



Diamond Street Early Childhood Center

Family Handbook

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www.diamondstreet.org

WELCOME

Dear Family,

Welcome to Diamond Street Early Childhood Center (DSECC), a STAR 4 and NAEYC accredited center. We are happy to have your child at DSECC and look forward to years of learning and growing. Your child will have many opportunities for hands on and interactive exploration that is appropriate for their development level. To the best of our ability we will provide a safe place for your child. We strive to create a nurturing atmosphere that respects the unique needs of each child and aids in social-emotional, as well as cognitive, development.

This family handbook is full of information about our program. Please keep it handy to refer to throughout the year. Thank you for choosing Diamond Street Early Childhood Center. We look forward to providing your child with a caring and enriching environment.

Sincerely,

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ABOUT US

Mission Statement

DSECC's ministry is to provide nurturing, safe, educational childcare that emphasizes the worth and uniqueness of each child, in a Christian atmosphere that promotes peaceful resolutions, tolerance, and service which is consistent with the Anabaptist mission of Akron Mennonite Church.

Values Statement

In recognition of God's call to the faithful community to respond to the needs of our world, the values of DSECC include a commitment to:

CHILDREN- The belief that educating and caring for children is one of the great missions of life;
FAMILIES – The desire to strengthen families through parent resources and involvement;
TEACHERS – The support of highly trained, committed teachers who are valued and aware of their lasting contributions to the children's quality of life;
AKRON MENNONITE CHURCH – The acknowledgement that DSECC is a local community missional response to Akron Mennonite Church; and
THE WORLD – The responsibility to be involved in community and global concerns and to peaceful engagement with all we meet.

Program Goals and Objectives

- Children will experience learning and growth in their social-emotional, physical and cognitive development.
- Families will feel supported and nurtured in their child rearing efforts. A partnership will be developed between parents and staff.
- Children will gain competence in peaceful resolution of conflict, appreciation of diversity and respect for others through an environment of cooperation and compassion.
- Teachers will be valued for the important contribution they make to a child's learning and development each day. Teachers will experience professional growth and development through ongoing trainings and professional development experiences.

Curriculum Statement and Philosophy of Learning

The Creative Curriculum is rooted in **educational philosophy and theory** as well as practice. It builds on Erik Erikson's stages of **socio-emotional development**, Jean Piaget's theories of **how children think and learn**, on **principles of physical development**, and on an **appreciation of cultural influences**.

The environment in *The Creative Curriculum* classroom helps children develop a sense of **trust and belonging**, encourages both **autonomy and self-control**, and fosters **competence and initiative**. This curriculum encourages teachers to recognize the interplay between **socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical growth**. Also recognized is the importance of the **role of culture in defining each child as an individual**.

Principles of a peaceful classroom atmosphere include the following:

- Friendship: association, conversation, belonging
- Compassion: recognition of emotions, problem solving, expression

- Cooperation: consideration of others, negotiation
- Kindness: caretaking, gentleness, helping, generosity, respect, and encouragement.

Faith Development Philosophy

- DSECC strives to provide a Christian environment consistent with the Anabaptist mission of Akron Mennonite Church.
- Children experience God's love through the warmth, respect, and acceptance modeled by DSECC teachers.
- Children learn peacemaking skills through experience and intentional teaching and rituals.

For more detailed information, ask for a copy of the "Faith Development" brochure.

Certification, Keystone STARS Program and NAEYC

DSECC is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

DSECC also voluntarily participates in the Keystone STARS program, a Pennsylvania initiative for quality measurements and assurance in early childhood care. In 2008, DSECC earned a STAR 4 rating, on a 4-point scale. STAR levels are based on quality standards in four key areas:

- Staff education: early childhood teachers have the training and knowledge for working with young children.
- Learning environment: the program has a variety of materials and activities for each age and level that makes it possible for children to learn something new every day.
- Leadership and management: a quality program has sound business practices to ensure your child's safety and early learning.
- Family and community partnerships: parents and community members are encouraged to become a part of the child's learning progress.

In 2013, DSECC earned accreditation through NAEYC (National Association for the Education of the Young Child).

Hours of Operation

Childcare services are provided from 6:30 AM to 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Holidays and Teacher In-Service Days

We are closed for the following holidays:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Black Friday
- Christmas Break (7 work days between Christmas and New Year. Please review your current family calendar for these dates.)
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day

We are typically closed for teacher in-service on Columbus Day and the Monday after Easter. Consult your current family calendar for in-service dates.

