



Parent Handbook

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Creative Critters

Parent Handbook

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Our Program

Mission:

We believe that young children learn through direct experience. Our objective is to provide an enriching environment in which children can gain these experiences while feeling safe and secure.

One of the hallmarks of high quality childcare is communication between faculty and parents. We place great emphasis on integrating the family into the educational process. You will be provided with a detailed overview of our curriculum, daily updates, and monthly newsletters. In addition to extensive informal interaction, formal parent-teacher conferences are conducted twice during the school year as needed. Parents are always welcome in our classrooms to visit any time.

Play is the work of children, for it is through play that children develop concepts about themselves and the world around them. At Creative Critters Learning Center, we provide a joyful, nurturing, and secure environment that supports the work of the children.

Philosophy: Creative Critters learning Centers provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for children six weeks through school age children. Our focus is to provide a stimulating early literacy based educational experience which promotes each child's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Our main focus is to promote a love of reading and learning.

Services Provided: We provide part time and full time care options for all age groups.

CCI: M-F 7am-6pm for ages 6 weeks to 5 years old

CCII: M-F 7am-6pm for ages 6 weeks to 12 years old - servicing Stonehouse Elementary School

CCIII: M-F 7am-6pm for ages 6 weeks to 12 years - servicing both NKES and GWES

CCIV: M-F 7am-6pm for ages 6 weeks to 5 years

CCV: M-F 6:30-6pm for ages 6 weeks to 12 years - servicing GWES

Staff Qualifications: All staff are extensively trained by Creative Critters Learning Centers trainer. Our trainer has over 30 years of teaching experience and works with teachers daily on best practices for all our classrooms.

Enrollment

Admission: We do not deny enrollment on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability. Children are enrolled on a first come first serve basis. In order to fill an opening, a completed registration packet must be submitted along with the registration fee at least three days prior to your child's start date. The registration fee is non-refundable. Once a registration payment is made, placement for your child is reserved. Upon registration, you will be asked to provide an estimated "start date". If you do not begin on that start date, you will be responsible for the weekly tuition after seven days. If you decide not to attend our center after paying your registration fee and giving your estimated start date, you will be responsible for three weeks' tuition along with filling out withdrawal paperwork.

At this time Creative Critters offers full time care (5 days), three day care, and two day care. Anything over three days of care is considered full time and tuition responsibilities will reflect.

Paperwork Requirements: three days prior to care the following items **must** be signed and on site.

1. A copy of your child's birth certificate
2. Signed Financial Agreement
3. Signed diaper rash cream form
4. Signed photo release form
5. Signed sunscreen form

Classroom Transitions: Since we are a development based center we do not use age as the only factor when considering movement to the next class. Children may move prior to their birthday or a few months after based on their developmental level as well as availability. Directors will work with families on transition for 30 days prior to actual movement.

When enrolled, a child will be placed in a classroom on the basis of age and developmental need of the child. Transitions to the next classroom will take place

according to age and developmental needs of the child, as well as available openings in the next classroom. Please refer to the financial section to learn more about rate changes.

Children's Dress: Children should wear clothing appropriate to get dirty. They should wear closed toe shoes and have appropriate clothing for the weather. Children will not be able to stay inside in inclement weather if their clothing is not appropriate due to ratio requirements. A change of clothes should be provided in a zip lock bag with the child's name written on the bag.

Personal Belongings: With the exception of blanket/security objects for naptime, crib items for infants, we ask that parents do not send personal toys and belongings from home with a child. The Center is not responsible for loss or damage to personal belongings. All coats, mittens, and hats should be labeled clearly with your child's name.

Confidentiality of Records: This Confidentiality Policy has been adopted to insure confidentiality and protection of individual rights of privacy for children, families, and employees of Creative Critters Learning Centers. The individual dignity of children, families, and employees shall be respected and protected at all times in accordance with all applicable laws. All children's private records (medical information, home address, etc.) are confidential and locked in a secure file and can only be accessed by password in our operating system, Kangarootime. Any other information about children, families, or employees will not be divulged to anyone other than persons who are legally authorized to receive such information. This policy extends to both internal and external disclosure of information - this policy applies to our employees 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. In matters regarding behavioral issues, some information may be released to the lead teacher and assistant teacher to whom your child's care has been assigned.

Withdraw or Change of Care: If you would like to make any changes to your child's enrollment, be it withdrawal, increase attendance, or decrease attendance, parents are required to make the request in writing and give three weeks advance notice of the change unless in the infant program then 4 weeks notice is required for withdraw.

