

Parent Handbook

Westside Early Childhood Centers



9030 Western Avenue, Omaha, NE 68114 • Revised 10/2022

Westside Early Childhood Centers Omaha, Nebraska

**WECC Administration Offices
9030 Western Avenue
Omaha, NE 68114**

Julie Oelke M.Ed. — ECC Program Director
ph: 402-390-8207
fax: 402-390-3315

Kaycee Meister — Workforce Development Coordinator
ph: 402-916-4150
fax: 402-390-3315

Carly Mathews — Professional Development Specialist
ph: 402-408-8602
fax: 402-390-3315

Abby Ridder — Administrative Coordinator
ph: 402-390-2250
fax: 402-390-3315

WECC Billing Department
ph: 402-390-2296
fax: 402-390-3315

Early Childhood and Before & After Care Programs Telephone Numbers

Hillside Before & After Care	(402) 884-3825
Loveland Before & After Care	(402) 390-2298
Oakdale ECC	(402) 390-8206
Pacific Heights ECC	(402) 916-4686
Paddock ECC	(402) 390-2297
Prairie Lane ECC	(402) 390-8209
Rockbrook ECC	(402) 390-8208
Sunset ECC	(402) 452-3483
Swanson Before & After Care	(402) 390-3324
Underwood Hills ELC	(402) 390-8218
Westbrook ECC	(402) 390-8205
Westgate ECC	(402) 390-8202

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SECTION 1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

1.1 History of Westside Early Childhood Centers

In 1967, the Westside Community Schools established an early childhood education program after it was determined these programs could have a positive impact on the subsequent education of its students. The first preschool was housed in a portable unit near Seward Street and later moved to a house located at 90th and Pacific Street.

In 1977, the program expanded, offering full-day services to children whose parents worked outside the home. A preschool was opened at Sunset Hills Elementary School in August 1977, but full day child care was not an option. In 1982, the program added the full day child care component. Since that time, preschools with a child care component have been established in the following schools: Hillside in 1983, Oakdale in 1984, Westgate in 1985, and Rockbrook in 1986. In 1987, a toddler program serving children ages 18 months to 3 years was added to the Westside Early Childhood Center (WECC) at 90th and Pacific. Also, in 1987, the Hillside ECC was moved to Westbrook, and they added a toddler program. In 1990, the 90th and Pacific Center moved to Prairie Lane Elementary School.

Before and After School Care Programs were added in numerous elementary schools that had an established Early Childhood Center. In August of 1991, Loveland Elementary Schools added a Before and After School Care program. Paddock Road Elementary and Hillside Elementary followed suit in August 1992, offering these programs. Swanson Elementary began the program in 1996, and Underwood Hills in August of 1997. The Westside Community Schools closed the Underwood Hills Center in May 2005 due to the reassignment of the building, while Westbrook Elementary opened a Before and After Care program the following August.

In 2011, an Early Learning Center was opened in the Underwood Hills location. This site serves children ages 18 months to 5 years.

The first Four Year Old Program was established at Westbrook Early Childhood Center in August of 2006. This program provided a full school day experience for four year old children. A second Four Year Old Program was established at Paddock Road Elementary School in August 2007 and a third was established at Westgate Elementary School in 2017.

In 2019, Pacific Heights Early Childhood Center was opened. This site serves children ages 3 to 5 years and includes a Four Year Old Program.

1.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the Westside Early Childhood and Before and After School Programs is to provide a safe, engaging educational environment for children ages eighteen months through sixth grade. The program offers developmentally appropriate opportunities for children to grow and develop socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically with the support and guidance of competent and compassionate adults.

1.3 Philosophy Statement

Westside Early Childhood Centers recognizes that young children learn best in an environment that provides opportunities for development and growth of the whole child: physically, emotionally, socially, and intellectually. To nurture this development requires a philosophy that allows children time and opportunity to:

- Stimulate curiosity and enthusiasm for learning.
- Engage in purposeful and playful work.
- Develop self-motivation, self-discipline and self-direction toward purposeful goals.
- Experience growth pertaining to decision-making, problem solving and creative thinking.
- Express themselves through language, drawing, writing, movement and the use of materials and resources.
- Participate in guided and informal learning experiences.

1.4 Accreditation

Westside Early Childhood Centers (Toddler, Preschool, and Four Year Old Programs) are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC ensures the quality of children’s daily experiences in early childhood programs and promotes positive child outcomes. The early childhood program standards and accreditation criteria are based on a conceptual framework laid out in 10 standards. This support structure promotes program accountability and makes it possible not only for classroom life to be consistently nurturing and filled with learning opportunities for each child, but also for this high level of quality to be sustained over time. WECC adopts the core values, ideals, and principles stated by the NAEYC’s Code of Ethical Conduct. For more information on the accreditation process or the Code of Ethical Conduct please see your Site Director.

1.5 Learning Through Play

WECC provides a high quality education and care for children year round. The curriculum revolves around the idea that children "learn through play." Age appropriate materials help develop skills and concepts through teacher and child lead activities and experiences. Children are encouraged to be independent and experiment with their environments. At the same time, children are allowed to be children and to use their senses to learn about the world around them.

Westside Early Childhood Centers uses The Creative Curriculum which is a researched based curriculum that supports the development of the whole child. The curriculum covers the following areas of development and learning.

Social-Emotional	Literacy	The Arts
Physical	Mathematics	
Language	Science and Technology	
Cognitive	Social Studies	

Our curriculum is centered around the principle of learning through play. Children play in self-selected learning centers. Teachers facilitate children in centers by observing, documenting and cultivating educational activities in the classroom.

The emphasis is on children making their own decisions. Teachers want each child to learn "how to learn" appropriate social and emotional actions while engaging in play activities. In this way, children learn independence and valuable problem-solving skills that will help them throughout their school years as well as their lives.

Along with the self-selected learning centers, children spend time in teacher directed activities which include large group and small group times. Both the self-selected and teacher directed activities help children to learn important pre-kindergarten skills. Learning centers are designed to promote children's learning and skill development. Some of the ways children learn in centers include:

1. Counting and quantifying objects and people (Mathematics)
2. Creative expression through music, dance, art and drama (The Arts)
3. Communication skills (Language)
4. Categorizing colors, shapes and sizes (Cognitive)
5. Developing gross and fine motor skills (Physical)
6. Following directions (Social-Emotional)
7. Using critical thinking and problem solving skills (Social-Emotional)
8. Interacting with books and learning to write (Literacy)
9. Exploring living and non-living things (Science and Technology)
10. Understanding how people live and work in our community (Social Studies)

1.6 Before and After School Care

WECC provides a high quality before and after school program with an engaging, fun and safe environment for school-age children. Our Before and After School Programs provide children varied opportunities to participate in activities involving Arts & Crafts, Music & Movement, Science & Nature, Math, Service Learning, and Cultural Awareness. Alongside these activities there is always space provided for children to sit and do homework or relax and read a book by themselves. We understand that learning occurs through a combination of interactions, structures, and experiences in the daily lives of children. Staff plan and implement a variety of activities to match the interests and unique approaches to learning that children have. We initiate, sustain and nurture group interactions and relationships through completion of ongoing projects or activities. Teachers will model problem solving and conflict negotiations and guide group behavior in an age-appropriate manner.

1.7 Teacher Qualifications

Westside Early Childhood Centers recognizes the importance of employing and supporting teaching staff who are knowledgeable, professional, and committed to promoting children's learning and development. Our programs implement strong personnel management policies so that all children, families, and staff have high quality experiences.

Prior to hire, applicants are required to complete a criminal background check, National Sex Offender Registry Check, Child Abuse and Neglect registry check for the State of Nebraska, and FBI fingerprinting. Education credentials and previous work experience are also verified prior to hire. Upon hire, staff are required to complete orientation. Orientation will review the program's policies and procedures including: Health and Safety practices, Communication, Supervision, Child Abuse and Neglect, Curriculum and Assessment, and CPR/First Aid/AED Certification. Throughout the course of the staff member's employment, he/she is required to complete in-service/professional development hours which help to ensure that best practices are being used.

SECTION 2. PROGRAM SERVICES

2.1 Description of Services

- Westside Early Childhood Centers serves children ages 18 months to 13 years.
- Our hours of operation are Monday - Friday, 7:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
- The Westside Early Childhood Programs incorporates The Creative Curriculum for Birth through Kindergarten. Developmentally appropriate practice guides teachers to teach in ways that match development and learning to promote their optimal growth. Our teachers make decisions about the education of children on the basis of three types of information:
 - Child development and how children learn.
 - The individual strengths, needs, and interests of each child.
 - Each child's family and community cultures.

Our program includes times for:

- Indoor/Outdoor play.
- Nap and/or rest periods.
- Individual and group play times.
- Children are read to and have access to books for reading and exploration.
- Fostering language and social development by talking and interacting with children and modeling appropriate language and behavior.

