



## **Parent Handbook**

# **Keystone Early Learning Center**

*Managed by TodayCare Children's Centers, LLC*



Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Keystone Early Learning Center, a daycare serving the families of employees of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Keystone Early Learning Center (KELC) is managed by TodayCare Children's Centers (TCCC); a company that specializes in the development and management of employer-sponsored childcare programs.

TodayCare Children's Centers, in conjunction with the Center staff, has developed a program to meet your needs as working parents and the developmental needs of your children. The Center offers a high-quality childcare program that is affordable, convenient, and accessible.

The Parent Handbook is intended to provide helpful information about the philosophy and operational policies of the Center. We hope the handbook will be useful to you as you prepare to enter your child in the program. Center management and the President/COO of TodayCare is available to answer any questions you may have about the program.

Our goal is to provide children with a safe, nurturing environment in which they may grow and learn. Thank you for sharing your child with us.

Sincerely,

Lana Stitzel  
Center Director  
Keystone Early Learning Center

Judy E. Simpson  
President/COO  
TodayCare Children's Centers

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## **WELCOME TO THE KEYSTONE EARLY LEARNING CENTER MANAGED BY TODAYCARE CHILDREN'S CENTERS!**

You have just made one of the most important decisions regarding your child that you will make in the next few years. Early childhood experiences will have a long-term effect on your child's self-esteem, socialization, and future academic abilities.

### **Mission Statement & Philosophy**

TodayCare Children's Centers at Keystone Early Learning Center is committed to providing a safe and secure environment that is marked by excellence. We recognize the unique educational and developmental needs of our children. We are devoted to delivering a quality program that is rich in open communication, fosters lasting relationships and provides educational stimulation.

We believe in a family approach to childcare. We recognize and respect parents as the most important influence in the lives of their children. It is our aim to work closely with parents as we assist in the care of their children. Parents have the right and responsibility to share in decisions about their children's care and development. We know that supporting the family is critical to the effectiveness of our work.

TodayCare Children's Centers believes early childhood is the most significant period of children's lives for preparing them for future success. Our goal is to facilitate the development of children who are:

- Competent
- Curious
- Initiating
- Cooperative
- Self-Directed
- Resourceful
- Exploring
- Attentive
- Cheerful

Our program is planned to generate excitement in learning and nurture pro-social skills. TodayCare Children's Centers believe development of intellectual curiosity, self-discipline and internal motivation are fundamental to the learning process.

We further believe a vital part of the curriculum involves fostering feelings of security, self-confidence, and independence. Central to TodayCare's philosophy is the idea that parents and our program are partners in nurturing each child's development. Therefore, a critical part of the program is open communication and close working relationships with parents.

TodayCare's philosophy is based on the belief that learning is achieved when each child works on his/her individual level in a supportive and unpressured atmosphere. Our program encourages divergent thinking, creative problem-solving and communication

skills. Emphasis is placed on the process children use in learning and experiencing their world, instead of a “Final Product.” We believe that young children learn best through play and direct experiences with the real world. Children who are free to make discoveries, explore skills, initiate ideas, and experience successes and failures within a supportive environment have a solid foundation in life for future success and happiness.

We believe that the childcare center staff is one of the most important factors determining a quality experience for children and families, so we employ only the best and brightest child development professionals. We value experience in group care of young children and formal child development training and education. Each staff member must be a caring, nurturing individual and must complete TodayCare Children’s Centers own training series prior to their actual involvement with children in our programs. The staff is supervised daily and evaluated regularly. Nurturing and caring staff is very important in our environment. Staff members receive a great deal of support for the important work they do which keeps staff turnover very low.

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

The goals of our program are to provide an environment that allows children, at their own pace, to:

- ✓ Find success in activities of their own choosing and discover the challenge of new experiences.
- ✓ Grow in the feeling that they are unique and valued persons.
- ✓ Experience comfortable, secure relationships with peers and adults.
- ✓ Learn to define and express feelings.
- ✓ Build strength, muscular coordination, and physical skills.
- ✓ Learn to manage routines and develop good health habits.
- ✓ Grow in understanding of the world in which they live, both natural and social environments.
- ✓ Develop concepts appropriate to age in solving problems and in broadening cognitive development.
- ✓ Experience creative expressions through art, music, literature, and dramatic play.
- ✓ Broaden communication skills through language development.
- ✓ Try new foods and develop healthy, nutritional eating habits.
- ✓ Develop internal controls for their own behavior.

We achieve these goals by:

- ✓ Following the curriculum guidelines as outlined for each group.
- ✓ Providing a highly organized environment using learning centers with appropriate

activities in each center.

- ✓ Setting appropriate rules to define clear boundaries and expectations for activities and behavior.
- ✓ Limiting “whole group” activities and emphasizing individual and small-group experiences.
- ✓ Directing learning experiences.
- ✓ Using open-ended questioning techniques.
- ✓ Using teachers as “Facilitators.”
- ✓ Developing skill-based, weekly activity plans.
- ✓ Providing low staff: child ratios and small group sizes.
- ✓ Developing a curriculum based on the child’s realm of understanding, experience, and awareness.
- ✓ Emphasizing multi-cultural and non-sexist language usage and activities.
- ✓ Using transition activities.
- ✓ Expecting teacher/child interactions which enhance the child’s self-esteem.

Everyone at TodayCare understands and accepts wholly that each child is an individual and must be valued, respected, and nurtured.

## **NAEYC ACCREDITATION**

Keystone Early Learning Center is a NAEYC accredited Center. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accredits early childhood programs that meet specific criteria for high quality. These standards go beyond the state standards and fewer than 10% of the childcare programs in the United States meet the criteria. For more information regarding NAEYC Accreditation, you can visit <https://www.naeyc.org/> and click on accreditation.

## **KEYSTONE STARS**

Keystone Early Learning Center is recognized as a Keystone STAR 4 Center. Keystone STARS is Pennsylvania’s Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is a continuous quality improvement approach to assess, improve, and communicate the level of quality in early care and education programs. Keystone STARS is a program of The Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL).

## **CHILDCARE IN A GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED ENVIRONMENT**

Childcare in a government-sponsored environment is slightly different than childcare in a community childcare setting. Childcare sponsored by an employer is a three-way partnership – parents, employer, and the Center. The Center is much like a private school with policies that reflect the needs of the government community.

TodayCare at Keystone Early Learning Center offers high quality, developmentally-appropriate programs – it is not a babysitting service. We adhere to guidelines set forth by NAEYC and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania licensing requirements. This commitment to quality ensures that the needs of the children are met, and that policies and practices are for the good of the children. The Center enables parents to focus on their jobs knowing that their children are receiving the best care.

## **ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES AND ORIENTATION**

Enrollment is open to all Commonwealth of Pennsylvania employees without discrimination regarding sex, race, color, creed, or political belief. Vacancies in the classes are filled by waitlist applications with priority for enrollment of children at the Center as follows: siblings of children enrolled in the Center; children of regular, full-time employees of our agency sponsor (Public Utility Commission); children of regular, full-time employees of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; children of TodayCare staff employed at the Center; and lastly, other priorities agreed to by TodayCare and the Keystone Early Learning Center Association.

During enrollment procedures, a special orientation process will be arranged to provide families with important information about our program philosophy and daily operating policies and procedures. This orientation session will also allow time for parents to become better acquainted with the teachers who will be working closely with their children. Several forms will be provided prior to, or during, our orientation which must be completed prior to a child's first day in the program:

- Emergency Contact Form
- Parent Commitment Form signed by both parents
- Child Development Plan
- Emergency Authorization
- Immunizations and Health Record (signed by physician). The form should be periodically updated as additional immunizations are received.
- Permissions Form
- Civil Rights Acknowledgement
- ACH Authorization Form
- Positive Guidance, Discipline and Expulsion Policy Acknowledgement
- Child and Adult Care Food Program Form (CACFP)
- Supervision Policy Acknowledgement
- Ointment/Medication Form (if applicable)
- Any additional forms (if applicable)

When a family submits an application to send their child to KELC, a one-time, non-refundable fee of \$35 is due, payable to the Keystone Early Learning Center Association.



Upon confirmation of availability from the Director, a family secures their child's spot by paying a \$100 enrollment fee. Each family will pay \$100 for enrollment annually on the anniversary of enrollment.

A full-time enrollee is defined as a child attending the Center on a regular schedule Monday – Friday for four/five days per week. A part-time enrollee is defined as a child attending the Center on a regular schedule either two or three days per week.

### **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Our hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:15 am to 5:30 pm. The Center is closed on the following holidays:

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King's Birthday	Columbus Day
President's Day	Veteran's Day
Memorial Day	Thanksgiving
Juneteenth	Day after Thanksgiving
Independence Day	Christmas Day

### **ATTENDANCE**

- We encourage a child's arrival prior to 9:00 am as daily activities begin no later than this time. Our teachers work hard to provide lesson plans that engage your child in a variety of experiences. Because we want to be able to provide these experiences every day, it requires us to keep a strict schedule. Therefore, if your child arrives after 8:45 am, they must have been provided breakfast OR you must sit with them at the table until they have finished their breakfast and washed their hands.
- If your child will be absent or late, either in arrival or pickup, you must notify the Center by phone, e-mail, or by using the Procure app.
- Full tuition is charged for holiday, inclement weather, and half-day training closings.
- If you plan to terminate your child's enrollment, a written months' notice is required to be submitted to the Director.

