

A Parent's Guide & Handbook
for
Mittineague Children's
Center

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www.facebook.com/mittkids

*Mittineague Children's Center is operated as a service to the community by

Mittineague Congregational Church UCC

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WELCOME TO

MITTINEAGUE CHILDREN'S CENTER

We are very pleased you have chosen our Center for your child. We are committed to providing excellence in early childhood care and education to the families and children in our community. We are delighted to partner with you in providing great beginnings for your child. Mitteneague Children's Center main goal is to provide developmentally appropriate early education experiences and consistent loving care in a warm and nurturing environment for children ages 8 weeks to 7 years.

We have prepared this handbook to help you become acquainted with our policies and expectations and to explain the benefits you will enjoy. Also included is a brief description of a daily class routine to familiarize you with the activities in which your child will participate.

Please read this handbook in its entirety and return the signature portion found at the last page of this booklet and return it to the office.

Again, welcome to Mitteneague Children's Center!

GENERAL INFORMATION

Statement of Purpose

Our purpose is to provide a quality early childhood care and education program that supports family success in our diverse community. We promote creativity, excitement and respect for all. Mittineague Children's Center embraces honesty, trust, respect, communication, life-long learning and fun in a safe, healthy and loving environment.

Mission Statement

Mittineague Children's Center mission is to provide excellent early childhood care and education to the families in our community. We will:

- View the entire family as our client, since families are the primary influence in the lives of young children. Anticipate and meet the needs of families with young children.
- Provide a nurturing, stimulating, and safe environment that allows all children to grow and develop through hands-on, child-centered experiences that recognize and encourage each child's individual strengths, interests and abilities.
- Recruit, develop and retain outstanding staff members by making this a "Great place to work", since they are the primary influence on a child's day while attending our program.
- Pursue partnership within the community, both to expand the number of families with young children we are able to influence and to expand the resources we have to call upon in serving families with young children.
- Recognize that longevity and consistency in our efforts will only be possible by operating a financially strong program.

Contact Information

Mittineague Children's Center Is located at:
1840 Westfield Street
West Springfield, MA 01089

Telephone Number : (413) 733-5566
Fax Number: (413) 733-5282
E-mail: mittkids@comcast.net (Director)
mittoffice@comcast.net (Office Manager)

Programs

- Infant Program** for children ages 8 weeks – 15 months
- Toddler Program** for children ages 15 months – 2.9 years
- Preschool Program** for children ages 2.9 years – 7 years

Hours of Operation

Our center is open year-round Monday through Friday from 7a.m. to 5:30 p.m. with the exception of certain holidays. School year closings are distributed every year around July 1st. All newly enrolled families receive our school year closing calendar upon enrollment.

In addition, the Center holds teacher in-service days during the year. Notices of all closings are posted prominently a week prior to each closing.

Severe Weather

In the event of an extreme weather emergency causing the Center to be closed for the day, the closing will be announced on Channels 40 and 22, as well as, being posted on the center's website and Facebook pages.

The Center will endeavor to remain open in the event of public school closings due to snow. In some cases, the Center may have a delayed opening. Please call us before bringing your child to the Center on these days, to let us know if your child will be attending. The more advance notice we receive, the better we will be able to staff the Center and accommodate each child.

A closing or early closing may be necessary due to the inclement weather or, but not limited to, other emergencies such as loss of heat, water or power for an extended period of time, affecting the ability to properly run the Center. In such circumstances, parents will be notified by telephone.

Licensing and Governing Rules and Regulations

Mittineague Children's Center is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and provides developmentally appropriate programs for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, ages 8 weeks to 7 years of age. The Center also meets or exceeds West Springfield's building and health standards, as well as, appropriate fire codes as required. All required licenses are posted in the administrative office for anyone who wishes to review the conditions authorized. A copy of the EEC- Child Care Center Rules and Regulations that govern child care centers like ours is on file and available for study upon request.

Mittineague Children's Center is owned and operated as a non-profit 501(c)3 entity as a, ministry by Mittineague Congregation Church. An Executive Board oversees the operation of the Children's center. Three members of the Board are elected to 3-year terms (and eligible to serve a second 3-year term) by the church membership. The Board recommends and the church council appoints two parent representatives whose child(ren) attend the Center to serve a yearly term (which can be renewed). One parent representative serves as the Board's secretary, The Center Director and Office Manager complete the Board. Board members and their telephone numbers are posted in the Centers office for your information.

Our Staff

Mittineague Children's Center staff members are chosen for their combination of experience in working with children and their training in early childhood education. They are dedicated to creating an environment where children feel safe and accepted and where learning is fun. Teachers plan activities to help their students develop problem-solving skills, make friends, and foster a love of learning. All employees have completed a interviewing process that includes reference checks, as well as, a complete Background Record Check (BRC). This includes a CORI (criminal background check, a DCF (Department of Children and families check) a SORI (Sex Offender Registry Information) and a SAFIS (Statewide Applicant Fingerprint Identification Services Check. Teachers are certified by EEC and are required to complete and keep current certifications in first aid, CPR, recognition and prevention of child abuse, and communicable disease. Massachusetts law requires any staff member to notify the DSF immediately if she suspects any child in her care is being abused or neglected. In addition, employees take regular courses in topics of early childhood development and education.

Philosophy of Education

Mittineague Children's Center is dedicated to the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development of children. This is accomplished through activities that encourage discovery, experiences, and investigation as well as social interaction for each child in an environment that is enriching and age appropriate.