We work closely with Westside Community Schools' Early Childhood Special Education Department. Our classrooms implement the Pyramid & PBIS practices. WECC collaborates with

Kid Squad to assist teachers and families at school and at home to support children in becoming successful in their environment.

WECC incorporates the Second Step curriculum, a program rooted in social-emotional learning (SEL) that helps transform schools into supportive, successful learning environments uniquely equipped to help children thrive.

Westside Community Schools offer a Love & Logic Parenting Class for families and community members. In the curriculum, there are built-in family connections that give parents ideas on how to extend the learning process to home. Family connection activities provide developmentally appropriate practice and child development information.

As children enroll in our programs, each parent is provided access to our Parent Handbook and Billing Policies via the DayCare Works Parent Portal. It is our expectation that parents read, understand and follow the policies and procedures of our organization.

At the time of enrollment, each family is provided a copy of the DHHS "Parent Information Brochure." This brochure describes how regulations can be accessed, how childcare-licensing staff can be contacted and how complaints can be filed.

2.2 Registration

Enrolling your child begins with filling out an online Registration Application. The Registration Application includes general contact information, who is responsible for tuition, and the schedule for which your child will be attending. This application represents the contract for paying weekly tuition. Schedule changes are available, please see your Site Director for appropriate documentation. Our program operates all year round with two registration periods. The first registration period is for the school year (August-May) and the second registration period is for the summer (end of May to Mid-August). Minimum contracted days and hours do apply, please see WECC's billing policies for more details. WECC will not hold spots for Toddler, Preschool, Four Year Old or School Age Programs.

2.3 Programs Offered

Toddler - Child must be 18 months old by September 30th

- Toddler program runs Full-Days only, Monday - Friday 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
- Enrollment options are 5 days (M-F), 3 days (MWF), and 2 days (TTh).
- Available at Prairie Lane, Underwood Hills, and Westbrook.

Preschool - Child must be 3 years old by September 30th

- Offered to 3 to 5 year olds
- Preschool ONLY runs from 8:30-11:30 a.m. This program is only available during the school year.
- Preschool Full-Days run from 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.

- Enrollment options are 5 days (M-F), 3 days (MWF), and 2 days (TTh).
- Available at Oakdale, Pacific Heights, Prairie Lane, Rockbrook, Sunset Hills, Underwood Hills, Westbrook, and Westgate.

Four Year Old Program (Must be four years old by July 31st)

- Four Year Old Program runs Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. Before and after care is available at no additional cost. This program is only available during the school year.
- There is a five day minimum requirement.
- Available at Pacific Heights, Paddock Road, Westbrook, and Westgate.

School-Age/Club 66 (Kindergarten-Sixth grade)

- Club 66 runs Monday-Friday 7:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m. with the exception of Wednesday’s 3:00 p.m. dismissal.
- Weekly rates apply while school is in session
- Full Day rates apply on non-school days and summer session.
- Available at Hillside, Loveland, Oakdale, Paddock Road, Prairie Lane, Rockbrook, Sunset Hills, Swanson, Westbrook, and Westgate.

2.4 Required Documentation for Child Enrollment

- Heath History
- Physical Exam (indication of normal or abnormal results and any follow up required) (Toddler and Preschool)
- Immunizations (up-to-date)
- Health Concerns / Allergies / Special Needs / Accommodations
- Insurance Information
- Hospital Information
- Physician Name / Information
- Competency Statement
- Emergency Contact
- Individual Educational Plan (IEP) if applicable
- Person(s) authorized to pick up
- Signed Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Parent Brochure
- Field Trip Permission
- Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-SE & ASQ-3) (Toddler and Preschool)
- Parenting plans / custody agreements

2.5 Child Health Records

Please view the CDC’s *Recommended Immunization Schedule for Children and Adolescents Aged 18 Years or Younger* by visiting:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/schedules/hcp/imz/child-adolescent.html>

Within six weeks of a child enrolling in our program, and as age-appropriate thereafter, health records document the dates of services to show that the child is current for routine screening tests and immunizations according to the recommendations of the American Academy of

Pediatrics. When a child is overdue for any routine health services, parents, legal guardians, or both, provide evidence of an appointment for those services before the child's entry into the program and as a condition of remaining enrolled in the program, except for any immunization for which parents are using religious, medical, or personal exemption. Health records are reviewed quarterly (August, November, February and May) and a form is sent to families requesting any updates. Updates include needed immunizations, insurance changes, routine health screenings and/or any changes in the overall health of the child (i.e., allergies or chronic illness).

If a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the facility and potentially exposes the children not immunized who are susceptible to that disease, the local Health Department will be contacted and consulted with to determine whether these children should be excluded for the duration of possible exposure. Exclusion of children not immunized or under-immunized from the facility in the event of a risk of exposure to an outbreak of vaccine-preventable disease protects the health of the non-immunized or under-immunized child. It also minimizes the potential for further spread of that disease to other children, staff, family, and community members.

2.6 Tuition Payments

Tuition payments may be made by cash, check, money order, bill pay, credit cards and auto-pay. Please make checks payable to the center where your child is enrolled. Drop payments off in the tuition box located in your center. Payments are due weekly.

Cash - Payment must be verified by staff.

Checks and Money Orders - Make payable to the center your child attends. Place in payment box at your center.

If your check is returned for nonsufficient funds (NSF) you will incur a \$35.00 fee.

Bill Pay - Set up through your personal bank with your center information.

Mail checks to: Westside Early Childhood Centers
Billing Department
9030 Western Avenue
Omaha, NE 68114

Credit Card - One time online payment at <https://family.daycareworks.com/> or your InSite Connect app. A \$5.50 convenience fee applies.

Auto-Pay - Debits your account for the current balance EVERY Friday.

Checking Account (ACH) Only - **No weekly convenience fee applies.**

If your auto-pay is returned for nonsufficient funds (NSF) you will incur a \$35.00 fee.

If your auto-pay information is incorrect in the system, you may incur an \$8.00 fee.

Late Payment Fee: A \$15.00 late payment fee will be charged if your account is not at a zero balance by the last billing week of each month.

The billing department can be reached at 402-390-2296.

2.7 Attendance

You will be billed your contracted days whether your child attends or not. If your child will be absent, please notify the center by 8:30 a.m.

Please do not rely on your child's classroom teacher or school secretary to inform the Club 66 program of your child's absence or other attendance plans. Please directly notify the Site Director of your child's absence or alternate plans.

2.8 Arrival and Departure

Upon arrival and departure, it is required that you park in the designated parking areas. For safety and environmental purposes, WECC discourages parents from idling vehicles in our parking areas. This ensures the safety of you and your child, as well as other families arriving and departing. **It is mandatory that your child be walked into the building each day when you arrive.**

Once you arrive, your child should be dropped off in the area of the building that his/her class is currently in (i.e., classroom, outside, gym). Please be sure a teacher has seen your child and they have been checked in following the centers specific policy. We also ask that you have your child wash their hands upon arrival. This decreases the chance of communicable illnesses being transferred to play items and surfaces within the center. There is a late charge of \$10.00 for every fifteen minutes (or fraction thereof) that your child is at the center after our closing time of 6:00 p.m. or prior to the 7:00 a.m. opening time.

If a child remains at the Center after 6:00 p.m., the staff should attempt to reach the parents, guardians, and/or emergency contacts given on the Health / Emergency forms. If no contact has been made by 6:30 p.m., contact the Site Director, Assistant Director, and/or Program Director. Staff can be advised to contact Child Protective Services for further assistance with the situation.

For your protection, only the people listed as contacts in your Parent Portal will be allowed to pick up your child. If staff members have not met someone on your list, they will be asked to provide photo identification before releasing your child. Please contact the center by phone or email if an alternate person will be picking up your child.

2.9 Club 66

The licensing procedures state that children reporting to after school programs are not the responsibility of the WECC's Club 66 until the child has been checked into our program. It is the responsibility of the Club 66 teachers to walk the students to their designated classrooms in the mornings.

If a child is scheduled to be in attendance and does not arrive, and a parent/guardian has not notified the Center of the absence, the following procedures will be followed:

- Check the voicemail system, email, and parent message board.
- Check with the school secretary and/or classroom teacher.
- Notify Site Director or Assistant Director of child's absence.
- Call parents or emergency numbers on the registration/emergency forms.
- Site Director or Assistant Director will determine if further assistance or action is needed.

2.10 Custody Arrangements

If there is any legal custody or divorce settlement information that your center should be aware of regarding a child, notify the Site Director. Information **MUST** include certified copies of pertinent legal documents pertaining to custody arrangements, residential custody, joint custody, order of protection, etc. It is extremely important that the center knows if a child is not to be released to a specific person. It is the policy of WECC to release a child to either parent or persons authorized by the parents unless there is a copy of a court order or divorce decree on file at the center prohibiting one of the parents from having physical custody of the child. This information must be updated each year or as situations change. Non-custodial parents have the legal right to receive information about their child unless there is a certified court order stating otherwise. It is not the centers responsibility to monitor custodial visitation arrangements.

