Children’s Centres
Information for parents
Welcome

Who we are
Welcome to our Children’s Centre. This centre is one of five which is directly operated by the Region of Waterloo. We have a long history of operating child care in the community. Our staff are Regional employees and registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario.

Our staff
Each centre has a team of dedicated professionals who will collaborate with you to make this a positive and rewarding experience for your child. Our Child Care Teachers are graduates of a college or university level program in Early Childhood Education and registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario. All of our staff participate in additional training on the HighScope Approach to Learning and are certified as HighScope Teachers by the HighScope Educational Foundation. In addition to the classroom teachers, each centre has a Supervisor, Assistant Supervisor/Team Lead, Cook and Aide who all work together. The Cooks have the Safe Food Handlers course and additional training in menu planning and food preparation.
Vision
The Region of Waterloo has a vibrant, comprehensive system of early learning and child care that supports the healthy development of all children in our community.

Mission
To be leaders in the development and delivery of early learning and child care programs and services by:

- Putting the needs and best interests of children first
- Promoting standards of excellence in early childhood education, care and support
- Meeting the needs of children and their families for quality, flexible, accessible and affordable services
- Planning and managing services that are responsive to community needs
## Table of contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program statement</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting started</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fee payment policy and payment options</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absences, vacations and statutory holidays</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School closures, snowstorms and inclement weather</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial assistance</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and confidentiality</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s belongings</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For your child’s first day – what to bring</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrival and departure times</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily schedules/routines</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health conditions</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration of medication</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunscreen</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allergies, special diets, other sensitivities</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking at the centre</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accidents and injuries</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious occurrences</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development/evaluation</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release of children from the program</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offsite activities</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire drills/emergency management</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students, volunteers and consultants in the program</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents issues and concerns</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in the program</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of operation and parking</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other information and updates</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Centre locations</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Program statement**

The Region of Waterloo, Children’s Centres offer a high quality early learning program that supports the healthy growth and development of all children. Our programs follow the Ministry of Education policies and licensing standards. We view all children as competent, capable, curious and rich in potential. Our programs follow the HighScope curriculum approach, a research based program that values children as active participants in the learning environment. Children learn best by pursuing their personal interests and goals. As they make choices and plans, children explore, ask questions and solve problems, and interact with peers and others in the learning environment. In addition, the program follows the four Foundations of Learning as described in “How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014” These Foundations are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foundations</th>
<th>Goals for children</th>
<th>Expectations for programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Belonging</strong></td>
<td>Every child has a sense of belonging when he or she is connected to others and contributes to their world.</td>
<td>Early childhood programs cultivate authentic, caring relationships and connections to create a sense of belonging among and between children, adults, and the world around them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Well-Being</strong></td>
<td>Every child is developing a sense of self, health, and well-being.</td>
<td>Early childhood programs nurture children’s healthy development and support their growing sense of self.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Child Care and Early Years Act 2014 Licensing Standards are the legislative standards that must be followed to maintain a clear operating license. These standards address items that affect quality in licensed child care centres, such as staff/child ratios, physical environment, staff qualifications, and children’s health and wellbeing. The standards are used as a basis in creating this policy manual.

**Our programs are designed to:**

✔ **Promote the health, safety, nutrition and well-being of the children**

Meals and snacks are rotated weekly and seasonally and are carefully planned to meet the nutritional requirements for children following *Canada’s Food Guide* and *Menu Planning and Supportive Nutrition Environments in Child Care Settings*. Locally grown, whole foods, and seasonal produce are selected when possible. Food allergies, food sensitivities and recognizing culturally sensitive needs are of prime importance when planning and preparing foods served to the children. Children are provided with choices at meal times and given opportunities to try new or unfamiliar foods.
Learning environments are carefully planned to support active exploration while maintaining safety. Daily, monthly and seasonal playground checks are completed to ensure that playgrounds are safe. An annual inspection is completed by a third party playground safety inspector. Guidelines are followed from Public Health and the health and safety requirements from the Ministry of Education around sanitizing the environment, the food preparation areas and play materials. Broken toys are discarded and replaced.

✅ **Support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents, child care providers and staff**

We believe that children are best supported in an environment where teachers participate in children’s play at their level, following the lead of the child. Teachers view each child as competent and capable. Relationships formed between all staff, families and children ensure that programs are centred on the child and the family. Learning and development are anchored through long-term, trusting and supportive relationships with teachers. Children are encouraged to learn new things and to expand their learning in a diverse and inclusive setting where they are supported by qualified Early Childhood Educators.

Teachers share control with children by using encouragement instead of praise, and by taking a problem solving approach to conflict. The HighScope approach to solving problems allows children to acknowledge feelings and to come up with solutions to problems with the support of staff. In more challenging situations, staff may be looking for additional classroom support to help your child to be successful. We will work with you in these situations.

