



FAMILY HANDBOOK

Port Washington Children's Center
Landmark Square
232 Main Street, Suite 2
Port Washington, NY 11050
516-883-4864

Port Washington Children's Center Family Handbook

Welcome to the Port Washington Children's Center. We hope that this handbook helps you to learn more about our Center's philosophy and policies. It is designed as a supplement to the Agreement that each family signs when enrolling their children.

We are a private not for profit Center, governed by a Board of Directors made up of dedicated community volunteers as well as Center parents. We offer a quality childcare program for children ages 18 months through twelve years, serving all segments of our community, regardless of race, religion, national origin, economic status, or handicap.

Our goal is to provide the very best, developmentally appropriate learning environment possible. Our Toddler program and our PreSchool program offer well rounded early childhood experiences for toddlers 18 months through three years of age, and for Pre-Schoolers three through five years of age on a year round basis. Our KidsPort program offers an enriched before and after school experience for children in kindergarten through grades six. KidsPort children attend full days on school holidays and have the option of attending during the summer, as well.

We are licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services and, as such, must adhere to their regulations for day care centers.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

We provide a safe, nurturing setting for all our children so that we can help them become productive, responsible members of society. We do this by offering a wide variety of activities that promote each child's optimum growth, giving them many opportunities to make choices, to be creative, to problem solve, and to learn how to solve conflicts in non-violent ways.

We strive to maintain the high standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, which delineates age-appropriate toddler, pre-school and school-age practices based on research as to how children best learn and grow.

Credentialed early childhood teachers head our Toddler and PreSchool programs providing experience and warmth. Our educational philosophy is that young children learn as they explore the world around them. As children play they are developing cognitively, physically, and social emotionally. They are learning to express themselves creatively and are developing communication skills. They are learning to live cooperatively and to value their own and each other's heritages.

Our KidsPort teachers have related educational backgrounds and/or expertise in working with school age children. KidsPort's emphasis is on providing a relaxing, enjoyable experience that offers youngsters enrichment and recreation. We try to replicate the neighborhood where children have opportunities to interact with friends of varied ages, as well as their own age group. Children also have the opportunity to do homework as needed.

We place much emphasis on staff development so that our teachers can continue to grow in their abilities to best work with children and families. We review such things as developing stimulating curriculums, how to effectively discipline children, how to keep them safe, how to recognize signs of child abuse, and how to respond in emergencies.

Please review the following guidelines and procedures that we follow in order for our Center to be a safe, nurturing, "home away from home" for your children.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Our goal is to provide quality care for all children who are enrolled in our program regardless of special needs.

The Social Worker will speak with the family whose child has special needs in order to gather helpful information. The parents, director, social worker and teaching staff will assess the abilities and disabilities of the child and make every effort to obtain resources that may be necessary for the child. All reasonable accommodations will be made and necessary adaptations which are readily achievable will be carried out. However, these accommodations should not cause an undue burden on the program or require a fundamental alteration of the program.

If additional resources are needed to facilitate appropriate programming for the child, a conference will be scheduled with the parent to recommend a course of action. The parent will be provided with information on several community agencies where she/he can obtain an evaluation and the staff will work with the parent in implementing these recommendations.

In cases where the staff and administration of the Center determine that the child's particular disability poses a significant risk to the health or safety of him/herself and others, the director/social worker will work with the parents to find a more appropriate program for the child.

NEGATIVE BEHAVIOR

Children who display negative behaviors will receive the same support as outlined for children with special needs. Negative behavior includes excessive biting or inappropriate conduct which endangers the well-being of that child or any other child in the Center.

The child's teacher will work with the Social Worker and parents to help resolve the problem. The child's age and/or developmental level will be taken into consideration. If the problem intensifies or continues unabated, the Social Worker after conferring with the child's teacher may suggest that the

family seek an evaluation and/or counseling for the child. If the child's behavior proves to be too unsettling for the group, a further recommendation for reduced hours at the Center may be necessary. The Director/Social Worker will communicate the decision to the family and work towards implementation.

DISCIPLINE/GUIDANCE

At the Children's Center, the term guidance is used for several reasons. It is a positive term, and implies working WITH the child to develop internal control of her/his behavior. Our goal is to encourage the children to become creative, independent, responsible, and socially mature. This involves learning to make responsible choices and accepting the consequences of such choices.

Guidance takes several forms:

1. Environment – A place for children. The furniture is child-sized with many opportunities for hands-on experiences.
2. Logical Rules – Such as not hurting others and taking care of the learning environment. These are discussed with the children, as well as why such rules are needed.
3. Curriculum – Is developmentally appropriate, based on the children's age, interest and level of readiness.
4. Positive Behavior – We reinforce appropriate behavior whenever possible.
5. Renewal Time – Occasionally a child needs to be removed from the situation for a brief time. The child is provided with another activity until he/she is ready to rejoin the group.
6. Redirection – Often interesting a child in another activity will eliminate a potential conflict.
7. Positive Reminder – Telling the children what we want them to do, rather than using “no” or “don't”.