2.11 Reserved Care Days

When Westside Community Schools are closed for Winter Break and Spring Break, designated centers will remain open for childcare. All families enrolled in our centers will have the *option* to bring their children to their designated site. Care on these days will be **by reservation only**. Reservation forms will be provided 2-3 weeks prior to the break. **Drop in care is not available**. If you choose not to reserve care, you will not be charged for these days. Full day rates apply.

2.12 Intersession

Westside Community Schools have fall/spring intersessions and several professional development days. These dates are predetermined and available to review on the district school calendar. **These days are specific to K-6th grades and do not apply to our Toddler, Preschool, and Four Year Old Programs.** When school-aged children do not have school, you will have the option to reserve a spot for child care. Our Toddler, Preschool, and Four Year Old programs will continue normal scheduling and are considered regularly contracted days.

2.13 Snow and Cold Days

When Westside Community Schools are closed due to weather, the Westside Early Childhood Centers will decide if the conditions are safe for children and staff. The decision to close will be based on travel conditions and snow removal by district maintenance. School closings are announced on the local television stations and social media sites. It is listed as "Westside Community Schools - District 66." If you have a child enrolled in the Westside Community Schools, you will receive an automated announcement by phone. Once WECC is notified of the school closing due to weather (or any other reason), you will receive an automated phone

message from your Site Director. The message will give you information regarding important details for the day.

1. **Please look for school closings** on local television stations and social media sites. You will receive an automated phone message from your Site Director.
2. For **Snow Day Closures ONLY** childcare sites will be opening at 8:00am. If school closes for Cold Temperatures, we will open at the regular scheduled time of 7:00 a.m.
3. Your child's designated snow day site will be provided by the Site Director.
4. **Call your child's center** before leaving home to ensure that a staff member has arrived.
5. **Children must bring a sack breakfast and lunch.** The school kitchens are closed, no meals will be served. We will supply a drink but there will be no supplies available to provide meals. Space is available for refrigeration. Please remember that our centers are **NUT FREE**. This includes peanut butter sandwiches.
6. **Be sure to walk your child into the building.** There may be additional information the staff needs to convey to you.
7. **Contact information.** Be sure the center staff have up to date phone numbers for reaching you during the day. Occasionally, if the weather forecast calls for increasingly severe conditions during the day, the centers may close early. You will be notified as soon as the decision has been made.
8. **Preschool Only Families (8:30a.m.-11:30a.m.)** -- Please note that we are only open for Full-Days on Snow Days or Cold Days. If you choose to attend you will be charged a Full-Day rate.
9. **No credit is given for Snow Days. You will be charged your regular contracted rate, if you choose not to attend.** If attending daily rates will apply. Credit will be given if WECC closes.

If you have questions regarding the Snow Day or Cold Day Policies, please contact your Site Director for more information.

2.14 Two Hour Late Start Procedures:

There could be times when Westside Community Schools implements a two hour late start. Should this happen, the following policies will apply.

- You will receive an automated phone message from your Site Director
- There will be NO morning Club 66
- Afternoon Club 66 will proceed as normal
- There will be NO Preschool Only (8:30a.m.-11:30a.m.)
- The Early Childhood centers will open at 10:00a.m.

If you have questions regarding the Two Hour Late Start, please contact your Site Director for more information.

2.15 Disenrolling Your Child

In order to disenroll from the program, we ask you to give the Site Director as much notice as possible. Your Site Director will ask you to fill out a "Change of Schedule" form and check the appropriate box indicating your last day. Not attending is improper notification and is subject to

charges. If you disenroll for any reason and wish to return in the same school year you will be charged a minimum weekly rate in order to retain your spot in our program. Payment is due weekly and your account must be kept current. If you disenroll and do not wish to retain your spot, your spot will be filled.

SECTION 3. RELATIONSHIPS

3.1 Parent Conduct

WECC strives to conduct its business according to the highest standards of honesty, integrity, respect and fairness when dealing with families. We expect that all staff, families, and other visitors will also conduct themselves appropriately and meet these high standards.

When on the property of Westside Early Childhood Centers, it is our expectation that families will conduct themselves in the following way:

- Abide by the federal Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 2002 which prohibits the unlawful possession, use, distribution or sale of illicit drugs, alcohol and tobacco on school property premises or as a part of any of the school's activities.
- Not be adversely affected by alcohol or other drugs.
- Refrain from carrying any weapons on grounds.
- Act courteously at all times.
- Be respectful of the center's environment.
- Respect cultural differences of staff and other families.
- Raise all concerns, issues and problems in accordance with the center's documented grievance procedure.
- Maintain a professional relationship with staff members.

3.2 Communication with Families

We highly value daily communication with families. We are committed to keeping you informed about the events of your child's day and any other issues that may arise. However, because our first priority is to be with the children, it is difficult to have extended conversations at arrival and departure times. Teachers are more than willing to schedule a time to meet with you or to have a phone conversation, to address any concerns or ideas you have.

Weekly activity plans are posted or distributed. Be sure to check your parent files, email, parent portal and/or Seesaw frequently. This is where we will place important information for parents including newsletters, field trip permission forms, snack reminders, and health alerts.

3.3 Parent Participation

Parent partnerships and involvement are vital to WECC. Parents are their child's first and most important teachers! We want to support you in any way we can. Parents and other family

members are always welcome to come and spend time in the classroom throughout the day. Your interests and expertise are valued and we encourage you to share your talents with us.

Every family has its own culture, which may include favorite pastimes, talents, hobbies, traditions, celebrations, and ethnic activities. Please share with us your family's favorite music, books, and any other "cultural" information. You may discuss with the teachers or Site Director if you have ideas for further involvement in the program.

One way for parents to become involved in the educational life of their children is through each center's Parent Action Committee (PAC). This group consists of any interested parent volunteers from the Toddler, Preschool, and Four Year Old Programs. This group meets periodically with the Site Director. The responsibilities of the PAC are:

- *Provide advisory input, not setting policy
- *Assisting with fundraising efforts
- *Assisting with Teacher Appreciation plans
- *Assisting with program family activities such as holiday celebrations, field trips, and Week of the Young Child activities.

Parents are invited to visit the centers at any time to eat a meal with their child, read stories, help with field trips, plan celebrations, share family and cultural traditions, help in the classroom, and other activities as well. Any parents that are interested in becoming regular volunteers should see their Site Director to complete a State Registry Check, provide contact information, and to set a regular time and schedule for when they will be in the classroom.

3.4 Confidentiality

It is the policy of Westside Early Childhood Centers to keep child and family information confidential. All files are kept in a securely locked location in the center. The child's file is immediately available to the Site Director, teachers, and regulatory agencies. It is important for these individuals to have access to this information so the needs of the child can be met. Regulatory agencies come and conduct annual file reviews to make sure we have the correct health and safety information on file. In addition to the above listed personnel, parents / guardians can authorize other people to have access to their child's file.

Child assessment information will be shared with parents / guardians at conference time or at any time requested. If a child's family decides that further testing and assessment is necessary, WECC will provide the assessment information to the appropriate people and agencies with the consent of the parents / guardians. Parents / Guardians are required to fill out a "Release of Education Records" form. This form gives us the permission to release the information to other agencies.

Westside Early Childhood Centers works closely with the Westside Community Schools. If your child will be attending one of the Westside Community Schools, we will provide your child's Kindergarten teacher with observations, documentation and assessment results. We do

this to ensure a smooth transition for your child into Kindergarten. Parents can opt out of this information being shared by contacting their Site Director at any time.

3.5 Parent Comments and Concerns

Your comments or concerns are welcome at any time. Parents may address their questions or concerns by speaking directly with their child’s teachers or to the Site Director. You may also call the center or send an email. If needed, staff will arrange to provide communication to families in their home language. If differences are not resolved, parents can meet with the ECC Program Director to further discuss their concerns.

3.6 Social Media Sites

Westside Early Childhood Center employees are expected to follow WECC policies and procedures in regards to the use of social media sites. It is our expectation for parents to agree to the following:

- Parents / Legal Guardians will not “Friend / Follow” or communicate with WECC employees on social media sites.
- WECC employees will not “Friend / Follow” or communicate with children or families on social media sites.

3.7 Babysitting

It is the policy of Westside Early Childhood Centers that staff members may not babysit for families whose children are enrolled in our program.

In the event that a parent insists on hiring teachers from our organization to babysit, the parents must sign a “hold harmless” agreement. This agreement states that the parent is aware of the program’s “no babysitting” policy and accepts the consequences of their choice in choosing to bypass the policy. Please see your Site Director for the “Hold Harmless” agreement.

