



### **Welcome to Our Place to Grow!**

We believe the strongest partnership in a child's life is that between the child's parents and the school in which their child attends. The goal that we strive to achieve is for our faculty to team with parents to make this experience an excellent one for your entire family. We are committed to providing the highest quality of care for your child and for your family. We have an Open-Door Policy and want your involvement. We encourage you to get involved in the community, visit or volunteer in your child's classroom, chaperone field trips, and always be an advocate for your child.

We serve children between the ages of 2.5 to 5 years old. Our daily program promotes your child's intellectual, social, physical, and emotional development. We individualize our program to meet the needs of each child. We continually train our faculty using the most current research in child development and early education. The beginning of school is an important time and please know that we are available to answer any questions that may come up. It is our hope that you and your child will develop a lifetime of wonderful memories while enrolled in our school.

**Phone Number:** 207-860-4452

Childcare Director – Marta Velez [mvelez@wmca.org](mailto:mvelez@wmca.org)

Childcare Coordinator / Lead Teacher -Danielle Wilbur [dwilbur@wmca.org](mailto:dwilbur@wmca.org)

### **About Us**

Our Place to Grow is a collaborative childcare center made possible through a partnership between Western Maine Community Action (WMCA) and Franklin Community Health Network (FCHN). This invaluable partnership allows us to bring quality, affordable childcare to employees within Franklin County.

### **WMCA Mission**

It is Western Maine Community Action's mission to help overcome poverty in our communities through services and advocacy that help people build better lives.

### **The Promise of Community Action**

Community Action changes people's lives, embodies the spirit of hope, improves communities, and makes America a better place to live. We care about the entire community, and we are dedicated to helping people help themselves and each other.

### **FCHN/Maine Health Vision**

Working together so our communities are the healthiest in America.

### **Program Philosophy**

At Our Place to Grow, we know that children's earliest experiences have a tremendous impact on their development. We respect parents as the primary and most important provider of care and nurturing. We believe parents and teachers are partners in children's care and education. Our school is designed to meet the developmental needs of young children. We provide experiences that enrich and enhance each child's cognitive, language, social, emotional, physical, and creative development. The members of our faculty serve as positive role models and provide learning opportunities that are supportive, nurturing, warm, and responsive to each child's individual needs.

## **Governmental Licensing Information**

**Our Place to Grow** is licensed by the State of Maine and receives periodic inspections by the Department of Health and Human Services. Parents/Guardians may request to view a copy of the minimum standards and the most recent licensing inspection report at any time. You may contact the local licensing office at;

Maine Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of Child and Family Services  
11 State House Station  
August, ME 04333-0111  
287-9300 or (800) 791-4080

\*Our Place to Grow is licensed to serve up to 29 children.

### **Hours of Operation**

Our Place to Grow is open year-round from 6:00AM-6:00PM, Monday through Friday, except for specified holidays and training days.

## **Holidays and Closures**

The center observes and is closed on the following days:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Week in April (same as school vacation)
- Memorial Day
- Patriot's Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans' Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve beginning 12pm
- Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve

Our Place to Grow observes 1 week of shutdown to ensure that our staff is highly trained, and the center is clean and well maintained for your children. During the week of April Vacation, the center will be closed to children so that we can complete a deep cleaning, attend to any maintenance issues and attend required training.

## **Staffing**

We are honored that you have put your trust in us to care for your children and are committed to providing high quality, trained teachers for the center. Prior to employment, all employees must pass all required background checks including DHHS fingerprinting. All staff of the center are certified in first aid/CPR and are required to maintain a minimum of 30 ongoing training hours annually on relative topics. In addition to the regular paid staff, there may also be times when volunteers, interns and parents may be in the center as well. If these individuals are in the classroom regularly, they will be required to pass all the same required background checks as employees. Children are never permitted to be alone with a volunteer or intern a staff person will be present.

## **Enrollment**

Enrollment at Our Place to Grow is open to children from 2.5 to 5 years. Enrollment shall be granted without regard to a child's race, color, creed, religion, national origin, gender, or disability, and without regard to a parent or guardian's race, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, gender, pregnancy, or disability. Our Place to Grow offers only full-time slots and full tuition is required each week regardless of how many hours your child attends. Initial enrollment is contingent upon receipt of the completed enrollment application, signed fee agreement, registration fee, immunization records and signed Parent Handbook receipt. When a new student

starts, teachers will give families a welcome packet of classroom specific information and suggestions. The packet will also include a family questionnaire to learn about your child's interests, your family's approaches to learning, your child's developmental needs, and your concerns and goals for your child. The teachers will incorporate this information into ongoing classroom planning.

