Child-initiated and adult-supported play experiences afford children the opportunities to develop autonomy and independence as well as to learn social and relationship skills as they explore their interdependence and connectedness with peers, educators and, in parent cooperatives, the 'duty parents'.

The staff supports children in their ability to self-regulate. All practices are respectful of a child's autonomy while being conscious of the need for safe exploration of the environment during play and positive interactions with other children and adults. This may be achieved through environments (natural or set-up by adults) for children to successfully and safely explore, role-modeling appropriate language and communication and otherwise finding just the right tool for a child to use to achieve self-regulation. Staff role model appropriate language and communication at all times. Empathy is developed through the use of the healing basket which helps children to focus on the healing act following an incident where another child has been hurt. All staff create a safe social environment by their awareness of group dynamics which then guides their practice (eg. setting up the program room).

Our environments provide opportunities for children to learn to care for themselves, their peers, adults and the rest of the natural world as well as the materials around them. Indoor programs have plants, pets, and babies (dolls) that need to be cared for. They have special items that must be handled with care, so children learn to have reverence for something that is precious. The environment is inviting, appealing to their changing interests and needs and is aesthetically pleasing, with furniture, toys and furnishings made from natural materials. Broken toys are often mended in the program with or by children. Programs situated in natural settings foster a sharing spaces perspective that is respectful of the more-than-human world.

Our trained staff are cognizant of the fact that a healthy rhythm to the day is crucial. We strive for a flow to the day rather than a schedule. In this way, the day may flow more according to the interests and activity level of the children rather than the clock. The day must have a “breathing” quality with moments of activity and moments that are more subdued. For example, an in-breath such as story time might be followed by an out-breath such as active running. We are respectful of the need for all children to have a rest time or quiet time, even if they do not sleep. Children may decide if they will sleep or rest quietly. Quiet activities, such as fidget bags, will be available for children choosing to rest quietly. As much as possible we allow the children to find their own natural rhythm for rest or sleep. We support their oral language development through storytelling, songs, traditional rhymes and games which are also built in to the rhythm of the day. Staff members sing through the transitions which tend to be slow and natural.

In positive learning environments, indoor playground and natural settings, experiences are child-initiated rather than contrived by the adults. Children are actively involved in the care of their environments. For example, in-playground and gardens, they may be engaged in meaningful tasks such as raking, sweeping and shoveling. In natural settings children will be involved in habitat monitoring. By dressing appropriately, children can enjoy outdoor play in most types of weather. To make this affordable for parents, we often rent waterproof clothing to families to spare them the expense of purchasing high quality outerwear. This enables children to play in wet weather and to enjoy puddles without inconvenience to the parent. The role of the adult is to observe their play, notice their interests, emerging ideas and developmental needs, plan and offer experiences accordingly, find ways to extend the learning and therefore optimize the child’s development. At times the adult may role model a new experience, inviting the child to join in and supporting their learning through the process which encourages on-going learning. Our goal is for children to be self-motivated learners. The emphasis is on process rather than an end result and healthy play is observed, valued, encouraged and supported by the staff.

Our playgrounds are natural and do not include any playground climbing structure. All playgrounds include a sandbox, gardening area or containers, logs and stumps, trees, rocks and other natural items. A variety of tools, equipment and "loose parts" is provided to ensure that children can interact with the natural environment in a creative way which supports inquiry-based learning. Artistic endeavours are promoted outdoors through simple means such as chalk drawings and collaging natural items and sometimes more complex crafts or activities such as weaving with natural items. We promote healthy gross motor play such as running, jumping and climbing (when safe) and often take children on excursions to places where this is most likely to happen. In programs set in natural settings, such as the Wild Roots program, nature provides the environment and materials for children to engage with. Tools, such as magnifying glasses, whittling tools, and baskets, are offered to deepen children's engagement. In the summer we support play in nature by renting Tapiola where children can roam the 14 acres of field and forest and can enjoy play in the river as well as tending the community garden which we plant there every June during our Family BBQ. Some staff members have received special training from various organizations to give them skills in this area, such as Monarch Teacher Network, Voices From the Land, Forum for Ecological Education and Action and Ecological Leadership. Some of our sites compost although not all are allowed to do so depending on the school policy. In general, our organization works hard to support the staff so that they will be equally excited to be outdoors as the children are.