As a child-oriented center:

- We believe the first seven years of life are the most important in the formation of a child
- We believe the interaction of the parent, teacher, and child is integral to the positive development of the child
- We believe the nurturing of a child's positive self-image is critical to the child's development as a whole person
- We believe through social interaction, a child develops acceptance of others and an increased awareness him/herself

Parent Participation

At Mittineague Children's Center we believe it is vital for the parents and the center to work together to insure the needs of your family and your child are being met.

Parents are always welcome to visit at any time during normal business hours. Upon your arrival, please check in at our office.

During the year the center plans several special events for parents and children. These may be holiday celebrations, fund raisers, or children's programs. Occasionally, volunteers are needed to help organize an event, bake "goodies", or assist in other ways. Please contact the Director for more information.

Non-discrimination policy

No child will be denied enrollment on the basis of his/her race, religion, gender, or status of toilet training. As our enrollment is limited by EEC regulations and licensed, we retain the right to deny enrollment if all slots for a particular child's age group are filled. If after talking with parents interested in enrollment, we realize that we do not have the training, equipment, facilities, etc. to successfully care for their child, we will not accept the child. If we are not sure whether or not we could provide an appropriate program for a diverse learner, his/her enrollment would be on a probationary basis. This is in the best interest of the child, since our goal is to meet the needs of each child.

Our Daily Program

Program Description

Mittineague Children's Center provides constructive experiences for the children through activities that promote pre-academic skills (science, math, reading, music, art, language arts, social studies and dramatic play) and large and small motor development. These education experiences provide a harmonious development of the intellectual, mental, social and physical abilities of each child. During these activities, the children have opportunities to establish relationships with adults and children outside the family.

Developmental Objectives

Physical development highlights good health and hygiene practices and appropriate nutritional activities that enhance each child's body coordination of large muscles through running, jumping, climbing, dancing, bike riding, ball playing, etc. Fine motor skills develop hand-eye coordination through such activities as block

building, lacing, connecting and disconnecting interlocking blocks, and handling crayons, markers, scissors, and bean bags.

Social development highlights working and playing together through small and large group activities, as well as the creation of friendships through effective dialogue and interactions, negotiation and problem-solving, appropriate turn-taking, role playing and involvement in community life.

Cognitive development highlights language and literacy activities, reading readiness, recalling events, processing information and following directions. Cognitive development also includes math readiness, sorting and classifying, comparing and counting; science, sensory and carpentry activities include using one's five senses to understand, explore and investigate the environment, hypothesize and draw conclusions.

Emotional development highlights interactions with staff and children that build self-confidence and self-concept. It includes that ability to identify and express one's needs appropriately and assist others; self-reliance and trust in oneself and others; the ability to try new experiences, separation, transition, flexibility and adaptability to daily routines and schedule adjustments; incorporates freedom of expression through dance, music and movements, creative art and dramatic play.

Curriculum

We believe children should have fun! After all, even the experts agree that preschool-age children learn most through play. These carefree years are so short, and soon the children will be exposed to a much more structured form of learning. How then, do we encourage a child's love of learning? By making learning fun!

Each week themes are chosen, based on things which interest children. During the week, many activities take place which help promote basic skills (letter and number recognition, color and shape recognition, large motor skills, fine motor skills, etc.) and as many of these activities as possible center around the weekly themes. Many of the curriculum materials we have seem more like toys to the children, yet while the children are playing with them, they are learning important concepts.

Daily Schedule

Each day, children participate in group Circle Time where they play learning games, share news, update class calendars, sing songs, and choose jobs. They also have opportunities daily to play in various learning centers, create a variety of creative art activities, listen to stories, as well enjoy large muscle play.

All children have an opportunity morning and afternoon for outdoor play when the weather is suitable. Our Center has a large, fenced-in playground with climbers, slides, play houses, etc. on the west side of the building. This equipment is augmented regularly with various sized balls, a parachute, bubble, bikes etc. Infants and toddlers often take walks in the nearby neighborhood using our sturdy stroller (teachers always have cell phones with them in case of an emergency). In inclement weather, classes use our indoor gymnasium for large muscle activities.

Tooth brushing is done daily in accordance with the Dept. of EEC regulations. Our center provides a toothbrush to every child, which is replaced every 3 months or after a child had been sick. No toothpaste is used.

Transition Policy

Mittineague Children's Center's transition process is designed to meet the needs of every individual child in a fun and easygoing way.

Upon enrollment parents will be asked to bring their child in for a visit as close to the start date as possible so that the child can meet his/her teachers and classmates and have a chance to explore the classroom.

When a child is ready to transition to the next classroom or age-group, visits will be arranged between the teachers. These visits will take place in the week or two before the actual transition and will increase in length as the child gets more comfortable in the new surroundings. Parents will be notified by the teachers before the transition process begins and will be asked for permission to share any pertinent information with the new teachers.

Rest Periods

A rest period is scheduled daily for all children in our care. Our infant room is furnished with individual cribs, while toddlers and preschoolers are assigned mats for naptime. Parents can provide a small pillow and blanket and naptime toy (stuffed animal or doll) if needed for toddlers and preschoolers. All naptime linens must be clearly marked with your child's name, and these items must be laundered on a regular basis. We ask parents to take linens home on Friday, or on your child's last day of each week, and to return them freshly laundered the next day your child attends the Center.

The Center will provide a fitted sheet for all infants, in accordance with SIDS risk reduction practices. All infants are placed on their backs and in their cribs to sleep. In addition, sleeping infants are checked on frequently. Parents may provide a sleep sack for their infants if they so choose.

A detailed schedule of your child's particular classroom is posted outside his/her classroom door for easy reference. Any child who does not nap will be given a quiet activity to do on their mat.

