



The Growing Tree Learning Center

**Parent Handbook
2025-2026**

Dear Families:

Welcome to The Growing Tree Learning Center: a program of UCP of Hudson County. The Growing Tree is committed to providing the three- and four-year-old children, who are Jersey City residents, with a safe and developmentally appropriate Preschool experience.

Our mission is to deliver the highest quality care and education for all our students and to ensure that parents are valued and respected. To accomplish this, we depend on parents to be responsible and active participants in their children's preschool experience. We strive to collaborate closely with parents in a partnership that will facilitate the transitions between home and school. Daily communication and a sense of trust between parents and teachers are vital.

Parents should read this handbook, use it as a key to follow the policies and procedures outlined, provide us with all the necessary information, and be open to collaborating with us as a team!

The handbook is designed to ensure that your family has a rewarding experience during your child's time at The Growing Tree. In the handbook, we have tried to anticipate many of your questions about the program, while also fulfilling all the policies and regulations established by the Jersey City Early Childhood Department and the Bureau of Licensing in the Division of Youth & Family Services for the State of New Jersey.

On behalf of the faculty and staff at The Growing Tree Learning Center, I would like to welcome you and your child to our school. We are excited you have chosen to become a part of The Growing Tree family.

Sincerely yours,

Sandra Vasquez

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Mission Statement

At the Growing Tree Learning Center, students are provided with a safe, secure, and wholesome physical, social, emotional, and intellectual environment.

A. Physical

- To ensure that the physical environment of the students, both outside and inside, is safe and free of hazards.
- To provide activities and programs that will stimulate the physical development and competence of each student.

B. Emotional

- To respect each student as a unique individual with his or her own needs and interests.
- To encourage development of independence, self-confidence, self-reliance, and self-esteem to reinforce a positive self-concept in each student.

C. Social

- To create and maintain a relaxed and stimulating social environment in which the students can function, relate to, and respect each other in groups.
- To encourage child-adult interaction in a warm, active family-type atmosphere.

D. Intellectual

- To provide cognitive programming in relation to the student's interest, stages of development, and levels of readiness.
- To prepare an environment that will stimulate creative and spontaneous responses.

Eligibility Requirements

Parents/Legal guardians must be Jersey City residents whose children will be three by October 1st of the current school year.

Health Regulations

- All students must have an updated physical prior to admission.
- All students must have all necessary immunizations.
- The prescribed medication shall have the student's name, name of medication, a pharmacy label containing directions for administering the medication, and the doctor's name.

Attendance/ Lateness Policy & Procedures

ATTENDANCE ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL IS MANDATORY. STUDENTS NOT PRESENT ON THE FIRST DAY WILL BE DROPPED FROM THE PRESCHOOL PROGRAM. PARENTS MUST PLAN. MORNING CARE AND AFTERCARE ARE NOT AVAILABLE ON THE FIRST DAY(S) OF SCHOOL.

Ten (10) CONSECUTIVE absences that are **NOT ILLNESS-related** will result in termination from the Growing Tree. Please schedule family vacations accordingly, as this is a district mandate and will be followed strictly.

It is the parents' responsibility to report a student's absence. Parents must call the main office by 8:00 am and provide the student's name and room number. Your call may be recorded on the answering machine or answered directly by school staff.

When a student is absent for 3 consecutive days, because of an ILLNESS, a doctor's note must be presented (upon arrival) when the student returns to school. The student CAN NOT return to school without a doctor's note.

The Growing Tree's instructional hours are 8:30 am to 2:45 pm. Regular school attendance is an important factor in students' social and cognitive development. Regular school attendance can provide students with various enriching opportunities and experiences that are beneficial to their social development and relationships with peers and adults. Excessive absenteeism, whether sporadic or consistent, can have long-term effects on a child's educational path starting in preschool. Chronic absenteeism sets the stage for poor attendance and inability to successfully do grade-level work in later grades (*Attendance Works, 2013*).

The Division of Early Childhood Education regulations require parents and guardians to have the student in school daily and on time. It is in the best interest of the student that the school and homework together to minimize the frequency of lateness and absences.

Late arrival deprives the student from receiving necessary instruction and may set a negative tone for the learning process that day. Furthermore, lateness to school causes problems both for the student and the class. The student misses an opportunity to interact with his/her teachers and friends, and important morning activities are neglected.