It is important for parents to stay within the hours they have scheduled in their Parent Contract as closely as possible because staffing is based on children's schedules. Early drop off or late pick-up can jeopardize the classrooms' teacher: child ratio. The Center closes at 5:30 pm. You will need to pick-up your child and be out of the building by 5:30 pm to not be charged for late pick-up. The late pick-up charge is \$1.00 per minute after 5:30 pm.

Teachers plan their daily activities based on the children expected for the days and hours children are scheduled in their Parent Contract.

### **TUITION**

Tuition is payable bi-weekly or monthly. Payments must be made by the 25th of the preceding month, or the Friday before if paying bi-weekly. Tuition must be paid electronically through auto-withdrawal or <https://www.myprocare.com/>. If tuition is not paid by 9:00 AM on the Monday tuition is due, you will be charged a \$10 per day late payment fee. If you receive subsidized childcare through a recognized program, you are responsible for the difference between tuition charged and your subsidy.

### **SIBLING DISCOUNT**

Parents with more than one child enrolled in the Center will receive a sibling discount\* of 5% off the tuition for the oldest child. If more than two children are enrolled, there will be a 5% discount on both older children.

\*Only children enrolled in full-time care will receive the sibling discount.

### **TAX STATEMENTS**

Each year we provide a statement of the amount you paid the previous year for childcare. This is a free service to our clients whose accounts are current. Any delinquent accounts will be gladly accommodated as soon as your account is current. Tax statements may be requested from management monthly, quarterly, or annually.

We are required by the Internal Revenue Service to provide you with our name and federal identification number. These are posted in the front office lobby.

### **WAITING LIST**

When the Center reaches maximum capacity enrollment for any age group, we will implement a waiting list. Applications for enrollment will be placed in the order that they were received.

Priority for enrollment will be given to siblings of children already enrolled in the Center. The order of priority, after siblings of enrolled children, is children of regular, full-time employees of our agency sponsor (Public Utility Commission); children of regular, full-time employees of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; children of TodayCare staff employed at the Center; and lastly, other priorities agreed to by TodayCare and the Keystone Early Learning Center.

When a space becomes available, the Center will notify you. After notification, please acknowledge whether you wish to take the available spot within 48 to 72 hours. The start date for the available spot will be in the near future. If you cannot opt to enroll your child at the offered date, you may opt to pay the appropriate weekly tuition rate to guarantee the space until your child can begin. If you decline an offer of enrollment, you will be moved to the end of the waiting list. If you decline a second time you will be removed from the list and another enrollment application with a new inquiry date will be

required if you are still interested in enrolling your child at another date.

## **SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

We do everything possible to minimize accidents through various safety programs, facility inspections, routine maintenance, and consistent policies and procedures. We will provide you with written documentation in the event your child is injured while in the Center's care.

Emergency drills for evacuation and severe weather are conducted monthly and plans are posted in each classroom of the Center. In the event of a sudden storm or emergency that prevents you from getting to the Center, we are prepared to care for the children for extended periods. In the unlikely event the Center is damaged and declared unsafe, you will be contacted immediately and evacuation plans will be put in place to enlist the appropriate professional authorities (fire, police, medical) and move the children to safety where they will await your immediate arrival.

Evacuation sites and addresses:

Pennsylvania State Museum 300 North Street Harrisburg, PA 17120	York County School of Technology Child Care Center 2179 South Queen Street York, PA 17402
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Because Keystone Early Learning Center is in downtown Harrisburg, our emergency response plan often includes sheltering in place to avoid putting the children in unnecessary danger by removing them from the building. It is important to note that part of our sheltering in place protocols require us to shelter within the Center, using a "lock-down" procedure. This procedure is done until we receive word that there is no threat to the children, so no parent/guardian will be allowed to enter the lock-down location until we have received the "all clear."

## **CLOTHING**

Activities at the Keystone Early Learning Center include running, climbing, painting, resting, eating, and many more creative experiences. Busy, creative, learning and play can be messy regardless of the age of the child. We use washable paints and smocks to cover clothing, but we cannot guarantee spills and stains will be avoided. Please dress your child in clothing that is washable, durable, and labeled with permanent marker.

Closed-toed shoes must be worn in school. For your child's safety, we recommend sturdy shoes, such as tennis shoes. Thongs, sandals, clogs, and jellies or smooth-soled shoes are not permitted. Water shoes may be brought for "water play days." Teachers will assist children in changing into these for the water experience.

- Children should have two complete clothing changes at the Center.
- Each child, except infants, should bring a sheet and a blanket.

Sheets and blankets must be taken home weekly to be laundered. Sheets are provided in the infant room and will be laundered by the Center weekly.

Children are not permitted to wear any shirts, jackets, sweatshirts, jewelry, or article that is tied around the neck. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure compliance with this safety policy by sending children to the Center with appropriate clothing. Hooded drawstring clothing presents a major safety hazard for children. The cord can become caught while a child is climbing, sliding, or engaged in other active play and result in choking or other serious injury.

Other clothing safety rules:

- No toys from home
- No amber beads
- No hair clips for children under the age of 2
- No outerwear with neck strings, including scarves
- No pants with drawstrings that extend more than 3 inches when tied
- No bibs, pacifiers, or teethingers with ties, strings, or clips of any kind
- No mittens or gloves threaded on a string in a child's jacket

If you believe your child to have a religious exemption regarding clothing or jewelry, please discuss with the Center Director.

## **GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES**

There is no smoking at Keystone Early Learning Center. Please do not bring hot beverages or liquids into the Center. All firearms, regardless of permit, are prohibited, as well as any explosive device or weapon.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Every effort is made to provide a safe and secure environment for children. The entrances are locked and monitored by the Center office. Unauthorized persons will not be admitted. Upon enrollment, parents will either have their Commonwealth of Pennsylvania keycards registered with the KELC locking system or be provided a code for entrance. Please do not hold the door open to admit any other individuals after entering the Center.

The Center has a central phone/intercom system as well as a central fire alarm and sprinkler systems. Evacuation routes are posted throughout the Center.

All staff are trained in Pediatric First Aid, CPR, and emergency procedures. The Center Director is responsible for risk management, including periodic inspections and training of staff. Parents are encouraged to identify and discuss with the Center Director any perceived risks to a child's health or safety.

## **SAFE ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

In order for parents to see each teacher in their child's classroom, one staff member works the opening hours, and the opposite team member typically works the closing hours.

Parents will sign their child in through the Procare app, and escort them to their room.

For your child's protection, only persons authorized by the parent are permitted to take a child from the Center. Parents must list names of anyone who might pick up the child on the Commitment Form and Child's Emergency Contact Form. It is extremely important that you maintain current information on all your child's records and emergency information. Please be sure to notify the Center Director of any changes immediately.

Any non-parent/guardian adult who picks up a child will be asked to show photo ID. Up to four family members will have access to the ProCare app. This will allow approved, non-parent/guardian adults to sign the child out when they are picked up.

If your child will be picked up by a person on their approved list but who does not regularly pick up the child, you must provide the Center with verbal notice in advance. If your child will be picked up by a person who is not listed on the Emergency Contact Form you must provide the Center with advance, written notice including the person's name and a physical description of the person. This information may be emailed with the parent's signature giving the Center permission to release the child to this person. Please state the approximate time the person will be picking up the child.

If parents need to send an adult not on the approved Release Authorization Form to pick up a child, in the event of an emergency, parents must complete an Emergency Pick Up Form to send along with the adult picking up the child. The pickup person will be asked to show photo ID.

Please note: it can be difficult for young children to stay at the Center longer than they are used to. Please notify the Center if, due to an emergency, you are unable to arrive on time. The teacher can then tell your child that you will be late.

## **PARENTS AS PARTNERS**

Involving parents in Center activities is important for both you and your child because it strengthens the community between the child's experiences at home and at the Center. Our program offers a variety of ways that you can become involved.

## **OPEN DOOR POLICY FOR ALL PARENTS**

You are welcome to visit the Center at any time and are encouraged to do so. Areas have been created so that you can spend one-on-one time with your child. Please discuss with

your child's teacher the best time to visit your child's classroom.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

Parent participation in the classroom is a special treat for the children and the teachers. You are invited to "help out" whenever your schedule permits. You may wish to bring a special activity for the children or simply participate in the activities planned. Parent volunteers are never left alone in the classroom with children.

## **KEYSTONE EARLY LEARNING CENTER ASSOCIATION (KELCA)**

The Keystone Early Learning Center Association is the organization that contracts with the childcare provider to operate the Keystone Early Learning Center. The KELCA is comprised of every family with an enrolled child at KELC.