Meals and Snacks

Mittineague Children's Center provides nutritionally balanced morning snacks, lunches, and afternoon snacks daily. A weekly menu is posted on the Parents Bulletin Board for parents to review, and copies are placed inside/outside each classroom each week. All meals and snacks are planned to meet the daily nutritional requirements for children, as required by the United States Department of Agriculture.

The Center will provide Enfamil formula, infant rice cereal, infant oatmeal cereal, first and second stages of fruits and vegetables. Other kinds of baby food and snacks need to be provided by parents/guardians. When babies are one year old, they are served table food prepared and whole milk provided by the Center.

Accommodations will be made for children with food allergies or other dietary restrictions. Parents should speak with the Director about their child's specific needs.

If you wish to have your child celebrate his/her birthday during the school day, you may bring a treat for afternoon snack as long as you receive permission from the office staff in advance. If you wish your child to have a snack different than scheduled on the menu, please have him/her eat it before entering the classroom. If you would like to provide snacks for all the children in the class, please make arrangements with your child's teacher and/or office staff in advance.

Our Center is operated in accordance with the USDA policy, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, age, handicap, religion, or any national origin. Any person who believes he/she had be discriminated against in any USDA-related activity should write to:

USDA Director
Office of Civil Rights
Room 366-W. Whitten Bldg.
1400 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410

Arrivals and Departures

Upon arrival, it is essential for the safety of your child that his/her teacher be aware of your child's presence. Therefore, a parent or guardian is required to

1. Bring each child to his/her classroom
2. Make sure the teacher acknowledges the child's arrival before the parent/guardian leaves
3. Note any special information about the child's day (a different person picking up, an earlier departure time, etc.,)
4. Bring items for that day to the child's cubby
5. Make sure at departure to also inform a teacher before leaving the Center

Release of Children only to Authorized Persons

At enrollment you authorize us to release your child only to those persons you name, on the enrollment form. If someone other than one named in the Authorization list comes to pick up your child, we will not release him/her. If it becomes necessary for another person to pick up your child, before we can do so, you must authorize us

- **IN WRITING** – this note must specify the name, address and relationship of the person picking up your child. This notification must be received in the Center office no later than the morning of that day.
- **BY PHONE** – the parent must call the Center office no later than the morning of the day the child will be picked up by another person.
- **IN PERSON** – the parent can notify the Director of the special arrangement no later than the morning of that day.

When the person named in these circumstances arrives to pick up your child, he/she will be asked to present a photo ID to the Director or teacher to verify the information we have been given by the parent. We also exercise the right to make a photocopy of the photo ID for verification purposes. All copies will be kept in the

child's file in a secured locked cabinet. If this person may be picking up your child again in the future, please stop in the Office and add his/her name to the Authorized list.

Absences

Parents/guardians must inform the Mittineague Children's Center by phone, in writing, or in person any time their child will be absent from their regularly scheduled program due to illness, vacation, doctor/dentist appointments, etc.

If a child does not arrive for a regularly scheduled program on a particular day, the teacher will inform the Director who will call the child's parents or people listed as emergency contacts in the child's file until the child's whereabouts can be ascertained.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Adjusting to a New Program

When a child starts a new placement, he/she usually will undergo a period of adjustment which may last a month or more. Your child may feel stress and tension. Quite often, a child may "regress", and temporarily forget some newly gained skills. Center staff and parents are in regular communication to help the child make a successful adjustment to the new program.

Some things parents can do to help children to adjust to the new environment at Mittineague Children's Center:

- Most of all be patient, tolerant and easy going.
- Remember to give your child plenty of preparation for coming to our Center. Children need and want to be told where they will be going, how long they will be there, and where you will be. They do not like surprises that relate to being separated from their family.
- For the first few days, you are welcome to stay with your child for several minutes. Your child will grow more relaxed as you visit a bit, rather than "drop and run".
- After the first week your child is with us, it will be helpful to your child if you shorten the time you stay in the Center at drop-off time. Our teachers are experienced in helping children to express their fears and soothing their tender feelings as you leave.
- To ensure a healthy development of trust, be sure to ALWAYS say good-bye to your child and assure him/her that you WILL BE BACK LATER. Then, leave when you say you are leaving and return when you promise to return.
- Good-bye rituals (i.e., a big bear hug or a kiss to last all day or waving good-bye from the good-bye from the window in the hallway, or blowing kisses on the camera after leaving the building) can be comforting to children.
- Sometimes a tangible item, such as a family photo that a child can keep with him/her during the day, can help ease the transition.

- When you return, be sure to speak directly with your child about the fact that you came back to pick him/her up to go home. Sometimes young children have fears that parents will not return and that the Center is their new home. They need to be assured that you will be there every day.
- Make every effort to keep routines at home consistent and that your child gets a good night's sleep.

Lastly, if you have concerns, please talk to your child's teacher or our Director. Because they are with the children at drop-off and at pick-up times, teachers are not able to discuss extensive concerns during these periods. Call us by phone, write a note or request a time to sit down and share your concerns. If you wish to speak to your child's teacher on the phone, we suggest you call between 12:45p.m. and 2:15p.m. when the children are resting.

Plan for Volunteers

Any potential volunteer will have a complete background record check completed before spending any time at the children's center. Upon satisfactory completion of a BRC, a volunteer will then have a children's center staff orientation and have a day of training which will include shadowing a teacher or teacher's aide for 4 hours.

Volunteers are never left alone with children and are always under the supervision of an EEC qualified teacher. A volunteer is responsible for logging his/her dates and times of service as well as any responsibilities, in the office and must obtain the signature of a lead teacher or the Director on the day of service.