Sometimes the approach used in challenging situations may need to be more direct. There are prohibitive practices (Section 48, Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014) that may never be used with children. These are directly taken from the Act:
a. Corporal punishment of the child
   Children in our care will never be spanked, hit, grabbed, shook, shoved, or forced to repeat physical movements or forced to eat food

b. Deliberate use of harsh or degrading measures on the child that would humiliate the child or undermine his or her self-respect
   Children will never be emotionally or verbally punished while in our care. The use of time out will not be used.

c. Depriving the child of basic needs including food, shelter, clothing or bedding
   Removal of food, clothing or bedding is not allowed under any circumstances.

d. Locking the exits of the child care centre or home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child

e. Using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine the child if he or she has been separated from other children
   Children will never be confined, physically restrained or separated from the other children in a locked room as a form of punishment.

Contravention of these policies would result in a disciplinary process with the individual staff member. All staff, students, enhanced staff, community consultants, and volunteers are expected to comply with the policy on Supporting Positive Interactions with Children and to review this policy yearly or more often as required.

Failure to comply with the Supporting Positive Interactions with Children policy could impact employment, may be reportable to Family and Children’s Services or the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario which could affect the individual’s ability to have further contact with children.
✓ **Encourage the children to interact and communicate in a positive way and support their ability to self-regulate**

By observing and responding to children’s individual needs, and cues, staff provide learning environments where stressful situations are minimized. Positive, trusting relationships between teachers and children are nurtured so that children are able to express their emotions in an acceptable way when there is a problem or conflict. Positive encouragement is one way that teachers can recognize the efforts of children. When children’s emotions are calm and focused they are best able to modulate their emotions, inhibit impulses and understand the consequences of their actions.

✓ **Foster the children’s exploration, play and inquiry**

We provide an environment that fosters curiosity where children can explore, make choices, and solve problems. This is called active participatory learning. During active learning, teachers support children to explore materials, play and interact with others and to ask questions and solve problems. Through careful observation, documentation and reflection, the teacher provides the materials and thoughtful inquiry to scaffold and build on the child’s exploration and play.

✓ **Provide child-initiated and adult supported experiences**

In the HighScope curriculum, children make their own choices about materials and activities during the day. When children are manipulating objects, acting out roles, or experimenting with different materials, they are engaged in learning through play. Teachers use intentional adult-child interaction strategies such as asking open-ended questions to encourage inquiry and thought. Through daily observations and using the HighScope Curriculum Key Developmental Indicators (KDI’s), teachers plan activities around children’s interests and to support each child’s development.
Plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child’s learning and development will be supported

As co-learners, staff, parents and children work together to provide a learning environment that supports the well-being of all children. Play allows children to actively construct, challenge and expand their own understanding and learning by making connections to prior experiences. Teachers and children are viewed as co-learners participating, planning and learning together. Through daily observations of children, teachers are responsive to their individual cues, interests, and can plan activities that will support each child at their developmental level. We work closely with the family, and other agencies if needed to provide a learning environment for each child where they are supported and feel safe. Our goal is for all children to be included in all parts of the daily program.
✓ **Provide a consistent daily routine that promotes active learning and shared control between teachers and children**

Children have opportunities for both group and individual activities. Children participate in choice times, small and large group activities, assist with cleanup, socialize during meals, develop self-care skills, and exercise their small and large muscles. Children have regular outside time, where they can explore and learn in a natural environment. The most important segment of the daily routine is the plan-do-review sequence, in which children make choices about what they will do, carry out their ideas, and reflect upon their activities with adults and other children. Teachers plan activities based on the interests and developmental needs of the children.

The Daily Routine is consistent and is visually posted for teachers, parents and children where all can see what is happening next. Parts of the day are referred to by the teachers to support transitions from one activity to the next.

✓ **Foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents about the program and their children**

We welcome families into our programs and engage with them through ongoing communication to help support their child in our centre. We view parents as partners and we are respectful of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We meet with them at the enrolment stage and communicate with them daily as their child attends our programs. Teachers share information about their child’s health, well-being and learning through ongoing conversations, daily observations and planning forms.

Information is shared with parents through emails, daily observation form, posted information, at orientation time, newsletters, workshops, surveys and other celebrations.
 ✓ **Involve local community partners and allow those partners to support the children, their families and staff**

Parenting and community resources are shared through newsletters, parent display boards, workshops and information nights.

Students from colleges and other training institutions work along with qualified staff in the classroom.

Teachers collaborate with outside agencies to support the child and family such as KW Habilitation, KidsAbility, Family & Children’s Services and local Boards of Education. Where additional resources are needed, parents can provide consent for outside community agencies to become involved to further assess the child and to develop an individual learning plan that will support and foster the growth of the child.

 ✓ **Support staff interactions with the children incorporating Continuous Professional Learning (CPL)**

Teachers are supported and encouraged to participate in ongoing professional development. As members of the College of Early Childhood Educators, teachers are aware of the need to enhance their own learning in order to support both children and families. Teachers continually reflect on their practices, collaborating with other educators and attending training to enhance their skills and knowledge. Teachers are members of the Professional Resource Centre at the community college where they can attend workshops and other learning opportunities. Staff can attend workshops and other learning opportunities. All staff participate in a yearly performance review where strengths and goals are discussed. All teachers participate in the HighScope certification process. Certification takes place every three years, and is a time to review the teacher’s skills in the HighScope approach. The certification process looks at the Learning Environment, Adult Child Interactions, and the Daily Routine. Teachers use the Program Quality Assessment tool to evaluate their classrooms. Throughout the year, teachers mentor each other and receive support to help build on their strengths and goals. All teachers engage in reflective practices where they can evaluate what they are doing and set goals for future professional learning.
Document and review the impact of the Children’s Centres learning environments