The Executive Board of the KELCA is made up of the President, President-Elect, Treasurer, Secretary, and two At-Large Board Members. This board meets monthly with meetings open to all parents with an enrolled child.

Additional details about the KELCA, including the by-laws, can be found as an addendum to this handbook on page 50.

## **OUR COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION**

It is the center's responsibility to communicate with you regarding your child's experiences at the Keystone Early Learning Center. Daily communication through the Procure app, monthly newsletters, and bi-annual parent/teacher conferences will keep you updated on your child's experiences in Center activities. Remember, teachers are interested in working with you to meet your child's individual needs. Please feel free to talk with them about any questions and/or concerns.

### **DAILY COMMUNICATION**

We believe that it is important that all of us who care for your child have a sense of the child's experience, both at home and at the Center. The daily communication reports provide information about your child's day and a critical communication link with home. In addition, we encourage informal daily communications between you and your child's teachers. ProCare app information and access will be provided upon enrollment.

Along with routine information, the information entered in the ProCare app by your child's teacher will indicate if there is a special need to meet with them, if supplies are needed, and/or whether any significant information has been noted.

We understand that you have a busy schedule; however, please set aside time to talk with your child's teacher each day and look for notes on the Parent Bulletin Board and TodayCare-Keystone Early Learning Center's website for parents.

## **WEBSITE**

The Keystone Early Learning Center website ([www.todaycare-keystone.com](http://www.todaycare-keystone.com)) is where Center information, monthly calendars, newsletters, etc. are posted.

## **NEWSLETTERS**

You will receive a monthly newsletter containing general information about Center and individual classroom activities. If you are interested in contributing to the newsletter, please contact the Center Director. Newsletters will be posted on the TodayCare-Keystone Early Learning Center website, in classrooms, and on the bulletin board.

## **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES & CHILD ASSESSMENTS**

In order to implement curriculum that is well planned, challenging, engaging, developmentally appropriate, culturally, and linguistically responsive and comprehensive, we make ethical, appropriate, valid and reliable assessments for the children. Our curriculum is Creative Curriculum® by Teaching Strategies, LLC. We use the Creative Curriculum® assessment tool.

The assessment tool is designed for the use of the teacher to identify the skills and behavior a child has, to screen for developmental progress, and to plan for intentional learning experiences that promote the acquisition of skills and behaviors as well as further growth of the developmental continuum. Teaching staff are trained by the management team based on Teaching Strategies/Creative Curriculum® training assessments. All staff receive training in Parent/Teacher Conferences through ProSolutions online training program.

The assessment instrument groups skills and behaviors into four broad categories: social/emotional, language, cognitive, and gross and fine motor development. The skills and behaviors are listed in the order that they are likely to emerge. Parents will complete a screening known as Ages & Stages to help teachers accurately assess student abilities as well after 45 days of enrollment and 45 days following a transition to a new classroom.

The assessment is administered through ongoing informal observations and through observation during intentional activities with the child. Anecdotal notes give supporting evidence of children's acquisition of skills and behaviors. The recording and observation of the acquisition of skills and behaviors. The recording and observation of the acquisition of skills and behaviors will be conducted in a natural classroom setting and dated on the instrument as they are mastered. Your child's individual assessment will be reviewed with you so that any questions can be discussed at the bi-annual Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Our teaching staff develops weekly lesson plans to include individual needs of each child. The Curriculum and child assessments are used as guidelines to meet both the individual

needs of the children in the classroom as well as group needs and to help set goals for each classroom. These goals are incorporated into the Center's annual Strategic Plan.

Parent/teacher conferences are offered twice a year for all children. The purpose of the conference is to provide parents with an overview of their child's developmental progress, to get parent input into their child's care, and to answer any questions or concerns parents may have regarding their child's stay at the Center. A copy of the written assessment is provided to parents at the time of the Conference. In addition, any parent may request a parent/teacher conference at any time.

## **RESOLVING PARENT CONCERNS**

Just as teachers are encouraged to discuss concerns with parents, parents are encouraged to ask their child's teachers any questions they may have about their child's care at the Center. It is important for parents to clear up any questions or misunderstandings quickly. Most concerns are best addressed at the classroom level, but if parents and teachers are not able to reach a mutually satisfactory resolution, parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns with the Center Director. Open communication between staff and parents is vital to the smooth operation of the Center. We are committed to the satisfactory resolution of parents' concerns.

If you have talked with the Center Director and if your concern has not been addressed, please contact Judy Simpson, the President/COO of TodayCare Children's Centers. Her telephone number and email address are available at the Center and are on the website.

## **CURRICULUM**

As defined by NAEYC, "Curriculum is an organized framework that delineates the content that children are to learn, the processes through which children achieve identified curricular goals, what teachers do to help children achieve these goals, and the context in which teaching and learning occur." We take this definition one step further in that we believe everything we do in the classroom and on the playground is learning and part of our curriculum. Every contact we have with a child is an opportunity for learning. Though we have lesson plans and daily activities, curriculum cannot be just what is planned or taken from a book. We believe children learn from meaningful experiences that occur often and are relevant to their lives. NAEYC calls this a "developmentally appropriate curriculum."

We utilize Creative Curriculum® by Teaching Strategies, LLC. Teachers are trained annually in the curriculum goals and adapting them to their classroom and children's needs.

## **PROGRAM POLICIES**



## **PRIMARY CAREGIVING**

We practice primary caregiving, the practice in which the care of each infant or toddler is assigned to one specific caregiver who is principally responsible for caring for that child in the care setting and communicating with the child's family. This does not exclude any of the classroom teachers from caring for your child. Instead, this allows teachers to develop strong relationships with the child to be able to offer them the best possible care and education.

KELC makes every effort to keep infants, toddlers, and twos with the same educators for a period of nine months or longer in an effort to benefit the child based on developmentally appropriate practice.

## **POSITIVE GUIDANCE**

Our approach to guidance and discipline is to promote a sense of independence, autonomy, and self-esteem, while maintaining the control necessary for a safe and non-threatening environment. The basis of this control is a secure, orderly, developmentally appropriate, caring environment. This atmosphere allows children to experiment and test their own behavior within clearly defined limits.

We will not subject children in our care to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening. We will not use sarcasm or ridiculing or any form of coercion such as forcing a child to sit down, lie down or stay down except when restraint is necessary to prevent a child from hurting himself or others. Under no circumstances will we use any form of physical abuse such as shaking, hitting, spanking, slapping, jerking, kicking, biting, pinching, excessive tickling and pulling of arms, hair, or ears. We will not associate discipline with food, rest, or toileting. Staff will not use psychological abuse or coercion when disciplining a child. Some examples of these types of punishment are: shaming, name-calling, ridiculing, humiliation, sarcasm, cursing at, making threats, or frightening a child; ostracism or withholding affection or requiring a child to remain inactive for long periods of time.

Staff will use a variety of methods to teach children self-control and how to express their feelings in acceptable ways. These include redirecting children to acceptable activities, using logical consequences to help them be responsible for their actions, using firm words and tones to help children understand how someone feels and modeling acceptable ways to express negative feelings.

The need for disciplinary action seldom occurs in an environment such as ours, where expectations are reasonable, and children are engaged in activities that they find challenging and enjoyable. However, occasional problems requiring the use of positive guidance arise. In these instances, our teachers are trained to use the following techniques:

- **Distracting the child:** The teacher will turn the child's attention from an unacceptable behavior to an acceptable one without confronting the child.
- **Redirecting the child:** The teacher will verbalize with the child what he/she has done and how it affects the other children in the classroom. Then together they will find a more appropriate activity.
- **Ignoring the child's behavior:** The teacher will ignore the child's unacceptable behavior if it is not harming the child, the other children, or the environment.
- **Time apart from the group:** If the above methods are not effective, it may be necessary to separate the child from the group for a few moments. He/she may rejoin the group as soon as he/she is able to behave appropriately.

In every case, we view positive guidance and discipline as a positive, solution-oriented process in which children learn appropriate behavior without damage to their physical or psychological well-being. Our Center does not permit, nor will tolerate under any circumstances the use of abusive disciplinary methods. Violation of this policy by any staff member will be grounds for immediate termination of employment.

## **ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES**

Keystone Early Learning Center sees every child as unique and an individual. Children learn and grow at their own pace. We recognize there are times children may need additional help to meet developmental milestones. Our goal is to strive to provide every child the opportunity to meet their potential.

Communication is the foundation to everything we do at KELC. Teachers will communicate to families in many different ways including verbally (in person), by phone, email, and via the Procare app. Because every family has different preferences, it is important to let teachers and Center leadership know the best way to communicate with you. Through regular communication, our goal is to build trust with families, be able to share what your child is learning, and sometimes we must communicate more difficult things such as a concern for your child's development. It is important for us, as caregivers to have regular, open communication which will allow us to share progress or concerns.