3.8 Community Resources

Below you will find links to community resources assisting with everything from housing, food, and income stability, to health related questions. All resources can be accessed by clicking on the links directly.

<https://www.education.ne.gov/migrant/family-and-community-engagement-mep/community-resources/>

<https://habitatomaha.org/community-resources/>

<https://www.yesomaha.org/what/community-resources.html>

3.9 Non-Discriminatory Statement

Westside Early Childhood Centers will not discriminate against any individual or group discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity,

national origin, age, disability, genetic information, marital status, veteran status or any other category protected by law. To file a complaint, please contact the Office for Civil Rights at Lyndon Baines Johnson Department of Education Bldg, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202-1100

3.10 Inclusion

Westside Early Childhood Centers supports the right of children with disabilities to grow and learn alongside their peers. Integrating children with varied abilities in the classroom increases the opportunities for all children to learn about and accept individual differences.

SECTION 4. EDUCATION & GUIDANCE

4.1 Visiting and Your Child's First Day

If your family will be new to our program at the start of the school year, you may want to consider visiting prior to your child's first day of school. Please contact your Site Director to set up a visitation time.

On the first day of school, if your child is afraid, listen to his/her feelings and then let him/her know that you feel confident they will have fun at school and that the teachers will take good care of him/her. When children are calmly helped to face their fears, they feel proud of themselves for conquering them. Please do not be alarmed or embarrassed if your child cries on the first day of care. Although it may be hard for you, the best thing to do is to separate yourself as quickly as your child feels comfortable, so as not to delay the inevitable. Be assured that the teachers are prepared for such normal behavior and will comfort your child. Also, do not be alarmed if your child does not cry the first couple of days but begins to do so after that. We have seen both of these situations occur. Take heart that this is normal and that children do adjust soon to their new environment.

For families with children enrolled in the Club 66 program, the elementary schools hold visitations prior to the beginning of the school year. This would be a wonderful time to stop by and meet the Club 66 staff, see the facilities, and have any questions answered.

4.2 Teacher-Child Groupings

Each group of children will be assigned teaching staff that have primary responsibility for working with that group of children. These teaching staff provide ongoing personal contact, meaningful learning activities, supervision, and immediate care as needed to protect children's well-being.

WECC strives to maintain developmentally appropriate staff to child ratios within group size to facilitate adult-child interaction and constructive activity among children. Staff to child ratios are maintained during all hours of operation, including indoor time, outdoor time, and during transportation and field trips. Groups of children may be limited to one age or may include multiple ages.

The program is organized and staffed to minimize the number of groups, staff and classroom transitions experienced by an individual child during the day and program year. Every attempt is made to maintain continuity of relationships between staff and children and among groups of children.

WECC has in place procedures to facilitate children's transitions from one teacher to another, from one group to another, from one classroom to another, and from one program to another. These procedures include letters to parents explaining transition procedures, meetings with parents regarding transitions, and visits to new programs and classrooms by the child while in the presence of a familiar caregiver. Every attempt is made to keep toddlers together with their teaching staff for nine months or longer.

4.3 Curriculum

Westside Early Childhood Programs incorporates the *Creative Curriculum System Birth through Kindergarten*. Developmentally appropriate practice requires teachers to teach in ways that match the way children develop and learn to promote their optimal development and learning. Our teachers make decisions about the education of children on the basis of three types of information:

- Child development and how children learn.
- The individual strengths, needs and interests of each child.
- Each child's family and community cultures.

The Creative Curriculum is a research-based system that combines curriculum, assessment, professional development and family connection resources. The curriculum is based on five fundamental principles. These principles are:

- Positive interactions and relationships with adults provide a critical foundation for successful learning.
- Social-emotional competence is a significant factor in school success.
- Constructive, purposeful play supports essential learning.
- The physical environment affects the type and quality of learning interactions.
- Teacher-family partnerships promote development and learning.

The Creative Curriculum is research-based on 38 objectives for development and learning. The curriculum helps guide teachers to determine the developmental progress of each child and plan appropriate learning experiences. The 38 objectives fall under the categories of:

- Social-Emotional
- Physical
- Language
- Cognitive
- Literacy
- Mathematics
- Science and Technology
- Social Studies
- The Arts

Our curriculum includes time for

- Indoor/Outdoor play.
- Nap and/or rest periods.
- Individual and group play times.
- Children are read to daily and have access to books to read and explore.
- Teachers to foster language and social development by talking and interacting with children by modeling appropriate language and behavior.

WECC also incorporates the Second Step curriculum, a program rooted in social-emotional learning (SEL) that helps transform schools into supportive, successful learning environments uniquely equipped to help children thrive.

4.4 Ages & Stages Questionnaire

All families enrolled in our Westside Early Childhood programs are asked to complete two surveys at the beginning of the school year: Ages & Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE-2) and Ages & Stages Questionnaire Third Edition (ASQ-3). These highly reliable questionnaires are parent-completed and focus on the development of the whole child. It can help parents and teachers accurately identify delays early and celebrate children’s milestones.

With ASQ:SE-2 & ASQ-3, parents or other caregivers answer a series of simple questions regarding their child’s development (e.g., “Is your baby able to calm himself down for example, by sucking on his hand or pacifier?”; “Does your child like to be picked up and held?”). These screenings pinpoint problem areas in social or emotional development, communication, gross motor, fine motor, and problem solving capabilities in early childhood. If social-emotional problems are identified and addressed early, children are less likely to be placed in special education programs and later in life, they’re also less likely to experience school failure, unemployment, and incarceration. The earlier a problem is recognized and addressed, the better the child’s chances of success. Children whose development appears to fall significantly below that of their peers are flagged for further attention. Flagged ASQ:SE-2 & ASQ-3 scores will be discussed with the parents and a plan developed to address the areas of concern.

Although the process of screening is not intended to serve as a diagnosis for a child, it is used as a proactive and accurate method in which to offer appropriate next steps, such as a more in-depth assessment, further monitoring or other alternatives. Typically, in many cases, the act of screening rules out the need for deeper assessment. Preventing social-emotional challenges and critical developmental delays in the early years is very important to Westside Early Childhood Centers.

4.5 Child Assessment Plan

Westside Early Childhood Centers conducts assessments as an integral part of our program. We use assessments to support our children’s individual learning. Our assessments consist of

observations, checklists, and individually administered assessments. We have adopted *Teaching Strategies GOLD* Birth through Kindergarten as our assessment tool.

Teaching Strategies GOLD is an authentic, observational assessment system for children from birth through kindergarten. It is designed to get to know children well--what they know and can do, and their strengths, needs and interests. With this information, teachers can guide children's learning by planning engaging experiences that are responsive to individual and group needs.

The *Teaching Strategies GOLD* assessment system blends ongoing, authentic, observational assessment for all areas of development and learning with intentional, focused, performance-assessment tasks for selected predictors of school success in the areas of literacy and numeracy. This seamless system for children birth through kindergarten is designed for use as part of meaningful everyday experiences in the classroom or program setting. It is inclusive of children with disabilities and children who demonstrate competencies beyond typical developmental expectations. It can also be used to assess the knowledge, skills and behaviors of children who are English-language or dual-language students. *Teaching Strategies GOLD* recognizes that young children's development is uneven, that it changes rapidly, and that development and learning are interrelated and overlapping.

The primary purposes of the *Teaching Strategies GOLD* assessment system are to help teachers:

- Observe and document children's development and learning over time.
- Support, guide and inform planning and instruction.
- Identify children who might benefit from special help, screening or further evaluation.
- Report and communicate with family members and others.

The secondary purposes are to help teachers:

- Collect and gather child outcome information as one part of a larger accountability system.
- Provide reports to administrators to guide program planning and professional development opportunities.

WECC's Assessment Procedures:

- Ongoing assessment occurs in the context of the classroom environment with words, pictures and concepts that are familiar to the child and represent the child's culture, language, ability and experiences. Evidence may include records of the children's conversations, their drawings, constructions, photographs and anecdotal notes indicative of their development.
 - Two times a year parents receive formal progress reports (Fall and Spring). These reports describe the developmental progress and learning of each child.
 - Teachers use Fall (August 1st – October 31st), Winter (November 1st - February 15th) and Spring (February 16th – May 31st) checkpoints as a time to review what they have learned and to summarize a child's skills and behaviors at those points in time.
 - All individual child records are kept confidential in files that are located in a secure place.