The program gathers information from many sources to provide a learning environment that is responsive to the interests and developmental needs of all children. Children are allowed to be independent, where they can make choices, solve problems, and play with others in a supported, safe and nurturing environment. By working together, families and educators provide a positive learning environment where all children are respected and valued as competent, capable and rich in potential. Program assessment tools, and parent daily input provides valuable information to be used for future planning and program development. Families are valuable contributors to their child’s learning and we encourage them to become involved at the centre.
Monitoring and measuring goals:
The Program Statement is a living document to be reviewed with all new staff, students and volunteers prior to interacting with children and yearly thereafter or where there are modifications to the program statement. Staff are required to sign and date that they have read the Program Statement as part of the licensing review process. Throughout the year, portions of the program statement may be further developed and discussed to ensure that all staff are able to transfer their learning into the classroom. Where there are concerns, Supervisors will provide verbal or written feedback to staff, work with staff to establish specific goals, and evaluate their progress along the way. The intent is that programs will provide positive learning environments where each child’s learning is supported and developed.

The cooks follow Canada’s Food Guide, the Healthy Food Indicator and Public Health guidelines to support all areas of food preparation, menu planning and cleanliness.

Each of our centres uses a special curriculum model called the HighScope Approach to Learning. The HighScope Approach has a strong research base to support its methods and continues to refine and develop its approaches to better meet the education needs of young children. Parents/guardians are encouraged to use the same approaches at home.

The HighScope Program Quality Assessment Tool (PQA), a standardized tool is used to evaluate the learning environment, schedules and routines, the adult-child interactions, curriculum planning and child observations. Sections of the PQA are completed by teachers, supervisors and external professionals at least twice per year. Based on the outcome of the PQA, modifications may be made to the learning environment, the daily schedule, or adult-child interactions.

The HighScope Child Observation Record (COR) is an assessment tool that assists teachers in supporting children at every developmental level — including children who are English Language Learners and those with special needs. It also provides Supervisors with more comprehensive reporting options to guide program planning and staff development.
Teachers use the COR to input daily observations and for daily program planning. The information from the COR is used to provide a Family Report twice a year to share information with families about their child’s learning and development. You can find out more about the HighScope Curriculum Approach by searching www.highscope.org

The Children’s Centres participate in three HighScope certification programs to support program quality:

- HighScope Program accreditation is completed every three years
- Teachers participate in the HighScope teacher certification program every three years
- Supervisors complete the HighScope certified trainer program

Teachers participate in ongoing professional development and in the Continuous Professional Learning plan as outlined by the College of Early Childhood Educators. All teachers are registered members in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators and abide by the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.

**The HighScope curriculum approach is based on five key factors which are applied consistently in all of our Children’s Centres:**

**The learning environment:** Each classroom has specific equipment and materials arranged into clearly defined areas of interest. This enables children to find, use and return the materials they need to explore, invent and learn about their world. The learning environment is a safe place where children are free to explore materials, be creative, be independent and solve problems.

**Active learning:** Children are involved in direct, hands-on experiences with people, objects, ideas and events. Young children are given the space to explore by rolling, creeping, crawling and cruising around their environment. Teachers plan activities based on individual children’s interests and stages of child development and will provide opportunities to support your child to the next stage of development when your child is ready.
Schedules and routines: Each day follows a familiar schedule of events, providing consistency for both children and adults. A daily “plan-do-review” process is the core of the HighScope routine. This gives children the opportunity to pursue their own interests, make plans, follow through on their plans and reflect on their experiences with peers and teachers.

If you have a young child, the teacher will work with you to plan a flexible schedule that meets your child’s needs. We want to work with you to help your child feel secure when away from home.

Teacher child interaction: Teachers interact and observe children to discover how each child thinks and reasons. Teachers support each child to develop initiative, interests, abilities and critical thinking. Building a trusting relationship with a consistent teacher is important in the HighScope classroom. The teachers will cuddle, hold, play and talk with your child in a warm, unhurried manner.

Assessment: Teachers observe and record notes on each child in their class. They use these notes to assess individual development using the HighScope Child Observation Record (COR). These careful observations are also used by teachers to plan activities that will support the development of each child and are shared with parents/guardians. Each year every classroom is evaluated using the Program Quality Assessment, which is part of the certification process with the HighScope Foundation.

It is our goal to help children to:

- Become independent, responsible, confident and ready for success.
- Become plan full learners – to think about what they plan to do, to act on those plans and then to reflect on what they did with others, and to use this as an opportunity to learn further.
- Learn through active involvement with people, materials, events and ideas.
- Gain knowledge and skills in areas such as language and literacy, creative representation, initiative and social relations, movement, music, classification, seriation, number, space and time.
Enrolment

If you are interested in putting your child’s name onto a waitlist for a space at the centre there are a few things you will need to do:

1. You must apply to the waitlist by submitting an online application through OneList Waterloo Region regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com

2. The online application includes some details for you on the program, for example, if there are infant, toddler or preschool programs. The online application generates an application date at the time of completion.

