



# Diamond Street Early Childhood Center

Where Children Shine

## FAMILY HANDBOOK

2022-2023 School Year

# Diamond Street Early Childhood Center

## WELCOME

Dear Family,

I am so excited to welcome you to our Diamond Street Family, where we enjoy watching families grow. We are a NAEYC accredited STAR 4 center and a ministry of the Akron Mennonite Church. It is our desire to create a space where your child can thrive. Whether your child has joined us as an infant and will spend many years learning and growing at Diamond Street or your school age child is just here for summer camp, they will have the opportunity to build relationships and developmentally appropriate skills that will guide them through their childhood life. Your child will have many opportunities for hands on and interactive exploration that is appropriate for their developmental level and will experience challenges that will stretch them to grow their skills. Our nurturing atmosphere will support the unique needs of each child as they grow in social-emotional, physical and cognitive areas.

This family handbook will be your guide to our policies and expectations. Please keep it handy to refer to throughout the year.

Thank you for choosing Diamond Street Early Childhood Center. We look forward to getting to know you and your child.

Sincerely,

Bethany Crane Jacke

Executive Director

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[www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org)

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## **ABOUT US**

### **Philosophy**

At Diamond Street Early Childhood Center, children experience learning through play and grow in their social-emotional, physical and cognitive development. Families will feel supported and nurtured through staff efforts to support each individual child. Children enrolled in our programs will gain competence in peaceful conflict resolution, 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 are required to take professional development trainings throughout the year to assist with the ongoing requirements and regulations of Department of Health and PA Keystone STARS.

Principles of a peaceful classroom:

Friendship: association, conversation, belonging

Compassion: recognition of emotions, problem solving, expression

Cooperation: consideration of others, negotiation

Kindness: caretaking, gentleness, generosity and encouragement

### **Faith Development**

DSECC Strives to provide a Christian environment constant with the Anabaptist mission of Akron Mennonite Church. Here children experience God's love through the warmth, respect and acceptance modeled by our teachers.

Children learn peacemaking skills through experience and intentional teaching as we guide them in social-emotional development. Bible stories are told to encourage each child's sense of wonder and to help them understand our world. Teachers model both reverence in meal time prayer and the joy we imagine Christ experienced when he interacted with children.

### **Curriculum Statement**

The Creative Curriculum® is rooted in educational philosophy and theory as well as practice. It incorporates a community approach to learning building on positive relationships, interactions, and exploration. The Creative Curriculum® is built on the development of young children learning through play within their environment. The Creative Curriculum® recognizes that by continually changing and enriching the environment, teachers can support learning and creativity in children. Children's creativity is supported by an environment that encourages them to try out ideas and to risk making mistakes. Our teacher's creativity is supported by a curriculum framework that encourages them to be innovative and responsive to children.

The Creative Curriculum® allows teachers to integrate learning through literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology throughout the day. It also gives teachers a wide range of teaching strategies— from child-initiated learning to teacher-directed approaches— to best respond to children's learning styles, strengths, and interests.

### **Vision**

We envision a community where Early Childhood Education is valued; families and teachers are supported; and children reach their full potential.

## ***Mission***

Our mission is to support our community by providing nurturing, safe, educational childcare that emphasizes the worth and uniqueness of each child.

## ***Values***

**Integrity** - We seek to follow Christ's example, creating an environment that empowers each individual to do the right thing.

**Respect** - We value each individual, accepting them for who they are and recognizing their strengths.

**Collaboration** -We welcome each person's ideas and perspectives. Staff and families share expertise, information and resources to work towards a common goal.

**Inclusion** - We recognize and embrace the diversity of personalities, backgrounds, social experiences, races, and religions that makes each of us unique.

**Kindness** -We use our thoughts, words, and actions to encourage and uplift each other. We look for the best in everyone and everything, seeking peaceful interactions and conflict resolution in all relationships.

**Excellence** - We commit to the continual pursuit of the highest standards in Early Childhood Education. We successfully engage students in learning on their level and in their unique way.

## ***Certification***

DSECC is licensed by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) through the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DHS).

DSECC holds accreditation through the National Association for the Education of the Young Child (NAEYC). This accreditation maintains our ongoing STAR 4 level based on the NAEYC program areas: relationships, curriculum, teaching, assessment, health, staff competence, families, community, physical environment and leadership. More information can be found at [www.nayec.org](http://www.nayec.org).

## ***Definition of Family***

In this handbook family refers to a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

## ***Hours of Operation***

Childcare and preschool services are provided from 6:30 AM to 5:45 PM Monday through Friday.

Pre-K Counts is in session from 9:00am to 3:00pm following the Ephrata Area School District calendar.

Before/After School Care is open for Ephrata Area School District half-day kindergarten from 6:30AM to Noon/ Noon to 5:45.