Full tuition is expected for weeks with holidays, with the exception of Christmas week, when there is no charge.

Admission and Enrollment

Categories of Admission:

<u>Daily Childcare & School Age Care</u>	<u>Half Day Preschool</u>	<u>Pre-K Counts</u>	<u>Kindergarten Care</u>
5 days/wk	3 days/wk (M,W,F)	5 days/wk	5 days/wk (full
3 days/wk	2 days/wk (T, Th)		day or half day)
2 days/wk			

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and enrollment fee paid prior to your child's first day of attendance. A non-refundable registration fee of \$75.00 is due at the time of enrollment and is good for as long as the child remains continuously enrolled at the center. Regularly returning school-age children will not be charged an annual registration fee.

Based on availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 weeks of age to kindergarten in our daily child care program and from 1st-4th grade in our school-age program.

Enrollment Agreement

An agreement is completed at the time of enrollment. This document includes the child's fee amount per week, services to be provided, days of attendance, arrival and departure times, designated persons authorized to pick up the child, and the number of free days per session (if eligible).

Additional Days/Exchange of Days

Additional days of childcare or exchanging scheduled days may be arranged as space is available. If exchanges or additions need to be made regularly, a new contract will be offered. Arrangements should be made with the office at least 24 hours in advance.

Increase/Decrease in Hours

In the event a child's hours are to be changed, either increased or decreased, notification must be given in writing two weeks prior to the date of the anticipated change. In addition, parents/guardians must sign an updated agreement. If increased, the new tuition rate applies as soon as hours are increased. If decreased, the new tuition rate applies two weeks after notice is given.

Full Day of Care due to Inclement Weather (Kindergarten, Pre-K Counts, School-Age)

A full day of care is available for certain children when Ephrata Area School District is closed. For ½ day kindergarten children, the rate is \$12 per day. Pre-K Counts children enrolled in before and/or after care may come on no school days for a fee of \$31. School-Age children may come on no school days for a fee of \$31.

Termination of Enrollment/Withdrawal

Children may be withdrawn from the program at any time with written notification to DSECC at least two weeks in advance. Tuition payment at the contracted rate will be expected up to the last day enrolled (two weeks after notification). DSECC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate services provided to a child based on the occurrence of events such as lack of cooperation by the child and/or parents with established rules or procedures or if the center cannot guarantee the safety of the child, other children, or staff.

Inclusion

DSECC believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in early childcare and education.

- ❖ DSECC will adhere to the recommendations of PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) regarding suspension and expulsion.
- ❖ We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program, based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.
- ❖ Whenever possible, curriculum, teaching methods, and/or the environment are adapted to meet the individual needs of children. However, DSECC staff are not able to provide ongoing one-on-one care for an individual child.
- ❖ If your child has an identified special need, please let us know at the time of enrollment. Please provide us with a copy of the child's IEP or IFSP. This will allow us to align the classroom routines, interactions, and learning experience with the identified goals and/or strategies in the child's IEP or IFSP.

Non-Discrimination

At Diamond Street Early Childhood Center, equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Program services shall be made accessible to persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods include, but are not limited to, equipment redesign, the provision of aids, and the use of alternative service delivery location. Structural modifications shall be considered only as a last resort among available methods.

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Diamond Street Early Childhood Center ensures that all persons with limited English proficiency will have meaningful and equal access to services and benefits. These services shall include, but are not limited to, free language assistance services when an interpreter is needed.

Anyone who believes they have been discriminated against may file a complaint of discrimination with:

DSECC
1311 Diamond Street, Suite A
Akron, PA 17501

Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission
Harrisburg Regional Office
1101 S. Front Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17104

Department of Human Services
Bureau of Equal Opportunity
Room 223, Health & Welfare Building
Harrisburg, PA 17105

US Dept. of Health & Human Services
Office for Civil Rights
Suite 372, Public Ledger Bldg.
150 S. Independence Mall West
Philadelphia, PA 19106-9111

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released, with the exception of that required by our regulatory (DHS) and partnering (STARS, NAEYC) agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential. For more information concerning confidentiality regulations, please see www.daycare.com/pennsylvania/center.html. Sections 3270.181 – 185 deal with child records.

If parents/guardians have a concern regarding their child, they should set up an appointment to speak directly to the Lead Teacher in their child's classroom. In compliance with confidentiality laws, staff will not discuss issues surrounding children with anyone other than their parent or legal guardian.