Continued enrollment at Our Place to Grow is contingent upon the parent's, emergency contact persons' and child's adherence to the policies and procedures of Our Place to Grow as outlined in this handbook including, but not limited to, timely payment of all fees and tuition. Parents are required to notify Our Place to Grow immediately, should any of the information collected at the time of enrollment or any time thereafter change. Failure to do so may result in the child(ren) being disenrolled from the program and forfeiture of any deposit.

### **Waiting List**

The center keeps waiting lists. A Waitlist Application as well as a non-refundable \$25 registration fee must be submitted to place a child on the waiting list. Once you are added to the waitlist, your child will remain on the list until a spot is offered. Applications will be filed according to the date the completed application form and fee are received.

The following waiting list policies apply to all families:

- Once an enrollment offer is made through email, families will have 48 hours to accept or decline the spot.
- Should a family decline the spot or fail to respond to the enrollment offer, the child will be removed from the waiting list.
- Any family wishing to be placed back on the waitlist must submit a new Waitlist Application and fee.

### **Center's Right to Refuse Admission**

Our Place to Grow reserves the right to refuse admission to any child at any time with or without cause. Possible reasons for the refusal of admission include but are not limited to:

1. Lack of faculty to maintain appropriate faculty to child ratios as determined by State Licensing Regulations.
2. The need to maintain compliance with Licensing Regulations.
3. Faculty deems the child too ill to attend.
4. Domestic situations that present a safety risk to the child, faculty or other children enrolled at Our Place to Grow if the child were to be present.
5. Parents' failure to maintain accurate, up to date records.
6. Parents' failure to complete and return required documentation in a timely fashion.
7. Parents' failure to follow the tuition policy as outlined in this handbook.

Parents will not be reimbursed tuition for days when their child is refused admission to the program.

### **Tuition**

All custodial parents and/or legal guardians must sign an Enrollment Agreement before enrollment of their child at Our Place to Grow. Parents must indicate to whom all billing information and

correspondence are to be addressed. There is no tuition credit or refund given for vacations, training weeks, scheduled school holidays, child illness, or for closings due to emergency situations, pandemics, inclement weather or acts of God.

Non-payment of tuition is grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Our Place to Grow; however, if you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Director immediately.

Tuition is reassessed annually in November. Any increases in tuition will be communicated to families in December and implemented in January.

### **Payment Schedule**

Tuition is due The Friday prior to the week and shall be paid using the Tuition Express ACH program. First and last week's tuition is due at enrollment. A \$25 fee will be charged for returned payments. Parents will be responsible for payment and fees. If at any future time the bank returns a parent's payment, future tuition payments may be limited to certified check or money order along with a \$5.00 monthly processing fee. If tuition is not received by the Friday ending the week, your child may not attend school until the tuition is paid. Timely payments are essential for continued enrollment at Our Place to Grow . If you anticipate difficulty with paying on time, please discuss the matter with the Director immediately.

### **Subsidized Care**

Our Place to Grow accepts a limited number of childcare subsidies through the Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Affordability Program (CCAP), formerly known as the Child Care Subsidy Program (CCSP).

### **Late Pick-Up**

Please be considerate of our teachers by picking up your child by the appropriate time. You will be charged \$10.00 per child after the first five minutes for late pick-up. You will be charged \$2.00 for each additional minute. Please note that Our Place to Grow closes at 6.00pm; therefore, late fees will accrue up until the time a family leaves the building.

### **Communication**

Good communication is a vital element in a successful school experience. We will use a variety of methods to keep you informed about your child and the events at Our Place to Grow.