Before/After School Care is open for grades 1-4 from 6:30 AM to 9:00 AM / 3:45 PM to 5:45 PM following the Ephrata Area School District calendar.

School Age Summer Camp runs from June to August 6:30 AM to 5:45 PM.

### **Holidays**

We are closed for certain holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Friday, Christmas Eve through New Year's Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day and Independence Day

Additional closing for in-service days includes Columbus Day, Election Day, Presidents Day or Easter Monday (consult this year's calendar for current in-service days).

### **Admission & Enrollment**

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from 6 weeks of age to 4<sup>th</sup> grade.

Categories of Admission:

Childcare: 6 weeks to 35 months (year-round care)

Preschool: Either one or two years prior to kindergarten eligibility, plus one year after kindergarten eligibility if child needs a growing year (year-round care)

Pre-K Counts: Special eligibility requirements for children either one or two years prior to kindergarten eligibility. (School year only)

School Age: Attending a qualified school program for children in kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade. (School year only)

Summer Camp: Finished Kindergarten through finished 4<sup>th</sup> grade. (Summer only)

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed, and first tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

An enrollment fee of \$75 per family is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.

Our process for introducing children to our program:

Families will attend an enrollment appointment with the Enrollment Coordinator who will walk them through the required paperwork. A packet of information will be given to the family that will include classroom information. An optional getting-to-know-you meeting may be set up with the child's classroom teacher one to five days prior to the child's first day. This meeting is free and should last no longer than 1 hour and the family is expected to stay for the duration. On the child's first day, the family should bring necessary items and plan for a short goodbye.

Tuition is due by Friday for the following week. All tuition is paid ahead of time. If permanent or temporary changes to a child's schedule are needed after the initial enrollment, two weeks' notice is required to ensure that correct tuition rates are charged. Emergency changes can be made at the discretion of the Enrollment Coordinator.

Families will receive annual **free days** in the number of days matching their per week contract plus one. For example, if a child is enrolled for two days per week, they will receive three free days to use between September 1<sup>st</sup> and August 31<sup>st</sup>. Free days do not accumulate or roll over.

Children are admitted to DSECC without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

## ***Termination of Enrollment/Withdraw***

Children may be withdrawn at any time with written notification. Two weeks' notice or two weeks of tuition is required. 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 families with established rules or procedures or if the center cannot guarantee the safety of the child, other children or staff. For more information see the Suspension/Expulsion Policy.

## ***Inclusion***

Diamond Street Early Childhood Center believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. 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.

If your child has an identified special need, we ask that you let us know at the time of enrollment. Please provide a copy of the child's IEP or IFSP if one has been completed. This will help us adapt the classroom routines, interactions and learning experiences to meet your child's needs. 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. Diamond Street will work with families and outside agencies to develop a plan for each child's success.

The following steps will be used if special needs are identified after enrollment:

1. Staff and Parents will work to clearly identify needs that could negatively impact the child's progress or disrupt the classroom learning.
2. Staff will document the frequency, length and intensity of behavior or special need daily.
3. Staff and the family will complete a developmental checklist of the child, i.e., Ages and Stages Questionnaire.
4. The leadership team will alert the child's family to the problem and level of severity.
5. A meeting will be held to review the documentation, developmental checklists, and observations.
6. With the primary guardian's written permission, Diamond Street will contact Early Childhood Mental Health, Intermediate Unit 13 or Early Intervention as appropriate for the situation. Families may choose to reach out on their own.
7. The caseworker and team will develop a plan for the child to be incorporated into the classroom environment.
8. Staff will follow the plan and document the child's progress and if successful will continue to follow the plan.
9. If the plan is unsuccessful, the center will request the family seek further evaluations through the appropriate agency. If further evaluations are refused the suspension/expulsion policy will be considered.
10. Diamond Street will continue to work with the family to meet the child's needs if the family continues to follow the plan and pursue any recommendations from the agency.

## ***Suspension/Expulsion***

DSECC will adhere to the recommendations of the PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) regarding suspension and expulsion. Before requesting the temporary or permanent removal of a child, DSECC will follow all steps towards inclusion of students with special needs. If these are unsuccessful or if the family refuses to pursue evaluations or follow the plans created by the agency conducting the evaluations, DSECC may require the temporary or permanent removal of the child.



If, despite best efforts from both the center and family, the child's needs cannot be met in our care, DSECC will help provide as much assistance as possible in finding an appropriate placement that can meet the child's needs and work with the family for a smooth transition.

DSECC reserves the right to terminate services to a child based on the occurrence of certain events such as a lack of cooperation from the family regarding established rules or procedures.

### ***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.

In Accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, DSECC ensures that all persons with limited English proficiency will have meaningful and equal access to services and benefits. These services will 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

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

Pennsylvania Human Relations  
Commission  
Harrisburg Regional Office  
1101 S. Front St., 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17104

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

### ***Family Activities***

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program by visiting children's classrooms, participating in events, and providing feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet.