Health and safety is a priority. We not only follow the common guidelines, but we far exceed them in some cases. We consider all aspects of the child's safety including recent research which shows that "no risk" environments have a detrimental effect on children. To achieve that balance, our supervisors have been trained to do "Benefit Risk Assessments" and are encouraged to do this in all programs, indoors and outdoors, with their staff and where appropriate, with the children.

Food is prepared daily on site by the cook, or, in the case of a satellite program, food is catered from one of our main sites. Our food policy is extensive, taking into account information from the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Algoma Public Health in regards to nutrition as well as supplementary information from Waldorf sources. We start with high quality ingredients, often organic, locally purchased if possible. We avoid foods with excess fats, sugars, hormones, high levels of mercury, preservatives. Environmental issues are taken into account in the procuring of local food and purchasing practices in regards to packaging, etc. Every effort is made to provide wholesome food prepared with attention to safe food handling and storage. In programs where families provide their children's lunch and snacks, parents will be made aware of the program's food policies and will be encouraged to provide foods that adhere to

these practices. Care is taken to serve food in an aesthetically pleasing manner in a home-like setting which fosters a sense of community. Food is served family –style with children encouraged to self-serve when possible. In many programs, children are frequently included in food preparation and wash their dishes following their snack. Foods from various cultures are enjoyed.

Ongoing open communication with parents is essential for us to work as a team to support their children to achieve their goals. Staff members strive to communicate verbally daily with families and, in some programs, through daily records as well as through the monthly and quarterly newsletters. As much as possible, we try to be there when the parent needs us. Over time this develops into a trusting relationship which facilitates open communication. Communication with parents today, of necessity, must take many forms and we strive to reach parents in the method that best suits them and their life style, be it by telephone, bulletin postings, newsletters or email. In parent cooperatives, families play an integral role. Duty parents (those who assist during program time) will participate in pre-program sessions to familiarize them with early childhood, nature and wild pedagogies. Monthly meetings will provide opportunities to further explore how children and adults learn and grow with nature.

A trusting relationship between co-workers and administration is also fostered. We do this by transparency regarding financial practices and decisions that directly impact staff. Staff members are informed of the reason for most situations or decisions, for example, regarding wages, benefits, funding requests, major purchases and other decisions that affect them.

Weekly staff meetings ensure that issues arising are dealt with in a timely manner. We are proactive rather than reactive and this opportunity for frank and open discussion enables us to better support the children and families. Weekly meetings also include opportunities to discuss topics related to the four principles of "How Does Learning Happen?" as well as the Waldorf philosophy and nature and wild pedagogies. Weekly staff meeting time may also be used for team planning where staff consider the interests and needs of the children they have observed during the previous week. Occasionally, staff will conduct a child study according to the Waldorf philosophy.

Staff complete an annual Self-Evaluation and a Behaviour Management Self-Evaluation (followed by action plans when deemed necessary by the supervisor) to ensure positive interactions with children at all times. The staff is instructed in the aspects of the Waldorf philosophy that relate to the well-being of children, including emotional and

spiritual well-being. Positive interactions with parents occur daily and take many forms from the initial interview process, an extensive application form which includes the child's history, a home visit if desired, through the orientation and daily written and verbal communication with staff. We find that interactions are always better when people are well-rested. We want our staff to be patient with children and that is enhanced if they are not tired or over-worked. For this reason, our centre has adopted a four-day work week to support their well-being physically and mentally. In addition we provide opportunities for counselling through an EFAP program to ensure good mental health.

We realize how important it is for our staff to have professional development opportunities that are both mainstream and Waldorf. Little Lions has started its own 400-hour Waldorf training for staff so that, over time, we will be able to have an ECE faculty which is also Waldorf trained. Presenters from all over the world (England, New Zealand, British Columbia, USA) come on a regular basis to work with all staff because we want the most current and relevant training we can find. We also offer training in nature pedagogy. Our staff appreciates this and it has enabled us to build a community of learners.

Little Lions is a Red Cross Training Partner so we ensure that all our staff not only have their First Aid training but also have regular updates that include child care specific examples. We provide an annual workshop on Choking to raise the awareness of parents.