After Hours Care: We do not provide care to families after 6 pm Monday through Friday or on Saturday and Sundays. Creative Critters does not condone or encourage its employees to babysit for parents of enrolled children outside of the

child care center. If you retain the services of any Creative Critter employee in such capacity, Creative Critters has no responsibility and is held harmless from any accident which may occur per your signed financial agreement.

Waiting List Procedure: A waitlist will be maintained by Creative Critters. After an inquiry has been made, families can choose to be placed on the waitlist. Once a space becomes available, families are offered the space in order of their placement on the waitlist. If the space is declined, the next family on the list will be contacted. This process shall continue until the space is filled. Once a space has been accepted, a tour will be scheduled (if one has not occurred) and registration paperwork will be completed. Families will be charged a \$100 non-refundable registration fee and a start date will be determined. Once your state date is confirmed with the \$100 registration fee you are considered an active family and if you decide not to attend or want to change your enrollment date you will need to follow our withdrawal policy and or our change in care policy noted above.

A Day at Creative Critters

Arrival & Departure: An authorized adult, at least 18 years of age, **MUST** accompany the child into and out of the building. Children will not be released to leave the building without a parent or authorized adult coming into the building. Children are not allowed to leave on their own or with a sibling under the age of 18 or with unauthorized adults. Adults must be prepared to show a picture I.D. (Driver's License) if requested.

Any restrictions on the right of a parent or legal guardian to visit at the center or pick up a child at the Center must be provided in advance to the Director with the proper supporting documentation.

If an adult arrives to pick up a child and appears to be intoxicated, under the influence of narcotics, or is exhibiting questionable behavior, such behavior may result in notification of the local police department.

Creative Critters is open Monday through Friday 7:00 am until 6:00 pm; however, our program begins promptly at 9:00 am. Therefore, we request that all children arrive at or before 9:00 am but no later than 10:00 am each day. If your child is not at the center by 10:00 am they will be considered absent for that day and will not be permitted to attend. Having your child at the center on time ensures your child is included in all the learning experiences offered. If your child has an appointment and needs to arrive after 10:00 am please notify the center director via Kangarootime in advance of the appointment.

If your child has an appointment and needs to arrive after our arrival cut off at 10am daily and you have notified the center director of this in advance your child will not be allowed to be dropped off after 12:30pm.

Upon arrival and departure each day we kindly require you to sign your child in on the Kangarootime App. Children will absolutely NOT be released to anyone except those authorized to pick up the child in Kangarootime. Identification is required of those who are unfamiliar to the staff. In the event you wish to have another adult pick up your child, a written note is required.

If your child will not be in attendance please notify the center the day before or contact the center by 10:00 am the day of. If the center is not notified by 10:00 am, they will contact the parents to verify that the child is not in attendance.

Daily Program:

Curriculum: Our curriculum Frog Street Press is specially designed to meet the developmental stages of each child. Through music, the children are introduced to colors, numbers, calendar skills, and early literacy skills vital to preparing children to read. Fine motor, sensory integration, and gross motor skills are an included focus in our curriculum as well.

Outdoor Play: Outdoor play is necessary for the healthy development of children. Weather permitting, outside playtime is scheduled daily for each group. Parents are asked to not request children “stay inside” due to illness. Children are expected to be well enough to participate in all aspects of the classroom schedule. To provide adequate supervision of children on the playground, all staff members must be able to oversee their activities. Please be prepared for sudden weather changes by having a jacket or sweater available in the fall and spring. Children will not go outside when the temperature drops below 40° for ages 2 and younger, or 32° for kids 3 years and older.

Rest Time: An adequately supervised rest period on cots, or in cribs. is required by the Virginia Department of Education for all children remaining in the center after lunch is served. Ages 16 months to 4 years will nap no longer than two hours per day. Children will be moved from a crib to a cot for a nap after their first birthday. Children of walking age and older will nap with their shoes on in case an emergency arises and evacuation is needed.

Toilet Training Process: Toilet training takes place in our Caterpillar 2 classroom only. This classroom is set up with the necessary items needed for toilet training. The staff has been trained in appropriate potty training. Our philosophy involves children working with parents on a weekend and then coming to school first of the week with the ability to pull their own pants down, to wipe, flush, and pull pants back up as well as wash hands. We will have children in underwear daily to avoid the confusion pull ups and diapers can cause. Parents will be given a supply list for this process, and should ensure their child has what they need daily or staff will not be able to assist in this process.