- Families are involved in the assessment process by having parent/teacher conferences, informal journaling and spoken communication. Teachers and parent/guardians are able to communicate and share assessment information at least on a quarterly basis. Communication is sensitive to family values, culture, identity and home language.
- Teaching teams work to achieve consensus with families about assessment methods that will best meet the child's needs (e.g., parent journaling, child surveys).
- Based on our assessments, WECC will arrange for a developmental screening and/or diagnostic assessments with the assistance of the Westside Community Schools Early Childhood Special Education Department. Norm-referenced and standardized tests are used in this situation to compare the child across standardized norms.
- WECC evaluates information from *Teaching Strategies GOLD* on the standardization sample, standardization procedures, scoring, reliability and validity to ensure that the results obtained with the instrument are valid for our purpose.
- Teaching staff are provided training on how to use the *Teaching Strategies GOLD* assessment system and how to interpret results.

These assessment tools are used to support Westside Early Childhood Center's curriculum based on child directed learning. Through diligent observation and documentation of each child's growth and development, teachers are able to provide learning opportunities for growth of the whole child; cognitive skills, language, social-emotional development, approaches to learning, health and physical development. Teaching teams meet once a week to interpret and use assessment results to align curriculum and teaching practices to the interests and needs of the children.

The WECC assessment plan is used appropriately and regularly to support each child's distinctive learning and developmental growth.

- Each child's work is collected on a regular basis and clearly demonstrates and documents each child's development over time.
- Information collected about children is used when planning instruction, daily activities, and classroom environment. Teachers design individual goals for children, guide curriculum planning and monitor progress with this collected information. This information is also used to plan any changes or improvements to the program.
- WECC staff provide families with information about the choice, use, scoring and interpretation screening and assessment methods. This information includes the purpose, interpretation, the way staff are trained and conditions under which children are assessed. Parents may have access to all information about any specific assessment tools used at any time.
- When WECC staff suspects that a child has a developmental delay, evidence and documentation is shared with the parents/guardians. This information is shared in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner. With the consent of the parents/guardians, the information is then shared with a specialized team of early

childhood special education professionals. This team then makes a formal referral for special education services.

4.6 Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP's)/Individualized Education Plans (IEP's)

Staff identify and establish relationships with specialized consultants who can assist all children and families' full participation in the program. This assistance includes support for children with disabilities, behavioral challenges or other special needs.

Staff encourage continuity of services for children by communicating with other agencies and programs to achieve mutually desired outcomes for children and to guide collaborative work. Westside Early Childhood Centers works closely with the Westside Community School's Early Childhood Special Education Department to provide children on IFSP's or IEP's the services they need. Children birth to age five must receive Special Education Services from the district in which they live in.

4.7 Early Development Network

The Early Development Network (EDN) serves children ages birth through two years of age who qualify for special education services according to Nebraska State Guidelines (Rule 52). Services are provided at no cost to the family, are provided in the child's natural environment (i.e., home, childcare) and are confidential.

Childcare and preschool providers can make a referral to EDN, but the parent ultimately has to consent to proceed with any screenings or evaluations. It is important to make parents aware of any concerns that they have and to partner with them as they seek resources to address those concerns. If a child is between the ages of three and five, the family can contact their local school district to inquire about support and services.

All Nebraska school districts are obligated to provide services beginning at birth for children who meet eligibility criteria and demonstrate a need for early intervention. To make a referral, use the school district contact numbers below:

Bellevue Public Schools **402-293-4941**

Elkhorn Public Schools **402-289-2579**

Millard Public Schools **402-715-8302**

Omaha Public Schools **531-299-9296**

Ralston Public Schools **402-331-4700**

Westside Community Schools **402-390-6472**

Papillion - La Vista Community Schools **402-514-3243**

ESU #3 (Arlington, Bennington, Blair, Conestoga, DC West, Elmwood-Murdock, Fort Calhoun, Gretna, Louisville, Plattsmouth, Springfield, Weeping Water) **1-800-593-3198 or 402-597-4936**

4.8 Parent-Teacher Conferences

Children enrolled in the Toddler, Preschool and Four Year Old programs, will have Parent-Teacher conferences twice a year. During conference times, teachers will share their observations regarding the child's development in these domains: Social-Emotional, Physical, Language, Cognitive, Literacy, Mathematics, Science and Technology, and Social Studies. Teachers will also share the child's strengths, needs, and interests. Examples of the child's work will be collected in the child's portfolio and shared with parents. Feedback from parents that involves their child outside of the school environment will be discussed as well. After all information is shared, parents and teachers will work together to create goals for the child. The goals will be revisited during the next Parent-Teacher conference. Additional conferences may be requested at any time during the year by the child's parents.

Children enrolled in Club 66 do not have set conference times with club staff. Parents and teachers may request a conference at any time to discuss the child's progress.

4.9 Program Transitions

Transitions between programs (i.e. Toddler to Preschool) will be facilitated by your child's teacher and the Site Director. The Site Director will work closely with you and your child to ensure a smooth transition. Areas to be discussed while facilitating your child's transition will include but are not limited to: social and emotional development, physical development, and the needs of your child. It is our goal to provide a seamless transition for you and your child.

4.10 Potty Training

Potty-training success hinges on physical and emotional readiness of your child, not a specific age. Many kids show interest in potty training by age 2, but others might not be ready until age 2 1/2 or even older -- and there's no rush. If you start potty training too early, it might take longer to train your child.

Is your child ready? Ask yourself these questions:

- Does your child seem interested in the potty chair or toilet, or in wearing underwear?
- Can your child understand and follow basic directions?
- Does your child tell you through words, facial expressions, or posture when he or she needs to go?
- Does your child stay dry for periods of two hours or longer during the day?
- Does your child complain about wet or dirty diapers?
- Can your child pull down his or her pants and pull them up again?
- Can your child sit on and rise from a potty chair?

If you answered mostly yes, your child might be ready for potty training. Ask yourself if you are ready to help your child with potty training by being consistent and encouraging. If you answered mostly no, you might want to wait awhile -- especially if your child has recently faced

or is about to face a major change, such as a move or the arrival of a new sibling. A toddler who opposes potty training today might be open to the idea in a few months.

When you feel your child is ready for potty training, we ask that you begin this teaching at home during a long weekend or vacation. We will follow through and encourage your child while in our care. Potty training will be done in a relaxed manner. It is our policy that your child be at least 18 months old and must be showing signs of readiness. As we assist you in potty training your child at school, we ask that you continue to send your child in pull-ups. When your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom (not just at home, but at school too) and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond the announcement, we will switch to underwear. Please keep in mind that the activity level here can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the potty, more so than at your home.

During potty training the child needs to be dressed in “user friendly” clothing. The best items are shorts and pants with elastic waists. Try to avoid really tight clothing, shirts that snap in the crotch, pants with snaps & zippers, overalls, and tights as often as you can. Your child will want to help pull their clothing up and down, plus clothing with too many buttons or snaps makes it harder to get the child on the potty in time.

We will only begin helping with potty training when you and your child have been successful with potty training at home for a week prior. Please do not ask us to begin potty training your child if you haven't successfully begun training at home. We are more than happy to follow your lead with potty training. We will not discipline your child if he/she has an accident.

During potty training you are asked to provide us with at least 3 extra full changes of clothing including socks and shoes. These are to be left at the center and replaced as needed. Due to maintaining sanitary conditions we are unable to fully clean soiled clothing. Please be aware that soiled clothing will be returned in a plastic bag at the end of each day.

Our Policy Requires the Following:

- Child must wear loose fitting clothing (can easily be pulled up and down).
- No overalls, bib-type pants, onesies (T-shirts with snaps between the legs).
- No pants with belts or one-piece outfits.
- Determine from the beginning of learning whether your boy child will sit or stand.
- A minimum of 3 full changes of clothing including socks and shoes.
- For your child to be successful it is important that you continue positive reinforcement at home.

For the first week, the child will be scheduled to use the toilet at consistent times of the day whether the child indicates the need to use the toilet or not:

1. Arrival and departure
2. Before and After Breakfast

3. Before and After Lunch
4. Before and After rest time
5. Before and After going outside
6. As needed

For those children in our programs who may be in the process of potty training, please obtain a copy of the Potty Training Agreement from your Site Director.

4.11 Biting

Biting is not unusual in a childcare environment among younger children. Reasons for biting include: teething, sensory exploration, autonomy and control, peer interaction imitation, frustration, anxiety and curiosity. It occurs most frequently when a child is tired, frustrated, or over stimulated.

When a child is bitten:

For the biter:

1. The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as "biting is not okay - it hurts." Avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. The caring attention is focused on the victim.
2. The biter is not allowed to return to the play and is talked to on a level that the child can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. We don't put our teeth on people."
3. Redirect the child to other play.
4. Parents will be notified in writing of the incident.
5. Parents will be provided additional information.

For the victim:

1. Separate the victim from the biter.
2. Comfort the child.
3. Administer first aid.
4. Parents will be notified in writing of the incident.
5. Parents will be provided additional information, but not the name of the biter. If the child's skin is broken please consult a doctor for further guidance.
6. If the child's skin is broken please consult your doctor for further guidance.