Any ongoing situations will be discussed with the family to ensure a cooperative approach. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns with the teaching staff in your child's room.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

The Center is open year round, except for legal holidays and two program transition days. In your annual enrollment packet you will receive an annual calendar specifying which days we are closed and which days are full days for KidsPort.

- Our Toddler and PreSchool program begin at 7:15 A.M. **All children need to be here by 9:00 am so that your child gets off to a good start and that scheduled activities are not interrupted by late arrivals.**
- Our KidsPort before school program begins at 7:15 A.M. On school vacation days KidsPort also opens at 7:15 A.M. **All children need to be in by 9:00 am.**
- KidsPort after-school children arrive at the end of their school day (on school district busses).

Closing time is 6:30 P.M. Please plan on picking up your child by 6:15 P.M. in order to allow fifteen minutes for traffic and signing your child out. Late fees will be charged for children picked up after 6:30 P.M.

If you find that you are running late, you must make alternate arrangements so that your child will be picked up by 6:30 P.M. In addition, call the office to let us know who will be coming.

After our 6:30 P.M. closing time there will be a penalty fee of \$10.00 for each fifteen (15) minute interval that a child remains at the Center. If a parent is late more than three (3) times we reserve the right to discharge the child from our program.

Children are not allowed to enter the building alone. Toddler and PreSchool parents must escort their children into their classrooms and sign them in for the day. When KidsPort children attend for full days, their parents must also escort them into their classrooms and sign them in for the day. All parents must also sign their children out at the end of the day, escorting them out of the building. Your cooperation with this procedure is very important as it helps us to keep children safe.

Children will only be dismissed to their parents/guardians or people whose names are listed on the enrollment forms as authorized to pick up the child. If anyone other than you is going to pick up your child, please send in a note or call the Center with the name of that person. This person is required to present identification. Please come to the office at any time to add someone to your pick up list.

PARKING

Our parents may park in the visitor parking spots in the Landmark parking lot. You may also use empty spots in our staff parking lot (facing South Washington Street) or park on the street adjacent to our playground. **Please do not park in any other spots; they are reserved for other agencies located in the building. There is no all day parking allowed for parents.**

FEE AND PAYMENTS

The Center mails a billing statement at the beginning of every month. Monthly fees are due promptly upon receipt of your statement. Weekly fees are due on Friday, for the upcoming week. Fees can either be brought to the office or mailed. Our office hours are 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. If there is no one in the office to receive payment, you must come back to the office at another time. You may not leave the payment if there is no one in the office to receive it. **Teachers in the classroom may not accept payments.** A receipt will be issued for any payment received. You may pay with cash, check or money order. **Please be advised that the Center can arrange automatic credit card payments.**

The fee is due even when your child (ren) is absent whether for illness or vacation, and when the Port Washington Children's Center is closed for a holiday, transition day or an emergency.

If fees should become delinquent, we reserve the right to discharge a child from the program.

ABSENTEEISM

It is very important that Toddler and PreSchool parents call the office by 9:30 A.M. if your child will not be attending the Center on any given day.

KidsPort parents must call the office prior to 2:45 P.M. if your child will not be attending the Center on any given day. This is critical for KidsPort children, as we will expect your child to be arriving on the bus from his/her school. If your child does not arrive as expected, we will make every attempt to locate him/her to make sure that he/she is safe. ***If your child gets on the wrong bus and does not arrive at KidsPort when he/she is supposed to be here, it is the responsibility of the parent to take the issue up with the school.***

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

You will be given an emergency closing notice with updated information, as it becomes available.

The Children's Center will be closed whenever the Port Washington Public Schools are closed due to weather or any other emergency condition. Listen to the following radio stations for the closings: WHLI 1100 AM, WALK 1370 AM and 97.5 FM, WBLI 106 FM, or WKJY 98.3 FM, or watch Channel 12 News.

You can also elect to sign up for the Port Washington School District emergency closing alert by e-mail. For detailed information please see the Port Washington School District website at <http://www.portnet.k12.ny.us/>.

If weather conditions are severe and the Port Washington School District has cancelled after school programs, the district will bus KidsPort children directly home; we reserve the right to have an early closing.

If it is necessary to close the Center early due to the weather or any other unforeseen condition, parents will be notified as soon as possible by phone. Please be sure that the Center has a number at which you can be reached, as well as the number for a local (within 15 minutes travel time) emergency contact. You must be prepared to have someone local pick up your child if you cannot get her for an early closing.

HEALTH

Our Center makes every effort to maintain good health practice.

We must have a current medical on file for each child. Please make sure that the Center is informed of any special medical needs or allergies that your child may have.

We cannot administer any medication to a child without an authorization form filled out by both the doctor and a parent. This includes all prescription and over the counter medications. If you need a copy of this form, please contact the office. All prescription medication must be in the original bottle and have the pharmacy label on it. The medication and authorizations must be brought to the office. **ALL MEDICATIONS MUST BE KEPT WITH THE CHILD'S TEACHER OR IN THE OFFICE.** Children may not keep medication with them.