It is important that students be at the center by 8:30 am for breakfast. Classroom activities begin at 9:00 am; therefore, it is important that students come to school on time in order to participate in the daily routines and activities.

The third occurrence of lateness will result in a mandatory conference with the parent, classroom teacher, and family worker.

Failure to Pick Up Student

Procedure to follow if the parent(s) or authorized person(s) fails to pick up or is late in picking up a student at the time of the school closing.

- Students not picked up by closing time will be supervised by two staff members in the general office area.
- The school staff makes every effort to contact the custodial parent and/or other persons authorized by the parents to care for the student.
- A fee of **\$1.00 per minute** will be charged for late pick up, e.g., 5 minutes late will be charged \$5.00. The late fee shall be paid at the time of pick-up. This fee is charged to encourage parents to pick up their children on time. Please arrange your schedule accordingly or find an alternate person (**18 years old**) to pick up students in a **timely** manner.
- Whenever the custodial parent or other person(s) authorized by the custodial parent fails to pick up the child one hour (6:30) or more after closing time, and provided that the Center staff members have been unable to make other arrangements for returning the

child to his/her custodial parent, a staff member shall call **DEPT. OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF) 24-hour Child Abuse Hot Line (1-877-652-2873)** to seek assistance in caring for the child until his/her custodial parents are available to care for the child.

Wraparound/ Aftercare & Tuition Fees

Wrap Around hours are: 7:30-8:00 & 2:45-5:30. Parents may pay for wrap around privately or apply for assistance through the Urban League of Hudson County.

A late fee will be assessed for students picked up after these scheduled times; please see the section titled **Tuition and Fees**. In addition, as required by New Jersey state law, DCF (DFYS) must be called when a student is not picked up an hour after the program's closure, without notification by the parent or caregiver. Please refer to the Information to Parent Document in this packet.

Wrap-around service payments are due on the 1st school day of the month. Any payments made after the 5th of the month will be charged a \$25 late fee payable immediately. NO payment will be accepted after the 10th of the month. The child will not be permitted to participate in the wrap-around program until payment is made in full. Payments will only be accepted in the form of a money order, **payable to UCP OF HUDSON COUNTY**.

The HighScope Curriculum

At the Growing Tree, we implement the **High Scope Preschool Curriculum** with fidelity and passion. The Highscope Curriculum covers the following areas: gross motor development, fine motor development, social/emotional development, literacy development, and creative skills development. The HighScope Curriculum is uniquely designed to provide a rich academic foundation while promoting independence, decision making, cooperation, creativity, and problem solving in young children. The HighScope Curriculum includes learning objectives, effective adult interaction strategies, and assessment measures that help programs ensure a high-quality experience for **ALL** learners.

Teachers using the HighScope Curriculum work in partnership with parents and other family members to promote students' learning. They provide information about the curriculum and early learning, invite family members to participate in classroom activities and parent workshops, discuss students' progress, and share ideas for extending classroom learning in the home. As a result, teachers report that parents have a better understanding of how their children are developing and learning.

Overview of the HighScope Preschool Curriculum

The central principles and guidelines of the High/Scope approach:

Active Learning

Through active learning—acting directly on objects and interacting with people, ideas, and events—students construct their own understanding of the world around them. Students in High/Scope environments are encouraged to follow their own initiative—to explore, engage in experiences that are of personal interest, ask and answer questions, set their own goals, solve problems that get in the way of accomplishing those goals, and generate new ideas to test. As they conduct their intentions with the support of interested, involved adults, students naturally engage in key experiences – activities that present important learning opportunities in ten key areas of development: creative representation, classification, seriation, number, space, and time.

Whether students are digging in sand, exploring with eyedroppers and colored water, or dancing with ribbons, they are talking with other students and with adults and making choices about what materials to use and how to use them. Adults, in turn, support students in a variety of ways, such as playing as partners with them, helping them solve problems, and providing opportunities for further learning experiences.

Adult-Child Interaction

The way adults interact with students is a key component of the High/Scope approach because it affects how comfortable students feel with initiating their own ideas. When adults focus on students' individual interests and strengths and share control with them, students feel encouraged to plan and follow through on activities of their own choosing.