Required Supplies: A fitted sheet and blanket appropriate for the crib or cot size, along with seasonally appropriate extra clothing, diapers/wipes/diaper cream if needed, and sunscreen if needed should be given to your child's teacher. All infant feeding supplies are the parents responsibility until children can have whole milk and table food, at which time Creative Critters can provide meals.

Sunscreen: Parents are required to apply sunscreen to their children before arriving at the center if needed. During May through August, staff will reapply sunscreen when waking up from nap for the afternoon if sunscreen is provided for the child.

Field Trips/Transportation: Limited off-site field trips are offered for our Butterfly children and our summer camp (school age) children. Parents will be notified at least the week prior to the details of the field trip and will be required to provide written permission for their child to attend. Children 8 and under will be required to be in some type of age appropriate child seat during transport. Information containing destination address, phone numbers, transportation times and needs for field trips will be communicated via Kangarootime at least a week prior for all parents/ guardians to be thoroughly informed of where we are going. Creative Critters takes great pride in taking safety precautions seriously, and in doing so increases the number of adults to child ratio while on field trips. For our Butterfly children we do encourage parent volunteer chaperones as well.

Communication with Parents

Teachers are required to discuss celebrations and concerns with parents. We ask that parents discuss celebrations and concerns with their child's teacher and to never hesitate to ask questions they may have about their child's care at the center or about general center concerns. It is important for parents and staff to have a

working relationship to ensure their child is successful. Nearly all concerns and questions are best addressed at the classroom level, but if teachers are not able to answer their questions, then parents are encouraged to discuss their concerns or questions with the Center's director. An open line of communication between teachers and families is vital to all children's success.

When dropping off and picking up children, the teachers may not be able to take time to visit, as their attention must be on the children in the classroom. Please do not *engage* them in lengthy discussions that can be handled with a phone call during naptime or a scheduled *conference*. Conferences may be scheduled whenever necessary.

Kangarootime: This is our operating system that is used for all online communication. There is the ability for the parent/guardian to message their child's teachers, the center's director, as well as the facility owner and admin team through Kangarootime. This is the preferred electronic communication tool.

Health and Wellness

If your child is ill, we request that you notify the center's director not only of absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses, which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with staff on a "need to know" basis. If your child has a communicable illness, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center's director, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable illness is present. Once again, only the communicable illness information will be shared. Creative Critters will take all measures necessary to protect your child's confidentiality.

Health Records & Authorizations: Parents are required to provide a Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Form that includes their child's well check and shot information signed by the doctor before they can begin. Then parents of children under 2 years of age need to provide an updated copy of this form every 6 months. It is the parents responsibility to provide this information to the center as required by the VA Department of Education. Parents will also sign a release that allows emergency medical care to take place in the parents absence if needed. This authorization is located on the parents financial agreement.

Daily Health Check:

The center CANNOT accept any child if the child has the following:

1. An oral temperature more than 100.2 degrees. The child must be free of elevated temperature for 48 hours without fever reducing medication *before* returning to the center.
2. Any signs or symptoms of possible severe illness such as lethargy, difficulty breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, vomiting (two or more episodes in 1 hour), rash with *fever*, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior changes, or other unusual signs until medical evaluation indicates that the child can be included in the center's activities. Three consecutive episodes of loose, watery stools occurring within one hour constitutes diarrhea. Children with diarrhea may return to the center when diarrhea has subsided for 48 hours.
3. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the center's activities.
4. The illness results in greater need for care than the staff can provide.
5. The child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, until medical evaluation determines that the child is no longer communicable and is able to participate in the Center's activities.
6. A physician must evaluate any generalized rash, including those covering multiple parts of the body. The child may return with a note from a physician stating the child is not contagious.
7. VA Dept of Education requires all communicable diseases to be communicated immediately upon onset of symptoms.

If any of the above occurs while at the center, the parent will be called and the child must be picked-up within one hour.

A child may return to the center after 48 hours without fever (without fever reducing medications), or in the event of communicable illness with a physician's written consent stating that the child is no longer contagious, or when symptoms no longer persist (for non- communicable illness).

The parents should notify our staff when a child has been exposed or diagnosed with a contagious disease.