Transportation Policy

Mittineague Children's Center only provides transportation to and from field trips. The Director serves as the transportation coordinator for the children's center and can be contacted regarding any field trip transportation issues. All enrolled children are dropped off and picked up daily by parents/guardians.

The children's center uses LPVEC services (413)263-3273 for transportation on field trips and permission is obtained by all parents/guardians before a child is allowed to go on any trip. All bus company drivers have radios and can communicate with the office in case of an accident, disabled bus, or other emergency. If at any time the bus becomes disabled, the bus company's policy is to immediately send a new bus to the location of the disabled bus. The driver will pull to the side of the road and activate hazard lights. The driver will contact police (911) if the disabled bus is in an unsafe location.

Field Trips

To broaden the children's learning experiences, our Center may plan age-appropriate, curriculum-related field trips. Parents are given advance notice of each field trip, and information detailing destination, activities and cost (if any), departure and return times, as well as any additional information needed. Parents are required to sign a written permission slip for each trip in order for their child to participate. *We cannot take your child on **ANY** field trip without your specific written permission for that trip.* Mittineague Children's Center makes sure each field trip excursion is adequately staffed to maintain state required adult/child ratios or ratios required by the field trip destination, whichever is lower.

Physical Environment

In order to ensure that the physical environment of Mittineague Children's Center is safe and healthy, we have established the following policy guidelines:

- No spray aerosols will be used when the children are present
- Absolutely no smoking is permitted in the Center's building, on the grounds, or anywhere in visual range of the children, or where the smoke may be smelled/inhaled by them
- The furniture, play equipment and toys will be regularly inspected to make sure they are in safe working order. Any items found to pose a safety hazard will be removed from the children's access until such time as they can be properly repaired.
- Sleeping mats are sanitized on a daily basis. Each child will have their own rest mat.
- All electrical outlets in areas where the children have access will be covered with childproof outlet plugs, and care will be taken to make sure cords do not pose a tripping or fire hazard.

Safety rules will be clearly explained to the children and are enforced at all times.

Fire Drills

Fire drills are conducted on a monthly basis. A floor Plan/Evacuation diagram is posted in each classroom and in the gymnasium, along with an Action Plan. Children are evacuated according to the plan and brought to designated areas until the drill/situation is over.

Child Guidance Policy

Mittineague Children's Center believes mutual trust, fairness and consistency are fundamental to each child's development. Staff member help children learn self-control and acceptable behavior through positive, gentle guidance that is consistent and developmentally appropriate for the child. Limits are set on behavior that might harm a child, damage property, or infringe on the rights of others. The following methods will be used in the guidance and management of children's behavior.

Positive feedback is given to a child for appropriate behavior. Staff members freely and frequently give hugs, eye contact, smiles, attention and verbal feedback to the child.

For non-harmful behavior, the teacher will engage the child in conversation to discuss the reason for the behavior and redirect him/her to a new activity.

If the behavior continues after redirection or if it is harmful to that child or another, the behavior is stopped immediately and the danger is explained clearly and concisely to the child. In these situations, the child will be given the choice of correction the behavior and joining the group, or continuing with a different activity.

If the behavior continues in the classroom and is deemed unmanageable by the staff, the director will be informed and the referral policy will be put in place. The Director may call the child's parents to discuss the situation or schedule a conference for a social service referral.

Any time a child acts inappropriately, the child's teacher will assess if perhaps an extenuation circumstance is affecting his/her behavior (such as being tired or hungry, or being stressed out). The teacher will then work with the child to help counteract the circumstance (i.e., offering the child a quiet individual activity away from the group, time in the "cozy corner") in order to help the child calm down and regain control.

It is very important that parents and Center staff work closely together. Each will need to help the other understand the child and reinforce or negate certain behavior. By doing so, we can make this early education experience a happy and profitable one for the child, the parents, and the Center staff.

Under **NO** circumstances will any member of our staff ever:

- Abuse or neglect children
- Utilize cruel, harsh, unusual or extreme techniques
- Utilize ANY form of corporal punishment
- Delegate children to manage or discipline other children
- Use physical restraints on a child or restrain a child by any means
- Place children in a locked room or confine children in any enclosed area
- Confine children to equipment such as a crib or high chair
- Humiliate, threaten or frighten children
- Subject children to profane language or verbal abuse to tell them to "shut up"
- Make derogatory or sarcastic remarks about children and their families
- Punish children for failure to eat, sleep or for toileting accidents
- Withhold any food (including snacks or treats), rest, or toilet use
- Punish an entire group of children due to the unacceptable behavior of one or a few
- Isolate and restrict a child from all activities for an extended period of time

These policies extend to ALL ADULTS while they are at our Center, including parents/guardians of children, visitors, etc.

Children's Clothing

Parents should dress their children in comfortable play clothing that follows these general guidelines:

Children should wear clothes they can easily manage independently or with little assistance after toileting, nap, outdoor play, etc. (pull on pants, shoes with Velcro fasteners, large buttons or snaps, etc.)

Clothes should be comfortable to wear and be active in, as well as easy to clean. Art materials such as markers, paints, etc. used at the Center are washable, but an average child's day is full of adventures that often result in dirt, spills, etc. Frilly dresses, expensive clothes that cannot get dirty, etc. are not practical.

Clothes should be seasonally appropriate. Because we go outside to play, summer and winter, whenever weather permits, children need clothing that will keep them at comfortable temperatures indoors and out. Layers that can be removed (light jacket or sweatshirt over a T-shirt, etc.) are recommended.

Shoes should be sturdy and fit well, for both comfort and the safety of your child. Children will be running, jumping, climbing, etc. during their day at the Center. Sandals, flip-flops, high heels/platform type shoes that can easily slip off while the child is playing are not appropriate. Sneakers and gym shoes are recommended.