Learning Environment

High/Scope settings are designed to support active learning. Both the indoor and outdoor settings offer students a wide range of materials that can be manipulated and combined in many ways – ways that make sense to students and enable them to pursue their own interests. Inside the classroom, the play space is divided into several interest areas centered on specific types of play – for example, block area, family area, table toy area, sand/water area, and library area.

Daily Routine

The High/Scope daily routine offers students the consistency of a predictable yet flexible sequence of events. The routine is made up of several components: a plan-do-review sequence, small and large group times, outside time, transition times, and times for eating and resting. These components provide students with a range of active learning experiences and a balance between adult and child-initiated activities. Students have opportunities to play indoors, as well as outdoors, and to participate in both noisy and quiet play. There are times for large group activities and times when students can choose to play by themselves or with one or two other students or adults. Students can engage in a variety of types of play, including exploration, constructive play, pretend play, and games.

DAILY CLASSROOM SCHEDULE COMPONENTS

- Planning time (10–15 minutes)
- Work time (45–60 minutes)
- Recall time (10–15 minutes)
- Small-group time (15–20 minutes)
- Large-group time (10–15 minutes)
- Outside time (30–40 minutes)
- Transition times (including arrival and departure) (variable)
- Eating and rest times (variable)
- Adult team planning time (20–40 minutes)

Parent Participation

Parent participation is necessary to help us achieve our goals in providing the best Preschool experience for your children. It is important for us to know what your values are for your child, and we would like to share our plans and experiences with you. We do this through daily informal talks and periodical individual conferences that you may request at any time.

Parents are encouraged to participate by:

- Offering to volunteer in the classroom.
- Offer your special talents such as singing, sewing, dancing, storytelling, etc.
- Share cultural experiences with your students' class.

- Read books to the students.
- Help teachers with special projects.
- Volunteer to be a guest speaker.
- Volunteer when field trips are scheduled.
- End of the year Moving Up ceremony

While we understand that work schedules limit the amount of time you are available, we encourage each parent to become involved in some way with the school. We welcome extended family members to volunteer and visit the school. All events will be announced in the weekly classroom newsletters.

Parents and/or guardians participating in The Growing Tree Learning Center on a regular basis (i.e., every Friday, reading to the students) must complete a Mantoux test and a Physical Exam. This document will be found with your students' medical documents.

Release of Students Policy

Each student may be released only to the care of authorized custodial parent(s)/emergency contact person(s) who can remove the child from the school and will assume full responsibility for the child in the event of an emergency.

If a non-custodial parent has been denied access or granted limited access to a child by a court order, the school shall secure documentation to that effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order.

If parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parents(s) fail to pick up a child at the time of the school's daily closing, the school shall ensure that:

1. The student is always supervised.
2. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by parents(s).
3. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his/her parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the school, the staff member shall call the Division's 24 hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the student's parent(s) is able to pick-up the child.

If the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s) appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the school shall ensure that:

1. The child may not be released to such an impaired individual.
2. Staff members attempt to contact the student's other parent, or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent.
3. If the school is unable to make alternative arrangements, a staff member shall call the Division's 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline (1-877-652-2873) to seek assistance in caring for the child.
4. For school-age childcare programs, no child shall be released from the program unsupervised except upon instruction from the student's parents.

***CUSTODIAL INFORMATION:**

If the non-custodial parent is not included among those persons authorized by the custodial parent to pick up the child, please explain below and attach a copy of the appropriate documents (**COURT ORDER**)

Communicable Diseases & Management Policy

If a student exhibits any of the following symptoms, the student should not attend school. If such symptoms occur during school hours, the student will be removed from the group, and parents will be called to take the student home.

- Severe pain or discomfort
- Acute diarrhea
- Episodes of acute vomiting
- Elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Lethargy
- Severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- Red eyes with discharge
- Infected, untreated skin patches
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Skin rashes in conjunction with fever or behavior changes
- Skin lesions that are weeping or bleeding
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Stiff neck

Communicable Diseases

Respiratory

Chicken Pox
German Measles*
Hemophilus Influenzae*
Measles*
Meningococcus*
Mumps*
Strep Throat
Tuberculosis*
Whooping Cough*

Gastro-Intestinal

Campylobacter*
Escherichia coli*
Giardia Lamblia*
Hepatitis A*
Salmonella*

Contact Illness

Impetigo

Scabies
Shingles

*Reportable diseases, as required by N.J.A.C. 10:122-7.10(A)

Once the student is symptom-free or has a health care provider's note stating that the student no longer poses a serious health risk to himself/herself or others, the student may return to the school unless contraindicated by the local health department or Department of Health.