### ***Confidentiality***

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential. Records may be sent to other educational institutions at the request of the family or provided to the family at a time of transition.

If families 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, unless expressed written consent is granted by the parent or legal guardian.

### **Staff Qualifications**

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. Typical staff certifications are as follows:

<b>Position Title</b>	<b>Education/Certification</b>	<b>Experience</b>
Teacher	Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education or higher education degree	2 years
Assistant Teacher	Child Development Associate Credential	1 year
Classroom Aide	High school diploma	

Teachers participate in orientation 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 part of their terms of employment, employees of DSECC may not accept paid work from participating families (i.e. babysitting) as it creates a conflict of interest. Any arrangement between families and our teachers will not be sanctioned by Diamond Street Early Childhood Center.

### **Child to Staff Ratios**

Children will be supervised at all times. Staff will be able to see, hear, assess, and direct children within their care. All staff receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

Families must remain in visual contact with their children until they transfer supervision to a teacher by signing them in on the classroom clipboard. Families must again maintain visual supervision of their child after signing them out of the classroom.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Child to Staff</b>	<b>Maximum Group Size</b>
≤ 12 months	<u>4/1</u>	<u>8</u>
13-35 months	<u>5/1</u>	<u>10</u>
3 year-olds	<u>10/1</u>	<u>20</u>
4 year-olds	<u>10/1</u>	<u>20</u>
5 year-olds	<u>12/1</u>	<u>24</u>
6 to 10 year-olds	<u>12/1</u>	<u>24</u>

## **Communication & Family Partnership**

**Daily Communications:** Daily notes from center staff will keep you informed about your child’s activities and experiences at the center. Information pertaining to your child’s day will be sent through the ProCare Engage App.

**Bulletin Boards:** Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide center news, classroom learning experiences/agendas, upcoming events, faculty changes, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

**Newsletters:** Weekly newsletters provide center news, events, announcements, etc. These newsletters will be sent via email. Monthly newsletters will highlight big center wide events and give a recap of the previous month including pictures. Classrooms also provide monthly newsletters focused on learning topics and special events within their classroom.

**Email:** We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so that we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates. Every family must provide at least one email address for billing purposes.

**Parent Tool Kit:** Our website has a section titled “Parent Tool Kit”. Here you can find center information such as our monthly meal menu, a digital copy of the handbook and forms you may need. You will also find community resources to help you in your journey as a family. The Parent Tool Kit is updated frequently so visit often.

**Family Visits:** We encourage visits to our classrooms, volunteering, or participate on a field trip. Volunteer clearances as well as mandated reporter training are required for the safety and protection of our children.

**Family Night:** Family nights are scheduled on a regular basis. These nights include snacks, drinks and fun filled age-appropriate activities for families. Family Nights 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.

**Conferences:** Family & teacher conferences occur three times per year. During these conferences, teachers will discuss your child’s strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child’s growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child’s progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns that you may have with the teachers and/or directors.

### ***Open Door Policy***

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Our team will always do their best to speak with parents/guardians. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.

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 cannot be reached, the family should consult with the program director or the executive director. If there is still not satisfaction, the grievance should be put in writing and given to the executive director to forward to the Board of Directors. The Board will respond in writing or in person as the situation warrants. If the family wishes to bypass the executive director, they may mail their letter to the Board, care of Akron Mennonite Church, 1311 Diamond Street, Akron, PA 17501.

## ***Publicity***

Occasionally, photos will be taken of the children at the center for use within the center, on our website or in letters to our community. Families are asked to designate how they would like their child's photo used at the time of enrollment. Categories include "in the center", "center events", "community outreach" and "social media". If a special situation arises, we will reach out to families prior to use of photographs.

Unless the family indicates that they want their child to participate, we will not use pictures and names of children for community outreach or on social media.

## ***Curricula & 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 flexible day routine 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.

### ***Curriculum and Assessment***

DSECC uses the Creative Curriculum® in our infant, toddler and preschool classrooms. As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom, so we deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

DSECC uses Teaching Strategies Gold to assess children's ongoing progress. It is important that ongoing authentic observations and assessments of children's developmental progress happens regularly at DSECC. An authentic assessment is defined as a process of using ongoing 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 learning experiences. Conferences will be offered three times per year. It is strongly encouraged that families make time for at least two conferences annually. All assessments are confidential records and will be maintained in the child's file. Families may request a copy of this information at any time. Records may also be transferred to another institution with a written request from parents.

For information about your child's day, please see copies of daily schedules and lessons plans posted in each classroom. You will also see updates via the ProCare engage app.