All children must have one full set of clean clothes in their cubbies (shirt, underwear, pants, and socks) in case of a diaper/toileting or other accident. Whenever these clothes are used, parents are requested to replace them the next school day.

Diapers, Pull-ups and Wipes

Parents are expected to provide all the diapers/pull-ups and wipes their child will need during his/her time at the Center. Cubbies are provided to store such items. Parents should make sure that diapers/pull-up packs and container of wipes are clearly marked with their child's name. Teachers will notify parents when these supplies are running low.

Parents must also supply any diaper cream/ointment they want used for their child. The child's name should be clearly marked on the container. A permission form must be completed, detailing how and when to apply the cream (at every diaper change, as need for rash, etc.)

Toilet Training and Readiness

Toilet learning is a process. Successful bowel and bladder control is an important (and exciting) developmental milestone. It is important to be patient and follow your child's cues in this process. Forcing or rushing a child into potty training can cause unnecessary power struggles, seriously impact his/her self-esteem, and lead to undue stress on children and adults. When children begin to show signs of readiness, our staff will work with parents to help each child gain mastery over toileting functions.

If you feel your child is ready for toilet training, please talk to his/her teachers. By working together as a team, parents, child and teacher can more easily accomplish the milestone of successful toileting. If you would like any helpful information sheets about these procedures, please pick one up in our office.

Labeling Items

All items children bring to the Center should be clearly marked with the child's name. This includes backpacks, coats, sweaters, boots, naptime items, toys, etc. Staff members make every effort to keep track of each child's belongings and their job is much easier when items are marked. Unmarked items left behind at the Center will eventually make their way to the Lost and Found box.

Books, Toys and Other Items

So that your child is not disappointed with a broken or lost toy and in order to minimize conflicts among children at the Center, please leave all toys, books, etc. at home – with the exception of a toy for naptime or to share on special occasions such as “Show and Tell”. Mittineague Children's Center shall not be held responsible or liable for any item that is lost, broken, or misplaced.

ITEMS PROHIBITED: For health and hygiene reasons, we request that children do not bring to the Center any lip balm/chap stick or makeup, or small objects such as coins, marbles, etc. that can easily be swallowed. Any sharp object or weapon-type toy is absolutely prohibited.

Your Child's File

At enrollment, we create a file for your child which contains:

- A FACE SHEET – pertinent information about your child (full name and age), names, address(es) and telephone numbers of parents and/or guardians and their places of employment.
- A DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY which helps our staff become acquainted with your child and also plan developmentally appropriate curriculum activities for your child.
- PERMISSIONS to take pictures of the child at the Center, to seek emergency medical treatment if necessary, field trips, diaper cream and sunblock.
- AUTHORIZATION naming people who may pick up your child from the Center. Please note that we will not let your child leave with any person not named in the authorization.
- PHYSICAL EXAM and IMMUNIZATION RECORD completed by your pediatrician.
- EMERGENCY CARD giving us contact information for parents, emergency people to call and your pediatrician.

During your child's enrollment, we periodically add copies of progress reports and other communications, any accident/incident reports or referrals made, records of administration of medication, IEP's if needed, and other documentation.

If at any time the information contained in your child's file changes, please stop in our office to update this file. This important information is treated confidentially and kept under lock and key. If at any time you would like to review your child's file, please talk to our Director.

EEC regulations require that a physical exam and current immunization information be added to this file yearly, and other forms be updated annually.

Custody/Visitation Policies

Mittineague Children's Center will make every effort to accommodate and communicate with custodial and non-custodial parents/guardians of children attending our Center. If, however, there are special circumstances that have been ordered by a court of law regarding custody, visitation, restriction on visitation, etc., the

custodial parent must immediately inform the Center director of such circumstances and a copy of the court order placed in the child's file.

Should a person whose contact with a child attending the Center is restricted or prohibited attempt to gain access to that child at the Center, s/he will be asked to leave immediately. If s/he refuses to comply, the authorities will be called to forcibly remove the person. Teachers will also be alerted to the situation so they can make sure all the children are in safe and secure location until any danger has passed.

COMMUNICATIONS

There are many ways we share news about your child's day, progress, Center events and announcements.

Each morning and at pick-up teachers and parents have an opportunity to chat briefly. If you'd like to check further with the teacher about your child's day, we suggest you call the Center between 12:45 and 2:15 p.m. when she had more time to talk. Parent conferences with your child's teacher are held three times during the school year. Notices regarding sign-ups, dates, and times will be posted two weeks prior to the conference nights.

Bulletin Boards

Outside each classroom door is a bulletin board on which we post useful information such as the classroom schedule, approaching closings, etc. General announcements are also posted conspicuously on the interior entry ("big blue door") and on the bulletin board to the right of the office.

Daily Notes

During the day preschool teachers note on the classroom doors activities in which the children have participated, as well as the day's menu and other special happenings in the class. This information is a great conversation started when asking your child about his/her day. Any special notes and reminders relating solely to your child are placed in his/her cubby.

Toddler and infant teachers complete daily noted sharing highlights of your child's day which are placed in the children's cubbies.

Monthly Newsletters

Mittineague Children's Center's Director distributes a monthly newsletter looking ahead to plans and activities including the monthly food menu.