- You are encouraged to take a minute to chat with the teacher at the beginning or end of each day. Sharing information can help teachers relate to your child appropriately. Teachers also use information shared to individualize curriculum. **If you need to meet with your teacher to discuss concerns or matters at length, please inquire about a scheduled phone call or a parent/teacher conference.**
- Teachers will provide daily and weekly updates via Procure, the parent engagement app, to keep families informed of their child's day, of upcoming events and lesson plans.
- Periodic newsletters will be e-mailed from the administration, to inform you of changes and activities within the school.
- Monthly snack menus are posted in classrooms

## **Confidentiality**

Within Our Place to Grow, confidential and sensitive information will only be shared with employees of the center and/or student interns who are in a “need to know” position, to care for your child appropriately and safely. Confidential and sensitive information about our faculty, other parents and/or children will not be shared with other parents, as Our Place to Grow strives to protect everyone’s right of privacy. Confidential information includes, but is not limited to names, addresses, phone numbers, disability information, and other health related information of anyone associated with Our Place to Grow. Outside of The Center, confidential and sensitive information about a child will only be shared when the parent of the child has given expressed written consent, unless otherwise required by licensing, such as in the case of suspected abuse. You may observe children at our center who are disabled or who exhibit behaviors that may appear inappropriate (i.e. biting, hitting, and spitting). You may be curious or concerned about the other child. Our Confidentiality Policy protects every child’s privacy. Employees of Our Place to Grow are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. Our confidentiality policy protects every child’s and employee’s privacy. If a parent or family member has a concern regarding another child or employee, they should contact the Director directly to discuss those concerns.

## **Parent Code of Conduct**

Our Place to Grow always requires the parents of enrolled children to behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy, and respect. One of the goals of Our Place to Grow is to provide the most appropriate environment in which a child can grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of the employees of Our Place to Grow but is the responsibility of every parent or adult who enters the center. Parents are required to behave in a manner that fosters this ideal environment. Parents who violate the Parent Code of Conduct will not be permitted on the property thereafter. Please refer to the Policy on Parent’s Right to Immediate Access for additional information regarding dis-enrollment of the child when a parent is prohibited from accessing school property.

**Swearing/Cursing** No parent or guardian is permitted to curse or use other inappropriate language on school property at any time, whether in the presence of a child or not. Such language is considered offensive by many people and will not be tolerated. If a parent or guardian feels frustrated or angry, it is more appropriate to verbally express the frustration or anger using non-offensive language. At no time shall inappropriate language be directed toward members of the faculty.

**Threatening of Employees, Children of Other Parents or Adults Associated with Our Place to Grow** - Threats of any kind will not be tolerated. In today’s society, Our Place to Grow cannot afford to sit by idly while threats are made. In addition, all threats will be reported to the appropriate authorities and will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. While apologies for such behavior are appreciated, the center will not assume the risk of a second chance.

### **Physical/Verbal Punishment of Your Child or Other Children at Our Place to Grow**

Our Place to Grow does not support or condone corporal punishment of children, therefore, such acts are not permitted in the childcare facility. While verbal reprimands may be appropriate it is not appropriate for parents to verbally abuse their child. Doing so may cause undue embarrassment or emotional distress. Parents are always welcome to discuss a behavior issue

with the teacher and to seek advice and guidance regarding appropriate and effective disciplinary procedures. Parents are prohibited from addressing, for the purpose of correction or discipline, a child that is not their own. Of course, no parent or other adult may physically punish another parent's child. If a parent should witness another parent's child behaving in an inappropriate manner or is concerned about behavior reported to them by their own child, it is most appropriate for the parent to direct their concern to the classroom teacher and/or Center Director.

Furthermore, it is wholly inappropriate for one parent to seek out another parent to discuss their child's inappropriate behavior. All behavior concerns should be brought to the classroom teacher or Director's attention. At that point, if deemed necessary, the teacher and/or Director will address the issue with the other parent. Although you may be curious as to the outcome of such a discussion, teachers and/or the Center Director are strictly prohibited from discussing anything about another child with you. All children enrolled in our agency have privacy rights and are further protected by our Confidentiality Policy. You may be assured that we will not discuss anything about your child with another parent or adult visiting the center.

**Smoking/Vaping** - For the health of all employees, children and associates, smoking is prohibited anywhere on the property. Parents are prohibited from smoking/vaping in the building, on the grounds, and in the parking lot of Our Place to Grow. Parents who are smoking/vaping in their cars must dispose of cigarettes prior to entering the parking lot.