We see ourselves as integral to the community and are committed to collaborating with community agencies, schools and professionals in order to support children, their families and staff. Our organization does this by participating actively with such organizations as Roots of Empathy and Healthy Kids Community Challenge. We have staff trained to offer Fair Start screening. We regularly use the services of Children's Centre Thunder Bay and Thunder Bay Health Unit to better support any children with special needs. We take part in Welcome to Kindergarten Nights as well as participating with Parent Councils in our Municipalities. We take part in assemblies and school events, working in partnership or taking a leadership role, such as Weed Out Hate Day. We have built strong connections with other agencies that support families in need, such as Dilico, and have worked to create a child care centre that has been invaluable in supporting young single mothers, our most vulnerable population.

The Waldorf philosophy is one that stresses the need for continual striving toward our ideals. We believe that we are always in the process of "becoming", adults and children

alike, and so in order to further this, we must look at ourselves as well as at children. This need for self-reflection is integral to our working in this field. As part of our ongoing assessment, we invite feedback from parents bi-annually although we welcome it at any time. For the ease of parents, we offer opportunities for feedback at our annual parent interviews in the fall and in the spring parents are asked to fill in a parent survey. This may be done on-line or on paper. New families are asked to complete an entrance survey so that we know how well we are doing when it comes to welcoming and integrating new families, at making this “their home away from home”. The parent exit survey allows for candid and honest feedback from families once they are out of the centre.

Future goals for our organization include improving our pedagogical documentation and ongoing communication with parents. We hope to go beyond the typical family board that we are currently using. This will take many forms including digital documentation as we explore current practices on making learning and interactions visible, to find a tool or practice that meets our needs, the needs of the families and complies with the Waldorf philosophy.

Another goal is wider use of play-based assessment in which some of our staff members are currently being trained.

We see our child care centre as a “learning organization” where knowledge and information is readily available so that decision –making can happen at many levels. We are striving for the autonomy for each centre under the umbrella of the larger organization. Our approach in this regard is for each Site Supervisor to have a form and financial formula which allows them to truly see the impact of their daily decisions. They meet quarterly with the bookkeeper to see if they are meeting budget expectations. These meetings may be followed up by meeting with the CEO to discuss their decision-making process and the impact it has on the running of the centre. Another aspect of this study of our individual centres is to see ourselves through the eyes of our community partners. We have a Community Partner Feedback Form that was previously circulated annually. We will re-instate this practice as a goal for this year.

The program statement will be read by all staff upon hire and annually thereafter during the annual Policy and Procedure Manual review. The program statement will be the

new standard to which we hold all our staff but we see this as a living document which will change over time. Job expectations and performance appraisals will reflect this. Staff meetings will be a time for site supervisors to reflect on the program with their staff to further their understanding of the organization's philosophy and practices and to find opportunities for improvement. Site Supervisor meetings, which happen approximately every three weeks, will be a time for us to reflect on the program statement to ascertain whether or not we are achieving our goals or if new goals are necessary. These findings will be brought forward to the board by the CEO.

This program statement may be taken as our assurance we are committed to live the vision we espouse.

Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre, based in Thunder Bay, began as an extension of the Grade 12 Family Studies program at Lakeview High School, conceived, organized and taught by Traude Wedding. It began as a workplace daycare that also served the Parenting Practicum course as a model for Waldorf childcare.

A start-up grant was acquired and a license obtained in 1984 for a one-room day nursery. The program expanded and eventually included an afternoon program, but finances were limited. Requests were made to the city for subsidized spaces. The process of incorporation was completed by 1986. The first Board consisted of three directors: Bobbi Sawchuk, Mary-Jane Wedding and Traude Wedding.

Eventually there was a full daycare, morning and afternoon programs and five directors. Later the After-School Program was added and enrolment was growing fast but, unfortunately, Lakeview was due to close. Many applications for grants were made to the city and various foundations. A grant was received from the Ministry of Northern Affairs administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. This resulted in the purchase and renovation of the Clarke Street property in 1991. The staff and directors looked forward to the blossoming of Waldorf childcare in their own centre. A Board resolution established Traude Wedding as founder and honorary director for life. New directors supporting the Waldorf philosophy have been gradually added to the Board.

Since 2005, our organization has experienced significant growth with the opening of numerous new sites, many located in schools. Wild Roots, a new nature-based cooperative program in Sault Ste. Marie, will open in April 2018.