### ***Developmental Screening***

DSECC uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire developmental screening tool for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. New children are assessed approximately 45 days after their entry into the program. After your child's first 45 days at DSECC, you will receive an invitation to meet with your child's teacher to discuss the results of the screening. In some cases, the teacher may provide a home assessment to accompany the one from the classroom as children may display

different strengths in a home setting. Having families fill out a screening questionnaire will help provide a more complete picture of the child's milestones.

Information gathered through the Ages and Stages Questionnaire screening may be used to provide information necessary to refer a child for further assessment if the classroom teacher and the family feel an outside assessment is appropriate. It is also used to help teachers learn more about each child, build a program based on the children's interests and ensure that each child is given an opportunity to learn to the best of their abilities.

### ***Outings and Field Trips***

Weather permitting; we conduct 30 minutes of supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood two times a day for all children. Children are accounted for at all times. A permission statement for participation in walking trips is included in the enrollment form.

From time to time, there will be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child's family. If you would like to join your child on the trip, a volunteer child abuse and state criminal clearances must be submitted to the office prior to the trip.

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. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from DSECC as well as during field trips. All field trips will be taken using an insured school bus service.

### ***Transitions***

Your child's transition in childcare should be a positive and 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 programs***

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program. DSECC transitions students as a group between the school year and summer programs and again at the beginning of the next school year. If a child needs to transition at a time other than these, their teacher will recommend this to the directors and parents so that a plan can be made to meet the child's needs.

#### ***Transition to elementary school***

Transition activities such as a field trip to a local elementary school will be part of your child's education at our center. We will provide you with information on Akron and Fulton Elementary Schools, what to expect, and ideas on how to talk to your child about going to elementary

school. Teachers will also fill out an information sheet provided by the elementary schools and sent to them with parent's permission. If children are to remain in our before and after care, we ask that you request a morning kindergarten slot for Fulton Elementary and an Afternoon slot for Akron Elementary.

### ***Transition for before/after school care***

Children who are of school age may continue with before/after school care at our center. The center will provide staff to ensure that your child arrives at the Akron Elementary bus stop for pick up (before school) and drop off (after school) in a timely manner. We will provide van transportation for up to 9 students to and from Fulton Elementary school daily. Families with students attending other schools are welcome to enroll but must provide their own transportation. The Supplemental Enrollment Form must be completed and on file with the center in order to be eligible for this service. Please note that before and after care is a school year only program which begins and ends following the Ephrata Area School District Calendar. Students must be enrolled in summer camp separately.

### ***Electronic Media***

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use but from time-to-time, we may use a television show without advertisements as a teaching aid and discussion stimulator. All Electronic Media will be screened prior to use and 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 will be offered only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, and limited to no more than 20 minutes per week per child.

OCDEL rules prohibit any screen time for children under two. This includes TV, videos and computers.

During summer camp or unexpected days off from school (such as snow days) students in kindergarten through 4<sup>th</sup> grade will be given the choice of using electronic media brought from home such as handheld games or cell phones during a designated time of day once per month. Both the students and their parents must sign off on a statement indicating that students must follow the rules or lose this privilege.

### ***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.

At DSECC we celebrate holidays including Christmas and Easter as well as Thanksgiving, Mother's and Father's Day, Fall Harvest and Birthdays. For each celebration, the classroom teacher will create a sign-up sheet with designated items requested. Families are welcome to sign up to bring one of the requested items. We ask that you do not deviate from the list to ensure the health and safety of all students, including those with food limitations and allergies.

For birthday celebrations, we ask that you provide a non-food treat if you wish to bring something in to share with the class.

## ***Rest Time***

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Caregivers/teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 15 minutes. DSECC uses infant sleeping equipment that meets the standards of the U.S. Consumer Protection Safety Commission such as sleep sacks. Pillows, blankets, stuffed toys and other soft items are not allowed in rest equipment for infants younger than 12 months. Infants will not be left to sleep in bouncers, reclined sleepers or in a propped position on the floor.

After lunch, all children over 12 months participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities.

School age children, although not required, will be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period if the child desires. For children who do not want to rest, a space and time for quiet play will be made available.

## ***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.

Children must be toilet trained or have an IEP/IFSP indicating a plan for toilet training in order to be a part of our school age programs starting in kindergarten. Our staff will work with each child by following their toileting plan and arrangements will be made to include all children in activities during summer camp such as swimming. Families will be asked to provide supplies such as pull ups, or swim diapers appropriate for older children.

## ***Guidance***

### ***General Procedure***

DSECC is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning 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.

### ***Discipline Policy***

At DSECC behavior management involves teaching and modeling good character and self-control so that children will make appropriate choices. To accomplish this the teachers at DSECC will use positive guidance (redirection) and the establishment of developmentally appropriate boundaries. Teachers will encourage children to be fair, respect property, respect

other people and learn to be responsible for their actions. Children will be instructed to be safe, helpful and kind.