4.12 Toddler, Preschool, and Four Year Old Program Guidance and Discipline

Our classrooms are designed to minimize behavior problems by providing children with engaging experiences and autonomy over their environment. We believe that the keys to effective guidance of a child's behavior include mutual respect between child and adult, consistency, and follow-through with discipline strategies. Teachers in our early childhood settings will use the following discipline strategies:

1. All teachers are trained in Pyramid Model practices. The goal of the Pyramid is to promote children's success by:
 - Creating an environment where every child feels good about coming to school.

- Designing an environment that promotes child engagement and learning.
 - Focusing on teaching children what to do.
 - Teach expectations and routines.
 - Teach social and emotional skills.
 - Teach skills children can use in place of challenging behaviors.
2. When a teacher notices a potential problem situation, s/he may intervene and redirect one or both children to a different activity.
 3. Children are encouraged to develop problem-solving skills. When children are in conflict with each other, they are asked to “talk out” a solution to the problem (with teacher help if needed). Teachers help children to reflect on their feelings. They point out when children may be feeling sad or mad about something. Children are encouraged to be empathetic towards each other. Children that have hurt others with their hands or feet are encouraged to mend the relationship by giving soft touches, hugs, or getting an ice pack if needed. Children who have hurt others with their words are reminded to “use kind words.”
 4. If a child repeatedly harms other children or cannot regain control his/her behavior, s/he is removed from the situation for a short time. When the child is calm and ready to talk, the teacher and child will discuss together the situation and talk it through with other children involved if necessary. Children are reminded to use words to solve conflicts rather than attempting to solve a situation by hurting others with hands or feet.
 5. If a persistent challenging behavior arises the WECC team will collaborate with the family and follow the Prevent-Teach-Reinforce Young Children (PTR-YC) model to generate a behavior intervention plan.
See Site Director for the challenging behavior flow chart.
 6. The goal of WECC’s guidance and discipline policy is to limit or defer the use of suspension and disenrollment from the program. Only after all other possible interventions have been exhausted will suspension and disenrollment be considered in the best interest of the child. The circumstances under which suspension and disenrollment may occur include aggression, unsafe behavior and self-harming. If disenrollment measures are taken, WECC will offer assistance to the family in accessing services and an alternative placement.

Our disciplinary policy follows federal and state civil rights laws that prohibit discriminatory discipline practices.

4.13 School-Age Guidance and Discipline

Our programs are designed to minimize behavior problems by providing children with engaging experiences and autonomy over their environment. Site Directors are part of the elementary school’s *Positive Behavior Intervention Supports* team. Club 66 staff members work closely with the elementary school staff to extend any behavior supports a child may need during the school day to our before and after school program. We believe that the keys to effective guidance of a child’s behavior include mutual respect between a child and adult, consistency, and follow-through with discipline strategies.

The following are some basic rules used in our school-age before and after school care programs:

1. Be Safe: use walking feet inside, stay with group at all times
2. Be Respectful: be a good listener, keep your hands and feet in your own space, use appropriate language
3. Be Responsible: clean up your area, use equipment appropriately

Physical Aggression (any action that inflicts physical harm) by a child towards other students or teachers will not be tolerated.

Disruptive behavior will result in the following actions:

- Redirection: The unacceptable behavior will be explained to the child. S/he will be requested to make another choice of activity and/or behavior. The child and teacher brainstorm ideas for alternatives. The child will be encouraged to make an appropriate choice.
- Talking it Through: If the undesired behavior persists, the teacher will remove the child from the group to discuss the situation. The teacher will again make clear why the behavior is unacceptable, and let the child know if the behavior persists, s/he will be removed from the group and may lose a privilege.
- Reset Time: The child is removed from the group and situation until he/she is able to discuss it calmly with the teacher and/or until emotions are reset or under control. The child is not left alone but placed in a neutral area of the room. When the child has “reset” him/herself, the teacher and child can discuss the incident and an incident report is filled out. When this is done, the child is offered alternative choices that will help him/her maintain composure.
- Denial of Privileges: When “talking it through” and reporting to parents has not been effective, the child will be denied a privilege, removed from the group with a book or activity for one person, or denied access to an activity such as outdoor/gym time. Denial of a field trip could also be possible. The parent/guardian will be notified when the child has received this action. Each time a child is denied a privilege, an incident report will be filled out and a copy given to the parent/guardian.
- Parent/Guardian Conference: A conference may be requested at any time. The purpose of a conference at this time is to encourage the parent/guardian, child, and teacher to work out an agreement or contract to ensure the child’s place in the program.
- Contract: If a child is consistently having problems, has three recorded incidents, and the parents/guardians are aware of each incident, there will be a conference between the parent/guardian, child, director and lead teacher to discuss a contract. The contract agreement will be written and then signed by his/her guardian, the teacher involved and the site director of the center. Violation of the contract will result in the following:
 - FIRST OFFENSE: Suspension from Westside ECC for one day.
 - SECOND OFFENSE: Suspension from Westside ECC for three days.
 - THIRD OFFENSE: Suspension from Westside ECC for five days.
 - FOURTH OFFENSE: Disenrollment from Westside ECC.

NOTE: Parent/guardian is responsible for payment of contracted tuition during periods of suspension from the program. Any contract agreement signed while a child attends a WECC program will be valid at all other Westside Early Childhood Centers or Westside Club 66 Programs upon a transfer. Disenrollment from one Westside Early Childhood Center or Westside Club 66 Program constitutes disenrollment from *all* Westside Early Childhood Centers and Westside Club 66 Programs. The disenrollment period is at the Site Director's discretion. Parents and the Site Director will work together through this process.

Our disciplinary policy follows federal and state civil rights laws that prohibit discriminatory discipline practices.

4.14 Field Trips

Our curriculum planning allows WECC to provide the children with fun and exciting opportunities outside of our centers. The field trips are planned at each individual site and program. In order for your child to participate, permission slips must be signed and returned to school by the due date indicated. Some trips will have a small fee which is also due with the permission forms. The forms and payments may be returned to your child's classroom teacher or Site Director. We will transport children on school buses for our large group field trips.

The toddler classrooms will not go on any "formal" field trips; however, we do have many other adventures planned for them and offer on-site field trips as well.

Any Club 66 field trips will be scheduled for non-school and summer days.

While on field trips, Westside ECC has several safety precautions in place to help safeguard the children while they are away from the center. Teachers always carry first-aid supplies and cell phones with them to call for help whenever necessary while on a field trip. If necessary, the district bus company can provide us with alternative transportation if there is a problem with the transportation vehicles during the trip.

4.15 Holiday and Birthday Celebrations

Our goal is to reflect the life and traditions of the families in our program. All early childhood families are asked to complete and return a *Family Diversity Survey*. The teachers will use the responses from these forms to guide their decisions about how to recognize holidays and birthdays in our program. Our purpose for recognizing holidays and birthdays will be:

1. To validate children's holiday or birthday experiences and traditions at home.
2. To explore different ways of celebrating holidays and birthdays.
3. To expose children and foster respect for celebrations and traditions that are different from their own.
4. To share information about holidays with children in a developmentally appropriate way.
5. To share a sense of community among children, families, and teachers.
6. To have fun together.

We strive to reflect holidays and birthdays in a way that is important and relevant to families at home. No holiday or birthday is portrayed as more important than another. How much we allow holidays or birthdays to be a part of the curriculum will be dependent on the age of the children in the group and the interest shown by children and families. We will not allow holidays or birthdays to take over the entire curriculum.

Teachers may talk with children during their morning meeting time about holidays or birthdays that just occurred or that are coming up. Recognition of a holiday may involve reading a book, a group discussion about the holiday or how a family celebrates it. When we provide activities, they will be open-ended and one of many choices so as not to be the focus of the curriculum. Parents are invited to share family traditions with the class in whatever way they feel comfortable. Children and teachers will plan parties a few times during the school year.

4.16 Personal Items and Toys from Home

All children will be provided a space to store personal items, such as a change of clothing and artwork.

It is our policy that children do not bring toys, food, or other miscellaneous items from home to the center unless it is a scheduled event (i.e., Show and Share Days or snack days). Your child may need to be reminded of the rule consistently at first. Please help us uphold this policy. The centers do not take responsibility for lost, stolen, or broken toys. We do encourage children to bring books from home to share. If they choose to do this, please be sure the book is clearly labeled with your child's name.

4.17 Television Viewing

Television/media viewing is discouraged because it encourages passive behavior in both staff and children. However, it may be used as an occasional resource under the following conditions:

- It is connected to a unit or project being explored.
- Follow-up discussion or activities are provided.
- Material has been previewed for appropriateness.
- Permission given by the Site Director.