Parents, guardians, and those with written authorization from a parent or guardian, may have access to their child's file during regular business hours in the presence of one of the center Directors or the Administrative Assistant.

Staff Qualifications

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum.

Teachers participate in an orientation class and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism. As a STAR 4 center, teachers are required to receive 24 hours of training annually.

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (i.e. babysitting). Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by DSECC.

Staff to Child Ratios

Children are supervised at all times. DSECC strives to maintain a staff to child ratio that is lower than the state requirements and is more developmentally appropriate. The following guidelines are utilized:

<u>Age</u>	<u>DSECC Staff/ Child Ratio</u>	<u>State Staff/ Child Ratio</u>
Infants to 12 months	2/8	2/8
13 months to 24 months	2/9	2/10
25 months to 36 months	2/12	2/12
37 months to 48 months	2/17	2/20

49 months to 6 years	2/19	2/20
K – grade 3	2/24	2/24
Grade 4 – grade 6	2/24	2/30

Ratios are maintained indoors, outdoors, and during field trips.

Communication and Family Partnership

Daily Communications. Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences at the center. Notes will be placed into your child's cubby at the end of the day.

Bulletin Boards. Located outside the door of each classroom and in the hallway by the office, bulletin boards provide information about classroom and center news, upcoming events and announcements. Announcements are also sometimes posted on the entry door and near the check-in computer in the hallway.

Newsletters. Monthly center and classroom newsletters provide information about center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters will be placed in your child's cubby.

Email. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, general updates, and the monthly e-newsletter, Diamond Street Digest.

Parent-Focused Activities: Parent-focused activities at the center include Parent Teacher Partnership (PTP) meetings, semi-annual parent meetings, and Parent Socials. All families are strongly encouraged to participate in these events. These events allow families an opportunity to provide feedback and offer suggestions on the daily operations of DSECC.

Evening Family Celebrations: Family Celebrations are evening events where families can participate in seasonal activities with their children and other families. These events are held bi-monthly and are free of charge.

Family Visits. Family participation is encouraged. Visit our classrooms, volunteer, come along on a field trip, or eat a meal with your child. Visits should be planned in advance with the classroom teacher. Signing in and signing out is required for the safety and protection of our children.

Family Activities. From time to time DSECC plans family events such as the Friendship Concert, Fall Fest, and summer picnic. These events allow families and children time to share, learn, and have fun. Families have an opportunity to be a part of their child's learning experience and connect with other families.

Social Services and Referrals. The DSECC office has a list of social services and their telephone numbers that is available for parents upon their request. If a parent or a teacher suspects that a child may benefit from special interventions, the lead teacher will be available for discussion of the need. After discussion, if the need is still felt, a plan of action agreed upon by the parents, teachers and DSECC administration will be written to assist the parents in accessing appropriate social, mental health, educational, and/or medical services.

Grievances. If a family has a grievance about any activity or policy of DSECC they should communicate that to the lead teacher in their child's classroom. If an agreement is not reached, the family should consult with the Operations Director or Educational Director. If there is still not satisfaction, the grievance should be put in writing and given to one of the Directors who will

respond in writing and after a meeting, the family and director will decide if it should be taken to the board for consideration. DSECC is open to constructive suggestions for improvement of our programs.

DSECC Assessment and Conference Policy

Authentic Assessment: It is important that ongoing authentic observations and assessments of children’s developmental progress happen regularly at DSECC. An authentic assessment is defined as a process of using on-going observations from multiple sources to provide a well-rounded picture of the child. Children are observed in a naturalistic environment throughout the day, observed across many routines and in daily circumstances.

Assessment Schedule: New students are assessed using a developmental screening, Ages and Stages, approximately 45 days after their entry into the program. After your child’s first 45 days at Diamond Street, you will receive an invitation to attend a “Getting to Know You” meeting with your child’s teacher to discuss the results of the developmental screening. Attendance at this meeting is optional.

We welcome your input regarding the type of assessment that will best meet your child’s needs. Please contact your child’s teacher or one of the Directors if you wish to discuss alternative forms of assessment.

Use of Assessment Information: Information gathered through these assessment tools is used to obtain a developmental screening of a child and to provide information necessary to refer a child for further diagnostic assessment if needed. Assessment information also helps teachers identify children’s interests and needs. Teachers use information obtained from assessments to describe the developmental progress and learning of children. In addition, teachers use assessment information to plan activities and lessons that will be meaningful and educational to each child. Based on assessment results, teachers and administrative staff are able to better plan program improvement.