Illness, Emergency Medical Care & Accidents:

For children, minor spills, scrapes, and other small injuries occur during routine play and exploration. In the event of a minor injury or accident, the parent will normally be notified at the end of the day, in writing, of what occurred and what

steps were taken to prevent any further harm from the injury or accident. The center's staff will provide on-site first aid in these instances. Creative Critters has at least two staff members on-site who are credentialed for both CPR and first aid at all times.

If the injury is non-life threatening, but there is a substantial amount of blood or a large bruise/abrasion, the child's parent will be contacted immediately and informed of the injury. In some cases, the parent may be asked to pick up the child. An accident form will be given to the parent at the end of the day.

If an accident or injury is a head injury, life threatening, or one that requires immediate medical attention, the local ambulance service will be called to transport the child to the hospital emergency room. The parents will be notified immediately. All incidents of this sort are documented and a copy of this documentation will be provided to the parents. The center is required to notify the VA Dept of Education of the injury immediately upon onset.

In case of a medical emergency, parents will be notified. Center staff is trained in basic First Aid including infant and child choking and CPR for infants and children.

Incident Reporting: An Incident/Accident report will be filled out on incidents/accidents that happen at the center. The parents or other person authorized by the parents will be notified as quickly as possible if the child has an injury that places him/her at risk.

Guidelines for parents and staff to follow when a child becomes ill.

Reporting Illness:

Parents will inform the center within 24 hours or the next business day after his/her child or any member of the immediate household has developed any reportable communicable disease, as defined by the State Board of Health, except for life threatening diseases which must be reported immediately.

Fever:

Anytime a child runs a temperature of 100.2 or greater, the child must be picked up. No other symptoms need to be present. For fevers of an unknown origin, the staff will not give any fever reducers. *The child shall be fever free for a period of 48 hours before returning to school without the aid of a fever reducer.*

Diarrhea:

Any child with diarrhea accompanied by either (1) running a fever of 100.2 or higher or (2) vomiting or (3) three or more episodes of uncontrollable diarrhea, should not be in the center. Parents will be called to pick up their child should this occur. Diarrhea must have subsided for a period of 48 hours before the child can return to the center.

Vomiting:

One occasion of vomiting may indicate the need for the child to leave the center. In the event of two or more incidents, or accompanied with a fever of 100.2 or higher, the parent will be notified to pick up the child. Vomiting must have subsided for a period of 48 hours before the child may return.

Hand, Foot & Mouth:

Any indication of Hand, Foot & Mouth, the parent will be notified to pick up the child. Normally, the child will be able to return to the Center after 3 days.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):

Any recognition of Conjunctivitis, the parent will be notified to pick up the child. The child may return 24-hours **after treatment is started and there is no discharge**. A physician's note will be required for the child to return.

Thrush:

Any signs of thrush, the child must be picked up and seen by a physician before returning to the Center.

Rash:

Any signs of a rash of unknown origin, the child must be picked up and a determination must be made by the child's physician to retain the child at the center.

Medication:

A designated center staff member, who is MAT trained, may administer medications if the following occurs:

1. Medicine must be in the original container, have the child's name, current date, and frequency to be given, and amount to be given.
2. A Medication Authorization form must be on file for each medication to be administered whether prescription or non-prescription. Prescription medication must have an Authorization form completed by the physician.
3. Non-prescription medications must have a Medication Authorization form completed monthly by the guardian.

Allergies:

Any child that has an allergy or intolerance to food, medication or any other substance is required to have this noted in their record in Kangarootime along with a plan for actions needed in case of emergency.

COVID:

Preparedness and Planning

Creative Critters are required to facilitate preventative measures such as frequent hand washing, refraining from touching your face, covering a cough or sneeze with an elbow, and practicing social distancing (keeping at least 6 feet of distance between you and another person).

We will post signage recommended by the Division of Public Health. As well as follow the current requirements for cloth face coverings for staff. We will deny entry to anyone over the age of 12 who is not wearing a face covering, if one is not available to be provided to that person.

In the event that Creative Critters experiences a positive case of COVID-19 in a staff member or child, we will reach out to the local health department for current quarantine recommendations and then will contact those families of children that were in close contact, as defined by the CDC as, within 6 feet for more than 15 minutes, with next steps.

We will do our best to keep children and staff in assigned rooms to avoid the potential for increased exposure should a positive case be reported.

Please refer to the tuition section of this handbook for information about tuition payments during COVID exposure that occurred at the center.