Regular assessments are a way of tracking each individual child's development. Although children grow and develop at their own pace, there are times when teachers are concerned by developmental or physical delays. Sharing concerns with parents is never easy, but our intention is to offer your child the best possible care and the opportunity to develop to their potential. Confidentiality is also important, so concerns such as these are often shared more privately (via phone or conference) so we don't talk about these concerns in front of others or the child.

When concerns are raised with the family, Center leadership often takes this opportunity to share resources as well. Although developmental delays can be a concern, there are

often many resources available through government-funded programming or through other avenues such as Keystone STARS or NAEYC. KELC has a commitment to the families we serve to provide each child with the best possible care, so there are many resources that we offer that are available at no additional charge to families. Please see Center leadership at any time if you have a concern about your child's development and we will be happy to provide you with resources.

Sometimes, children with special needs require special accommodations. KELC is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to any child in need. It will be necessary for parents, teachers, and Center leadership to determine what accommodations are needed and how we will work to meet these accommodations.

KELC supports the need for special therapists to enter the classroom for children with special needs. These therapists offer support to the child and often offer suggestions and feedback to the teachers. Any therapist that enters Keystone Early Learning Center is required to abide by our policies and health and safety guidelines. Please note a release is required if a therapist will need to remove the child from the classroom for any reason, such as a need for a quiet area for an assessment.

Transitions are another often misunderstood process at KELC. Transitions are not just based on a child's age. To transition a child to the next classroom, we must also look at two other important factors: available space and developmental appropriateness. We want to assure that each child is ready to transition to the next classroom based on physical and cognitive development. Concerns that could delay a child's transition will be brought to the family as soon as a concern is raised to inform the parent. Parents, teachers, and Center leadership will then work together to prepare the child to transition when it is agreed upon that the child is ready.

## **INFANT PROGRAM**

We realize the transition of going back to work and leaving your child can be overwhelming. We would like to help make this adjustment as smooth as possible for your family. We have outlined our goals and philosophy of our infant program for you to be able to easily refer to as your child nears each new landmark development. You can request these documents from the Director.

Infancy is the time when trust, self-worth, and independence/dependence are established.

Our priority with each infant is to provide a safe, nurturing environment. Each infant is assigned a primary caregiver to promote bonding and foster communication with each parent. Caregivers are chosen because they are warm, nurturing individuals with experience in caring for young babies. All caregivers go through an extensive training program that includes principles of child development, Keystone Early Learning Center/TodayCare policies and practices, and proper techniques in caring for infants in a

group setting.

Although each child will have his/her individual schedule, we do have guidelines that help provide consistency and stability for the children and our program.

Upon arrival at the Center each morning, sign your child in using the Procure app. The information entered in the app lets us know your child's activity for the day, as well as if there are any changes in his/her routine.

We are a child development center and development begins as an infant. We provide a safe, loving, nurturing atmosphere as well as a challenging environment. The teachers prepare weekly lesson plans. This will keep you informed on how your child is developing physically, emotionally, socially, and cognitively. Infants are not pushed to develop at a faster rate than a normal child or to "keep up" with the other children. Activities and infant stimulation are provided to encourage development in a regular sequence. As the child shows signs of being ready for the next developmental task, we will provide activities to assist your child to perfect the task.

Our philosophy is that children learn through play. We believe interaction with the children is as important as being fed and changed. For this reason, we attempt to keep the children on the floor with other children and toys when they are not sleeping. This encourages the child to become aware of his environment and the other children. The teachers are down on the floor interacting with the children as much as the atmosphere of the room at the time allows. Infants and toddlers will always be supervised using both sight and sound; meaning that all infants and toddlers must be easily in view, if not direct line of sight, then by looking up, or slightly adjusting the position by at least one member of the teaching staff.

### **Infant Sleep**

All infants, 12 months and younger, will be placed on their backs to sleep unless otherwise ordered by a physician. The sleeping surface will be firm and manufactured for sale as infant sleeping equipment and will meet the standards as approved by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. Appropriate, fitted crib sheets are provided by Keystone Early Learning Center and will be laundered weekly.

When children are sleeping, teachers will check on them every 15 minutes. Infants who fall asleep outside of a crib will be gently picked up and placed in a crib, on their backs, for the duration of their sleep. Infants who arrive at the Center asleep in a car seat will be immediately placed on their backs in their assigned crib.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends sleepers or other sleep clothing (such as sleep sacks) as alternatives to blankets, or no covering at all in a crib. Swaddling is only allowed using a swaddle sack. The use of a swaddle sack will be stopped when any of the following occur:

- Child rolls over
- Swaddle sack limits the child's movements
- Child becomes overheated

Nothing will be permitted in the infant's crib other than the child. Bumper pads, pillows, sheepskins, pacifiers with stuffed animals attached, and other stuffed animals are prohibited. Crib wedges may only be used with a note from the child's pediatrician. Heads are never covered. Due to strangulation hazards, bibs will not be left on babies in cribs.

For information on Back to Sleep Guidelines, see <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/sids/sids/cfm>.

If your child uses a pacifier, please provide at least two pacifiers, as well as instructions for use. Infants will not be forced to take a pacifier for any reason. Pacifiers should be labeled with the child's name in non-toxic marker.

### **Other Safety Measures for Infants**

The infant room is a shoeless environment. Any shoes worn outdoors must be removed before entering the classroom. Parents may wear socks or cover their shoes with clean foot coverings provided by the Center. No adults may be barefoot.

### **Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome, Abusive Head Trauma, and Child Maltreatment**

All TodayCare Children's Center staff and volunteers shall receive training compliant with PA § 3270, § 3280, and § 3290 in "Prevention of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head Trauma" prior to working with children. This includes recognizing the signs and symptoms, coping strategies, and understanding the development and vulnerabilities of the brain in infancy and early childhood.

### **Coping with a Crying, Fussing, or Distraught Child**

Shaken baby syndrome is a severe form of physical child abuse resulting from violent shaking of an infant by the shoulders, arms, or legs. Learning the reasons babies cry can help caregivers better understand the dangers of violent shaking and may provide tips to soothe a crying baby and manage stress. Shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma is 100% preventable.

Shaking a baby can cause serious effects including brain injury, cerebral palsy, blindness, hearing loss, learning and behavior problems, seizures, paralysis, and death. If you are feeling overwhelmed, the following can help you calm down to prevent shaken baby syndrome and abusive head trauma:

1. Put the baby in a safe place
2. Walk Away
3. Take a Time Out
4. Ask for Help

### **Recognizing the Potential Signs and Symptoms of Shaken Baby Syndrome and Abusive Head**

## **Trauma**

1. Irritability
2. Trouble staying awake
3. Trouble breathing
4. Vomiting
5. Unable to be woken up

## **Prevention and Identification of Child Maltreatment**

Child maltreatment causes stress that is associated with disruption in early brain development. Extreme stress can impair the development of the nervous and immune systems. Consequently, as adults, maltreated children are at increased risk for behavioral, physical, and mental health problems such as:

- perpetrating or being a victim of violence
- depression
- smoking, alcohol, and drug misuse
- obesity
- high-risk sexual behaviors and unintended pregnancy

These behavioral and mental health consequences can contribute to heart disease, cancer, suicide and STDs. Violence against children is also a contributor to inequalities in education. Children who experienced forms of violence in childhood have a 13% greater likelihood of not graduating from school.

### **Characteristics that may increase the likelihood of a child being maltreated include:**

- being either under four years old or an adolescent
- being unwanted, or failing to fulfil the expectations of parents
- having special needs, crying persistently, or having abnormal physical features
- having an intellectual disability or neurological disorder
- identifying as or being identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender

### **Characteristics of a parents, caregivers, intimate partners, friends, or peers that may increase the risk of child maltreatment include:**

- difficulty bonding with a newborn
- not nurturing the child
- having been maltreated themselves as a child
- lacking awareness of child development or having unrealistic expectations
- misusing alcohol or drugs, including during pregnancy
- having low self-esteem
- suffering from poor impulse control
- having a mental or neurological disorder
- being involved in criminal activity
- experiencing financial difficulties
- family breakdown or violence between other family members

- being isolated in the community or lacking a support network of family

**Effective and promising prevention interventions include:**

- Information and skill-building sessions to support the development of nurturing caregiving from nurses, social workers, or trained lay workers through home visits or in a community setting.
- Education and life skills approaches:
  - Enrolment in quality education to allow children acquire knowledge, skills and experiences that build resilience and reduce risk factors for violence
  - Prevention of sexual abuse, building awareness, and teaching skills to help children and adolescents understand consent, avoid and prevent sexual abuse and exploitation, and to seek help and support
- Norms and values approaches: Programs to transform restrictive and harmful gender and social norms around child-rearing, child discipline and gender equality and promote the nurturing role of fathers
- Implementation and enforcement of child protection laws
- Response and support services: Early case recognition coupled with ongoing care of child victims and families to help reduce reoccurrence of maltreatment and lessen its consequences.