Assessment information will be shared with parents quarterly. Assessment information will be shared at parent/teacher conferences offered twice a year. At that time, parents have the opportunity to be involved in planning based on assessment results. Parent/teacher conferences are wonderful opportunities not only for teachers to share information with parents, but also for parents to share their insights into their child’s interests, likes, and dislikes. Communication with families is sensitive to family values, culture, identity, and home language. Together, parents and teachers can work on goals for the child’s future growth and development. Parents who choose not to attend a conference will sign for a copy of the assessment. During quarters with no parent conferences, information may be shared through various avenues including, but not limited to, emails, checklists, photos with developmental explanation and parent-teacher conversation.

Assessment Confidentiality: All assessments are confidential. Hard copies are kept in the child’s portfolio in the student files in the office.

Publicity

Pictures of your children will not be used in publicity and educational promotions without parental permission.

CURRICULA AND LEARNING

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a daily schedule with enough flexibility in the routines that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through play. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Copies of daily schedules are posted in each classroom.

Outings and Field Trips

Weather permitting, we conduct supervised walking trips around the neighborhood. Children are accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment package.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips. Permission Slips for each trip must be signed by the child's family.

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of childcare programs. Proper restraint systems and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the childcare program as well as during field trips.

Transition

Your child's transition in childcare should be a positive and an exciting learning adventure. We will work with you and your child to ensure the smoothest possible transition occurs as new routines and new people are introduced.

Transition from home to center. Prior to your child's first day, you will have an opportunity to tour the center, meet with your child's peers and teachers, and communicate any anticipated concerns. At this time please share the best communication methods that the teacher may use to reach you.

Transition between learning programs. Children are transitioned to the next classroom based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. Transitions generally happen three times during the year - in January, June, and August. Unless it is not age appropriate, infants and toddlers remain with the same teaching staff for at least nine months. During the transition, current and future teachers are available to meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program. We arrange for your child to visit the new classroom prior to making the transition.

Transition to elementary school. Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school or creating pictures of special friends and special times at our center may be part of your child's education at our center. We will provide you with information on local schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary school. Families may

request that their child's records be transferred to their new school by submitting a written request to the office.

Television/Video Time

Our normal daily routine does not include television watching, but from time to time, we may incorporate a short educational video into our weekly lesson plans. Screen time will follow the recommended time provided by NAEYC and Keystone Star. Programs will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world.

Electronic Media/Computers

Internet sites and software are pre-screened to contain non-violence and high-quality educational content.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

Rest Time

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs, unless otherwise ordered by a physician. DSECC uses infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission. Pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, and other soft items are not allowed in rest equipment for infants younger than twelve months.

After lunch, all children at DSECC participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

Each child has their own mat and mat cover that is laundered weekly. You may send a small blanket and soft pillow or stuffed toy for use during nap time.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

GUIDANCE/DISCIPLINE

General Procedure

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Suspension/Expulsion Policy

DSECC will adhere to the recommendations of PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) regarding suspension and expulsion. Before requesting the temporary removal of a child, the center's Education Director, staff, and parents will follow these steps:

A. Initial Steps

1. Clearly identify behavior(s) that could lead to the removal of the child from the center.
2. Document the frequency, length, and intensity of the behavior(s).
3. Complete a developmental checklist of the child, i.e. Ages and Stages.
4. Alert the child's parents to the problem and level of severity.
5. Establish a meeting with the parents to review the documentation and observations. Receive parent feedback of behavior(s) they are seeing at home.

B. Secondary Steps

1. With parents' written permission, contact Early Childhood Mental Health (ECMH). ECMH will assist in developing a specific plan to support the child as he/she learns to control his/her behavior(s).
2. Teacher(s) will document the child's behavior and evaluate results of above plan with Education Director.
3. If plan appears successful, the center and parents will continue to implement the plan and monitor future behavior(s). If plan is *not* successful and the behavior(s) continues, the center will request a professional evaluation. Parents will contact the appropriate agency (Early Intervention, BHRS, IU 13) to set appointment(s). DSECC will allow the necessary agency to observe the child in the child care setting.
4. After parents receive this evaluation, they must follow a specific timeline created by the center's leadership team to pursue further help if recommended by the agency.

C. Follow-up

1. If parents refuse to pursue any evaluation or follow the recommended help for the child, the center (upon consultation with the leadership team) may request temporary or permanent removal of the child.