Arrival/Drop-off and Screening Procedures

Creative Critters will remind staff to stay at home if they are sick, and remind parents to monitor children for signs of illness and keep them home if they are sick. We will adhere to the following screening practices for adults and children entering the facility: Parents/Guardians will wear a mask and will proceed directly to the designated hand washing area and wash the child's and adult's hands. Then you will proceed to the child's drop off location where their temperature will be taken and the staff member will do a quick health screening of the child before the child is allowed to stay. Parents/Guardians and children are required to follow this same process at pick up daily.

Nutrition

Snacks & Meals: We are a peanut free facility! Since nutrition is an important component of a child's development, Creative Critters offers a wide variety of nutritious food for the children to enjoy. The children are offered a well-balanced morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack. A two or four-week rotating menu based on USDA recommendations is posted in the lobby at all centers.

If your child has specific dietary needs, the director of Creative Critters must be notified and provided a doctor's note. The parent will provide substitute meals and snacks.

Outside food is not permitted at Creative Critters unless the director has approved it. Therefore, no snack or beverages should be sent in with your child. Breakfast should be finished before entering the center.

Infant Nutrition: Staff will work closely with infant parents to ensure that children are somewhat following the USDA recommendations for feeding. We will also follow the DOE requirements on proper feeding techniques as well as food storage and heating of bottles.

Special Treats: Parents wanting to send in a special treat for occasions such as birthdays, holidays, or seasonal celebrations may do so after communicating with the center's Director in advance of bringing in the treat. This will allow for the Director to determine any special dietary needs in the class receiving the treat.

Prevention of choking: we are prepared to help prevent your child from choking.

Foods and preparation: Food will be cooked and prepared to the right shape, size, and texture for your child's development. We will avoid small, sticky, or hard foods that are hard to chew and swallow.

Below are foods considered a choking hazard by the CDC that either will not be served or will be served when prepared appropriately and for the appropriate age group.

Served: Hot dogs, whole fruit, cookies, granola bars, pretzels, marshmallows, fruit snacks (3 and older only)

Not served: popcorn and gum

Meals and snack time: Your child will sit up while eating (no lying down, crawling, or walking). Mealtimes will be calm and staff will avoid distractions, disruptions, and rushing when children are eating.

Staff will pay close attention to what your child puts in his or her mouth.

Guidance & Discipline

Creative Critter's classrooms are structured and routine all day long, everyday. It is our belief that children are more successful both academically and behaviorally in an environment that is calm and organized. We believe that discipline is teaching and not punishment. Our children are exposed to Expectations Books prior to each activity and are reminded of the expectation throughout the activity through positive reinforcement. If a child is not following the expectations, or disrupting the learning of the other children in the classroom, the child will be removed and the expectations will be reviewed and the child will then return to the activity.

Aggressive Behavior Policy:

Aggression can certainly be part of a child's behavior when angered or frustrated. Should your child have an aggressive episode involving another child, both sets of parents will be notified of the incident, including what guiding behavior techniques were used, how each child was feeling, and how the incident was resolved.

When a child's aggression becomes habitual and constantly disrupts the activities of the day, either by taking staff time away from the others, or making other children afraid, then we will evaluate our capabilities. Creative Critters staff is not designed to, nor equipped for, dealing with habitually physically aggressive children.

We also believe that all staff have the right to feel safe from harm during the workday. It is our collective responsibility to support and ensure the safety of our staff. Please review the guidelines laid out below.

1. In the case of a child showing **repeated** aggression toward another child or staff, you, the parent will be informed both verbally and in writing. Incident reports will be filled out and you will be given a copy. Another copy will be placed in your child's file.
2. If the aggression continues and becomes a daily occurrence, you, the parent, will be asked to attend an in person meeting with your child's teacher(s), the center director and a member of the Administration to discuss a behavior plan for your child in and outside the center.
3. If the aggression comes to a point where other children become afraid or we feel their right to enjoy school is compromised for either the staff or child, it may result in the withdrawal of your child from the program.

Biting Policy: Children biting other children are one of the most difficult behaviors in child care centers. It occurs without warning, is difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the parents, and the caregivers involved.

For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure fire way to cause the other child to drop whatever it is that they are holding so the biter can then pick it up. A teacher will show disapproval and eventually they learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing their feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. No

matter what cause, biting in a group causes strong feelings in all involved. It does Help, however, to be aware of the potential problem before it happens, and to form a plan of action if it does occur.

The following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in any of our classrooms.

Before Biting Occurs:

1. Discuss the issue of biting when a parent enrolls their child.
2. Distribute written policy to all families and include them in the enrollment packet.