**Infant Feeding**

Children in the infant program are fed on demand. For children 6 weeks to 12 months, iron-fortified formula and fruit and vegetable purees (to be used by infants over the age of 6 months) are provided through CACFP.

Breastmilk should be in bottles labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breastmilk can be stored at the Center for a maximum of one month. Frozen breastmilk must be kept in appropriate storage bags, labeled with the child's name, and the date the milk was expressed. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home but must be frozen or kept cold during transit.

If parents provide formula for infants, it must be in a ready-to-feed, non-glass bottle labeled with the child's name. Glass bottles are prohibited.

To avoid contamination, all leftover contents of heated bottles are discarded after 60 minutes unless the child is still feeding. All bottles will be rinsed and sent home at the end of the day.

Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child's health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice. Pediatrician's diet orders must be updated regularly.

**Nursing Mothers**

Nursing mothers are welcome and encouraged to come into the Center to feed their child. A quiet, private area will be provided.

## **TODDLER PROGRAM**

Between the ages of 12 and 15 months, as space permits, and at your child's appropriate development level, your child will move into the Toddler room. We are aware of the physical and emotional changes that your child is going through, so we endeavor to make this transition a smooth one. A week or so before the move, we will try to let your child "visit" the new room so they will become familiar with the room and their new teachers as well as their new friends.

Toddlers are moving towards increased autonomy as new skills emerge. They enjoy constant movement as well as new activities and challenges. A consistent schedule, nurturing and patient teachers, and a safe environment rich in activities are keys to successful toddler programs. Promoting language development, learning self-help skills, developing inner controls, and positive social skills are the goals for the toddler years.

The Toddler curriculum is structured with many more daily activities to satisfy their ever-inquiring mind. We include art, music, fingerplays, songs, creative movement, discovery, story time and circle time. These are all age-appropriate activities.

TodayCare Children's Centers uses the guidelines defined in Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (published by NAEYC).

Toddlers are very busy children! The world is so large and so full of fascinating things to touch, see, taste, smell and try for the first time. Older toddlers will oppose you with "no", use word-gestures, climb, speak a vocabulary of 10 to 50 words or more, jump off the floor with both feet, dance to music, have a short attention span, put simple puzzles together, and much, much more. During the developmental stages of a toddler, they will continue to grow intellectually physically, emotionally, and socially. Because of this, they can develop more advanced skills. Teachers must be very creative and perceptive to meet each of their needs.

Most children in the Toddler room have transitioned to one nap each day. If your child needs a morning and afternoon nap, please let us know. Our program is built around what is best for each child.

The most common aggressive behavior seen in toddlers is biting. This occurs for various reasons: teething, mimicking, self-assertion, cause and effect, or sensory exploration. As much as is possible, we try to prevent biting by keeping the children busy, giving plenty of individual attention, keeping frustrating situations to a minimum and redirecting inappropriate behavior.

Toddlerhood is a wonderful stage in a child's life. Every minute of the day they are ready



to absorb and remember something new. They are openly loving and affectionate and a joy to be with. They will make you laugh and smile with their antics. It can be a challenging but rewarding time.

TodayCare Children's Centers uses the guidelines defined in Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs (published by NAEYC) and The Creative Curriculum for Infants and Toddlers as the basis for its infant and toddler caregiver/teacher orientation and training program.

## **PRESCHOOL PROGRAM**

Experiences for the older children (3-5 years) are designed to enable them to learn about themselves and the world around them. Opportunities are provided for individual and group activities in a variety of learning centers including block building, sensory play, dramatic play, art, music, and storytelling. Learning centers include more complex materials and choices reflect the child's changing interests and capabilities. An integral part of the daily routine includes opportunities to explore the various learning centers.

Teachers guide the development of physical, intellectual, emotional, and social skills that will help prepare your child for the future. The curriculum serves as a planning tool for teachers to use in preparing the daily experiences. During this developmental stage, children are classifying and manipulating small objects, building, and acting out the life they are trying to understand. Language and new cognitive understanding enable them to question and explore new worlds through books and conversation.

Throughout the day, children plan and make choices about which aspects of the learning environment to focus on and participate in small groups.

Preschoolers are independent, active, and eager learners. Research shows that preschoolers learn best by "doing," or through interactive play in an environment that is rich in experiences and exploratory opportunities. Our primary curriculum and training tool for the preschool classroom is the Creative Curriculum. This curriculum validates what current theory understands as appropriate practice in early childhood learning.

Each day has a schedule that includes group times (circle time, story time, etc.) as well as learning center time or child choice time. Teachers are trained to look for the "teachable moments" as they move through the schedule of activities. They serve as facilitators, constantly interacting and encouraging children's interests and explorations, supporting learning through encouraging language development, mathematical reasoning, and scientific thought.

## **DIAPERING**

Parents must provide disposable diapers in bulk. Parents also must provide appropriate wipes, ointments, and other needed supplies. Parents will be notified when diapers,

wipes, or other supplies are running low and must be replenished.

Because limited extra supplies are available, if a child does not have the needed supplies for a second consecutive day, the parent will be asked to immediately provide the necessary supplies in order for the child to receive care that day.

If parents require that any ointments be applied, they must complete a medication administration form.

Diapers are checked every two hours, when soiled, and after a child wakes up from naps.

Soiled clothes will be double bagged, sealed, and labeled with the child's name to be returned home for laundering daily.

Disposable diapers are required. Cloth diapers are permitted if medically necessary, and under the following guidelines:

- The soiled diaper and covering will be changed as a unit and not reused. Due to the risk of contamination, soiled diapers will not be emptied.
- Parents must provide a Wet Bag for soiled cloth diapers which must be taken home daily for laundering.

## **TOILET LEARNING**

Toilet learning efforts of parents are assisted and supported. Toilet learning will begin when both the parents and the teachers feel the child is ready. A child should show signs of readiness before toilet learning can begin. Independence - not cleanliness - is the central issue in teaching a child to use the toilet. For the process to be successful, the child must have almost complete control over it. Parents and caregivers should do a little more than arrange the environment so that the child can use the toilet easily.

A child will show readiness in two ways:

- Physical readiness is the attainment of adequate bladder capacity and control. A physically ready child can stay dry for two or more hours during the day, wake up dry from naps, and possibly wake up dry in the morning.
- Mental readiness occurs when the child understands what toilets are used for and is curious to learn more about them. Signs of mental readiness include wanting to watch people use the toilet (if they allow it), wanting to flush the toilet, and asking questions about it.

The presence of both readiness signals defines the most opportune time for toilet learning. This critical period usually emerges between the ages of 2 and 3, give or take 6 months and lasts for about 3 months. During this phase, the child is "primed" for toilet learning skills and needs only support and encouragement from parents to be successful.

Please discuss techniques with your child's teacher so that your child can experience continuity in adult expectations in this important area.

## **NAP TIME & SAFE SLEEP**

Licensing guidelines require a rest time for children. Your child needs to feel comfortable during nap time.

Cribs, according to safe sleep guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, including crib sheets, will be provided for infants. Infants may also wear sleepers or sleep sacks. Blankets are not permitted in infant cribs. Infants will be placed on their backs to sleep unless otherwise ordered by a pediatrician. Additional details on infant sleep are on page 19 of this handbook.

For children in the toddler room and older, please bring a sheet and blanket for naptime. These personal items must also fit into each child's individual cubby. Parents must launder sheets and blankets weekly.

If after a child has been on his or her cot for more than 30 minutes and has not gone to sleep, he/she will be offered quiet activities to do on his/her cot.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips may include walking visits to special places within the Capitol Complex and surrounding area. Special precautions are taken to assure the safety of children on field trips. You will be notified in advance of planned field trips. Parent permission is required. You may request that your child not participate.

Parents are welcome to participate in field trips. Any parent wishing to accompany children on a field trip must have a Child Abuse Clearance through the PA Department of Human Services, and a PA Criminal Background Check Clearance through the Pennsylvania State Police. Parents wishing to accompany children on a field trip who have not resided in Pennsylvania for ten or more years must also provide a FBI Background check. This process can be lengthy, so it is suggested that anyone considering participating obtain clearances early. Clearances cannot be older than five years from the date the parent wishes to volunteer, or new clearances will be required. Please check with the Director for further clearance instructions and assistance.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Your child's experiences on the playground are an important part of the program and his/her development. The playground is an extension of the classroom. It combines opportunities for exploration, creativity, and play.

Our private playground features separate play space for younger children and older children. A wide range of outdoor toys, water play, climbing structures, playhouse, and a covered area for rainy days are among the playground's amenities.

Children will go outside each day as weather permits. KELC abides by the following

temperature guidelines for outdoor play:

- Children will go outdoors when the “feels like” temperature is above 30° Fahrenheit, or below 90° Fahrenheit.
- We carefully watch and follow all air quality alerts.
- Parents can assure their child’s comfort by providing appropriate outdoor clothing: hats, gloves (not on a string threaded through a child’s jacket), snow boots, etc.
  - We do participate in snow play as long as the temperature is within the above guidelines.