2. If parents do pursue the recommended help, the center will cooperate with the early intervention plan--providing they can do this and still provide appropriate care for all the children in the classroom.
3. If the proposed plan by an outside agency requires extra staffing for the center, the funding for this must come from the parents or the advising agency. If this funding is not available, the center may terminate care of the child because it cannot meet the needs of this child without compromising care of the other children.
4. After attempting to meet the above steps, the center or the family may conclude the center is unable to properly provide for the needs of this child, as well as the needs of other children. If it is necessary to withdraw a child, the center will provide the family with information on local child care choices and other possible sources of support for their child.
5. DSECC reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to terminate services to a child based on the occurrence of certain events, such as lack of cooperation by the child and/or parents or guardians with established rules or procedures.

TUITION AND FEES

Payment

Tuition payment is due the Thursday before the week of service.

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures (except the week between Christmas and New Year) due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control. Payment is due as outlined in the Enrollment Agreement.

At registration, parents are enrolled in our Tuition Express ACH program that automatically withdraws tuition payment from your account each week. If there are insufficient funds in the account, \$25.00 will be charged for administrative costs.

The initial registration fee and the first week's tuition may be paid by check or cash (until the ACH is set up). After that DSECC will not accept checks, only cash and automatic withdrawal, unless approved by one of the directors.

Late Pick-up Fees

Half-day preschool children remaining at the center after 12:00pm are subject to a late fee of \$2.00 per minute with a minimum \$20.00 charge. Pre-K Counts children remaining at the center after 3:00pm are subject to a late fee of \$2.00 per minute with a minimum \$20.00 charge unless enrolled in after school care. Any child remaining at the center after 6:00 pm is subject to a late fee of \$2.00 per minute, with a minimum \$20.00 charge.

Additional Fees/Credits

Referrals – A \$50 credit will be given when a new family registers at your referral to DSECC.

Sibling discount – Siblings enrolled full-time will receive 10% off the oldest child's tuition.

Emergency closings – As long as the center is open, the full contract rate is due. If the center is closed less than 3 consecutive days, the full contract rate is due. If it is necessary to close for more than 3 days, no tuition is charged.

Summer Leave

If a family wants to withdraw a child for at least three consecutive weeks during the summer, a fee equal to one day's tuition per week is required to hold the child's place to return in the fall. A written request to take a summer leave must be received in the office at least four weeks prior to the first day of leave. The holding fee must be paid at the beginning of the leave, or on a weekly basis using ACH throughout the leave, and will not be refunded if you choose not to return. For leaves longer than six consecutive weeks, credit for up to 25% of the total fee (not to exceed one week's payment) will be applied toward the second week's tuition after the child returns. Leaves may not be extended beyond 10 weeks. A summer leave will decrease the number of free day credits available.

Scholarship Program

DSECC participates in several income-based tuition scholarship programs. One, the Pennsylvania Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC), provides scholarship money for families of children between the ages of 36 months and the beginning of Kindergarten. The other scholarship fund occasionally has limited funds available for families of children ages eight weeks through 35 months and kindergarten through school age. If you are interested in either scholarship, please fill out the scholarship application forms included in the registration packet and return to the office.

ATTENDANCE AND WITHDRAWAL

Absence

If your child is going to be absent or arrive significantly later than your normal start time, please call us at 717-859-4272. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

Pre-K Counts Attendance Policy

Students enrolled in Pennsylvania Pre-K Counts classroom at DSECC are considered full-time and must attend 5 days per week for a minimum of 180 school days per year from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Classroom teachers or administrative staff will contact families when children are absent for 3 consecutive days to learn the nature of the absence and offer support, as appropriate. Classroom teachers or administrative staff will contact families when children have more than 5 consecutive unexcused absences. The provider and family, together, will discuss the reasons for the absence and determine ways to support the child's attendance in school. Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (more than 18 days total) and have not responded to program supports must be dismissed from the Pennsylvania PreK Counts classroom at DSECC.

Vacation/Free Days

Each child who attends full-time is given 6 free days each calendar year. Children who attend part-time (less than 5 days per week) are given 3 free days per calendar year. Free days are allotted at the beginning of each term and must be used during that term. (See following chart). Free days apply only if your child is normally scheduled to attend on those days but cannot, due to sickness, family vacation, center closure, or any other reason. Proper forms must be completed and given to the office in order to receive credit.