History of the Waldorf Movement

The educational and childcare philosophy of Little Lions is based on the teachings of Austrian Philosopher Rudolf Steiner who founded the first Waldorf School in 1919 for the children of the workers in the Waldorf cigarette factory. Soon there were many schools and while visiting them in the 1920's, Steiner observed the need for preschool or "kindergarten" programs. Elizabeth Grunelius began the first Waldorf Kindergarten based on the needs of the very young child as Steiner described them in his books and lectures. This is the origin of the "Waldorf" or Steiner philosophy of education for young children. There are more than 1,500 Waldorf Schools and initiatives world-wide.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Objectives

1. To provide exceptional child care and other appropriate programs for children aged 6 months to 12 years, five days a week, year-round, in a Waldorf setting.
2. To provide encouragement and leadership for the expansion of Waldorf child care providers across North America.
3. Provide strong infrastructure which supports staff, programs and the other objectives.
4. To obtain the support, funding and publicity needed to achieve the above goals and stated objectives

Function of the Board

The Board of Directors meets on the third Tuesday of every month at the Clarke Street location. If a parent wishes to address the Board, they must inform the Chief Executive Officer so that their presentation is added to the Agenda.

The Board works in close cooperation with the Staff and Parents in regards to matters concerning (but not limited to) the following:

- Balancing of the budget and other financial concerns
- Long range plans for growth of the centre
- Education of staff and parents
- Community awareness
- Fund-raising
- Daily operation including wages and expenditures
- Tuition fees
- Capital expenditure
- Adherence to Waldorf Principles

Contacting the Board

The names and telephone numbers of all board members can be found in the family library.

Social Responsibility Committee

Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre believes that an organization has an obligation to act to benefit society at large, that we have a duty to improve the quality

of life of our workforce and their families as well as the local community and society at large. This committee engages on many community based projects to benefit all ages of citizens. An example of a current project is the EMS folder for seniors and the Watch For Bikes decals that we distribute.

Becoming a Board Member

Parents are invited to become Board Members. They may attend the Annual General Meeting in April and allow their names to stand for election to the Board of Directors. For more information on what is involved, please feel free to contact any Board Member.

The Office

The Chief Executive Officer carries out her administrative work at the Clarke St. location in Thunder Bay. The main office, located in the basement of 211 Clarke is usually open from 9:00 to 4:30 p.m. Even though you may get a recording when you call, there may be people in the office who are on the other line. You will get a call back as soon as possible. The extensions for the office staff are as follows:

(807) 344-2298

Lindsay Gaw-Martin, CEO ext. 4

Adam Boone, Human Resources Officer ext. 1

Brandee Popowich, Financial Officer ext. 3

Katie Cryer, Accounting Clerk ext. 5

Marilyn Grudniski, Director of Training, 807-632-2735

Since we are located in a secure building, and if you wish to meet with any of the office staff, please call ahead so we can schedule an appointment at a time that is convenient for you.

Please do not give verbal messages to the staff since we do not want them to be distracted from their duties with children. This can also lead to messages being confused or forgotten. Messages for staff regarding your child's attendance may be left on the voice mail for the site.

Messages to the Chief Executive Officer or Office Manager may be left on the voice mail or emailed. If messages concern changes to your schedule or other important information, it is always best to give instructions in writing or on the appropriate form for that purpose, if there is one. Please hand all schedule change requests to your site supervisor. These forms are always available in the parent library.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Waitlist Policy for the Wild Roots program

Wild Roost will maintain a wait list. Parents may request to know where they are on the waitlist.

The Site Supervisor will offer spots when they come available based on the following criteria:

1. Priority given to a family that wishes to enroll the sibling of a child currently attending.
2. Priority given to a family requesting a full-time spot.
3. If there are no requests for full-time, every effort will be made to match families that have complementary schedules, for example M/T/TH family matched with W/F family. This will ensure maximum use of the available spaces.
4. Flex schedules may be considered, on the understanding that if the spot is needed for another family with a set schedule, they may be given two weeks' notice to make other arrangements.
5. We will not have more than one flex spot per program as the financial loss is too great.
6. Site Supervisors will remove a family from the waitlist if they refuse a spot three times.
7. Site Supervisors will remove a family from the waitlist if they do not call back within three business days of receiving an offer.
8. Little Lions Waldorf Child and Family Centre (our parent organization) is inclusive and discrimination during enrolment for any reason is not tolerated.
9. Children with special needs are accommodated provided the program meets licensing requirements.