Due to staffing demands, children are not allowed to stay inside while their group is on the playground. Children who come to the Center will be expected to join the others in outdoor play.

## **MEALS**

The Keystone Early Learning Center participates in the Child and Adult Food Program (CACFP). The Management Directive (see addendum beginning on page 38) establishing KELC also mandates that we provide “sound nutrition” to children attending the Center. Further, NAEYC standards state that curriculum should include teaching children healthy eating habits. The mealtime procedures are as follows:

- Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack will be served daily. Times served will vary by age group.
- All food and drinks will be provided by the Center.
- If your child needs a special diet, please discuss options with the Director.
- CACFP Centers must provide reasonable modifications to meals and snacks to accommodate children with disabilities. These modifications are done on a case-by-case basis. A medical statement from a licensed physician or licensed health care professional must be provided. The medical statement should also include a description of the child’s disability so that providers understand how it restricts the child’s diet. The statement should also describe what must be done to accommodate the disability. This may include which foods should not be served, and recommendations for what should be served.
- Staff will document which foods are being served and the amount being served for all infants and children with special needs. This information will be shared with the child’s parent or guardian via the ProCare app.
- Toddlers and preschoolers arriving after mealtimes should already be fed.

### **Other important meal & food related information:**

- Keystone Early Learning Center is a Peanut and nut-free environment. **DUE TO SEVERE ALLERGIES, NUT PRODUCTS ARE PROHIBITED FROM OUR CENTER** (For example, no peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, peanut butter crackers, certain cereals contain nut products, granola bars, Cracker Jacks, trail mix

with nuts, cookies with nuts, or nut-based milk products.)

- All foods must meet Pennsylvania licensing regulations for childcare centers. The Center follows the Pennsylvania food safety program pertinent to serving and preparing meals.
- Leftover food which has been opened will be discarded. No open cans or jars may be sent for your child to the Center.
- Staff cannot serve any foods brought to the Center with an expiration date that has passed. Any expired foods will be discarded by staff.

KELC promotes healthy dental hygiene. If you would like your child to have the opportunity to brush their teeth while in care, please make the Director and your child's teacher aware and we will happily assist them.

## **OPERATIONAL POLICIES**

### **WITHDRAWAL AND DISENROLLMENT**

Your right to withdraw a child from the Center will be respected. If choosing to disenroll your child, you will be required to provide the Director with a 30-day written notice of intent to withdraw. You will be charged your regular tuition for that period whether your child is in attendance or not.

### **TERMINATION OF CHILDCARE**

The Center may require parents to withdraw their child when:

- Parents abuse the policies and procedures of the Center (i.e, failure to pick up a sick child within **1 hour** of the time notified; negligence in updating medical records, or failure to pay all tuition and late fees promptly).
- Child's physician recommends withdrawal.
- Parents are unwilling to cooperate with Center staff in the best interest of the child as determined by the management team.
- After repeated attempts to correct inappropriate behavior, a child continues to disrupt the learning process of the group and/or poses a risk of harm to self or others.
- Child purposely and maliciously hurts another child and/or damages the property of the Center.
- Child is verbally abusive including repeated use of inappropriate and offensive language.
- Other circumstances deemed inappropriate by Center management team.

If withdrawal is deemed necessary due to one of the reasons listed above, the Center will provide parents with as much notice as possible (one week) unless child poses a risk to himself and has a history of harm to children in the group.

When a Commonwealth of Pennsylvania employee who was listed as the child's sponsor for enrollment in the Center leaves employment with the Commonwealth, they must immediately provide another proof of family sponsorship or immediately disenroll their child.

## **EXPULSION**

TodayCare feels strongly about how children are disciplined. When a child's ongoing challenging behavior must be addressed, we will consult with you and ask your permission to get professional help. We will work with you and professionals to develop an individualized plan to address the behavior. If that is not successful and the leadership at KELC/TodayCare feels that they cannot keep your child and/or the other children in the classroom safe, we will ask you to make other arrangements for your child's care.

Children are no different than adults. They can become stressed or anxious as well as display behaviors or emotions that might not be appropriate for a classroom setting. If a child seems to be experiencing difficulty managing their behaviors or seems to be displaying distress the teachers will make it a point to monitor, observe, and document these incidents.

The information gathered is then shared with the Director. At this point, it is determined if there are classroom changes that need to be made, interactions or activities that need revising. Once necessary changes are made, we will monitor and document if these changes have improved the child's experiences and behaviors.

If there is little or no improvement, then a meeting will be scheduled with the teachers, Director, and the child's family. An appropriate cohesive plan will be discussed and put into place which will include the participation of both the families and school. We will allow several weeks to determine again if the changes are positively affecting behaviors. At this time, a second meeting will take place with all involved. We will review all monitoring and documentation regarding the child's behaviors and participation in class. Typically, when the families work together as a team along with the child's teachers, there is great improvement and the child is successful in his or her school day.

Unfortunately, there may not be any improvement. If this is the conclusion, it will be the Director's decision to either continue care or expel the child from the Center. If expulsion is deemed necessary, there will be a two-week notice given to the family.

Expulsion is an extreme option for TodayCare Children's Center. We will work very hard to refrain from having to reach such a decision. It is critical that families are receptive to being partners in the process to help a child overcome such obstacles as behavior or emotional challenges.

## **STAFFING**

The Center staff are trained and dedicated early childhood professionals. They exceed the education and experience requirements of the Pennsylvania Child Care Licensing regulations. The high quality of the staff is a benefit to you and your child. The results are the positive development of your child and the increase in your ability to focus on your work and/or education. We encourage you to treat your child's teacher and the rest of the Center staff with dignity and respect. They are early childhood professionals with whom you have entrusted the Care of your child.

All potential staff must comply with all Pennsylvania laws with regard to childcare: mandatory background checks, clearances, fingerprinting, and mandatory reporting standards, and any other requirements as stated by the Director.

The following are the teacher: child ratios and group sizes which will be followed.

<b>Classroom</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ratio</b>	<b>Total children per class</b>
Infant	6 weeks - 1 year	1:4	12
Young Toddler	1-2 years	1:5	15
Older Toddler	2-3 years	1:6	18
Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten (same room)	3-4 years, 4-5 years	1:10	20

### **BABYSITTING POLICY**

TodayCare does not interfere or restrict any employees from offering childcare to families during their hours off. It is strictly the employee's prerogative to make those choices.

TodayCare is not, in any way, responsible for incidences that occur during after-hour arrangements. If parents or guardians wish to engage with TodayCare teachers for babysitting, parents will be asked to sign a babysitting policy. The policy affirms that TodayCare is not, in any way, responsible for incidents or accidents that occur when staff has been engaged by a family for babysitting services.

### **COOPERATING WITH REGULATORY AGENCIES**

The Pennsylvania Department of Human Services licenses TodayCare Children's Centers at Keystone Early Learning Center. The Center meets and/or exceeds state standards. The license is clearly displayed at the Center. All Center staff are mandated to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Pennsylvania Department of Human Service's Childline.

### **CHILD CUSTODY**

Legal decisions regarding issues of child custody will be respected. In fairness to parents and children, documentation of the rights of each parent is required to restrict visitations

when necessary. Please be advised that the Center cannot refuse to release a child to the child's parent or legal guardian without a court order or legal document restricting or denying that person of such rights.

## **CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS**

Children with pre-existing medical conditions will be evaluated for admission on an individual basis. After admission, documentation of regular medical follow-up will be required. Children with chronic asthma will be allowed to remain in the Center if there is no "whistling" and/or difficulty breathing, and the child is not running a fever.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

All children are required to be immunized according to the Department of Human Services Child Care Regulations. An immunization record shall be updated according to the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended schedule. A health report must be written and signed by a physician, physician's assistant, or a CRNP, and must include the individual's professional title.

The health report must include the following information:

- A review of the child's health history, a list of the child's allergies, a list of the child's current medication and the reason for the medication, an assessment of an acute or chronic health problem or special need and recommendations for treatment or services, including information regarding abnormal results of screening tests for vision, hearing or lead poisoning, a review of the child's immunized status according to recommendations of the ACIP, a statement of the child's medical information pertinent to diagnosis and treatment in case of emergency, a statement that the child is able to participate in childcare and appears to be free from contagious or communicable disease, and a statement that age-appropriate screenings recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics were conducted since the time of the previous health report required by this section.

Parents or guardians must provide an updated immunization and updated health record as they are obtained unless they have provided an exemption from immunization for religious belief or strong personal objection equated to a religious belief which must be documented by a written, signed, and dated statement from the child's parent or guardian.

Any under-immunized child will be excluded from care in the event that a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible to occurs in the program.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Prescribed medications can often be administered outside of the hours when care is provided at KELC. If possible, please plan to do so.