<u>Contracted days for Child Care</u>	<u>Free Days</u>	<u>Terms</u>
5 days/week	2 each term, total of 6 days/year	Sept. 1 – Dec. 31
2 or 3 days/week	1 each term, total of 3 days/year	Jan. 1 – May 31 June 1 – Aug. 31

Vacation Request for “free day” credit must be received by the office at least two weeks in advance. Requests made without two weeks advance notice may not receive credit.

Sick-Bereavement Request for “free day” credit must be received by the office within seven days after the child’s absence. Requests made after seven days may not receive credit.

Free day benefits will be adjusted for any extended leave of absence. Contracts beginning mid-term will be given free days according to a pro-rated schedule.

Withdrawals

A written notice, two weeks in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn. If a child is suddenly withdrawn from the program without a two-week written notice of withdrawal, a two-week tuition fee may be applied. Families who withdraw and later re-enroll will be charged a re-enrollment fee.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child’s records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions regarding where the records should be sent is required.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced via text, email, on our website, and on our Facebook page.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child’s early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

Orioles (Full Day Pre-K Counts) will be delayed two hours if Ephrata Area School District is delayed two hours. The Orioles class will be cancelled if Ephrata Area School District closes. Weather make-up days will follow the Ephrata Area School District’s calendar.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

General Procedure

We open at 6:30 AM. Please do not drop off your child prior to the center opening. Parents are expected to sign their child in and accompany them to their classroom. Please make sure your child's teacher is aware of your child's arrival. For security, lock car doors when bringing your child into the center. Never leave a child alone in the car or leave the vehicle running.

We close at 6:00 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time. Please make sure your child's teacher is aware you are picking up your child, especially when leaving from the playground. In summer months, when children may be on the playground at pick-up time, please do not drive to the playground. Park in the parking lot and walk to pick up your child. The orange cones will be a reminder to keep vehicles away from the playground for the safety of all the children.

Authorized and Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will be released only to you or those persons you have listed as Release Contacts at the time of enrollment.

Emergency pick-up arrangements may be made by phoning the office. For emergency pick-ups, use the following procedure:

- Call the DSECC office and indicate that you need to make emergency pick-up arrangements.
- Give the name of the pick-up person, relationship to the child, and any other pertinent information.
- DSECC office staff may call you back on your listed cell phone number to verify your identity, if needed.
- Pick-up person must show a driver's license or other photo identification.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after one hour we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency or police.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as a Release Contact pick up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring

- **Infant room:** enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least two changes of clothes per day, and sunscreen.
- **Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes per day, and sunscreen.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program, sunscreen and a water bottle.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks, shoes, sunscreen and a water bottle.
- **Kindergarten:** at least one change of clothes, sunscreen and a water bottle.

For health and sanitation reasons, cloth diapers are discouraged. If a child has allergic reactions to disposable diapers, a letter from a physician should be kept in the child's file.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items.

Cubbies/Mail Pockets

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a cubby or mail pocket in or just outside their classroom. Cubbies or mail pockets are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby/mail pocket daily for important papers, news, and items that need to be taken home.

Lost and Found

You may look for lost items and bring found items in the Lost and Found box located on the bottom shelf under the sign-in/out computer in the hallway. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. At no time does DSECC allow electronic toys or toys of aggression (power rangers, guns, GI Joe, etc.)

NUTRITION

Breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack are served daily. Children enrolled in daily childcare who arrive before 8:30 am are offered breakfast. Lunch is served around 11:15 am and an afternoon snack is served around 2:45 pm. Children enrolled in school-age care who arrive before 7:30 am are offered breakfast before leaving for school. An afternoon snack is served after returning from school. Menus are posted outside each room and are also available in the drawer under the sign-in/out computer. No food from outside DSECC will be permitted to be served to your child in the classroom without a doctor's order and CACFP form completed.

Food Prepared at the Center

Food prepared for or at the center will be properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service.

“All meals served to children under the Child and Adult Care Food Program are served at no separate charge regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, ancestry, union membership, or any other legally protected classification. There is no discrimination in admission policies, meal service, or the use of the facilities. Any complaints of discrimination should be submitted in writing to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington DC, 20250.

Food Allergies

We do not prepare meals for special diets. We will make reasonable accommodations on a case-by-case basis for those on special diets due to allergies or for those individuals addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

If your child has a food allergy, you must notify us in writing so that we can make appropriate substitutions. The written notification should list appropriate food substitutions and must be updated at least annually. Parents may be responsible for supplying alternative food.