EXCLUDABLE COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

A student or staff member who contracts an excludable communicable disease may not return to the school without a health care provider's note stating that the student presents no risk to himself/herself or others. **Note: If a student has chicken pox, a note from the parent stating that all sores have dried and crusted is required.** If a student is exposed to any excludable disease at the school, parents will be notified in writing.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE REPORTING GUIDELINES

Some excludable communicable diseases must be reported to the health department by the school. The Department of Health's Reporting Requirements for Communicable Diseases and Work-Related Conditions Quick Reference Guide, a complete list of reportable excludable communicable diseases, which can be found at:

http://www.nj.gov/health/cd/documents/reportable_disease_magnet.pdf.

Medication Policy

The Growing Tree Learning Center does not have a sick room; the JCBOE consulting nurse is an active participant in the program, but her role is not solely assigned to the Growing Tree. The Growing Tree staff is limited when diagnosing illness; therefore, **we're on the side of caution.** Parents should pick up immediately and be active participants when informed of a student's symptoms. The Growing Tree is equipped with staff that have received medication training and will dispense prescription medication under the following conditions:

- Medication will be given only after the student's parent has completed the necessary paperwork in the Medication Administration Log, found at the front desk.
- Prescription medication for a student must be prescribed for the student for it to be given to them.
- Medication must be in its original container, which has been labeled with the student's name, name of medication, date it was prescribed, and directions for its administration.
- Unused medication will be returned to the parent(s) when no longer being administered.
- We will not give any medication that has to be administered rectally.
- We will not dress or treat burns, wounds, open sores, skin lesions, etc.

Medication Administration Policy & Procedures

GUIDING PRINCIPLES and PROCEDURES:

1. Whenever possible, it is best that medication be given at home. Dosing of medication can frequently be done so that the child receives medication prior to going to childcare, and again when returning home and/or at bedtime. The parent/guardian is encouraged to discuss this possibility with the student's health care provider.
2. The first dose of any medication should always be given at home and with sufficient time before the child returns to childcare to observe the student's response to the medication given. When a child is ill due to a communicable disease that requires medication as treatment, the health care provider may require that the child be on a particular medication for 24 hours before returning to childcare. This is for the protection of the child who is ill as well as the other children in childcare.
3. Medication will only be given when ordered by the student's health care provider and with the written consent of the student's parent/legal guardian. A "Permission to Give Medication in Childcare" form is attached to this policy and will hereafter be referred to as Permission Form. All information on the Permission Form must be completed before the medication can be given. Copies of this form can be duplicated or requested from the childcare provider.
4. "As needed" medications may be given only when the student's health care provider completes a Permission Form that lists specific reasons and times when such medication can be given.

5. Medications given in the Center will be administered by a staff member designated by the Center Director and will have been informed of the student's health needs related to the medication and will have had training in the safe administration of medication.

6. Any prescription or over-the-counter medication brought to the childcare center must be specific to the child who is to receive the medication, in its original container, have a child-resistant safety cap, and be labeled with the appropriate information as follows:

- ✓ Prescription medication must have the original pharmacist's label that includes the pharmacist's phone number, the student's full name, name of the health care provider prescribing the medication, name and expiration date of the medication, the date it was prescribed or updated, and dosage, route, frequency, and any special instructions for its administration and/or storage. It is suggested that the parent/guardian ask the pharmacist to provide the medication in two containers, one for home and one for use in childcare.
- ✓ Over-the-counter (OTC) medication must have the student's full name on the container, and the manufacturer's original label with dosage, route, frequency, and any special instructions for administration and storage, and expiration date must be clearly visible.
- ✓ Any OTC without instructions for administration specific to the age of the child receiving the medication must have a completed Permission Form from the health care provider prior to being given in the childcare center.

7. Examples of over-the-counter medications that may be given include:

- ✓ Antihistamines
- ✓ Decongestants
- ✓ Non-aspirin fever reducers/pain relievers
- ✓ Cough suppressants
- ✓ Topical ointments, such as diaper cream or sunscreen

8. All medications will be stored:

- ✓ Inaccessible to children
- ✓ Separate from staff or household medications ☐☐ Under proper temperature control.
- ✓ A small lock box will be used in the refrigerator to hold medications requiring refrigeration.