If your child contracts a communicable disease please notify the Center immediately. Notices will be sent home if a classmate comes down with any communicable disease (chicken pox, strep throat etc.) or a contagious condition (head lice) that warrants your attention.

In any group setting, head lice are a problem. We follow the policy of the Port Washington Public Schools, which is that any child who has lice will be sent home from the Center. We will give you instructions that detail what you need to do to rid your child and home of lice. **Children cannot return to the Center until they are nit free.**

If your child gets sick during the day, your child will need to be taken home. If we cannot reach you, we will call one of the people listed on your emergency contact form. Please make sure that all names listed on the emergency contact form are updated as needed.

MEALS

Our Center makes every effort to maintain good nutrition practices.

Meals are prepared in our kitchen, following the guidelines of our regulatory agencies.

Toddler children are served breakfast, a morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

PreSchool children are served breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

Snack is served to KidsPort children in our after school program. Breakfast is served to KidsPort children in our before school program. When KidsPort children attend full days they are served breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack.

Menus are posted in each classroom and on the Parent Information board outside the office. For children in our Toddler and Preschool programs, menus will be distributed monthly.

We strongly encourage all children to eat the meals we provide. Cheese sandwiches are available as substitutes for lunch. If a child has a peanut allergy or any other food allergy we will make every effort to accommodate them and keep them safe. **We do not serve peanut butter in the Center.**

CLOTHING

Children should be dressed in casual comfortable clothing for play. Sneakers are best for gym and outdoor play. Sandals and thongs are acceptable for warm weather and beach wear as long as a pair of sneakers or sturdy shoes for play accompanies the child for the gym, playground and outside.

Toddler families will be given a list of items necessary to leave in the Center, including diapers. Pre-School children are required to have a complete set of clothing, including underwear and socks that can remain in school. It is also recommended that KidsPort children keep a complete change of clothing at the Center.

Weather permitting; the children will have outdoor play every day. In cold weather children should bring hats, gloves or mittens and warm jackets. Boots are necessary whenever snow is on the ground, since the group might go for a walk. PLEASE LABEL ALL ITEMS WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME.

BIRTHDAYS

Your child's birthday is a very special day. If you would like to celebrate his/her birthday in the Center, we would appreciate your cooperation with the following:

1. At least one week before the date, check with your child's teachers to review the date and the number of children in the class. Some KidsPort classes choose to celebrate birthdays once a month.
2. On the morning of the party, bring a special snack, such as cupcakes or cookies, for each child in the class to have at snack time. *Please check that the food item that you wish to bring in is peanut free. KidsPort children may bring the snacks in their backpacks.
3. Do not bring in anything else, as we would like to keep the celebration low keyed but enjoyable, with no party more outstanding than the others.
4. We will provide everything else that is needed.

REST TIME (Toddler and Pre-School children only)

Toddlers generally rest from 12:30 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. Preschoolers rest from 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. Children are encouraged to sleep or rest quietly. After a period of time, those children who are still awake may engage in quiet activities.

All children should bring in a small sheet, light blanket and small stuffed toy to rest with. Music as well as the teacher's assistance will help the children to relax.

PARENT/CENTER COMMUNICATION

The Children's Center strives to work as a partner with each family. We encourage good communication between families and the Center. Please be sure to read all the notices sent home with your child. **CHECK THE MAILBOXES EVERYDAY.**

Please inform your child's teacher about any changes/events that may affect your child, such as deaths, moves, etc. If you have any concerns about your child's experience at the Center, please speak with your child's teacher. They will make themselves available to discuss any concerns or issues you may have.

Should you have any concerns about your family life and/or your child's development, our social worker is available to speak with you. If our classroom teachers have any concerns about your child's development, they will share them with you. Our social worker would then be of assistance should there be any need to follow up.

Should you find that you have a concern about the experience your family is having with the Center, please reach out to the director. If you find that you have a problem that remains unresolved, you may contact the Parent Representatives of the Board of Directors for assistance. The office has a list of the Parent Representatives. Members of the Parent Representatives will bring the unresolved issue to the Board of Directors where the issue will be resolved.

There is an open house at the beginning of the school year. At this time you will get to know your child's teachers, office and support staff. We will help you to become familiar with the routines at the Center

and answer any questions you may have. This is also a good time to get to know the other families in the Center.

In June the Center plans a Picnic Supper. Families come, share a meal and spend an evening with staff and other families in the Center.

The Center encourages families to visit their child's classroom. We also invite parents to join us on special trips throughout the year, if possible.

Please check the parent bulletin board for announcements, notices, etc. This board is located next to the office. It is there for your information and convenience.

We make every effort to have two parent teacher conferences per year; however you may schedule parent-teacher conferences any time throughout the year. During the conference, the teachers will report on your child's progress at the Center. If your child is experiencing any difficulty at the Center that requires our mutual efforts please be assured that we will notify you immediately. We encourage you to do the same if there are any changes at home.

By working together, each child will be helped to grow to his/her potential.