WHEN A CHILD IS BITTEN

For the biter:

1. Biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as “biting is not okay-it hurts.” The staff will avoid any immediate responses that reinforce the biting or calls attention is always focused on the victim.
2. The biter is not allowed to return to what they were playing and is talking to on a level that the child can understand. “I can see that you want that doll, but I can’t let you hurt her/ him. We do not put our teeth on people.”
3. Redirect the child to another play.
4. Write an accident report as per DSS standards and notify the parents of the biter.
5. Notify the biter’s parents via an incident report

For the victim:

1. Separate the victim from the biter.
2. Comfort the child.
3. Administer first aid.
4. Write an accident report as per DSS standards and notify the parent immediately.

If biting continues:

1. The lead teacher meets with the director on a routine basis for advice, support, and strategy planning. This planning will be documented.
2. Chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and include location time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.

3. Let all parents know that there is a problem and the procedures that are being followed to address the biting.
4. “Shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite:
 - a. Head off biting situations before they occur.
 - b. Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - c. Adapt the program to better fit the individual child’s needs.
5. “Shadow” children who have a tendency to be bitten:
 - a. Head off biting situations.
 - b. Teach responses to potential biting situations: “NO” or “DON’T HURT ME!”
6. Work together as partners with parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop written joint strategy plan for change.
7. Hold a conference with the parents of a biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
8. Consider the early transition of a child “stuck” in a biting behavior pattern for change in environment (if it’s developmentally appropriate and space is available).
9. Prepare parents of biting child for the possibility that the child may be removed from the center both in writing and verbal.
10. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, the center, and other children, the director will terminate the child from Creative Critters for the duration of the biting stage. One week written warning will be given to the parents before this action is taken.

Anti-Bullying Policy: At Creative Critters Learning Centers, bullying is inexcusable, and we have a firm policy against all types of bullying. Each child is expected to treat all other children with respect, and to help each other achieve the best possible experience. If a child has difficulty meeting this expectation, parents may be called upon to assist

Our leadership addresses all incidents of bullying seriously, and we train staff to promote communication with children. We work together as a team to ensure that children gain self-confidence, make new friends, and learn to ask for help when needed.

Behavior Policy: We expect children to act respectfully at all times when they are on our property or participating in our programs. Children are to behave in a mature, responsible way and respect the rights and dignity of others.

Actions will reflect the values of Creative Critters:

- Children take **Responsibility** for their actions.
- Children **Respect** themselves, each other, center equipment and the environment.
- **Honesty** will be the basis for all relationships and interactions.
- Children will be **Caring** in their relationships with others.

Children should talk to a teacher or any Creative Critters staff if they are uncomfortable with any experiences or need assistance while at site.

Discipline Procedures

When a child does not follow the behavior guidelines, we will take the following action steps as behavior problems progress.

1. Staff will redirect the child to more appropriate behavior.
2. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child will be reminded of behavior guidelines and rules, and the child will be asked to decide on action steps to correct his/her behavior.
3. If a child's behavior still does not meet expectations and is affecting the experience of other children, he/she will be referred to the center's Director.
4. If inappropriate behavior continues, a meeting will be held that include both guardians and the center director to determine a course of action going forward
5. As a final action step the child may be dismissed from the center.

Examples of unacceptable behavior:

- Refusing to follow behavior guidelines or center rules
- Using profanity, vulgarity, or obscenity
- Stealing or damaging property (personal or center property)
- Refusal to participate in activities or cooperate with staff

- Disrupting a program
- Leaving a program without permission
- Endangering the health and safety of children and/or staff
- Teasing, making fun or bullying of other campers or staff
- Aggression of any kind

Child Abuse/Neglect and Molestation Policy:

Childcare providers are mandated to report in each state for suspected child abuse/neglect and molestation. Types of maltreatment include but are not limited to physical, sexual and psychological abuse as well as neglect. Staff are trained on the signs to look for and how to report the suspicion of abuse/neglect or molestation to the center director. They are also trained on where and how to report such things in their locality. The protocols they are trained on include actions to be taken in anticipation that a report needs to be made, actions to be taken at the time of suspicion and follow up action.

Discharge Policy: Reasonable steps will be taken to avoid termination; however, Creative Critters reserves the right to terminate services for the following reasons.