**Entry Door Safety** - For the safety of all the children, we have secured doors. Only people who are authorized can enter the building while children are present. Please buzz the doorbell to get access to the building and do not hold the door open for unauthorized individuals. These procedures are designed to protect the welfare and best interests of the employees, children, and families. Be alert and immediately report any breaches or concerns to the office.

**Weapons - Firearms**, hunting knives, bows and arrows, and other weapons are prohibited on the premises.

**Policy for Handling Parent Concerns** - If a parent has a concern, they should first discuss it with the lead teacher of the child's class. If the lead teacher and parents cannot resolve the concern together and to the satisfaction of both, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Director. A three-way conference may be arranged at this time. If a resolution is not reached, the matter will then be brought to the attention of the Executive Director and if deemed necessary by the Executive Director, it will be brought to the Board of Directors for their consideration.

**Parent's Right to Immediate Access** - Parents of a child in our care are entitled to immediate access, without prior notice, to their child whenever they are in care at Our Place to Grow, as provided by law. In cases where the child is the subject of a court order (e.g., Custody Order, Restraining Order, or Protection from Abuse Order) Our Place to Grow must be provided with a copy of the most recent order and all amendments thereto. The custody orders of the court will be strictly followed unless the custodial parent(s) requests a more liberal variation of the order in writing. In the case where both parents are afforded shared/joint custody by order of the court, both parents must sign the request for more liberal interpretation of the order. Once presented with a Protection from Abuse Order, Our Place to Grow is obligated to follow the order for the entire period it is in effect. Employees of Our Place to Grow cannot, at the request of anyone, except the issuing judge, allow a Protection from Abuse Order to be violated. Our Place to Grow will report any violations of these orders to the court. In the absence of a court order on file with Our Place to Grow, both parents shall be afforded equal access to their child as stipulated by law.

Our Place to Grow cannot, without a court order, limit the access of one parent by request of the other parent, regardless of the reason. If a situation presents itself where one parent does not want the other parent to have access to their child, Our Place to Grow suggests that the parent keep the child with them until a court order is issued, since our rights to retain your child are secondary to the other parent's right to immediate access. Our Place to Grow faculty will contact the local police should a conflict arise. Our Place to Grow will dismiss any child whose parent is prohibited from entering upon the property. Due to the parents' right to immediate access policy, as well as state and federal regulations, Our Place to Grow cannot have a child at the center when the child's parent is prohibited access. Our Place to Grow will not agree to any request to maintain a child's enrollment even if the parent agrees to stay out of the center. Such an agreement is a violation of the law and will not be entertained.

### **Dismissal**

Every effort will be made to resolve differences. However, circumstances that can result in a child /family's dismissal from the school, include, but are not limited to:

- Behavior aspects of a child:
  - A child who continually places the safety of him/herself, other children, or faculty members at risk. A child with behavior problems so severe that they cannot be accommodated within the scope of the regular program and regular faculty-child ratio or lack a written plan or instructions from a psychiatrist, psychologist, counselor, or therapist specializing in young children. \*In the event of any of the above situations, the center will attempt to assist the family with next steps.
- Parental disregard for Center policy:
  - Tuition is 30 days overdue and there is not a written plan for payment of back tuition,
  - Failure to pay the tuition according to the written plan
  - Consistent disregard for the hours of operation
  - Failure to treat the faculty and children with respect

Our Place to Grow reserves the right to dismiss any child at any time if the Executive Director deems it necessary. Although families can be dismissed immediately, when possible, the school endeavors to follow the procedure below:

- Parents will be notified of the issue by the teacher or office faculty as soon as possible.
- Parents and teachers or office faculty will set up a conference for discussion of the problem within 48 hours. Resources will be provided that may assist and referrals can be made if the family is open to it. Resources include but are not limited to; Child Development Services, The Maine Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP), Help Me Grow Maine, The Maine Parent Federation, etc.
- A follow-up conference will be scheduled for 2 weeks later.
- If significant improvement is not observed, parents will be asked to seek outside assistance to aid in a solution.
- After a reasonable time, if a solution cannot be reached, the Executive Director may communicate dismissal.



Any past due balances must be paid at the time of the dismissal. An invoice detailing the past due balance will be forwarded to the address indicated in the child's file within one week of the dismissal. Any balances remaining after the 30-day period will be referred to the agency's legal counsel for collection.