Special occasions may be planned using television/media as long as the item has been previewed and approved by the Site Director. On these occasions, viewing must be a choice, with other activities provided for those not wishing to view the program. Any viewing must be "G" rated unless prior consent from the parents has been obtained.

4.18 Technology Policy

Technology is an integral part of the world we live in. Technology used in the correct manner can provide many benefits. However, when educating young children we need to be very thoughtful around the material we are exposing them to and for how long. Young children learn best by hands on experiences and exploring their environment. Technology can enhance these

explorations but too much screen time takes away from the rich hands on experiences that are vital to childhood development. WECC will use the following policies and procedures to guide the use of technology in our centers.

Toddler children (18 months – 3 years) will have no screen time while in our care.

Preschool children (3 years – 5 years) will have no more than 20 minutes of screen time each day while in our care. Technology devices from home will not be permitted.

School-Age children (Kindergarten – Sixth Grade) will have no more than 60 minutes of screen time each day while in our care. Viewing a movie would be an exception (please see the Television Viewing policy 4.17 for more information). School-age children are allowed to bring the following technology devices on non-school days, snow days, or during the summer program: (Cell phones are not an approved technology device.)

Handheld Gaming Devices

Tablets

iPods / MP3 players

In order for school-age children to use their devices in our centers, parents/guardians must first sign the “Technology Permission Form.” This form may be obtained from your Site Director. When using these devices in our care, children will be prohibited to use social media sites including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, etc. Games and Apps must have the rating of EC: Early Childhood or E: Everyone. Games and Apps must be age appropriate and contain no violence or adult language or content. The “Technology Permission Form” is valid for one calendar year.

SECTION 5. HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURES

5.1 Building Emergency Procedures

WECC operates in conjunction with the Westside Community Schools to implement their Emergency Response Plan. Each site has a copy of this manual to guide us in emergency responses. All children who have identified special needs and/or medical conditions will have a separate plan of action to accommodate their needs.

These emergency procedures, along with others such as bomb threats, chemical or toxic events, traffic emergencies, utility failure, security threats, etc., are covered in the orientation process due to the site-specific nature of the procedures. During the orientation process, employees are required to read the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

The program has written and posted disaster preparedness and emergency evacuation procedures. The procedure designates an appropriate person to assume authority and take action in an emergency when the Site Director is not on site. In the event of an evacuation, please call the front office of the school (not the ECC/Club 66 program) or contact first responders for more information.

5.2 Fire and Tornado Drills

In each center there are posted fire & tornado evacuation maps throughout the building. We practice fire drills once a month and tornado drills four times during the months of March through September. At least one fire drill and one tornado drill are practiced during nap time. These are regulated and monitored through our license with the Department of Health and Human Services.

5.3 Injuries and Accidents

Westside Early Childhood Centers strive to provide a safe environment for children but know that when working with children, accidents and injuries do occur. Employees are expected to provide basic first aid and to document such injuries. Documentation includes Ouch / Daily Sheet and Incident / Accident Reports.

- Ouch / Daily Sheets are communicated with families to report minor injuries such as scrapes and bruises.
- Incident / Accident Reports are filled out in triplicate to document more serious accidents when a parent must be immediately contacted regarding the injury and/or a child needs to receive more urgent medical care (i.e. broken bones, stitches, etc.).
- Parents must be called anytime a child sustains a head injury.
- Staff must use gloves and universal precautions when treating any injury.
- At least one staff member who is currently certified in CPR and Pediatric First Aid is on site at all times when children are present.
- When it is necessary to send a child to the hospital by ambulance a staff member or site director will ride along to serve as a liaison between the hospital and school
- All Westside Early Childhood Centers that require an ambulance to transport will use Children's Hospital for all medical or dental treatment required.

5.4 Illness

If you suspect your child is ill or is showing signs of infection, please do not bring him/her to the center. While at the center, if a staff member suspects your child is ill or showing signs of infection, they will notify the Site Director or Assistant Site Director so you may be promptly notified. Any child showing signs of illness will be asked to leave the center. WECC is protecting your child, as well as the other children and staff at the center by enforcing this rule. If your child becomes ill at the center, he/she will be isolated in a comfortable location away from the other children and cared for by a familiar caregiver. The following are symptoms that would require your child to be picked up from the center:

- Diarrhea - Child will be sent home after 2 or more instances within 1 hour
- Vomiting - Child will be sent home after 1 vomit
- Fever above 100 degrees (tympanic, oral, temporal artery, or axillary)
- Rash
- Consistent Cough

- Sore Throat
- Any inflammation around the eye area
- Any open sores that may be contagious
- Any communicable disease - For a complete list of communicable diseases, please visit the Douglas County Health Department website at www.douglascountyhealth.com

A child will not be permitted to return to the Center until all symptoms, including fevers, are not present for 24 hours without the use of any medications such as fever-reducers or anti-diarrheal medications or, in the case of contagious illness, the confinement time for the illness has passed. A parent may also be requested to provide a doctor's note stating that the child is healthy enough to return to the Center and does not present a contagious threat to others. The Site Director must notify the families of any contagious diagnosis.

If a child is found with head lice, they will be sent home immediately. Before the child can return to the center the child must have received a treatment AND no live lice have been found. The recommended treatment includes using either a prescription or over-the-counter (OTC) medicated (lice-killing) product. If you have questions concerning diagnosis and treatment of head lice, call you doctor or the Douglas County Health Department.

5.5 Medication

WECC would prefer medications be given outside of the school day. However, we recognize that this is sometimes not possible. When administration of medication is necessary, a staff person who has completed the Medication Certification will be responsible for giving the medicine. **Do not leave medications in your child's backpack or cubby.**

- All medications must come in the original container.
- All medications must be signed in and permission given for dispensing by a parent / guardian and the licensed health provider.
- All medications must contain:
 - a label with the child's first and last name
 - date that either the prescription was filled OR the recommendation was obtained from the child's licensed health care provider
 - the name of the licensed health care provider
 - the expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication,
 - the manufacturer's instructions OR the original prescription label that details the name
 - strength of the medication
 - instructions on how to administer it
- Medication is administered only with written permission of the parent or legal guardian and as prescribed or as recommended in writing or by another form of direct communication with a licensed health care provider for a specific child. A standing order from a health care provider guides the use of over-the-counter medications with children in the program when that order details the specific circumstances and provides specific instructions for individual dosing of the medication.

- All medications are kept in a locked container.
- Dosages must be appropriate to age and weight standards on the container unless otherwise stated by a physician's orders.
- All medications (over-the-counter and prescription) must be accompanied by a medication sheet signed by the physician. This can be faxed to the center if necessary.
- All medications must be given directly to a staff member to be locked up away from the reach of children. Medications will be returned daily or when administration period is over.
- Westside Early Childhood does not buy, prescribe, or provide any form of medication for children.
- No medications may be stored at the center to be used "as needed" with the exceptions of epi-pens, inhalers, and medication for allergic reactions. A doctor's note will be required for these medications.
- All children must have on file a parent / guardian signed Competency Statement.

5.6 Outside and Gym Play

We take the children outdoors daily. We will use our gym or indoor space for large motor play on cold, hot, or rainy days. Please dress your child appropriately for the day's expected weather and outdoor play (i.e., tennis shoes for running on the playground). Children will have the opportunity to play in the shade. During the warmer months, if temperatures or heat indexes get above 95 degrees Fahrenheit outdoor play will be restricted.

During winter months, we will take the children out to play, temperature permitting. If the temperature or wind chill is below 10 degrees Fahrenheit, outdoor play is restricted. In order for the children to play safely outside during the winter months, all children will need a **warm winter coat, snow pants, hat, gloves and snow boots.**

5.7 Sunscreen and Insect Repellent

When playing outside and in the sun, your child will need to be protected with either sunscreen or sun block with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that is applied to exposed skin (sunscreen and written permission must be provided by parents or guardians). You will need to send a bottle of either sunscreen or sun block with an SPF 15 or higher. Please label the bottle with your child's name on masking tape (writing on the bottle often rubs off) or place clear tape over the child's name to prevent it from rubbing off. We will apply sunscreen during the months of April through October.

Staff will apply insect repellent no more than once a day and only with written permission from parents/guardians. All insect repellents must be provided by the family and labeled with the child's name.

5.8 Clothing

Please send your child to school in play clothes and appropriate shoes for running and playing on the playground. Our curriculum involves learning through play and is based on exploration

and being creative. This often translates to messy activities, so dress your child in clothes that they can get dirty.

Children should have a full change of seasonally appropriate clothes (underwear, pants, shirt, socks and shoes) in their cubbies or backpacks. We want your child to be comfortable, and accidents do happen (such as during toileting or spilling juice at snack). When this happens, you will be provided with an “Oops” report explaining the reason for the clothing change. Please label all items clearly with your child’s name.