9. For the child who receives a particular medication on a long-term daily basis, the staff will advise the parent/guardian one week prior to the medication needing to be refilled so that needed doses of medication are not missed.

10. Unused or expired medication will be returned to the parent/guardian when it is no longer needed or be able to be used by the child.

11. Records of all medication given to a child are completed in ink and are signed by the staff designated to give the medication. These records are maintained in the Center. Samples of the forms used are attached to this policy and include:

- ✓ Permission to Give Medication in Childcare
- ✓ Universal Child Health Record
- ✓ Emergency Contact Sheet
- ✓ Medication Administration Log

✓ Medication Incident/Error Report

12. Information exchange between the parent/guardian and childcare provider about medication that a child is receiving should be shared when the child is brought to and picked up from the Center. Parents/guardians should share with the staff any problems, observations, or suggestions that they may have in giving medication to their child at home, and likewise with the staff from the center to the parent/guardian.

13. Confidentiality related to medications and their administration will be safeguarded by the Center Director and staff.

Parents/guardians may request to see/review their student's medication records maintained at the Center at any time.

14. Parent/guardian will sign all necessary medication-related forms that require their signature, and particularly in the case of the emergency contact form, will update the information as necessary to safeguard the health and safety of their child.

15. Parent/guardian will authorize the Director or Director Designee to contact the pharmacist or health care provider for more information about the medication the child is receiving and will also authorize the health care provider to speak with the Director or Director's designee if a situation arises that requires immediate attention to the student's health and safety particularly if the parent/guardian cannot be reached.

16. Parent/guardian will read and have an opportunity to discuss the content of this policy with the Director or the Director's designee. The parent's signature on this policy is an indication that the parent accepts the guidelines and procedures listed in this policy and will follow them to safeguard the health and safety of their child. Parent/guardian will receive a copy of the signed policy including single copies of the records referenced in this policy.

Sick Student Policy

The Growing Tree staff is limited when diagnosing illness; therefore, we are on the side of caution. Parents should pick up immediately and be active participants when informed of a student's symptoms. If staff deems it necessary, we will notify the parent/caregiver. If we cannot reach the parents/caregivers, we will contact the persons listed as emergency contacts. In case of a very high fever, accident, or any other illness that we feel requires immediate medical attention, an ambulance will be called and the student will be taken to the nearest hospital/emergency treatment facility and we will continue to reach the parents/caregivers and/or emergency contacts, for more information on this policy please refer to the next section, titled "Illness/Injury Policy."

If the student displays any of the conditions listed below, the student may not return to school 24 hours after the condition has cleared.

Absences of three or more consecutive school days require a doctor's note indicating that the student is well to return to school. A parent/caregiver must pick the student up from the school no more than one hour after being contacted with regards to the situation.

- Rash or inflamed skin areas
- Elevated temperatures of 101.5 degrees Fahrenheit
- Severe pain or discomfort
- Diarrhea

- Episodes of acute vomiting
- Sore throat or severe coughing
- Yellow eyes or jaundice skin
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) *
- Red eyes with discharge*
- Earache
- Infected untreated skin patches*
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours
- Swollen joints
- Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- Stiff neck
- Blood in urine
- Ringworm*
- Lice

*Condition requires a doctor's note to return to The Growing Tree Learning Center.

Illness/Injury Policy

The following steps will be taken in the event of a serious illness/injury or emergency. The staff in charge will telephone the ambulance for the student to be transported to the closest appropriate hospital/emergency treatment facility for diagnosis and treatment. The staff in charge or another staff will accompany the student to the hospital. The parent/caregiver will be notified to meet the staff in charge and their student at the hospital/emergency treatment facility. An Incident Report will be completed by the staff in charge within 24 hours and submitted to the program director so that the appropriate administrative steps may be taken. Note: for minor illness/injury the student will be isolated, appropriately treated, supervised and the parent/caregiver will be notified.

The student who has any of the above illnesses will not be admitted to school until he/she is symptom free and has a medical diagnosis that indicates that the student poses no health risk to himself/herself or any other students and must have a date when the student can return to the program. The student may not return to school without a doctor's note.