3. You are able to login to your online application at any time to update information, or withdraw your application. There is no fee charged to you to apply to the waitlist and you can apply to up to 10 programs online.

After you apply on OneList, the programs you have chosen will receive an email message regarding your application. In the child care centres, the waitlist administrator, who is usually the centre Supervisor, reviews the information you have provided. You will receive an email confirmation that your application was received and future emails if and when a space becomes available at the centre. Spaces for child care are determined taking these factors into consideration:

- ✓ priority order from oldest application date to newest
- ✓ age of the child
- ✓ child care space available to meet licensed ratios
- ✓ hours of care required
- ✓ full time enrollment
- ✓ centres ability to meet the specific needs of the child which may require additional supports or accommodations throughout the day
- ✓ other siblings already enrolled in the centre
- ✓ special circumstances or emergency situations
When a space becomes available, you will be asked to provide confirmation around when you would like your child to start and a registration package will be provided to you. The completed registration package must be returned to the centre in order for your child to be registered. There is no deposit fee charged for enrolment in the program. You may contact the centre anytime to inquire about your status on the waitlist.

Getting started

The transition to a child care centre is often the first big step your child may take in separating from you. This can be a positive and exciting change for both of you. We strongly encourage you to visit the centre a minimum of two times with your child before leaving them at the centre. The supervisor would be happy to arrange dates and times for you to come to the centre so you and your child can join the classroom activities. During these visits, you and your child will be able to go into the classroom and participate in the scheduled activities along with the rest of the children. This is a wonderful way for your child to become familiar with the classroom teachers and other children while you are still with them. You will also be able to observe how teachers will work with you and your child.

In addition to scheduled play times before your child starts, here are some other things we suggest that you try:

• Ask the centre if they have a classroom photo album which you can borrow until your child begins attending the centre. Your child can look at pictures of the toys and centre before their first day.

• Ask us for one of our small empty photo albums. Put pictures of your family and other things important to your child into the album. We keep these albums in the classroom for your child to look at any time. Having a picture of family members, pets or other important people really helps your child feel connected to you during the day. Please use pictures that could be touched, bent, handled and hugged. Coloured photocopies work well in these albums.
• Talk to your child about the centre, the daily routine, teachers, who will be there to greet your child when you arrive. Young children need assurances of what is going to happen each day. The teachers will talk with your child in the same way by referring to what is coming next, and what happens just before they go home at the end of the day.

• If your child has a cherished blanket, stuffed toy, soother, bottle or other comfort item, please be sure to bring it with you. (Please mark with your child’s name or initials if possible). These special items often help children feel safe and secure as they settle into the classroom and centre. Many children continue to use these comfort items to help them settle at sleep time.

• Visit your local library and borrow some books about starting preschool and day care. Read these books with your child and talk about how they may feel.

• Always say goodbye to your child before you leave. No matter how hard this may be, it is important for your child to know when you are leaving and when you will be coming back. If you know that your child will have difficulties at departure time, ask the teacher for help. We know how difficult this separation can be for you and your child and we will be there to help you with this transition.

• Establish a regular and consistent drop-off and pick-up time for your child. A predictable routine and schedule will help your child to settle into the classroom more quickly.
Fee payment policy and payment options

Before your child starts, you will complete a fee payment agreement with the Supervisor. This agreement outlines the hours of care you are paying for, the daily rate and days of the week your child has been enrolled.

Invoices for your monthly costs will be emailed to you around the 20th of each month. Your fees are due upon receipt of your invoice. Payment can be made by pre-authorized debit or online banking. Cash payments are not an option. Interest is charged on all overdue accounts and failure to pay for child care costs will result in termination of your child’s space. It is important that you provide a current email and mailing address to the centre.

Each of our centres use a special curriculum model called the HighScope Approach to Learning. The HighScope Approach has a strong research base to support its methods and continues to refine and develop its approaches to better meet the education needs of young children. We encourage Parents/guardians to use these same approaches at home for consistency.

Income tax receipts are issued once a year. In February, a receipt for income tax purposes will be emailed to you. If you do not receive a receipt or need a duplicate re-issued, you can do this by contacting our Accounts Receivable Department as noted on your copy of the fee payment agreement.

We require one month written notice that you will be ending your child care arrangements with the centre or fees will continue to be collected. In lieu of one month notice you will be required to pay the normal fees you would have paid had your child attended during this time span.

The Centre fees are reviewed each year to ensure they accurately reflect our costs of operation. Any changes to fees must be approved by Regional Council. You will receive written notification of any of these changes at least one month in advance of the change.

Please ask the centre for a current rate card outlining our fees and closure dates or check our website: www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/region-owned-child-care-centres.aspx
Absences, vacations and statutory holidays

The centres are closed for a maximum of 10 consecutive days during the middle of the summer and additional days between Christmas and New Years. For specific dates, check with the centre supervisor.

Parents/guardians do not pay fees for any of the above days when the centre is closed.

Your child may be absent from the centre at other times during the year, but payment will continue to be made to hold your child care space. Please contact the centre if your child will be absent for any reason. Families receiving child care subsidy are required to contact their subsidy caseworker for absences longer than three days.