Ultimately, continued enrollment will be at the sole discretion of the Executive Director. A parent who wishes to appeal for a dismissal from school may do so by requesting a meeting with the Board of Directors. However, the Board will not overturn the decision of the Executive Director unless it is proven that she/he has acted in a biased or unprofessional manner during the dismissal process.

An administrator will assist the parents in gathering their child's belongings at the time of dismissal and parents are required to leave the center property in a calm and respectful manner, immediately. Our Place to Grow will request assistance from local police should any parent become disruptive and/or uncooperative. A dismissed child and his/her parents are required to call and request an appointment with the Executive Director if they wish to return to the property following a dismissal. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Executive Director and are not a right of the dismissed child or parent. Following a dismissal, any parent or child who harasses, threatens or in any manner causes harm to anyone affiliated with the center by calling, writing, posting/commenting online, or any other means, will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law by Our Place to Grow.

### **Withdrawal**

When withdrawing from the center, Our Place to Grow does require a written 2-week notice. You are responsible for full tuition for these 2 weeks regardless of your child's attendance during those weeks.

The parents and child, following their last day of enrollment, are not permitted to re-enter the property without prior permission of the Director. Appointments are made at the discretion of the Center Director and are not a right of the withdrawn child or parent.

### **Arrival Procedures**

Upon arrival at Our Place to Grow, parents must buzz the office to be let in. All children are required to be escorted into the building by the parent or the adult dropping them off. A faculty member will meet you at the classroom door to receive your child. Children are required by law to be supervised while in the school building. The center discourages idling vehicles from being left in the parking lot unless the vehicle needs to idle in extreme heat or cold temperatures to maintain interior or engine temperatures. Parents are also not allowed to leave a sibling or other child in the car unattended while they drop off.

Upon arrival, parents must follow the Medication Policy if a child must receive medication during the day. Parents are required to notify the child's teacher of any special instructions or needs for the child's day. The parent must present the special instructions in writing and verbally discuss them with either the classroom teacher or Director. These special instructions include but are not limited to, early pick up, alternative pick-up person, health issues over the previous night which need to be observed and/or any general issues of concern which the teachers should be aware to best meet the needs of your child throughout the day.

Our Place to Grow does not provide breakfast for students but will make space available for children to eat breakfast between 6:30 AM and 8:30 AM should the parent/guardian wish to send breakfast. A nutritional snack will be provided by the center for all children at 9:00 AM.

### **Notification of Absence**

Parents are encouraged to inform the school by 9:30am if a child will not be attending or will arrive late on a scheduled day. If your child is ill, we request that you notify the office not only of the absence, but also of the nature of the illness. This enables our administrators to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a “need to know” basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the office, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. The identity of the child(ren) with the disease will never be shared with other families. Parents are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child’s absence from school.

### **Pick-up Procedures**

Upon pick-up at Our Place to Grow, parents must use their key fob to get into the school. Parents must have direct contact with a staff person when picking up and all children must be signed out. Once a parent receives their child, the parent is then solely responsible for supervising their child while on the premises. The parent may not allow a child to wander through the hallways, bathrooms, other classrooms, parking lot and/or playground. Parents must handle all business issues before picking up their child and exit the building promptly.

### **Persons appearing to be impaired by drugs and/or alcohol**

Our Place to Grow will contact local police and/or the other custodial parent should a parent appear to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The parent’s right to immediate access does not permit the center from denying a custodial parent access to their child even if the parent is or appears to be impaired. However, Our Place to Grow faculty will delay the impaired parent while contacting the other parent, the local police, and Child Protective Services. Any other authorized person who attempts to pick-up a child and appears to the faculty of Our Place to Grow to be under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol will be denied access to the child. Our Place to Grow will contact the child’s parents, local police, and Child Protective Services of the situation.

### **Emergency Contact & Authorized Pick-Up People**

At enrollment, parents will be required to include all persons who, in the course of events, may at one time be asked to pick-up their child from Our Place to Grow. In an emergency, the child’s parents will be called first. Should the faculty contact a parent, and the parent is unable to pick up the child, it is then the responsibility of the parent to arrange for their child to be picked up by someone on the list. If they cannot be reached, the faculty will call the emergency contact and authorized pick-up person. The persons listed under the admission information will be required to provide a government issued photo ID prior to the center releasing the child. There will be no exceptions to this rule. All changes and/or additions to the admission information must be made

in writing and be dated and signed. Only custodial parents have the right to make changes or additions to this form.