Enrolment Practices

If you would like to enroll your child you will receive a tour of the site. You will be able to ask questions about the program (philosophy, facilitator responsibilities, fees...). Next you are encouraged to visit the program in action. This will give you an opportunity to see the philosophy in action. Questions can be answered after the program concludes.

Once a decision is made that this is the education you want for your child, you will receive a registration package, which includes information about your child and facilitator requirements.

When all forms have been completed and submitted, including the immunization record for the Algoma Public Health (APH), facilitator requirements are completed (including the free First Aid course, Criminal Record Check, HR training and immunization record) and the deposit is paid, registration is confirmed. Please note that the child's completed immunization form is required by the Medical Officer who is responsible for the enforcing of the Health and Day Nurseries Regulations. **This form is to be received by the APH upon their request and must be readily available.**

Once the application process is completed, you will receive a copy of the parent handbook. It is also posted on our website. This is an important document that will address philosophy, expectations, facilitator roles and responsibilities, rights and financial responsibilities. You will be expected to read all of the information in the handbook. If you have any questions or want to further discuss the contents the Site Supervisor will be happy to meet with you (see Pre-program visit below). We want to ensure that you clearly understand the content of the Parent Handbook before signing the contract.

Pre-program Visit

On the application form you **may** request a pre-program visit before your child begins. This can provide an opportunity for your child and the educator to share time on a more personal basis. During the visit the family and the educator can discuss any questions about the child's enrollment form (not in the child's presence) and become more familiar with the educational philosophy. A visit can be the beginning of a positive, cooperative relationship between your family and the educator.

Options include;

- a visit to your home
- a visit at the Wild Roots site before the program begins

Alternately you may also choose a home visit after your child has become familiar with the educator.

Schedules for Enrolment

Ideally, children enrolled in Wild Roots must attend scheduled programs for a minimum of two days a week, on the same days and time. From time to time, and if the program is not too full, exceptions may be made.

Arrival and departure times are important. To allow the child the benefit of all activities, we expect prompt arrival and departure. The daily, weekly and monthly rhythm is designed to expose the child to a maximum of creative, imaginative learning. Facilitators must be punctual for their scheduled time

If, for any reason, the arrival must be delayed, an appropriate non-disruptive time will be chosen through discussion with you by the educator or Supervisor. Frequent late

arrival times will result in a review of your needs and the ability of the program to accommodate your schedule.

Parent Fees and Terms

Applications for enrolment are accepted along with a \$25.00 deposit to secure your child's space in a specific program.

\$25.00 of this deposit is applied to your first month's fees for the period of enrolment. The deposit is forfeit if the child does not attend the daycare.

If you are enrolling more than one child, you only need to pay the deposit fee one time.

The fee for a daily session is \$10.00/child.

DIRECT PAYMENT

Statement of Account

- Direct pay families are billed at the beginning of every month. You will expect to receive an Invoice and Statement of Account in the first week of every month. It is the families' responsibility to retrieve their Invoice and Statement of Account from their email or mailbox. (If you are unsure of where the Mailboxes are located please ask a staff member for assistance.)
- Billings are done during the first three days of every month, so if you have submitted a Request For Change of Schedule Form after the first three days, it will not reflect on your account until the following month.
- A Change of Schedule Form **must** be submitted **2 weeks** prior to the change. If two weeks written notice is given (A Request For Change of Schedule is submitted) you will be given credit for the requested days off. Failure to do so

will result in full payment of the days missed. As a non-profit organization, we must be sure that programs are as full as possible every day in order to be financially sound. Giving us ample notice will ensure that you do not pay for days of care that you did not use and also ensures that we have a chance to offer that spot to another client.

- Attendance sheets are reviewed and verified at the end of every month so if your child attends the program an extra day during the month it will reflect on the following month's Statement of Account.
- Payments are due in full by the 15th of every month. You may however, divide your payments and give postdated cheques for the 15th and 30th/31st but they **must** be handed in by or before the 15th of every month.
- If payment or postdated cheques are not received by the 15th of the month a late notice slip will be sent out.
- You will not be billed for any closures including unscheduled closures for example, snow storms.
- You will find the current Program Fees above. Any changes will be communicated through email and posted on our website.

SUBSIDIZED SPACES

At this point subsidized spaces are not available.

FOR ALL FAMILIES

Contracts

Your contract must be signed before your child begins at Little Lions. Please read the contract carefully or discuss it with the Supervisor to ensure that you fully understand the terms. You must pay according to the schedule you provide. Extra days may be accommodated if space and staffing allow.