School closures, snowstorms and inclement weather

Our centres remain open whenever possible. Special conditions such as no water or heat in the building, poor weather conditions during the day; or severe weather conditions affecting the closure of all Regional buildings may cause the centres to close. You can find information about centre closures by calling the centre and listening to recorded messages, calling the Service First Call Centre at 519-575-4400, or by listening to the local radio station. If the centre needs to close during the working day, you will be contacted to arrange for pick up of your child. Phone calls and emails are methods most often used to contact you during the day. It is important that the centre is able to contact you during the day for an emergency situation.
Financial assistance

You may be eligible for child care subsidy to help you pay for your child care costs. Subsidy is available to parents/guardians who live in Waterloo Region, are working, going to school, are in a training program or have a child with special needs.

Information about subsidy can be provided by calling 519-575-4400 or by applying on OneList online. You can check if you meet the income level for subsidy by going to www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/child-care-subsidy-calculator.aspx to find out.

All personal financial information is confidential and will not be disclosed to the child care centre.

Communication and confidentiality

It is important that you feel comfortable talking with us each day. We want to hear about your child. We encourage you to share stories, concerns and to work together with us, so we can understand your child and support your child’s development. Often arrival and departure times are busy for both parents/guardians and teachers. If you have something you would like to discuss with the teacher that might take some time, please let us know and we will arrange a time to meet with you. You are always welcome to come into the classroom and we encourage you to ask questions.

We do ask that you refrain from discussing issues or problems about your child directly in front of the children. We would be happy to arrange a time to discuss these issues with you in a private area away from the children.

We do not share personal information about your family and child with other parents/guardians or agencies without your written consent. We are not able to discuss personal circumstances of other children in the classroom with you and ask that you respect this in your conversations with the teachers. Photographs of children will never be taken and shared with others without your written consent. Parents are not permitted to take pictures of children in the classroom except for their own child.
Sometimes communication between you and the centre happens through email or text messages. Email and text messaging has risks that you should be aware of, such as sending messages to the wrong person, cell phones and laptops that may be stolen or lost, forwarding messages without the sender’s consent, viruses to personal devices. At your request, we can email information to you that pertains to your child’s day at the centre, send photos of your child, or to reach you in an unusual or emergency situation. It is important to discuss this method of communication with the centre supervisor. The program has a Consent to email form that you must sign in advance.

Children’s belongings

Comfort items - We encourage you to send a comfort item with your child. Comfort items may be a blanket, cuddle toy, soother or any favourite item that helps to soothe your child. Comfort items are always available to your child throughout the day and are not limited to sleep time.

Toys and treasures - We ask that you do not send toys, videos, electronic games or extra food to the centre with your child. We have lots of equipment and materials available for your child to use at the centre. If your child insists on bringing these items to the centre, please talk with the classroom teacher. Together we can work out a way to handle this situation.

Clothing - It is important that you send your child in clothing that can get messy and that can be washed. The children are busy with paint, glue, water and sand every day. Please make sure your child has a change of clothing, indoor shoes, diapers (if appropriate), and outdoor clothing suited to the weather with them at the centre. Children play outside for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, weather permitting. In the summer months, a hat is required and a bathing suit may be suggested. On hot days, children like to run through the sprinkler and play with water. Please label all clothing, boots, mittens, scarves, towels and shoes for your child. Having all the necessary clothes during the day will allow your child to participate in all parts of the daily routine. All extra items can be stored in your child’s cubby.
Here is a list of suggested items that you may want to bring for your child. Not all children will need all of these items.

- Blanket for rest time
- Cuddle toy for comfort basket
- Soother if needed
- Package of diapers
- Diaper cream
- Diaper wipes
- Bottles of milk
- Extra set of clothes including socks, underwear, pants, shirts
- Shoes that are safe for indoor and outdoor climbers
- Photos of the family—pictures of familiar things, pets, family, friends
- Additional outdoor clothing: Summer – hat: Spring/Fall – splash pants, rain boots; Winter – snowsuit, mittens/gloves, neck warmer, winter boots, extra socks, winter hat

Please label all items for your child.
Arrival and departure times

When you enroll your child at the centre, you will be asked to identify the hours of care you require for your child. A general arrival and departure time will be noted on the application form. We ask that you stay within these times. If you need to adjust your hours, or need to extend a drop-off or pick-up time, please speak with the Supervisor. We will do our best to accommodate your request, however changes may affect our licensed ratios in the centre.

Each day when you bring your child to the centre, please be sure they have everything they will need for the day. This includes additional clothes, appropriate outerwear, and comfort items. Take your child to a teacher to be signed in for the day.

Sharing information about your child’s night, morning, or any special events or instructions will help to make the day go more smoothly for your child. This is an important piece of the transition from home to centre, so please take time to speak with a teacher.

Each centre has a scheduled opening and closing time. Staff shifts are arranged to meet the required adult child ratios.

If you or your child have difficulty at arrival and/or departure times, please speak with the teacher or supervisor. Working together, we can help you to make these times of the day less stressful.