DSECC strives to offer consistency between home and school settings, however teachers WILL NOT use physical punishment or verbal abuse, as these approaches encourage children to respond in kind. Likewise physical restraint will not be used except when absolutely necessary to prevent injury.

### ***Challenging Behavior***

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness.

Each student at **DSECC** has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

Aggressive behavior (causing or potential to cause harm to self, others or property) is not acceptable. Teachers will be proactive in the intervention that is necessary to defuse the situation by redirecting the children involved. Teachers will intervene immediately when a situation develops that endangers children or others. Teachers will model positive alternatives rather than just saying “no”. Acceptable techniques include separating the children, providing comfort and attention to victims, providing calming activities such as “rainbow breathing”, roleplaying difficult situations and helping the children find words to express their feelings.

### ***Physical Restraint***

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child’s safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding her or him only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

### ***Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families***

If a child’s behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child’s individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. When communicating with parents, teachers may not disclose the names of other children involved in incidents. This includes confirming or denying statements made by the children.

On rare occasions, a child’s behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. For more information see our Suspension and Expulsion policy (pg4).

## ***Tuition and Fees***

### ***Important Notice***

All payment and fee processing will be completed by the Enrollment Coordinator. The Enrollment Coordinator will oversee collecting tuition and other fees and contacting families



regarding payment issues. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact Angie, [angie@diamondstreet.org](mailto:angie@diamondstreet.org).

### ***Tuition Rates***

Visit the parent tool kit on our website, [www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org) for current tuition rates.

Families contract for a specific weekly schedule as indicated on the *Childcare Application and Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every week year-round whether or not your child attends, with the exception of pre-arranged Free Day credits and the week between Christmas and New Years. This enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No additional credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather beyond the appropriate number of Free Day credits.

In the event of a classroom closure due to illness (such as COVID-19) or maintenance problems (such as a lack of functioning toilets), families will be credited the number of days that they did not receive care.

### ***Extended Care Fees or Adding Extra Days***

Extended time fees will be charged when a family exceeds the number of hours in their contract. Tuition covers 9.5 hours per day for part time families and 48 hours per week for full time families. Visit the parent tool kit on our website for the most up to date tuition rates and fees.

We know that flexibility is important to families. If families need to add a day of care or switch their day during a particular week, we will attempt to accommodate with a minimum of 24 hours' notice. As we also seek to provide care for as many families as possible, we may not have space on a particular day. Please speak with the Enrollment Coordinator to ensure that DSECC can accommodate your change. Fees for the additional day will be charged to your account when the arrangements are made.

### ***Payment***

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather. Credits for the use of Free Days may be issued ahead of time or after use. Payment is due weekly by 5:00 PM on Friday.

### ***Methods of Payment***

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by exact cash, check, automatic electronic funds transfer or credit card. To setup automatic, reoccurring payments, please contact the Enrollment Coordinator.

### ***Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges***

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$25. This charge may be collected electronically. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed on "cash only" status. Childcare services will be suspended or terminated after two consecutive weeks of nonpayment.

### ***Late Pick-up Fees***

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. Late fees of \$20 plus \$2 per minute will be assessed beginning at 5:45 PM and will

be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up may result in childcare services being terminated.**

### ***Credits***

- **Sibling Discount** – A family’s youngest enrolled child will pay full tuition. The oldest enrolled child will receive a 15% **discount**. All other enrolled children will receive a 10% discount.
- **Free Day** – Each child will receive a number of annual free days equivalent to their weekly schedule plus one. A full-time child will receive 6 free days to use for the year (September through August).
- **Credit may be given for Serious Illness/Injury** – In the unfortunate event of extenuating circumstances such as your child is hospitalized, absent for an extended period of time due to a serious contagious disease or serious illness or injury, credit may be issued. A written doctor’s note is required to receive a credit.
- **Scholarships** – DSECC participates in several need-based scholarship programs. If you are interested in applying for scholarships, please fill out an application form. Forms can be found in the parent tool kit on our website, [www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org) or in the main office. Scholarship programs include:
  - **Pre-K Counts (children aged 3-5 years old)**
  - **EITC (Educational Improvement Tax Credit) program**
  - **Akron Mennonite Church Scholarship program**

## ***Attendance***

### ***Absence***

If your child is going to be absent or arrive significantly later than their normal arrival time, please notify us by calling 717 859 4272, messaging via the ProCare app or emailing the Enrollment Coordinator. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

### ***Pre-K Counts Attendance Policy***

Students enrolled in Pre-K Counts at DSECC are considered full-time and must attend 5 days per week from 9:00am- 3:00pm following the Ephrata Area School District calendar. Teachers or administrative staff will contact families after three consecutive days of absence to offer support as appropriate. DSECC will meet with families to discuss reasons for absences and ways to support consistent attendance. Children who have 10 or more consecutive unexcused absences or more than 10% unexcused absences over the course of the school year (18 days total) and have not responded to the program supports must be dismissed from the Pre-K Counts program at DSECC.