Food allergies can be life threatening and each child with a food allergy should have an action plan for emergency care completed by the family physician.

Non-Edible Treat Policy

Food will not be permitted for celebrations due to the increasing number of children’s allergy concerns. Children who would like to bring in birthday treats for their friends may share something that is non-edible such as pencils, stickers, bookmarks, small toys, etc. We want the children to feel honored on their special day, but we believe we can achieve this through non-edible treats and special attention in the classroom.

Mealtime

Mealtimes are important social times. Teachers eat with the children, modeling appropriate table manners. Children are encouraged to become self-sufficient and to use appropriate table manners. A relaxed environment is the key to successful mealtimes. Our goal is to provide children with a well-balanced, tasty meal in an atmosphere where they will want to try all the foods we offer.

We will trust the children to manage their own eating. The amount the child eats may vary from day to day.

- Children may pick and choose from the food we make available.
- Children may eat as little or as much as they want.
- Children will not be forced to try certain foods or to eat certain amounts of food.
- Seconds will be served, as long as there is food and drink available.
- Food will not be used as a reward or withheld as a punishment.

A caregiver who is trained in first aid for choking is present at all meals.

Infant/Toddler Feedings

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Bottle-fed infants are fed while being held.
- Infants are fed “on demand” to the extent possible (at least every 3 hours and usually not more than hourly).
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies.
- Expressed breast milk may be brought from home in ready-to-feed sanitary containers if frozen or kept cold during transit. Fresh breast milk must be used within 48 hours. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child’s name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to 3 months.
- Staff will ensure that they gently mix, not shake, the milk before feeding to preserve special infection-fighting and nutritional components in human milk.
- Formula must be brought to the premises in a factory-sealed container in a ready-to-feed strength or powder or concentrate. Formula will be diluted at the childcare site according to the instructions provided by the manufacturer or from the child’s health provider, using water from a source approved by the local health department. Formula brought from home must be labeled with the child’s name.
- Bottle feedings do not contain solid foods unless the child’s health care provider supplies written instructions and a medical reason for this practice.
- Staff discard after one hour any formula or human milk that is served but not completely consumed or is not refrigerated.
- If staff warm formula or human milk, the milk is warmed in water at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for no more than five minutes.
- No milk, including human milk, and no other infant foods are warmed in a microwave oven.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child’s family.
- Infants and toddler/twos do not have bottles while in a crib or bed.
- Toddler/twos do not carry bottles, sippy cups, or regular cups with them while crawling or walking.
- Teaching staff offer children fluids from a cup as soon as families and teachers decide together that a child is developmentally ready to use a cup.

HEALTH

Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and PA Dept. of Human Services. Pennsylvania state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Immunizations are required at the following ages:

2 mo	4mo	6mo	9mo	12mo	15mo	18m	24mo
3yr	4yr	5yr	6yr	8yr	10yr	11yr	

Unimmunized children need a hand-written note explaining the reason(s) a child is not immunized. Notes must be signed and dated by a parent and must be updated yearly.

Unimmunized children may be excluded from the center during outbreaks of vaccine-preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

Physicals

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. A copy of your child's physical should be received before, but must be received no later than 30 days after, your child begins the program. Families are responsible for assuring that their child's physicals are kept up-to-date and that a copy of the results of the child's health assessments are given to the program. Health assessment forms can be printed from our website: www.diamondstreet.org or found in the drawer under the check-in/out computer.

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children, you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable, but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Fever (above 100°F under the arm, above 101°F in the mouth, above 102°F in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or two or more times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chicken Pox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.

- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

DSECC follows the guidelines published in *Managing Infectious Diseases in Child Care and Schools* 3rd ed. published by the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Tooth Brushing

Children will have the opportunity to brush their teeth once every day. A toothbrush holder is hung on the wall in close proximity to the classroom/bathroom sink. This holder allows toothbrushes to receive air and also hang freely without touching one another. **The holder will be sanitized weekly.** Each toothbrush is labeled with the child's individual name. Each child will wet his/her toothbrush under running water. When the child is finished brushing, he or she may take a drink from his/her water bottle or cup if desired. A staff member will rinse the toothbrush with hot water. Sinks will be sanitized after all children have brushed teeth. Toothbrushes are replaced every three or four months or whenever bristles become worn. A child who has been sick will receive a new toothbrush. When assisting children to brush teeth, staff will wear gloves.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the classroom and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications

Staff may give prescription medication and/or non-prescription medication only with a doctor's signature, and provided that:

- the medicine is in the original container, and
- a written order from the doctor is obtained including the amount and the time to be given, and
- the parent or guardian provides the proper equipment for measuring correct doses (i.e. medicine spoon, syringe, etc.).