Holidays

For any holidays during the school year, September to June, notice of two weeks in advance is required.

Late Charges

In the case of late pickups, the following will apply:

1. When a parent arrives late for the first time, a reminder is given. The parent is made aware of the LATE CHARGE FEE of \$5.00 for 5 – 15 minutes and \$10.00 for 15 – 30 minutes.
2. A parent arriving late for the second time is charged the amount per minutes as stated above.
3. On the third infraction, a letter will accompany the late fees,

Termination of Contract

Two week's written notice must be given to terminate your contract. If it is necessary to terminate due to a strike or lay-off, one week's notice will be accepted. Your child's spot will be held for a maximum of two weeks after which the spot may be given to another family. Your child will be put on the waiting list for the next available spot after the end of the strike or lay-off.

Resource Consultant

We are investigating how we can access support.

PROCEDURES FOR CHANGES TO:

Child's Schedule, Dates, and Times

Please request a Request for Change of Schedule Form. Complete it and hand it to the Supervisor as soon as possible. Please refer to the section on Invoice/Statement of Account to be sure that you give adequate notice for changes.

Address and Phone Numbers

For your child's safety, changes must be submitted in writing and handed to your Site Supervisor as soon as possible after the change occurs.

Emergency Contact Numbers

Please inform the site of any change in writing and hand it to your Site Supervisor.

Pick-Up Person

Please inform the site of any change in writing and hand it to your Site Supervisor. For the sake of security, please do not make these changes by telephone.

HOW TO READ YOUR MONTHLY INVOICE AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNT

Invoice

The monthly invoice will provide you with specific information for the current month. This information will include:

- an invoice number located on the top right-hand corner of the page
- the date of the invoice
- your child's name and the site they attend
- your name and address
- the care code or program your child is attending
- the number of days billed for the current month
- a description of the program your child is attending. Please refer to the description if you are attending a full or extended day
- the cost per day
- And lastly, the total charge (amount due) for the month.

At the beginning of each month you will receive an **invoice first** followed then by your statement.

Please note that your invoice will only show what you are being billed in the current month. It will not reflect any adjustment(s) to your prior month's invoice. Any adjustments applied to your account will reflect on your Statement.

There will be a sample invoice for you to view at the end of this section.

Statement

The monthly **statement** will provide you with specific information for the current month. The top portion of your statement will provide you with the following information:

- the date of the statement
- your child's name and the site they attend
- your name and address
- and a place to write in the payment amount you are submitting.

You can cut or tear the top portion of the statement, enter the amount you are paying in the **AMOUNT REMITTED** section and submit it along with your payment.

The body (middle) part of the statement will provide you with:

- the invoice number the charge(s) reflect
- the amount for the invoice number noted

- and the amount due.

The bottom portion of the statement shows:

- the current amount billed to your account
- any overdue amounts from the previous 2 months (31-60)
- any overdue amounts from over 3 months (Over 60)
- and lastly, the Actual or Total Balance Due on your account.

How to Recognize Any Adjustments Applied to Your Account

Please note that in the event that there has been an adjustment applied to your previous month's invoice (last month's invoice) it will reflect both in the body of the **statement** and also on the bottom portion of the **statement**.

In the body of the statement the first line will show the previous month's invoice date, invoice number and the amount of the original charge. The second line will show any payments applied to the invoice (or account), and then the third line will show the amount still owing on the invoice. Below this information your current month's charges will appear.

On the bottom of the statement you will see your Current amount due, any balance owing from the previous 2 months (31-60) and any balance owing from prior 3 months and over (Over 60). These 3 columns are added together and this gives you the actual balance owing on your account which appear on the bottom right hand corner of the statement.

If the adjustment applied to your previous month's invoice was a credit to your account (you had given two weeks notice and had booked a day off) the balance on the third line will have a negative sign beside it (-). The statement will subtract this credit amount and your balance owing on your statement will be less than the amount showing on your invoice.

There will be three samples of Statements following this section and after the Invoice sample. The first sample statement will show how your statement will appear with no adjustments or overpayments. The second sample statement will show how your statement will appear if your child attended an extra day in the prior month (added one day) and the third sample invoice will show how your statement will appear if there has been a credit applied to your account (if you submitted two weeks' notice and booked off one day).

SAMPLE INVOICE AND STATEMENT

Posted on-line