Doctors’ notes are required as submission for absences to count as excusable.

### ***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 on WGAL 8. Notifications will be sent via ProCare Messaging App and Email.

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.

The Pre-K Counts program and Half Day Preschool will operate following the Ephrata Area School District. If they are closed or delayed, Pre-K Counts classrooms will be closed or delayed. Half Day Preschool will be closed in the event of a school closure or delay. Make-up days will follow the Ephrata Area School District calendar.

## ***Drop-off and Pick-up***

### ***General Procedure***

We open at 6:30 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in to the Center **and** the classroom.

We close at 5:45 PM. Please allow enough time to arrive, sign your child out, and leave by closing time.

Pre-K Counts classrooms open at 9:00AM and close at 3:00PM. Children may not arrive early or stay late unless they are enrolled in wrap care.

Half Day Preschool opens at 8:30 and closes at 11:30. Children may not arrive early or stay late.

### ***Cell Phone Usage***

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you not use your cell phone apart from checking your child in/out of Procure.

### ***Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up***

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In an emergency, release may be requested by phone using the following steps:

- Parent/guardian calls the center at 717 859 4272 to make the request.
- The administrator or teacher who answers the phone will explain that they must call back on the parent/guardian's phone number listed on the emergency paperwork to verify your identity.
- The administrator or teacher will immediately call back using the number listed on the emergency paperwork.
- The parent/guardian will give the full name of the person permitted to pick up their child along with that person's phone number and address.
- At release, the teacher will check the person's photo ID to ensure that the name and address matches the information provided by the parent/guardian.

In order to safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

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 and the police as appropriate.

### ***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, alcohol or is physically and emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and 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***

- **Infants:** enough clean bottles for a day's use and at least 2 changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated. Labeled diaper cream, lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use.
- **Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes per day. Labeled diaper cream, lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use. Optional comfort items for naptime. We are a closed toe facility and encourage independent walking on excursions and in gross motor play. Children aged one and above should wear appropriate feet wear while at the facility.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program, socks and closed toed shoes. Labeled diaper cream, lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use. Optional comfort items for naptime.
- **Preschoolers:** at least one change of clothes, socks and closed toed shoes. Labeled lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use. Optional comfort items for rest time.
- **Kindergarteners:** at least one change of clothes, socks and closed toed shoes. Labeled lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use.
- **After School Care Children:** books for homework, appropriate play clothes and closed toed shoes. Labeled lotion or sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use.
- **Summer Camp:** appropriate play cloths, swimsuit, towel, socks and closed toed shoes. Labeled sunscreen in original containers with your instructions for use.

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. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

### ***Cubbies and Communication Folders***

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Many classrooms also have a Communication Folder located near their main classroom entrance door. Please check your child's folder daily for items that need to be taken home.

## ***Lost & Found***

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the lost-and-found Box located at the check in/out station. 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-share activity. Please leave all toys in your vehicle as taking toys from your child at the classroom door can cause additional difficulty in transition.

Comfort items may be brought in for nap time. These should be labeled and stored in your child's plastic bin or cubby. Children's comfort items should be able to fit in their bin or cubby, anything larger than the bin will be sent home. Please take these items home weekly to wash. Comfort items may only be used during rest/nap times.

No toys representing weapons are permitted at any time.

## ***Nutrition***

### ***Foods Brought from Home***

We request that you do not bring food from home into our center. If your child has dietary restrictions that cannot be met by our food program, a doctor's note must be provided for you to bring meals and snacks.

### ***Food Prepared for or at the Center***

Food prepared 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.

Enrolled children will receive breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack if present at designated times. If a child indicates that they are hungry outside of these times, accommodations will be made to meet their needs.

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), religious creed, disability, age, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>, from any USDA office, by calling (833)

620-1071, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to:

1. **mail:**  
Food and Nutrition Service,  
USDA  
1320 Braddock Place, Room 334  
Alexandria, VA 22314; or
2. **fax:**  
(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. **email:**  
[FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov](mailto:FNSCIVILRIGHTSCOMPLAINTS@usda.gov)

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### ***Food Allergies***

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 some substitutes.

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

### ***Meal Time***

At mealtime children's plates are pre-portioned and each child is given every menu item unless a substitute is required. Children and teachers sit and eat together as mealtimes are an important social learning experiences. Teachers model appropriate table manners and encourage children to become self-sufficient and use appropriate table manners as well. 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. Children are not required to try everything or "clean their plate". Seconds will be offered to everyone until a food item is gone.

We will trust children to manage their own eating. The amount the child eats may vary from day to day. Children may pick and choose what to eat from the food provided. Children may eat as little or as much as they want. Children will be encouraged to try everything but not required to do so. Food will not be used as a reward or withheld as punishment.