Guidelines for Positive Discipline

The High/Scope Curriculum provides us with a preventive approach to student behavior problems in which teachers and staff work to avert difficulties and conflicts by creating a supportive classroom environment and an orderly daily routine. When prevention fails, the adults help the students resolve their own conflicts and frustrations through problem-solving rather than through adult-imposed control or punishment. The goal of this approach is to help students become aware of how their own actions affect others and how the choices they make can help those overcome difficulties and conflicts.

- Teachers will not discuss a student's behavior(s) with a parent without consulting the Director first.
- There will be NO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT of any kind to any student.
- Students learn through repetition. Students should be reminded of classroom rules daily.
- Teachers will not discuss a student's behavior in front of the student.
- No food or rest shall be denied.
- Positive reinforcement and role playing will be used for discipline rather than negative statements and punishments.

- Each classroom teacher will discuss and reinforce “classroom rules” through morning meeting activities, role playing, socialization activities, and visual aids such as pictures, study and films, and music and songs.
- Teachers will set limits in the classroom by encouraging and modeling positive behavior.

While these approaches enable most students to function smoothly in most early childhood settings, sometimes staff find themselves spending a disproportionate amount of time dealing with the problems created by one or two challenging students. When faced with one student’s severe behavior problems, the teacher will record daily observations/incidents of the student in the classroom, and then they will consult with the Director. The Director will observe the student to give the teachers additional strategies. We realize, however, that such efforts are not always successful. Our next step is to schedule a conference with the student’s parents and teacher. The conference will include a discussion of effective and consistent methods to resolve the student’s behavior problems, and possible referral to the Pre-School Intervention Team. (PIRT)

Suspension & Expulsion Policy

Under state regulations, *N.J.A.C. 6A:13A-4.4(g)*, “Preschool students in a general education program or special education program shall not be suspended, long-term or short-term, and shall not be expelled.” Our goal at the Growing Tree is to prepare young students to succeed in school. More importantly, suspending or expelling preschoolers is not an age-appropriate method for addressing behavioral problems. There are no short-term or long-term outcomes that will benefit a student when he/she cannot be in school to receive the needed support services due to out-of-school disciplinary measures.

Challenging behaviors exhibited by preschool students must be addressed in the context of a comprehensive approach to behavior support that is designed to teach, nurture, and encourage positive social behaviors.

The Growing Tree Learning Center would like each student to achieve his/her maximum potential. The Preschool Intervention and Referral Team (PIRT) will be contacted to further evaluate specific circumstances pertaining to the student and work closely with the teacher and the parents.

A STUDENT WILL NOT BE EXPELLED:

If a student’s parent(s):

- Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a school’s alleged violations of the licensing requirements.
- Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the school.
- Questioned the school regarding policies and procedures.
- Without giving the parent enough time to make other childcare arrangements.

PARENTAL ACTIONS FOR STUDENTS' EXPULSION:

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments will result in termination from the wrap-around program, **NOT THE PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAM.**
- Failure to complete forms required by the JCBOE / Growing Tree, including the student’s immunization records.
- Verbal abuse of staff.

SCHEDULE OF EXPULSION:

- If after the remedial actions above have not worked, the student's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the student's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion/ or new placement in another school.
- Suspension of a parent is meant to be a period so that the parent/ guardian may work on obtaining the required documents that are deficient.
- The parents/guardians will be informed regarding the length of the suspension period.
- The parents/guardians will be informed about the expected changes required for parents to return to the school.

Notice of Withdrawal

To withdraw your student from our program, The Growing Tree Learning Center requires thirty (30) day notification in writing.

Technology & Social Media Policy

The Growing Tree Learning Center recognizes that access to technology in school gives students, parents, and teachers greater opportunities to learn, engage, communicate, and develop skills that will prepare them for work, life, and citizenship. We are committed to helping students develop 21st-century technology and communication skills.

To that end, this policy outlines the guidelines and behaviors that users are expected to follow when using school technologies or when using personally owned devices on school property.

- Students, parents, and teachers are expected to follow the same rules for good behavior and respectful conduct online as offline.
- Misuse of social media can result in disciplinary action.
- The Growing Tree makes a reasonable effort to ensure students' safety and security online, but will not be held accountable for any harm or damage that results from misuse of social media technologies.