If you will be late picking up your child, please call the centre. You may need to make alternate arrangements to have another adult pick up your child.
Daily schedules/routines

Each classroom follows a predictable daily schedule of activities. Each classroom has a schedule posted. Though there will be some variations, your child may participate in all of the following activities throughout a full day.

**Greeting time: (5-10 minutes)** - A time that the teacher and children come together in their room to share their news and talk about the day’s events.

**Planning time: (5-10 minutes)** - During planning time, the children share their plan for what they are going to do during work time.

**Choice time/work time: (1-1.5 hours)** - At choice/work time, the children are busy playing, exploring and manipulating materials available to them in the classroom. During choice/work time the teacher is moving about the room and supporting children to learn, interact and discover.

**Review time: (5-10 minutes)** - During review time, the children come together to talk about what they have done during work time.

**Lunch and snack time: (20-40 minutes)** - A time when the children sit together at the table with the teacher and others in their group to eat.

**Tidy up time: (15 minutes)** - Each morning and afternoon, a specific time is set aside for the children following work time to tidy up the room. Tidy up activities are fun and based on the abilities and skills of the child.

**Group time/small group time: (15-20 minutes)** - At small group or choice time, the children come together with the teacher for a specific learning activity. The activities planned during small group time are based upon: the HighScope Key Developmental Indicators, children’s interests, as well as skills the teacher sees that the children are ready to learn. All children are encouraged to participate in the small group activity. For the younger infants and toddlers, choice time may be more informal.

**Outside time: (1 hour twice a day)** - The children play outside on the playground for up to one hour in the morning and afternoon, weather permitting. Physical activity, exploring nature, and fresh air are all part of nurturing the child’s overall positive feelings and general good health.
Rest time: (30 min.-2 hours) - During rest time, each child has a crib, or cot where they can relax and sleep if needed. Rest time or quiet time may be adjusted to meet each individual child’s individual needs, and parent preferences. Children are always supervised during the resting period. The centre is required to follow the Joint Statement of Safe Sleep for all children under the age of 12 months where young children are placed on their back during rest time. For safety, all children are monitored and observed during rest time.

Group time/large group time: (10 - 20 minutes) - This is a time when the children come together to exercise their large muscles, sing songs, move to music and play games.

Illness

Please call the centre to let us know if your child is ill. If your child is fevered, lethargic and generally unwell, please do not bring him/her to the centre.

Since your child is with other children in a classroom, it is important to remember that their illness can be spread very easily to other children and teachers. If you are not sure what to do, please call the centre before bringing them to the school. Generally, if your child is not well enough to actively participate in the daily activities and routines, then they should not be at the centre.

Sometimes children are sick more frequently than normal during the first few months they begin group care, simply because of the exposure to other children.

If your child becomes sick during the day, we will call you. You may be asked to make arrangements to pick up your child or just to inform you that your child is unwell. It may be necessary for you to have alternate care arrangements planned in advance. Planning ahead will help reduce the stress and worry for you when your child becomes ill during the day. When a child is sick, payment of fees is required.
We follow the guidelines established by our local Public Health Department to determine whether a child should be excluded for the period of the illness. Our staff use the universal precautions of hand washing, disinfecting toys, surfaces and equipment regularly to help prevent the spread of illness.

If you are uncertain about whether your child has a communicable disease, ask your doctor, call Public Health or consult with the centre supervisor. If there is an unusual number of children or adults with similar symptoms, Public Health will be consulted and may declare the centre to be in an outbreak. Additional precautions will be implemented, one of which may be the delay in new children starting in the program, or having visitors at the centre.

Health conditions

Each day, the staff will observe and document your child’s general overall health. It is important that you inform us if your child has any health conditions ie. diabetes, seizures, asthma, allergies. A special medical alert form will be completed for your child so that all staff can respond quickly and effectively if needed. The more information we have about your child’s health condition, the easier it is for us to respond appropriately if the need arises. Updates to any health conditions should be provided to the centre supervisor in writing or by email.

Administration of medication

We recommend that you speak with your doctor around any medication that is prescribed for your child and try to work out an administration schedule that can be implemented at home. If your child does require medication while at the centre, we require that the medication be in the original container with the prescription label showing your child’s name on it. You will be asked to complete a form to authorize us to give the medication to your child. Your instructions for administration must match the dosage and time intervals specified on the medication container. Please allow yourself enough time in
the morning to complete all of the paperwork required and to discuss the
details with the centre staff. All medication is stored in a secure location. Please
do not leave any medication in your child’s cupboard or bag. It should be given
directly to the teacher, supervisor or other centre staff. Epipens® and asthma
medications will be easily accessible throughout the day if needed by your child.

Over the counter medications such as Tylenol, cough syrup, or decongestants
cannot be given to your child by the staff unless we have a written note by
your doctor. This note must have the doctor’s name and phone number along
with written instructions for dosage. In addition, you will be asked to complete
a form and sign your consent. Over the counter topical cream like diaper cream
can be administered if needed. The staff can assist you with completing any of
the paperwork required to administer these creams or ointments.