However, if necessary, management can administer medicine under the following



guidelines:

- Medication will be administered one time per day per child only. Medicine will be given as your physician prescribes and will be administered by the Center Director, Assistant Director, or other TodayCare staff who have been trained in medication administration. Please ask your physician to prescribe medication accordingly.
- We cannot administer any type of medication without a physician's current prescription (or written prescription approval by health personnel for non-prescription drugs with specific dosage) and a signed Medication Authorization form to be completed by the parent. Medication administration forms are available in the office.
- Medication must be provided in the original container and labeled with the child's name, date, instructions, and physician's name. The Center will not administer medication after the expiration date, nor will we administer medication to a child that was prescribed for another child. A member of the management team must log the medication into the Medication Logbook.
- Never leave medication in your child's diaper bag or backpack. All medication must be left with Center Management. Medication left at the center is kept in a locked container. If medication requires refrigeration, it is kept in a lock container in the medication refrigerator. If medication is not to stay at the center, it is the parent's responsibility to remember to take medications home with the child at pick up time. Medication that is required for extreme allergic reactions will be kept in the emergency backpack.
- Upon enrollment, please discuss any allergies/medical conditions your child has with center management and note them in "allergy/medical conditions list" section of the emergency contact. It is the parents' responsibility to keep us informed of changes in their child's health. Any medications your child may need upon an allergic reaction will be stored in a labeled container in the office.
- If a physician has ordered a special medical management procedure for a child in care, an adult trained in the procedure must be on-site whenever the child is present.
- The application of diaper rash ointment, sunscreen, or insect repellent requires that a medication administration form be filled out by the parent.

## **ILLNESS AND INJURY**

Parents will be notified immediately if their child becomes ill at the Center. Parents shall remove children from the Center within **1 hour** after notification. Please be sure all emergency numbers are always up to date.

Children exhibiting signs of illness listed below should remain at home. The following are indications of illness that will necessitate removal:

- Unusual drowsiness or severe lethargy
- Extreme fussiness

- Persistent or excessive crying
- Severe wheezing
- Uncontrolled coughing
- Rapid or labored breathing
- Asthmatic with upper respiratory infection and coughing that are interfering with the child's ability to learn
- Unable to play
- Complaining of severe pain
- Yellowing of the eyes or skin
- Undiagnosed rash
- Fever above 100.4 degrees
- Vomiting with two or more episodes within one day
- Diarrhea of 2 abnormally loose stools within a 1-hour period.
- Severe cold with coughing, sneezing, and/or thick nose drainage.

If the parent or guardian cannot be reached, an emergency contact person, designated by you, will be called. Your child will be transported to the closest hospital if required due to a severe illness or injury. In extreme emergencies, immediate treatment will be administered as determined by emergency medical personnel. You will be responsible for payment of any medical fees incurred.

Parents are required to inform the Center of reportable communicable diseases. We will notify public health authorities, as well as parents of other children who may have been exposed to your child. Your family's identity will be kept confidential.

We will provide you with written documentation in the event your child is injured while in the Center's care. If your child is injured, a staff person will call the parent to let them know in advance of their child's injury (unless it is just a red mark or a minor scrape). Staff will also notify the parent if the injury needed to be looked at by a physician. Phone calls will be made promptly in the time frame it takes to assess the injury. Documentation will be given on the same day as the injury. The incident report will include details on where the injury took place, if any equipment was involved, type of injury, and injury location. The form must be signed by management, staff, and a parent.

## **HEALTH CONSULTATIONS**

All children will have access to annual screenings for vision & hearing if providers are available. Parents will also complete a questionnaire about their child's development after 45 days of enrollment.

## **ECO-HEALTHY PRACTICES**

TodayCare encourages parents to work with the Center to participate in eco-healthy practices such as limiting your family's exposure to environmental health hazards such as

unhealthy air, heavy metals, and chemicals.

The Keystone Early Learning Center is recognized by the Children's Environmental Health Network as an Eco-Healthy Child Care® facility.

TodayCare is aware of and uses eco-healthy practices such as: washing fruits and vegetables before consumption; purchasing non-toxic toys and art supplies; recycling; monitoring daily outdoor air quality; and using least-toxic, fragrance-free cleaning products.

The TodayCare Center at the Keystone Early Learning Center participates in Earth Day and includes it in the Curriculum.

### **IDLING VEHICLES**

KELC follows the policy set forth by the Department of General Services on Idling Vehicles: 3701. Unattended motor vehicle. (a) General rule.--No person driving or in charge of a motor vehicle shall permit the vehicle to stand unattended without placing the gear shift lever in a position which under the circumstances impedes the movement of the vehicle, stopping the engine, locking the ignition in vehicles so equipped, removing the key from the ignition and, when standing upon any grade, turning the front wheels to the curb or side of the highway and effectively setting the brake.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are an important day for a young child, and they will be celebrated at our Center during the regular snack time.

Parents are invited to provide moderate birthday treats for their child's class and to participate in the celebration. Our Center is a peanut and nut-free environment. Please remember – no items with nuts. All snacks provided must be commercially prepared with an ingredient list included.

### **CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS**

Holidays are special times to celebrate and opportunities to teach the children about different traditions and cultures. Although no specific religious instruction is offered, different holidays are discussed to help the children understand and gain an appreciation of various traditions and cultures.

Parents are encouraged to share with the staff information about the customs and celebrations that are important to them. If you do not celebrate holidays for religious reasons, please discuss these with your child's teacher.

### **YOUR CHILD'S FIRST DAY**

## **WHAT TO BRING:**

There are several things you should bring with your child to the Center on their first day. Be sure to label everything with your child's name in non-toxic, permanent marker.

- Two complete changes of clothes labeled with the child's name (all ages) preferably folded and sealed in a gallon-sized zip-lock plastic bag. Keystone Early Learning Center is not responsible for any lost and/or stolen items.
- Disposable diapers, wipes, and all ointments. If ointment is required, please complete the Medication Administration Form. Cloth diapers are permitted if medically necessary, or if used under specific guidelines. Please see the diapering policy on page 25 of this handbook.
- Children, other than infants, must bring a crib or cot sheet, blanket, and pacifier if needed. If using a pacifier, please bring two with your child's name on them in non-toxic, permanent marker.
- Crib sheets for the infant room will be provided and laundered weekly at the Center.

## **WHAT NOT TO BRING:**

Toys, food, gum, candy, pets, toy weapons, jewelry, and money should stay at home.

All children share the learning materials at the Center as part of the learning experience. When children are not concerned about their toys becoming lost or broken, they are able to participate more fully in our educational environment.

We are not responsible for any items lost or broken.

## **SHOULD PARENTS STAY? IT DEPENDS...**

Most early childhood professionals believe that a caring policy allows parents to stay as long as necessary, especially if children appear to need parental support. No optimal policy exists. Children are different and temperaments vary. Children who adapt to change well or know about school from other experiences cannot understand why a parent might stay but are perfectly amenable to parents in the room. Other children approach new experiences with hesitation and adapt better if the parent remains. Parents offer valuable support by staying, but if they make themselves too available, children may be reluctant to relate to other children or to teachers.

Circumstances vary as well as children's temperaments. Children who have had few babysitters and whose parents rarely left them may need a more gradual separation than children with a large extended family or a history of multiple caregivers.

## **SAYING GOODBYE THE FIRST DAY**

At some point, parents must leave. Saying goodbye to your child builds trust. Repeated

goodbyes strengthen children's beliefs that parents will come back. If children know that a parent is leaving, they will be better prepared to begin their day.

Thank you for choosing the Keystone Early Learning Center. If you have any questions, please call the Center at 717-783-3842.

TodayCare @ Keystone Early Learning Center  
Lana Stitzel, Center Director  
Judy Simpson, President/COO

ADDENDUM 1: MANAGEMENT DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHING  
COMMONWEALTH CHILD CARE PROGRAM

ADDENDUM 2: KELCA BY-LAWS

KEYSTONE EARLY LEARNING CENTER BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this association is the Keystone Early Learning Center Association (hereinafter "the Association").

ARTICLE 2 - ORGANIZATION AND PURPOSE

1. The Association shall be registered as a nonprofit organization under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
2. The purpose of the Association is to provide to children affordable, convenient, safe and high-quality day care.
3. The Association is not, and shall not be considered to be, an entity within or under the jurisdiction of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission or the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Association's relationship with the Commission shall be governed by contract; to the extent that the terms of that contract conflict with these bylaws, the contract shall govern.

ARTICLE 3- OFFICE

The registered office of the Association shall be Room 125, 400 North Street, Keystone Building, Harrisburg, PA 17120.

ARTICLE 4- MEMBERS

1. Any parent or guardian of a child enrolled in the childcare center is eligible to be a member of the Association.
2. Membership in the Association shall be affected upon enrollment. Membership shall be without regard to race, color, religious creed, ancestry, union membership, age, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, or physical handicap.
3. Each member of the Association shall be entitled to one vote. The right of a member to vote, and his/her right, title, and interest in or to the Association or its property, shall cease when he/she is no longer eligible for membership in the Association.
4. The Executive Board may determine from time to time the amount of initiation fee, if any, and annual dues, if any, payable by members.