Television & Computer Policy

The Growing Tree provides an activity-focused early learning environment. We believe students learn best through active participation, hands-on experiences, interactive conversation, and exploration. We follow the recommendations established by the American Academy of Pediatrics, which has found that too much television and computer viewing/use has been linked to poor performance in school, overweight students, and the establishment of poor dietary habits. As such, students at The Growing Tree have limited television viewing during the school year, which includes watching videos, or DVDs, playing with video games, and using the computer. On special occasions the television screen time is limited to 15 minutes per session and no more than 30 minutes at a time. Computer use is encouraged during "Work Time" but is also limited to 15-minute increments per student.

Video/ Photo Release Policy

The Growing Tree Learning Center will take photographs and record videos of the students during school hours and on trips. Parents acknowledge that said photographs and videos will be used for school displays, and/or training purposes. Signatures are required on the school application and are kept in the student file.

Methods of Parental Notification Policy

The Growing Tree acknowledges the important partnership between the school and families in promoting a healthy, safe, and successful experience and learning environment for its students. To promote the health, safety, and well-being of its students, The Growing Tree has implemented this **Parental Notification Policy** in compliance with Manual of Requirements for Student Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 10:122). Every licensed student care center in New Jersey must provide parents of enrolled students a policy to inform parents or guardians about their student's behavior, allegations, activities, or performance. A hard copy of The Growing Tree Parent Handbook stating all school policies and procedures is distributed to Parent upon enrollment.

The Growing Tree staff will inform parents about the following circumstances which include but are not limited to:

- a student's attendance is past the 10-day absenteeism policy
- when there is a health, medical, or safety incident or concern involving the student (except in those instances in which the school has reason to believe that the parent is involved in making a student unsafe)
- concerning the rights and procedural safeguards of parents related to assessment referrals and special education services. Concerning a student's assessment results
- concerning immunization requirements
- concerning early dismissal and/or emergency closings

Process of Notification:

The Growing Tree staff will notify a parent by phone, in writing (email or traditional letter), or in person concerning classroom news, incidents, or circumstances that require notification.

Nutrition Program

No outside food is permitted in the school without prior approval from the school Director.

The Growing Tree Learning Center is a **NUT FREE ZONE**; therefore, nuts and products containing nuts are not permitted at our school.

The Growing Tree participates in the New Jersey Student and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The Student and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) plays a vital role in improving the quality of schools. The program promotes the development of basic nutritional concepts and provides nutritious, well-balanced meals fostering sound eating habits that enable participants to become caretakers of their own nutritional habits.

- All students are served three meals a day: breakfast, lunch, and a snack.
- Staff members are to inform parents of any repetitive feeding problems experienced by their student.
- Staff members shall not force-feed or coerce a student to eat against his/her will.
- For students on special diets, alternative food is provided by the school. (Be sure to inform staff about these needs).

Nap Time

The Growing Tree Learning Center understands the importance of rest for your student's well-being, growth, and development. Therefore, after lunch time every day, the students have nap time. During this time the students lie in their own cots and nap if desired. Students are not forced to sleep; they may rest quietly at their cots or play with a quiet toy so as not to disrupt the students who are sleeping. To make naptime more enjoyable and comfortable for our student, we ask that you provide a clean crib size fitted sheet and blanket for your student to use on their cots during nap time. These linens should be taken home at the end of the week and a clean set should

be returned at the beginning of the following week. Please make sure that you label all your student's linens to ensure that they are not misplaced.

Toileting Policy

Students enrolled at The Growing Tree Learning Center do not have to be toilet trained. However, it is the parents' responsibility to provide at least a weekly supply of pull-ups, wipes, and a change of clothes.

Outdoor Play

As stated above, our program curriculum involves daily outdoor play time, weather permitting. Outdoor play is carefully monitored by staff. Please be sure that your student is appropriately dressed for the season.

STUDENTS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO PLAY IN THE PLAYGROUND DURING REGISTRATION. THE SAME RULE APPLIES DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR: NO PLAYING IN THE PLAYGROUND DURING DROP OFF OR PICK UP. THE PLAYGROUND IS OPEN DURING SCHOOL DAY WHILE THE STUDENTS ARE UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF TEACHERS.

Personal Hygiene

In order to help your student practice personal hygiene, all students are required to wash their hands with soap and running water as follows:

- Before the intake of food.
- Immediately after using the toilet.
- Immediately after encountering blood, fecal matter, urine, vomit, and/or nasal secretions.
- Immediately upon returning to the classroom after outdoor play.