Progress Reports

All teachers keep informal anecdotal notes of each child's developmental milestones and challenges observed in the classroom. Each December, March and June developmental reports are given to each family about their child. These reports include progress on the cognitive, fine and gross motor, self-help, emotional, and language areas

Important Family News

In most families there are dynamics that can impact a child's life in a big way. Mittineague Children's Center asks that parents keep their child's teachers and the Director apprised of such situations insofar as parents feel is appropriate. For instance, if a child has a grandmother living at home, the teacher can make sure that the child makes a special craft for her as well as Mom on Mother's Day. If one parent is largely absent from the child's life, the teacher can structure activities, etc. in a way that is inclusive of the child's situation. One big change could be the addition of a new sibling to the family. Teachers can help a child celebrate as well as help parents smooth the transition of the child into a "big sister/big brother" role.

Sensitive family information will be kept in the strictest confidence as requested by the parents.

At Mittineague Children's Center we believe it is vital for parents and the center to work together to ensure the needs of your family and your child are being met. Your participation in the Center activities and your comments are always welcome.

HEALTH CARE POLICIES

Required Records

All children enrolled at our Center must have on file:

1. A current record of immunizations by the first day a child attends the center.
2. A record of a current physical examination by a licensed physician dated no later than 5 business days from the first day of attendance.
3. Results of a required lead tests.

This information must be updated yearly.

A child who has a chronic medical condition that is potentially life-threatening (severe allergies, asthma, etc.) or has a history of recurring medical problems (i.e. seizures) must provide a Health Care Plan form filled out by a physician. This provides our staff with an action plan should your child's condition require treatment while s/he is at the center. A parent or other certified trainer must show the child's teacher and the Director what

danger signs to watch for and the proper method of administering treatment. Should the child's condition require medicine, such as an inhaler or Epi pen, etc., parents must also complete and sign a Parent/Guardian Request for Administration of Medication. Copies of all forms are available in the center office.

Health Care Policy

The ability of authorized staff to administer medications will be evaluated annually, using "The 5 Rights of Medication" training which is posted on EEC's website.

Any parent with a child who has an Individual Health Care Plan will be asked to obtain written permission from the child's physician allowing the parent to train authorized staff in the administration of any medications.

All completed or expired medication will be returned to the parents for proper disposal. If a medication is left behind when a child leaves the children's center the Health Department will be contacted for proper disposal instructions.

Illness

The health of every child as our Center is important to us. To keep the spread of illness from child to child at a minimum, we ask that parents help their child(ren) **wash their hands immediately** upon entering the Center each morning. Health professionals tell us this is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of germs.

It is our policy to clean, disinfect, and otherwise treat toys, furniture, etc. on a regular basis to prevent the spread of any communicable diseases. Staff members are instructed in proper hand washing, appropriate handling of food, and sanitary methods of dealing with /cleaning up after toileting accidents, etc., to greatly reduce the transmission of communicable disease.

Parents are asked to keep children home if they are exhibiting symptoms of a cold, sore throat or other illness. The onset of these illnesses is the most contagious period for the other children, and your child probably will not feel well enough to enjoy school routines.

Please call the Center if your child will not be attending because of illness. If s/he is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please let us know so we can notify other parents there is an illness going around that may be contagious.

If a child becomes ill while at the Center, we will have him/her rest in the office (if available) and keep them as comfortable as possible. A parent (or emergency contact) will be advised of the situation and asked to pick him/her up if any of the following symptoms are exhibited:

- An axillary (underarm) temperature of at least 100.4
- Diarrhea (three or more abnormally loose stools within a 24-hour period)
- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or to make a whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Redness of the eye, obvious discharge, matted eyelashes, burning or itching eyes
- Untreated infected skin patches, unusual spots or rashes

- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature
- Evidence of untreated lice, scabies, or other parasitic infestations
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Vomiting more than one time or when accompanied by any other sign or symptom or illness

Parents should not bring their child(ren) to the Center if they exhibit any of the above symptoms.

Returning to the Center after an illness

Following an illness, a child can return to the Center if:

- Parents bring a written statement from the child’s attending physician indicating the child is free from communicable disease
- Vomiting and diarrhea have not occurred within the last 24 hours while on a normal diet
- The child’s temperature had been normal for 24 hours without medication
- After a specific contagious disease had been medically treated by a physician, the child has no symptoms and is receiving appropriate treatment

If a staff member exhibits signs of a communicable disease as listed above, that person shall be relieved of any duties that bring her into direct contact with children and/or sent home until she meets the guidelines above for readmission to the Center.

Administering Medication

If a doctor prescribes medication for your child, the Center can administer the prescribed dosage following these steps. The parent must bring the medication to the Center in the original container showing directions as to dosage and frequency. The medication should be brought to the office so paper work can be filled out.

If the parent wishes the Center to administer an over-the-counter medication (such as Tylenol, cough syrup, etc.) authorization by the child’s pediatrician is required. The doctor’s office may fax this permission to the Center upon each request, or the parent may ask the doctor to authorize the Center in writing to administer such medications at the parent’s request. We will follow the recommended dosage on the medication container specified for the age of the child.

The parent must also complete an “Authorization for Medication” form. The staff person and a witness will note on the form the date, time and dosage each time the medication is given to the child. This form is kept in the office along with the medication in the medication cabinet. Once the medication is completed the form will be put into the child’s file.

Topical Ointments

A permission form must be completed and signed by a parent in order for topical ointments such as sunscreen or diaper rash preventatives to be applied at the Center. A doctor’s authorization is not necessary. These ointments must be brought in the original container, clearly marked with the child’s name.

Accidents and Injuries

Every precaution is taken to make sure each child is safe from harm while attending Mittineague Children's Center. Staff members are trained in First Aid and CPR procedures, and a first aid kit is located in each classroom as well as in the Center Office. In addition, one is taken on every field trip. A Medical Emergency Action Plan is posted in each classroom for immediate reference. Please note Mittineague Children's Center is not held responsible for any injury or illness that may occur while your child is on site or enrolled in our program. Furthermore, Mittineague Children's Center will not be held responsible for any medical expenses that may be incurred due to such injury, illness, etc.