- Financial: Late payments, returned checks or other problems with tuition or fees. The second time a child is suspended for late payment, that child may be terminated.
- Failure to follow policies: Failure to honor the policies and obligations of the contract, the handbook, or any other policies provided by the school.
- Adverse Actions: Any actions by parents or children that adversely affect the Creative Critters program.

Fees, Tuition, & Account Responsibility

Registration: Creative Critters charges a non-refundable registration fee of \$75 at the time of enrollment. This registration fee is automatically charged again, annually, in September, for each child and can be paid using the same methods as listed below in the section titled “Tuition & Payment Options”.

Tuition & Payment Options: Tuition fees are paid through the Kangarootime app. Parents can pay, fee free, by using their checking or savings account number and their bank routing number. If you choose to pay via credit card a processing fee is passed on to our customer above and beyond their tuition amount. If your payment

bounces back as unable to process for any reason there will be a \$45 fee automatically charged to your account.

Our tuition is based on a weekly schedule with Monday beginning the start of a week. Tuition is due the Friday before care is given. Therefore, you are paying in advance of services being rendered. Some months may reflect 4 weeks and other 5 weeks depending on how many Mondays are in the month. This will affect bi-weekly payers and monthly payers. Please see below.

You can choose to pay on the following payment cycles:

Weekly: This is due every Friday by 6:00 pm and will incur late fees at that time.

Bi-Weekly: This is due on the 1st and 15th of each month with late fees incurring after 6:00 pm on the above dates. In 5-week tuition months the payment on the 1st will be for two weeks of tuition and the payment on the 15th will be for 3 weeks of tuition.

Monthly: This is due in full on the 1st of each month and will incur late fees after 6:00 pm on the 1st.

If your tuition accrues to one months care or more Creative Critters reserves the right to suspend care until the balance is current. If this becomes habitual then Creative Critters can terminate services and your balance will be sent to small claims court.

Late Payment Fees: If your tuition is not paid on time (6pm the day it is due), according to your selected payment cycle, then a \$45 late fee is automatically added to your account.

Returned Payment Fees: If your tuition is unable to process electronically Creative Critters will be notified within 5 days of processing and then your account will be charged a \$45 returned payment fee.

Late Pick Up Fees & Procedures: If a parent is going to arrive after 6pm they should immediately contact the center either through the Kangarootime app or the center phone to notify staff. If staff have not been notified and it is after 6pm they will call the primary account holder in Kangarootime first and then if they are not available then they will call the next guardian on file and then move to emergency contacts. If staff are not able to get a hold of any of the above and it is 6:15pm or later they will contact the local police for assistance.

If you pick up after 6pm your account will be charged \$10. At 6:15pm a \$2 per every two minutes you are late will be charged to your account.

Discounts: We currently offer a 10% sibling discount on full time rates only and it does not apply to school age children. The 10% discount is off the oldest child's weekly rate.

Additional Care: If your child is enrolled part time and you need to add an additional day you will be charged our daily rate. If your child attends our Before and After Care Program there is an additional fee required for care needed on early release days as well as for days when school is not in session. Please see your center's fee schedule for specific rates.

Account Responsibilities: It is the parents' responsibility to ensure their payments are processed according to their payment cycle. If your account becomes overdue to an amount that equals three weeks worth of tuition or more, your child's services can be terminated until your account is current. It is also the parents' responsibility to ensure that all contact information is up to date in Kangarootime. This includes the following:

- Primary Account Holders: email address, mailing address, phone number, employment information to include address and phone number and photo
- Guardian Information: email address, mailing address, phone number, employment information to include address and phone number and photo
- Two Emergency Contacts: this can not be the parent or guardian in this section and should include photos of the individuals.
- Child's Primary doctor's information
- Active Payment Method
- Accurate birth date and photo of child

Closures: Creative Critters planned annual closings are deducted from our annual tuition costs. Thus, you pay the same weekly rate regardless of planned closures.

In the case of closures due to unforeseen circumstances such as a power outage, weather, or worldly acts you are still responsible for your full tuition payment.

In the case that your child contracts COVID from a staff member at the center or your child has to quarantine due to a staff member testing positive for COVID you will be given up to one week's tuition at a 50% discount. This is subject to change.

Changes in tuition rates: Creative Critters reserves the right to change tuition rates at any time. However they will give families at least three weeks' notice of any change in writing with a new financial agreement to be signed by the family acknowledging the rate change.

Time Off

We are closed the following holidays:

Labor Day, Thanksgiving and the following day, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day and the Fourth of July.