**Sunscreen**

During the summer months, we recommend the use of sunscreen for all
the children. If possible, we recommend that you apply sunscreen in the
morning at home before arriving at the centre. Additional applications will
be applied during the day. If you have a specific type you prefer, we ask
that you supply a bottle at the centre. The centre does provide sunscreen
with an SPF factor of 30. You have given your permission for us to apply
sunscreen on the admission form.

**Nutrition**

Your child will be provided with a nutritious lunch and two to three snacks
each day depending upon the hours your child attends. Drinking water is
available throughout the day. Menus are planned in consultation with a
Public Health nutritionist and meet the daily requirements for children as
set out in the Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide. The cooks prepare all
food at the centre. When possible, fresh, local foods are purchased. During
meals and snacks we try to maintain a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.
Children are encouraged to serve their own food if possible and to make
choices about what they eat. We encourage children to try all foods, but children are never forced to eat and food is never withheld. In keeping with Public Health guidelines, we ask that you do not bring food from home into the centre unless you have discussed this with the supervisor in advance. Our menus are posted in the centres and online at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/region-owned-child-care-centres.aspx

Allergies, special diets, other sensitivities

If your child has an allergy which causes severe allergic reactions when exposed, please notify the supervisor. Requests for special diets can sometimes be accommodated at the centre, but may not always be possible. The supervisor, classroom teacher and/or cook may all want to speak with you to ensure we understand your child’s dietary needs. Occasionally parents/guardians may be asked to supply some of the food products if we cannot secure the items through our food supplier. Updates to any allergies or special diets should be provided to the centre supervisor in writing or by email.

All centres are “nut free”. Throughout the year, other foods may be eliminated at the centre if there is a severe anaphylactic allergy.

For the comfort of all staff and children, we ask that you avoid the use of strong scents and fragrances such as body sprays and perfumes that can be uncomfortable for others.

Smoking at the Centre, Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017

Smoking of tobacco and medical cannabis and the use of electronic cigarettes in licensed child care centres is not permitted. There are “No Smoking” signs in the building. Smoking is not allowed at entrances or exits to the building and must follow the Smoke Free workplace policy from the Region of Waterloo where smoking is not permitted within nine metres of any Regional building. Anyone not following these requirements will be asked to leave the property.
Accidents and injuries

Occasionally during the course of an active day, accidents can happen with your child. If your child is injured in any way, he/she will be comforted and basic first aid applied. Any time an injury occurs that requires first aid (cut, scrapes, bumps), an accident report is completed and a copy given to you. If your child sustains an injury that requires further medical attention, you will be contacted. It is important that we have all emergency contact numbers up to date in your child’s file.

Young children are not allowed to be left unattended in motor vehicles. If you need help to bring your child into the centre, or to leave the program, please ask the staff. Please do not leave your motor engine running while you are picking up or dropping your child off at the centre.

Suspected abuse

All of our staff are required by law to report any reasonable suspicions of child abuse to Family and Children’s Services. This can relate to harsh physical punishment, emotional abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. We all have a responsibility for the care, safety and protection of all children. You can read more on the Family and Children’s website at www.facswaterloo.org or by calling 519-576-0540.

Serious occurrences

Every effort is made to support the safety and well-being of children in the centre. Sometimes accidents are of a more serious nature and require further immediate action to respond to the incident and to prevent future accidents from occurring. These incidents are called serious occurrences.

A serious occurrence could be:

a. the death of a child
b. abuse, neglect or an allegation of abuse or neglect of a child
c. life-threatening injury to or a life-threatening illness of a child
d. an incident where a child goes missing or is temporarily unsupervised
e. unplanned disruption of the normal operations of a child care centre
Serious occurrences are reported to the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Office, the Manager of the Children’s Centre, and in some cases the Police and/or Family and Children’s Services. A Serious Occurrence Notification form is posted in the centre to inform parents/guardians when a serious occurrence has occurred at the centre. The information provided on these reports is brief and is intended to protect personal information and privacy of the individuals involved.

Child development/evaluation

We want to work closely with you around developing a program for your child that will meet their needs. We value your feedback. Your teacher will provide you with regular feedback on how your child is doing at the centre, what they like to do, how they have eaten, or slept and anything else that may be of interest to you. Twice/year teachers will invite you to a more formal meeting where we can share more information, share samples of your child’s work and discuss with you future goals and next steps for your child. Our teachers use the online HighScope COR Advantage as our tool to monitor and track development. Twice a year you will receive a written report summarizing how your child is doing.

Should you have any concerns about your child’s development a range of additional supports and services is available to you through a SNAP (Special Needs Access Point) referral. A consultant from KW Habilitation is available at the centre to support the inclusion of all children in the program. If you would like more information about making a SNAP referral for your child, please speak to your child’s teacher, the Assistant Supervisor/Team Lead, or the Supervisor.
Release of children from the program

For your child’s safety, please inform your child’s teacher when you have picked up your child, so they can be signed out for the day.

Other adults cannot pick up your child without your prior consent. If someone other than you is going to pick up your child, please notify the centre. We require the adult’s full name and phone number. If someone arrives to pick up your child without your consent, we will call you for permission to release your child. All unfamiliar adults will be asked for identification.

Children cannot be released to anyone under the age of 16. If you are requesting an exception to this practice, we will ask you to authorize this in writing. An adult must accompany your child to and from the centre each day.