ARTICLE 5 - MEETINGS OF MEMBERS

1. Meetings of the members of the Association shall be held at the Keystone Building or at such other place as may be fixed by the Executive Board.
2. The annual meeting of the members shall be held during the regularly scheduled

- August meeting each year, if not a legal holiday, and if a legal holiday, then on the next full business day following, at noon, when the members shall elect an Executive Board and transact such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting.
3. Regular meetings of the members of the Association may be called at any time by the President or by five (5) members. It shall be the duty of the Secretary to fix the time of the meeting which shall be held not more than fifteen (15) calendar days after the receipt of the request.
  4. Special meetings of the members of the Association shall be held at least monthly at a time and place designated by the Executive Board.
  5. A meeting of members duly called shall be organized for the transaction of business. The presence, in person or by proxy, of 12 members entitled to vote shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of the members for the transaction of business except as may be otherwise provided by law.

## ARTICLE 6 - EXECUTIVE OFFICERS

1. The Executive Board of the Association shall consist of a President, President-Elect, Immediate Past President, Secretary, Treasurer and two At-Large Board Members. They shall hold their offices for a term of one (1) year and shall have such authority and shall perform such duties as are provided by the By-Laws.
2. Any officer may be removed by the membership by a two-thirds vote whenever in its judgment the best interests of the Association will be served thereby.
3. The President shall be the chief executive officer of the Association. He/she shall preside at all meetings of the members and Executive Board, shall have general and active management duties of the affairs of the Association, and shall see that all orders and resolutions of the Board are carried into effect, subject, however, to the right of the Board to delegate any specific powers, except such as may be by statute exclusively conferred on the President, to any other officer or officers of the Association. He/she shall be an EX-OFFICIO member of all committees and shall have the general powers and duties of supervision and management usually vested in the office of the President. The President shall also be the official liaison person with the childcare center provider.
4. The President-Elect shall collaborate with the President to learn the role of the President, to become familiar with the Association and its governance, and to develop and facilitate officer transition. The President-Elect assists and supports the President as needed. The President-Elect shall act in all cases for and as the President of in the latter's absence or incapacity and shall perform such other duties as he/she may be required to do from time to time. The President-Elect shall automatically become President at the end of the term as President-Elect.
5. The Immediate Past President shall provide advice and leadership to the Executive Board regarding past practices and other matters to assist the Board in governing the Association. The Immediate Past President supports the President and the President-Elect on an as-needed basis.

6. The Secretary shall record all the votes of the Association and the minutes of all its transactions in a book to be kept for that purpose. He/she shall perform like duties for all committees of the Executive Board when required. He/she shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all meetings of the members and of the Executive Board, and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Executive Board or President.
7. The Treasurer shall have custody of the Association's funds and shall keep full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Association. He/she shall keep the moneys of the Association in a separate account to the credit of the Association. He/she shall disburse the funds of the Association and shall render to the President and the members, at the regular meetings of the Association, or whenever they may require it, an account of all his/her transactions as Treasurer and of the financial condition of the Association. The Treasurer shall be bonded to the extent determined necessary by the Executive Board.
8. The two At-Large Board Members shall be responsible for planning and organizing fundraising events and activities on behalf of the Association and shall perform other duties as assigned by the Executive Board.

#### ARTICLE 7- EXECUTIVE BOARD

1. The business and affairs of this Association shall be managed by its Executive Board, which shall consist of the seven officers of the Association. They shall be elected by the members at the annual meeting of members of the Association, and each officer shall be elected for a one-year term. Nominations shall be made from the floor and the Executive Board shall be elected by a majority of those present and voting.
2. In addition to the powers and authorities by these By-Laws expressly conferred upon them, the Executive Board may exercise all such powers of the Association and do all such lawful acts and things as are not by statute or by the Articles or by these By-Laws directed or required to be exercised or done by the members.
3. The meetings of the Executive board may be held at such times and at such place as the President may from time to time appoint or as may be designated by the Secretary in the notice calling the meeting.
4. Notice of every meeting of the Executive Board shall be given to each officer at least one (1) day prior to the day named for the meeting.
5. A majority of the Executive Board in office shall be necessary to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and the acts of a majority of the Board present at a meeting at which a quorum is present shall be the acts of the Executive Board. Any action which may be taken at a meeting of the Board may be taken without a meeting, if a consent or consents in writing setting forth the action so taken shall be signed by all of the Executive Board in office and shall be filed with the Secretary of the Association.
6. The Association shall establish and maintain required committees, as directed in Commonwealth Child Care Program Management Directive 205.21 Amended. The Executive Board may, by resolution adopted by a majority of the Board in office,



establish one or more committees to consist of one or more officers of the Association, with the exception of the audit committee, and an appropriate number of members of the Association as shall be determined by the Executive Board.

7. Each committee of the Board shall serve at the pleasure of the Board.

8. A member of the Executive Board shall perform his/her duties as an officer, including his/her duties as a member of any committee of the Board upon which he/she serves, in good faith, in a manner he/she reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the Association, and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, skill, and diligence, as a person of ordinary prudence would use under similar circumstances.

9. Members of the Executive Board shall not receive any state salary for their services. They may request to be reimbursed for actual expenses incurred on behalf of or for the benefit of the Association with the approval of the Executive Board.

## ARTICLE 8 – VACANCIES

1. If the office of any officer, one or more, becomes vacant for any reason, the Executive Board may choose a successor or successors, who shall hold office for the unexpired term in respect to which such vacancy occurred.

## ARTICLE 9 - BOOKS & RECORDS

1. The Association shall keep a record of the proceedings of the members and the Board, the copy of its By-Laws, including all amendments thereto to date, certified by the Secretary of the Association. The Association shall also keep appropriate, complete, and accurate books or records of account.

2. On the vote of the membership, an audit of the financial records of the Association shall be accomplished on an annual basis by a committee appointed by the Executive Board which shall not consist of any member of the Executive Board or such audit may be performed by an independent, qualified, public accountant or public accounting firm selected by the Board.

3. Every member shall, upon written demand, have a right to examine for any proper purpose, the books and records of account and the records of the proceedings of the members and the Board and to make copies or extracts therefrom. A proper purpose shall mean a purpose reasonably related to the interest of the Association or of such person as a member.

## ARTICLE 10 - TRANSACTION OF BUSINESS

1. The Executive Board shall appoint a committee to review and negotiate the annual selection of a provider or renewal of the contract between the Association and the childcare provider. This committee shall consist of the four (4) officers of the Board and three (3) at-large members appointed by the President. The contract committee shall make its recommendation to the members at a meeting called for the purpose of selecting a childcare provider or renewing the contract with the childcare provider. The final

decision for selecting a provider or renewing the contract shall be made by majority vote of those members present at such meeting.

2. All checks shall be signed by such officer or officers as the Executive Board may designate.

#### ARTICLE 11 – MISCELLANEOUS

1. The fiscal year of the Association shall begin on the first day of January.

#### ARTICLE 12- INDEMNIFICATION

1. The Association shall indemnify each of its officers against all reasonable expenses actually and necessarily incurred by him/her in connection with the defense of any litigation to which the individual may have been a party because he/she is or was an officer of the Association. The individual shall have no right to reimbursement, however, in relation to matters as to which he/she has been adjudged liable to the Association for negligence or misconduct in the performance of his/her duties or for dereliction in the performance of his/her duty as an officer or by reason of willful misconduct, had faith, gross negligence, or reckless disregard of the duties of his/her officer. The right to indemnity for expenses shall also apply to the expenses of suits that are compromised or settled if the court having jurisdiction of the matter shall approve such settlement. The foregoing right of indemnification shall be in addition to, and not exclusive of, all other rights to which such officer may be entitled.

#### ARTICLE 13 - VOLUNTARY DISSOLUTION

1. Voluntary dissolution of this Association may occur upon a vote by the membership. Upon such affirmative vote, the Executive Board shall have full power to wind up and settle the affairs of the Association.
2. If assets remain after the Board has paid or provided for all the Association's liabilities, such remaining assets, in the form of cash or property, shall be donated to similar nonprofit organizations that provide affordable, convenient, and safe care of high quality for children of employees of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or to one or more bona fide, nonprofit organizations in the Harrisburg area that provide for the health, welfare, or care of children.

#### ARTICLE 14- AMENDMENTS

1. By-Laws may be adopted, amended, or repealed by a vote of members entitled to cast at least a majority of the votes which all members present are entitled to cast thereon at any regular or special meeting duly convened after notice to the members of that purpose as long as changes do not conflict with childcare center policy.

Revised and adopted August 10, 1994. Amended February 29, 1996. Amended September 12, 1996. Amended October 10, 1996. Amended November 10, 1999. Amended June 17, 2009. Amended August 27, 2013. Amended March 1, 2016. Amended June 30, 2017. Amended August 23, 2018.