Three teacher workdays are required each year and the centers will be closed. We typically pair these with a holiday (Friday before Labor day, Friday Before Memorial Day and Presidents Day) so that families will hopefully have more flexible childcare options with family and friends. We reserve the right to be closed additional days during the Christmas Holiday. All closing dates are announced annually in September for the coming academic year.

Any changes in hours will be posted at least one week in advance. If a holiday falls on a Sunday we reserve the right to observe that holiday on the following Monday. If a holiday falls on a Saturday we reserve the right to observe it on the preceding Friday.

Absences: You are paying for a space at the center for your child, not your child's attendance. Therefore, please notify the center if your child is out for any reason but please know that tuition is still required.

Emergency Closings

While no one likes unforeseen circumstances to occur, some situations may require Creative Critters to shut down early or close. Examples include but are not restricted to severe weather, electrical power failure, lack of water, and/or lack of heat or air conditioning as well as communicable illness.

In consideration of the needs of our working families, we will facilitate all efforts to remain open under almost all situations . However, on occasion, we have to reserve the right to close the center for inclement weather and/or emergency situations.

Should the school need to close in the middle of the day, the staff will send a text message through the Kangarootime app along with a physical message through this same app. Staff will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the message, if there is an alternate pick up location should the children need to be evacuated from the child care center. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated.

In the case of inclement weather Creative Critters will typically follow the local public school districts closing schedule. However, the center will send out a text message and normal Kangarootime message to families as to what the center's opening or closing schedule will be as many times the main roads have been cleared and are safe for travel.

Should the center need to close for any reason you are still responsible for your tuition payment unless you receive communication otherwise from the owner of Creative Critters.

Security & Center Access

Photos, Videotaping & Monitoring: Parents will be given a photo release form to complete at registration. Photos that are taken via Kangarootime and are housed in the gallery section of this app are for the use of Creative Critters and the individual families of the child in the photos. Photos shared on Kangarootime should not be shared on any social media platform as many families have not given the center permission for their children to be posted on any social media platform. Failure to follow this policy can lead to termination of services as well as legal action.

Children will only be videotaped for purposes of behavior management in conjunction with parent consent as well as for educational purposes according to the VA Dept of Education.

Access to the Center:All centers are secured with an electronic keypad at the main entrance. This is the only door that will be used daily for arrival and departure. Please see your center director for your specific door code. This code can be shared with emergency contacts and guardians. Please do not hold the door for other families entering the center as you may not know if they are truly on site to legally pick up a child. Always ensure the door closes behind you.

Custodial parents are encouraged and welcomed to visit the center at any time. However, please check in at the main office before entering a classroom between the hours of 9:00 am and 3:00 pm.

Grievance Procedure

It is our goal to strive for quality and excellence in the care of your child. Therefore, any positive comments or suggestions are greatly appreciated and can be made to the Director of the facility. We always welcome your input and feedback toward the care of your child. The Director appreciates questions and/or discussions of any kind that affect a positive outcome for your child. However, if you feel that there is a problem concerning the facility or a staff member, please follow the steps as listed:

1. Speak with your child's teacher.
2. Allow follow-up from the teacher to you.
3. If you are still not satisfied with the results of your concerns, please make an appointment to personally talk to the Director.

All comments made to staff members are relayed to the Director, so that the Director is aware of any problems or issues. If a complaint is made, the Director will listen carefully to the issue at hand, and will attempt to work with the parent(s) to rectify the problem. At this time it may be appropriate to discuss any other issues that the Director may feel is important concerning the child in the context of the complaint.

We feel that communication is essential to the success of your child's care. We must make sure that we can openly share any concerns or questions that may arise. We believe in an open door policy and encourage parents to feel free to call and check on your child's day if you have any concerns. We understand that, to you,

the most important person in the entire center is your child and we respect that fact and in turn treat your child with just as much respect. We try to put ourselves in the parents' place and we recognize that you have a right to expect the best care possible for your child.

Communication between parents and staff members is very important. We encourage daily interaction between parents and staff to ensure that as parents you are kept abreast of your child's day and that you are made aware of any specific incidents.

Also, it is equally important that staff members are kept abreast of any concerns parents may have about your child at the center and/or at home that may assist in the care of your child.

All comments are taken very seriously and we will all do our best to ensure your complete satisfaction. We aim to keep parents stress-free and self-assured knowing that their children are in our loving care.

Liability Insurance

Creative Critters does maintain liability insurance; however, it is secondary to the parent's insurance coverage.