In the event of a minor accident/injury (bumps, scrapes, bruises, etc.)

- Staff will administer first aid and comfort the child
- Staff will make sure all other children are properly supervised, in no danger or harming themselves, and are not interfering with the care of the injured child.
- An accident report detailing the incident and the first aid administered will be filled out and signed by the staff members(s) witnessing it and the Director.
- The injured child will be monitored through the rest of the day to make sure there are no concerns/complaints as a result of the injury. If such a concern arises, the staff and Director will determine if additional treatment is necessary or if the child's parents should be called.
- Parents must review and sign the accident report form when they arrive to pick up their child at the end of the day, and a copy of the form will be given to them. The Center will keep a copy of this form in the child's file.

In the event of a more serious accident/injury

- Staff will administer first aid as necessary and comfort the child.
- Staff will make sure all other children are properly supervised, in no danger of harming themselves, and are not interfering with the care of the injured child.
- The Director or available staff members will call the injured child's parents/guardians and notify them of the incident. The Director and parent will then determine if the child is able to remain at the Center or should be picked up by the parent.
- If it is agreed that the injured child should stay at the Center, s/he will be monitored through the rest of the day to make sure there are no additional concerns/complaints as a result of the injury. If a concern arises, staff and director will determine if additional treatment is necessary and contact the parent again,
- If the child is unable to stay at the Center, parents must make arrangements to have their child picked up as soon as possible and arrange for additional medical attention or care for the child, if necessary.
- An Accident report will be filled out by the director and staff member(s) who witnessed the incident and performed first aid.
- A copy of the Accident report will be available for the parent to review and sign within 72 hours of the incident.

Please note: The Department of Early Education and Care will be notified within 3 days of any and all injuries requiring medical treatment.

If any accident or injury occurs while the child is home or prior to arriving at the Center, the parent must inform the teacher/Director. A note will be made and kept in the child's file pertaining to the fact that the accident or injury did not occur at Mittineague Children's Center.

Head Lice

Head lice infestations are very common for young children at certain times of the year. In order to keep this problem to a minimum, Mittineague Children's Center has a "nit free" policy. If a child is found to have lice (itchy scalp accompanied with evidence of eggs or lice), the parents will be called to pick up their child and begin treatment. This includes using an over-the-counter or prescription shampoo and removing all eggs and lice from the child's head. Parents must also take appropriate measures to ensure the child's clothing, bedding (for nap time and at home), etc. have been properly laundered/treated to prevent reinfection.

Children will not be permitted to return to the Center until a visual check by the Director shows no eggs or lice present. The Director will continue to check the child regularly during the next three weeks to make sure the lice has not returned.

If parents independently discover head lice on their child, they should notify the Center as soon as possible. This helps us alert other parents of the possible exposure so they may begin checking their child for symptoms and start treatment if necessary. *Copies of our health care policies are available in the office.*

EMERGENCY PLANS AND POLICIES

Missing Child

Every effort is made every day to know the location of every child at every moment. However, in the case of a missing child, the entire facility and grounds will be searched. If the child cannot be located 911 will be called, and then the parents. EEC will also be notified immediately. The Director and staff involved will follow any recommendations and/or directions given by the police.

Utility Outage (loss of power, heat, or hot water)

In the event of a utility outage, the Director will contact the appropriate utility company to inquire about the expected length of the outage. If the expected repair time is more than 2 hours parents will be called to pick up their children as soon as possible. Announcements regarding a change in our opening or closing status will be posted on channels 22 and 40, as well as, their websites.

Fire Evacuation

In the event of an actual fire or carbon monoxide leak staff and children will follow the posted evacuation procedures. Staff will take attendance clipboards (with all parent contact information) and first aid backpacks (with any necessary emergency medications) when evacuating.

Direction will be taken from the West Springfield Fire Department about how to proceed after the evacuation. If necessary, the Director and Office Manager will contact parents, using cell phones, to pick up their children as soon as possible.

Widespread Emergency Procedures

In the event of a widespread emergency (such as a hurricane, tornado, or chemical spill) the West Springfield Police Department will be contacted (263-3210) for guidance on whether to evacuate or shelter in place.

If the local police say the children's center must evacuate, the following procedure will be followed:

- Parents will be called and asked to pick up their children immediately, using school phone lines if possible. If the land lines aren't working the Director and Office Manager will use their cell phones. Teachers may be asked to use their cell phones and assist in parent calls, if needed
- The entire school will be relocated to Tatham Elementary School on Laurel Road (263-3330). If weather conditions permit, the children and staff will travel to Tatham by foot/stroller. If there is inclement weather transportation will be provided by LPVEC Services. Teachers will accompany children to the shelter and stay with them until they have been picked up
- Immediately following the evacuation, the Director will check the entire children's center and grounds to ensure that no children have been left behind
- Staff will take attendance clipboards and first aid backpacks when evacuating, containing parent contact information and emergency medications
- Closing announcements will be broadcast on channels 22 and 40, as well as posted on the channels' websites
- When the center reopens the evacuation will be documented on the Evacuation Log that is posted in the Director's office

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Weekly Fees

Fees are determined on an annual cost basis and divided into 52 equal weekly installments. Fees are based on enrollment, not attendance.

Payments Due

Fees/tuition payments are due each Friday in advance for services to be provided the coming week. It is vital that each family's account is paid in full at the end of each week. Mittineague Children's Center counts on parents to be timely and consistent in their financial obligations to us, so that we may in turn be consistent in our financial obligations to others.