The parent or guardian must complete, in advance, a medication log (available from the teacher) with the amount to be dispensed and the time it is to be given. **This must be done each day when the parent drops off the child.**

Staff will record the amount dispensed and the time it was given along with their initials on the medication log which will be placed in the child's file.

Suntan lotion, sun block, diaper rash ointment, and hand lotion (non-prescription, external application) may be dispensed with a parent or guardian's signature located on the child's enrollment form.

DSECC will not be held accountable for any reactions or problems with medications when doctor's and parent's instructions have been followed.

At times it is necessary to post medical alerts in the classroom and the kitchen so all staff are aware of allergies or other medical concerns. Because of confidentiality, parents need to sign a form allowing their child's health alert to be posted.

Insect Repellents

When public health authorities recommend use of insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne illness, only repellents containing DEET are used, and these are applied only on children older than two months of age. Staff apply insect repellent no more than once a day and only with written parental permission.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a suspected or confirmed reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure, so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness

Statewide Health Events

In the event of a need to respond to a state or national health alert, DSECC will follow the protocol of Ephrata Area School District for Kindergarten and Pre-school public health responses. The Center will remain open until the office of the Governor or the Akron Borough office dictates that it must close. If there are staffing concerns, classrooms will be combined as much as possible, while maintaining appropriate staff/child ratios. When that is not possible, the center will close until it is possible again. Reopening information will be forthcoming and families will be notified as to when to return. This procedure may be amended by future Department of Human Services (DHS) announcements.

SAFETY

Clothing

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including:

painting, outdoor play, sand, water, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm. All drawstrings from children's clothes should be removed as a precaution.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will not occur if the heat index is greater than 90°F or wind chill is less than 25°F or public announcements are made that advise people to remain indoors due to weather conditions such as high levels of pollution.

Communal Water Play

During the summer, DSECC schedules weekly water play days. Children are carefully supervised. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water play does not spread infectious disease. Children are not allowed to drink the water. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play. Fresh potable water is used.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver, in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an accident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, or involves the head or face, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit which meets state regulations.

In case of a medical emergency, Diamond Street staff would dial 911. The Diamond Street region of Akron is generally served by the Ephrata Community Hospital Advanced Life Support Unit and the Ephrata Community Ambulance Association. Unless otherwise specified by parents, the child would be transferred by ambulance to the Ephrata Community Hospital. A familiar staff person would accompany the child until a parent/guardian can be on site. Emergency information provided by parents would accompany the child. At Diamond Street, staff/student ratios would be maintained using administrative or kitchen staff until the staff return or a substitute arrives.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter to learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and to the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior and/or to remove your children from our care.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants' and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances will be ordered to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object which, by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon, on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will

cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCIES

DSECC staff is required to have regular training in Fire Safety and Pediatric First Aid. In addition, regular fire, emergency, and weather drills are conducted at the center.

DSECC cooperates with the local chapter of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to emergency situations. Please see the following letter for further details:

To the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of Children of Diamond Street Early Childhood Center:

This letter is to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of children attending Diamond Street Early Childhood Center. Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstances of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

- Immediate evacuation: Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc.
- In-place sheltering: Sudden occurrences, weather- or hazardous materials-related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.
- Evacuation: Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to the relocation facility in our safe house located at 204 East End Avenue, Akron, PA. In the event that all of Akron is compromised, the children will be taken to one of four cooperating day care facilities in Lititz: Sonshine Child Development Center, The Children's Corner, and/or St. Paul Christian Child Care Center.
- Modified Operation: May include cancellation, postponement, or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in the case of a winter storm or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children but may be necessary in a variety of situations.

Please check DSECC's Facebook page, website Happenings page, and/or your texts and email for announcements relating to any of the emergency actions listed above.

We ask that you not call during an emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information. We will call you when we've resolved the situation and it is safe for you to pick up your child.

We specifically urge you not to attempt to make arrangements for people not on your Pick-Up list to pick up your child during an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance

will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives. In order to assure the safety of your children and our staff, we ask your understanding and cooperation.

Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures, or any other policy or procedure, please contact the DSECC office.

Sincerely,

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