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

### ***Infant Feedings***

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed "on cue" to the extent possible (at least every 4 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 if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of

each day. 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.

- Breast milk and prepared formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.

### ***Children 12 Months and Older***

- No child shall go more than 4 hours without a meal or snack being provided.
- Children are encouraged to self-feed to the extent that they have the skills. Children are encouraged, but not forced to eat a variety of foods.
- Round, firm foods that pose a choking hazard for children less than 4 years of age are not permitted or are altered to make them safe.
- Bottles are not permitted outside of the infant classroom
- All children must be seated to eat or drink.

### ***School Aged Participants***

- Before and after school childcare participants will be offered a snack at each session. If your child will be arriving before 8:00 AM, they will be served breakfast.
- Children are not permitted to eat snacks from home unless a doctor's note for special dietary needs is on file.

## ***Health***

### ***Immunizations***

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org). Pennsylvania state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Exemptions for immunizations must be provided in writing. Families may exempt their child from required immunizations due to religions or philosophical objections by handwriting a note stating their objection. The note must include the child's full name, birth date, date written description of objection and the printed name and signature of the parent/guardian. Medical exemptions may be typed and must include a signature from a primary care doctor or physician. The exemption note for the flu shot must be provided annually.

### ***Physicals***

Routine physicals are required according to the current recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, [www.aap.org](http://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 assessment is given to the program. The form may be found in the parent tool kit on our website, [www.diamondstreet.org](http://www.diamondstreet.org) or in the main office.

## **Illness**

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children and our staff; 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.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100.4°F or higher)
- 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 more than 2 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.
- Chickenpox, 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.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

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.



## ***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 main area 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.

## ***Toothbrushing***

Children 2 years and older 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 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 name. No toothpaste will be used. A staff member will rinse the toothbrushes individually in hot water. Sinks will be sanitized after toothbrushing. Staff will wear gloves to assist in toothbrushing when assistance is necessary.

## ***Medications***

All medications should be handed to a staff member with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- **Prescription medications** require a completed medical log signed by the child's guardian and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.
- **Non-prescription medications** require a completed medication log signed by the child's guardian. The medication log must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.
- (C) **Non-prescription topical ointments** (e.g., diaper cream, sunscreen and insect repellent) require authorization signed by the guardian. A signature on our enrollment form under this section is sufficient. All ointments must be in their original container and labeled with the child's name.

## ***Communicable Diseases***

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) 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
- COVID-19
- 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
- Tuberculosis

### ***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. 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 to 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 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, weather conditions, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the center, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One 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 DSECC and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities. Please send your child to the center in closed toed shoes that will stay on your child's foot during active play. Shoes should not have smooth slippery soles (ex. dress-up shoes).

### ***Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play***

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 90°F or less than 25°F. Additionally, outdoor play will be cancelled if the air quality rating indicates that it is harmful for sensitive groups such as young children.

### ***Communal Water Play***

Supervised children are permitted to engage in water play in indoor sensory tables and outdoors during the summer months. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water

play does not spread communicable infectious disease. Children are not permitted to drink the water. Children with sores on their hands are not permitted to participate in communal water play and will be provided with an alternative activity. Fresh potable water is used. The water is dumped, and the table cleaned after each use. All teachers are trained in water safety per DHS requirements.

### ***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 incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, center staff will call 911. If determined necessary by an EMT, unless otherwise specified by the parents in advance, the child will be taken to the Ephrata Community Hospital by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

### ***Shaken Baby Syndrome***

Abusive head trauma (also referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome) occurs in infants and young children, whose neck muscles are not well developed and whose heads are larger relative to their bodies. As a result, they are especially susceptible to head trauma caused by any type of forceful or sudden shaking with or without blunt impact. Damage can occur in as little as five seconds.

The signs and symptoms of abusive head trauma include bruises on or around the head and neck, lack of appetite, vomiting, difficulty sucking or swallowing, lack of smiling or vocalizing, rigidity and inability to lift the head, difficulty staying awake, altered consciousness, difficulty breathing (blue color to skin), unequal pupil size and inability to focus eyes or track objects.

Infant crying is normal behavior, which improves as a child ages. Caregivers/teachers will develop proactive strategies to manage stress levels and appropriate responses to a crying child. All staff employed by DSECC will receive approved training on prevention and recognition of abusive head trauma. Teachers will never shake, drop, throw or push a child into the air or onto/into any surface. Teachers will never strike a child's head, directly or indirectly; doing so is grounds for immediate termination of employment.

If a child presents any of the signs or symptoms of abusive head trauma the following steps will take place, teachers will inform the parent/guardian and the Executive Director. If immediate care is needed, 911 will be called. A report to Childline will also be placed. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse.