Students will be taught to brush their teeth upon completion of meals.

Personal Items

Sometimes the students may get dirty or have accidents that may require a change of clothes. Therefore, we ask that all students always have at least one complete set of clothes at the school. This includes a shirt, pants, underwear (if used), socks and sneakers. Please check the clothes regularly to ensure that it still fits your student and that it is appropriate for the season. If your student's clothes are changed during the day, please make sure that you bring in a clean set the following day. Also, please make sure that your student's spare clothes are labeled so that we know which student they belong to.

Jewelry Policy

Due to the number of students in the classroom, it is not possible to keep track of your student's jewelry and it may get lost, damaged, or stolen. To avoid this, please do not bring your student to The Growing Tree Learning Center wearing any type of jewelry. The Growing Tree Learning Center will not be responsible for the replacement of any lost or damaged jewelry.

Fire Drills & Evacuations

Fire drills are held once a month at The Growing Tree Learning Center. Should an emergency occur, that would require evacuation of the school, you will be notified immediately. The Growing Tree has two possible evacuation sites, the students and staff will be at PS#38. You will be asked to pick up your student if the emergency is expected to last a significant length of time. **It is very important to update emergency contact information and telephone numbers if there is a change.**

If you are at the school at the time of a fire drill or an emergency, we ask that you remain calm and follow our procedures and evacuate the building immediately along with the students and staff.

Snow/Weather Emergency School Closing

The Growing Tree Learning Center follows the procedure mandated by Jersey City Board of Education. In the event of inclement weather or other emergencies, two possible adjustments to the school day schedule may be necessary: Schools will be closed OR a 10:00 a.m.-delayed opening will occur.

TV Stations:

LOG ON TO WWW.JCBOE.ORG FOR THE MOST CURRENT NEWS ON SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Channel 4 -
WNBC

Channel 5- FOX
TV

Channel 12- NJ

Channel 41-
Spanish

Channel 62-NJ

HELPFUL HINTS FOR PARENTS

- You, as a parent, are the expert when it comes to your student. Your interaction with your student's teacher is important to assisting us in providing a safe, secure, and wholesome environment. To keep the lines of communication open we encourage you to speak to your student's teachers on a regular basis.
- A part of The Growing Tree Learning Center's curriculum includes arts and crafts, painting, etc. Please dress your student appropriately so their clothing is not ruined. If you want to send a smock or another cover up, we would be happy to use it.
- In the event of an emergency, The Growing Tree will contact you. It is the parent's responsibility to provide us with any changes in emergency information immediately.
- We discourage students from bringing their own toys to the school.
- Breakfast is served at 8:30 am. Please make sure that students arrive before this time to ensure that they can eat their breakfast and be ready to start the day with a full stomach!
- The Growing Tree Learning Center is centrally heated and cooled. Please dress students appropriately according to the weather and make sure that they wear comfortable, safe shoes. Please refrain from sending students to school in sandals, heels, or flip-flops since the students may fall off and cause an accident.

IMPORTANT INFO REGARDING PARKING:



THE PARKING LOT IS FOR EMPLOYEES ONLY.

**THE SAME RULE APPLIES DURING THE SCHOOL
YEAR: NO PARKING IN THE SCHOOL LOT
DURING DROP OFF OR PICK UP.**

**PLEASE INFORM ADULTS WHO ARE ON PICKUP
LIST.**

**Department of Children and Families
Office of Licensing
INFORMATION TO PARENTS**

Under provisions of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 3A:52), every licensed childcare center in New Jersey must provide to parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other childcare matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents and staff this written statement, prepared by the Office

of Licensing, Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement, the center must secure every parent and staff member's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Center Licensing law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care & Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our center must comply with the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (the official licensing regulations). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food, and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers and make it available to interested parents for review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the Manual of Requirements on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf> or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application, or alleged violations of the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our center may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your student's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's Inspection/Violation Reports on the center, which are available soon after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint investigation, you are also entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review or you can view them online at https://data.nj.gov/childcare_explorer.

Our center must cooperate with all DCF inspections/investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the student's use. Please talk to us if you have any questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents. Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities and to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292-4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), unsafe student's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by any adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the *State Central Registry Hotline, toll free at (877) NJ ABUSE/(877) 652-2873*. Such reports may be made anonymously. Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to www.state.nj.us/dcf/.

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