5.9 Diapering Procedures

For children who are unable to use the toilet consistently, Westside Early Childhood employees make sure:

- Parents/guardians provide only commercially available disposable diapers or pull-ups unless the child has a medical reason that does not permit their use (the health provider documents the medical reason).
- For children who require cloth diapers, the diaper has an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering are changed as a unit.
- Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing or avoidable handling) and sent home that day for laundering.
- Staff check children for signs that diapers or pull-ups are wet or contain feces.
- Diapers are changed when wet or soiled, and checked at least every 2 hours when children are awake and when children awaken from a nap.

5.10 Rest Time

Toddler and preschool children need time to rest. Children in our programs are offered a rest time each day. All children are asked to rest on their mat / cot for at least 20 minutes. Activities are available for those children who do not nap. We provide each child with a soft mat / cot to rest on. You may send a blanket, small pillow, and / or a stuffed animal or a doll for your child to use at rest time. These items will be sent home weekly to be laundered. Mats / cots are disinfected after every use.

5.11 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All employees of Westside Early Childhood Centers are legally mandated to report suspicions of child abuse and / or neglect. Employees include: administrators, classroom teachers, bus drivers, food service-staff, etc.

5.12 Concealed Weapons Policy

Westside Early Childhood Centers prohibits the possession of firearms, explosives, weapons, hazardous materials, or dangerous devices on the property or at school sponsored functions. Additionally, use of any item as a weapon is prohibited. This policy applies to individuals who have a concealed to carry permit. According to LB454, the Nebraska Concealed Handgun

Permit Act, permit holders are prohibited from carrying concealed handguns into or onto property operated by the Westside Community Schools.

5.13 Classroom Pets or Visiting Animals

All classroom pets or visiting animals must appear to be in good health. Teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals and instruct children on safe behavior when in proximity to animals. Staff make sure that any child who is allergic to a type of animal is not exposed to that animal. Reptiles are not allowed as classroom pets because of the risk for salmonella infection. Pets or visiting animals have documentation from a veterinarian or an animal shelter to show that the animals are fully immunized (if the animal should be so protected) and that the animal is suitable for contact with children.

SECTION 6. MEALS AND SNACKS

6.1 Meals

Westside Early Childhood Centers serve meals and snacks at regularly established times. Food provided for meals and snacks are prepared and stored in accordance with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines. Breakfast and lunch menus are prepared on a monthly basis by the Westside Nutrition Services Department and are available to families. You can also find the monthly menu on the [school district's website](#) under the meals tab. Children will be served the “main” entree from the menu provided.

It is our policy that staff will not serve any child younger than 4 years of age the following: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, spoonfuls of peanut butter, chunks of raw carrots, or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Staff cut food into pieces no larger than 1/2 inch square for toddler/twos, according to each child’s chewing and swallowing capability. Children under the age of 2 will be served whole milk and children over the age of 2 will be served 1% milk. This comes from a recommendation by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The early childhood programs serve 2 meals and 2 snacks. The School-Age programs serve a morning breakfast and an afternoon snack, except on non-school days, in which 2 meals and 2 snacks are served. Meals and snacks are served at least two hours apart but no more than three hours apart. Breakfast can be served from 7:45 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Lunch can be served from 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. If your child will be arriving after 8:30 a.m., please be sure you have served breakfast at home.

Our program takes steps to ensure food safety in its provision of meals and snacks. Staff discards foods with expired dates. Our program documents compliance and any corrections that it has made according to the recommendations of our programs health consultant that reflects consideration of federal and other applicable food safety standards.

For toddlers and for children with disabilities who have special feeding needs, our staff members keep a daily record documenting the type and quality of food a child consumes and provides families with that information. All children that require any food restrictions due to disability, allergy, intolerance, etc., should complete the Nebraska Department of Education's Medical Statement Form or the Request for Meal Modification Form. These forms will help Westside Nutrition Services provide meal modifications for participants who require them. Please see your site director to request a copy.

6.2 Family Style Dining

Westside Early Childhood Centers participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP has long been recognized for its nutritional goals by providing nutritious meals to children and helping them establish good eating habits at a young age. Family style dining provides a further opportunity to enhance these goals by encouraging a pleasant eating environment that will support and promote mealtime as a learning experience.

Family style is a type of meal service that allows children to serve themselves from common platters of food with assistance from supervising adults setting the example. Family style dining encourages the adults to set a personal example and provide educational activities that are centered around foods. This approach allows children to identify, and be introduced to new foods, new tastes, and new menus, while developing a positive attitude toward nutritious foods, sharing in group eating situations, and developing good eating habits.

6.3 Peanut/Tree Nut-Free Centers

Peanut/tree nut allergies represent a health and safety hazard, which can have serious consequences for those who have such an allergy. In order to protect those students, employees, and guests of Westside Early Childhood Centers from an environment that may be harmful to them because of such an allergy, and because of possible harm to personal well-being, Westside ECC prohibits the use and serving of peanuts/tree nuts, peanut butter, or any product containing peanuts/tree nuts or peanut/tree nut oil by students, staff members, employees, visitors, or guests of Westside Early Childhood Centers.

We will not allow any food that contains, or has been manufactured on equipment with peanuts or tree nuts into our classrooms. The teachers and staff have been trained on how to read food labels to double check that all food coming into our classrooms is safe. If we find that the labels on the food indicate that it is not peanut-free or tree nut-free then we will send the food back home with you to enjoy with your family. We will also be unable to allow children to bring in breakfast food from home or from restaurants. We ask that your child eat and finish breakfast foods before entering the site. This includes all Club 66 students as well.

6.4 Medical Statement Form to Request Special Meals and/or Accommodations

Food allergies or special nutritional needs are accommodated in conjunction with the parents and/or child's health care provider.

The program prepares menus, provides them to families and has copies available. Menus are kept on file for review by the health consultant.

For all children with disabilities who have special feeding needs, WECC employees keep a daily record documenting the type and quantity of food a child consumes and provides families with that information.

For each child with special health care needs, food allergies, or special nutrition needs, the child's health care provider gives the program an individualized care plan that is prepared in consultation with family members and specialists involved in the child's care.

All children that require any food restrictions due to disability, allergy, intolerance, etc., should complete the Nebraska Department of Education's Medical Statement Form or the Request for Meal Modification Form. These forms help the school / agency provide meal modifications for participants who require them. Please see below for further explanation.

- **Medical Statement Form:** A parent/guardian can request a meal accommodation for their child's meal that cannot be achieved within the CACFP's federal meal pattern requirements. Therefore, in order to meet the child's needs, this form must be completed and returned to the site director. The form must be completed by a State Licensed Health Care Professional (Physician (MD or DO), Physician's Assistant (PA), Advance Practice Registered Nurse-Nurse Practitioner (APRN-NP), or Chiropractor. A Licensed Medical Nutrition Therapist (LMNT) may also complete and sign when acting under the consultation of the licensed physician.
- **Request for Meal Modification Form:** This form maybe used to request meal modifications for children of the CACFP who have a physical or medical impairment. The center will work collaboratively with parents/guardians to ensure equal opportunity to participate in the CACFP and receive program benefits. However, if the care provider is unable to accommodate your participant's meal modification within the meal pattern requirements, a Medical Statement completed by a State licensed Medical Professional will be needed.

The Medical Statement Form helps the school/agency provide meal modifications for participants who require them. Your participation in this process is very important. The sooner you provide this signed and completed form to the school/agency, the sooner the staff can prepare the food required. Your signature is required for the school/agency to take action on the medical statement. The school/agency staff cannot change food textures, make food substitutions, or alter the participant's diet without completion of the necessary portions of this form. Please see your site director for a copy of the Meal Modification Form.

6.5 Cold Lunch Recommendations

Cold Sandwiches (turkey, ham, chicken, etc.)

Grilled Cheese

Canned/Fresh/Dried Fruit
Canned/Fresh Vegetables
SpaghettiOs
Lunchables (no candy please)
String Cheese
Yogurt
Crackers

6.6 Snacks

We try to provide healthy snacks for children whenever possible. Children will share responsibility of bringing snacks. If you would like to provide snack for a special occasion (i.e., birthday treats), the center will provide a list of possible snack items that could be considered. All snack food items brought into the center must be in the original container with ingredient labels listed on them.

The early childhood programs serve 2 meals and 2 snacks. The school-age program serves an afternoon snack, except on non-school days, in which 2 meals and 2 snacks are served. Meals and snacks are served at least two hours apart but no more than three hours apart.

6.7 Tooth Brushing

Any early childhood program that provides two or more meals to children other than school-age are required to offer children the opportunity to brush their teeth. Each child will have their own toothbrush, provided by the school, clearly marked with their name.

After the children brush, they will rinse their toothbrushes thoroughly with tap water and we will allow them to air-dry. We will store them in a toothbrush container so they do not have contact with another child's toothbrush. No toothpaste is used.