Deposit

Upon enrollment, a deposit equaling a week's fee is required which is held on account and applied to the last week a child is enrolled. This deposit may be paid at enrollment or together with the first weekly payment. At the termination parents are responsible for paying any adjustments necessary to balance their account.

Registration Fee

A registration fee is due at the time of enrollment and is non-refundable. This charge covers all children in one family being enrolled. A family receiving funding from an approved subsidizing agency is exempt from paying a registration fee.

Family Discounts

Families enrolling more than one child at Mittineague Children's Center receive a 10% discount on the weekly tuition fee for each additional child. In cases where children are enrolled in a program with a different tuition rate, the 10% discount applies to the lower cost program. Discounts are not applicable to fees of families receiving subsidized funding.

Late Fees

We close promptly at 5:30p.m. Please arrive early enough to pick up your child and their belongings. If families are consistently arriving late, families will have to meet with the director to discuss alternative pick up measures. Parents are charged a late pick-up fee of \$30.00 for every 15 minutes or part thereof a child is picked up after closing. Parents are asked to sign a Late Pick-Up Acknowledgement form when they pick up their child and may pay their late pick-up fee then or pay by week's end.

Vacations

After a child has attended Mittineague Children's Center for one year, each family is entitled to one week of vacation. Tuition is not due for that week. We ask that we have a written notice informing us when the vacation will be. The vacation must be consecutive days and the child must be out, in order to receive the credit.

NSF/Returned Check Fee

There is a \$25.00 charge for checks returned by the bank for insufficient funds. After two incidents, only cash or money orders will be accepted in payment on the child's account.

Yearly Tax Statements

Each January the office prepares for all families a statement of total payments received for childcare during the previous year. These statement will be printed out and placed in your child's cubby in the month of January. This information is necessary if you plan to take a child care tax deduction.

Copies of current fee schedules are available in the office.

TERMINATION OR SUSPENSION OF ENROLLMENT

Mittineague Children's Center requires a two week notice in writing if you plan to withdraw your child from our program. Fees paid up to the time of cancellation are non-refundable.

Mittineague Children's Center may suspend or terminate child care services as a result of, but not limited to, any of the following:

1. Failure to follow financial policies
2. Failure of parent/guardian to follow policies and procedures regarding hours of operation, dress code, etc.
3. Failure of child to adjust to the Center and its settings
4. The Center's inability to meet the child's needs
5. Failure of parents/guardian to follow through with a referral program recommended by staff and/or director
6. Verbal or physical abuse of any person or property by child, parent, relative or friends
7. False information given by parent or guardian either verbally or in writing
8. Failure of parent/guardian to submit pertinent medical information regarding immunizations, lead screening, health conditions and required medical forms necessary to continue service.
9. Failure of parents/guardian to submit information pertaining to continuation of subsidy funding
10. Inappropriate behavior of parent(s) or guardian(s)

All avenues will be explored before a child is terminated for behavior reasons from Mittineague Children's Center. If a teacher or the Director has concerns regarding a child's behavior, a meeting will be held with the parent/guardian to discuss those concerns and to develop a behavior plan that can be used at school and in the child's home. Documentation will be kept by the teacher, tracking the child's behavior and how the behavior plan is working.

The teacher and/or Director will decide with the parent if an outside referral is necessary. If a referral is needed the Director will aide the parent in contacting the appropriate agency. The Director will contact outside consultants to support staff in dealing with any serious or specific behavior issues.

If termination is unavoidable the parent may contact the Director about re-enrollment if, after seeking support for the child's behavior, there has been some improvement or there is evidence that a consistent behavior plan is working.

REFERRALS

As teachers work closely with the children, they may through daily observation conclude that a child should be screened to ascertain if s/he would benefit from individual therapy. A referral may be made for language, hearing, vision, motor development, behavior, medical services or other issues.

The Center has several resources for obtaining services: Westfield Infant/Toddler (for children birth to 3 years of age), Preschool Enrichment Team, THOM Intervention Services, public schools CH. 766 program (serving children 3 years and older, Behavioral Health Network, as well as others.

When referrals are recommended, the Director meets with parents to explain the process and obtain their written permission to proceed. Our staff works closely with parents and therapist to arrange for an assessment and if necessary, individual plans to assist the child. These may be periodic sessions with the child, usually at our Center, or suggestions for the teacher for activities in the classroom to foster proper progress. Our staff works closely with the specialist, and periodic written reports are made.

Our Director will be glad to meet with parents to discuss any concerns they may have concerning their child's development. Further information regarding assessments and referrals are available in the Center office.

ADDRESSING QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Questions or concerns should first be presented to the Mittineague Children's Center Director. Should the problem still not be resolved, parents should contact the Center's parent representative or Executive board in writing (1840 Westfield St., W. Spfld., MA 01089) If, after speaking with the Board, the problem is not resolved, parents may contact the Department of Early Education and Care at (413) 788-8401.

All policies and practices detailed in this handbook are subject to change at the combined discretion of the Director and Executive Board, with appropriate notice given to the parents and staff.

Mittineague Children's Center Parent Handbook Agreement Form

I have read and understand the policies and regulations set forth and stated in the parent handbook.

I hereby agree to comply with the rules, policies and regulations of Mittineague Children's Center regarding fees, attendance, health issues, and other items specified in the Parent Handbook. I am also aware of the Center's observed hours of operation and holidays.

I also agree if I become delinquent on my child's tuition, I will be responsible for any and all late fees. If a collection agency must intervene to collect the delinquent amount, I understand that I will be responsible for ALL fees and legal steps which may take place in order to collect said fees.

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

Parent/Guardian's Signature

Date

Name of child _____

Director's Signature

Date