### ***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 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 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***

DSECC staff will treat all children, families, visitors, and volunteers with respect and dignity. In return, all families, visitors and volunteers will treat staff and each other with respect and dignity. DSECC will not tolerate violence or threats of violence. If any individual acts in a violent way, appropriate action will be taken, including calling police to intervene. Unacceptable behavior will result in action that can include banning of an individual from DSECC property and property in use by DSECC or the end of a care contract, employment or volunteer relationship.

To protect the children enrolled in our programs and to provide a supportive work environment for our staff, no loitering is permitted. Individuals are expected to leave the Center and AMC campus when they do not have an active and appropriate reason to be on DSECC property or on property in use by DSECC.

Any individual experiencing violence or threats of violence should report these instances to the Executive Director and call 911 if applicable. We will not tolerate retaliation against any individual who reports an act or threat of violence, and all reported instances will be investigated.

### ***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 is required to leave the premises immediately.

### ***Dangerous Weapons***

DSECC prohibits the possession of firearms or any other lethal weapon on organization property and property in use by DSECC through rental and shared space agreements, including the DSECC van, or in an vehicle being used for DSECC business. This policy applies to employees, visitors, and program participants including those who are licensed to carry a weapon, exempting on duty law enforcement officers in the course of official business. Possession of a weapon on DSECC property will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, termination of a care contract or an end to a volunteer relationship.

### ***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 Childline 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 are required to participate in fire safety, emergency operations procedures, and pediatric first aid/CPR training in regulation with OCDEL, DHS, and STARS guidelines. DSECC cooperates with local chapter of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in responding to emergency situations.

Information pertaining to the procedures of an emergency are listed below in the parent letter:

To the Parents/Guardians of children who attend Diamond Street Early Childhood Center-

This letter is to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of the children attending DSECC. Our emergency plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency the following protective actions will take place:

**Immediate evacuation:** In case of fire or other necessary needs for evacuation, students are evacuated to a safe area on the ground of the facility out of way of emergency vehicles and responders.

**Immediate shelter:** If sudden occurrences such as weather or hazardous material related conditions, students will be taken to places that are designated as safe shelter spaces within the facility.

**Evacuation:** If there is a danger or necessary reason to relocate off premises due to an emergency children and staff will be brought to the following predetermined safe facilities:

In Community: Volunteer Fire Company of Akron, 1229 Main St. Akron PA. 17501

Outside Akron Community: If we would need to evacuate outside of the Akron area the following locations would be where we would relocate staff and children.

- A. St. Paul's Christian Child Care: 200 W. Orange St, Lititz PA 17543 (7.6 miles)
- B. Sonshine Child Development Center: 1060 E. Newport Rd, Lititz PA 17543 (5.5 miles)

Emergency transportation will be provided by the DSECC van, and staff's personal vehicles. All staff must accompany and remain with children within the transportation of children.

In an emergency, please do not call the facility. We need those lines open for emergency personnel to communicate and relay information. We will contact families when we feel that the situation is resolved, or it is considered safe for child pick-up.

Emergency information will be shared via email, DSECC Facebook page if appropriate and Procure Engage App. Check these sources regularly during an emergency for the most up to date information regarding the situation and circumstances.

Children will be released only to your authorized to pick-up list. No additional authorizations can be arranged in an emergency. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

### ***Fire Safety***

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, flashing lights, emergency shut-off valves (kitchen), and emergency cribs.

Our fire evacuation plan is practiced with the children and staff on a 30–60-day basis. All staff are trained yearly on proper fire safety training during the month of October.

### ***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 staff member will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

### ***Lost or Missing Child***

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within 3-5 minutes, the family and the police will be notified. If a child elopes from the class, the family will be notified once the situation is resolved unless the child is not returned to safety within 5 minutes at which point both the family and police will be called.

## ***Center Policies***

Our center policies, including those in this handbook are reviewed on an annual basis and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.

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# Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the Diamond Street Early Childhood Center (DSECC) Family Handbook, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the DSECC staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the Family Handbook that I do not understand.

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Recipient Signature

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Date

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Center Staff Signature

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Date

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

**Family Events:** We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Popsicles on the Playground
- Fall Festival
- Scholastic Book Fair
- Christmas Caroling
- Friendship Concert
- Bi-Monthly Family Nights
- Annual Family Picnic

**Classroom Activities:** Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Chaperone field trips
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Serve as a parent representative
- Welcome new families
- Contribute to class Potluck Meal
- Family Teacher conferences

**Family/Parent Workshops:** Our menu of family workshops changes annually. Below is a list of workshops we typically offer. We try to offer these in the early evening or on Saturdays. See the monthly calendar for scheduled topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Positive Guidance and Loving Discipline
- Toilet Training
- Safety in the Home
- Child Proofing Your Home
- Brain Development
- Nutrition and Exercise for Small Bodies
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- Food Allergies
- How to Prepare for a Conference
- Warning Signs for Developmental Delays
- Value of Reading to Your Child
- Everyday Math