If there is a legal agreement prohibiting access to your child, a copy of this agreement will need to be in your child’s file. A current picture of the individual is helpful in these situations.

Offsite activities

All offsite activities revolve around our immediate neighborhood or community and are within walking distance for the children. They involve simple things that the children would find of interest. Walks outside of the centre are noted on the daily planning sheet for parents/guardians. Accommodation is made for non-mobile children by using strollers, wagons or toboggans. Children are never transported in public or private vehicles.
Fire drills/emergency management

The children’s centre has an emergency management policy and procedure describing the steps taken if there is an emergency in or near the building. This policy is to ensure the safety of all children, staff and visitors to the centre. These emergencies could be due to fire, a threat inside or near the centre or a natural disaster.

Once a month all of the children participate in a fire drill at the centre. This involves activation of our alarm system and evacuation of the building. We have regular maintenance and inspections of our alarm systems, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and fire suppression systems.

In an emergency where we are required to leave the building, we will go to our designated temporary shelter. You will be contacted by email, phone, or twitter about the emergency and the need to arrange to pick up your child. Please find out the location of the temporary shelter or to discuss emergency plans that may be specific for your child.

The fire safety and emergency management policies and procedures are reviewed with all staff, students, and volunteers annually and are monitored regularly for compliance.

Students, volunteers and consultants in the program

Students from local high schools, community colleges or universities may be assisting or observing in your child’s classroom. Child Care teachers will monitor and coach students and volunteers with the approaches set out in our Program Statement. These individuals provide assistance and gain knowledge around working with young children but they are never left to supervise children on their own or included in child care ratios. Students and volunteers are always supervised by one of the trained centre staff. Consultants try to remain in the classroom setting, but may occasionally take the child they are working with to a quieter place in the
centre. Parental consent will be required to permit the consultant to work individually with any child. All students, volunteers and consultants must provide current medical and immunization information and have a clear Criminal Reference Check working with vulnerable populations.

Parent issues and concerns

Ongoing communication between you and the staff is encouraged. We hope that you will take time to speak with the staff daily. We encourage open and timely discussions with you whenever you have a concern. All concerns are taken seriously and confidentially. If we hear of a complaint, our goal is to respond within one business day.

In the event that there is a complaint, please arrange a time to meet privately with the staff when your child is not present. The staff will:

- meet with you privately to listen to your complaint
- document the concern
- inform the Supervisor, designate or Manager. If needed, the Supervisor, designate or Manager will contact you within one business day of hearing about the complaint
- if needed the Supervisor will submit a Serious Occurrence report, a complaint report to the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario, Family and Children’s Services and/or the Police
- if concerns have not been addressed after talking to these individuals, parents/guardians can contact Manager of Children’s Centres at 519-883-2171 or Director of Children’s Services at 519-883-2177
- our centres are licensed by the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing branch and you can contact them at 1-877-510-5333 or information.met@ontario.ca with a question about service or a complaint. A formal complaint can also be made to the College of Early Childhood Educators of Ontario at 1-888-961-8558 or info@college-ece.ca
Involvement in the program

We encourage parents/guardians to be involved in our program in whatever capacity they are able to manage. Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their child’s classroom or just drop in to observe anytime.

We are always looking for parents/guardians to share information, interests or hobbies with us. If you have a special hobby or talent to share, please let us know.

Throughout the year, parent nights are planned to share information and help parents/guardians learn about a specific component of the HighScope curriculum approach or other topics of interest. We welcome any ideas for specific topics that you may have for these events. There may also be social events planned at the centre for your whole family to attend. Usually we hold two social events in a year.

Parents/guardians are asked to complete surveys, written or verbal feedback to evaluate their satisfaction with the program. The feedback we receive helps us to plan for our program and to look at areas for improvement or change.

Hours of operation and parking

Centres are open Monday-Friday and hours of operation are between 6:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., but may vary depending on location. All centres are closed for statutory holidays, Easter Monday, August Civic holiday, Remembrance Day, with a brief summer maintenance shut down and between Christmas and New Year’s Day.

Free parking is available at all locations.

Other information and updates

For further details regarding days and hours of operation, view our rates, newsletter, menus, or for the most recent Parent Handbook, visit our website at www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/region-owned-child-care-centres.aspx
Children’s Centre locations

Cambridge Children’s Centre
99 Beechwood Road, Cambridge, Ontario N1S 3S1
519-622-4390
Toddler and preschool programs

Christopher Children’s Centre
30 Christopher Drive, Cambridge, Ontario N1R 4R4
519-621-6525
Infant, toddler and preschool programs

Edith MacIntosh Children’s Centre
104 Stirling Avenue South, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3N9
519-743-6344
Toddler and preschool programs

Elmira Children’s Centre
250 William Street, Elmira, Ontario N3B 0B9
519-575-4460
Infant, toddler and preschool programs

Kinsmen Children’s Centre
651 Concession Road, Cambridge, Ontario N3H 4L1
519-653-9933
Toddler and preschool programs.

Photos provided by Regional Children’s Centres
www.regionofwaterloo.ca/CommunityServices

519-575-4400

TTY: 519-575-4608

Alternate formats of this document are available upon request.