Our Place to Grow reserves the right to refuse/ban any person listed on the Admission Information form for any reason, including violations of the policies/ procedures contained herein. It is the responsibility of the enrolling parent(s) to inform each person on the Admission Information form of the policies/procedures contained herein. Parents will be asked to determine which persons (if any) on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-up form have the right to act “In Loco Parentis.” In Loco Parentis status affords the pick-up person the right to discuss confidential information about the child’s day including but not limited to, incident/accident reports, and behavior issues. In the absence of this designation the people on the Emergency/Alternate Pick-Up Form are only afforded the right to pick up the child. The faculty is not permitted to discuss the child’s day with them.

### **Transportation**

Our Place to Grow does not provide transportation at any time.

### **Emergency Closings**

In the event of an emergency closing and/or inclement weather, parents will be notified of the closing by message through parent engagement app and posted to the local channels. Should the school need to close in the middle of the day, the faculty will attempt to reach the child’s parents first to arrange for pick up. Should the faculty be unable to reach the parents, people listed on the emergency contact form will be called until pick-up arrangements can be made. The faculty will notify the parents or emergency contact person at the time of the call with the pickup location should the children need to be evacuated from the school. Parents or emergency contact persons should report directly to the alternate location if one is indicated. Should the school need to close for any reason, tuition will not be refunded or reduced for closures of less than 15 school days.

### **Mandated Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and/or Neglect**

Under the Child Protective Services Act, mandated reporters are required to report any suspicion of abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities. The employees of Our Place to Grow are considered mandated reporters under this law. The employees of Our Place to Grow are not required to discuss their suspicions with parents prior to reporting the matter to the appropriate authorities, nor are they required to investigate the cause of any suspicious marks, behavior, or condition prior to making a report. Under the Act, mandated reporters can be held criminally responsible if they fail to report suspected abuse or neglect. We at Our Place to Grow take this responsibility very seriously and will Our Place to Grow will make all warranted reports to the appropriate authorities. The Child Protective Services Act is designed to protect the welfare and best interest of all children. As mandated reporters, the faculty of Our Place to Grow cannot be held liable for reports made to Child Protective Services which are determined to be unfounded, provided the report was made in “good faith.”

Causes for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect may include, but are not limited to:

- Unusual bruising, marks, or cuts on the child’s body
- Severe verbal reprimands

- Improper clothing relating to size, cleanliness, season
- Transporting a child without appropriate child restraints (e.g. car seats, seat belts, etc.)
- Dropping off or picking up a child while under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol
- Leaving a child unattended for any amount of time
- Failure to attend to the special needs of a disabled child
- Children who exhibit behavior consistent with an abusive situation.

As required by Child Care Licensing, all Child Care Staff Members must immediately contact the Department of Health and Human Service's Child Protective Intake hotline (800-452-1999) when they suspect Child Abuse or Neglect. If a staff member has reason to suspect abuse or neglect of a child, they should also immediately notify the Director. The Director or Coordinator will contact the parent and request a meeting that day to inform the parent that a report has been made. Classroom teachers and assistants are not responsible for having these conversations with parents. This will come from a membership of leadership. When staff make a report to the Child Protective Intake hotline, they must provide their name to the intake worker but can request that their identity be kept confidential from the parents. The Mandated Reporter Worksheet should be filled with as much information as possible. The report should include; the details of the allegation or suspicion, familial information, the date Child Protective Intake was called, the name of the intake worker spoken with, which relevant parties were notified the report was filed, and when and by whom the parent/guardian was notified of the allegation. These reports must be completed before the end of the shift and sent directly to the Director by interoffice mail, and they will be stored at the administrative office. They should not be stored in the child's file.

### **Reporting Licensing Violations**

All staff are expected to follow Maine Child Care Licensing Rules, and all violations need to be reported to DHHS. To report concerns about a child care provider, including licensing violations or concerns regarding suspected abuse or neglect in a child care setting call 1-800-452-1999. Intake caseworkers are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays. Any concerns regarding suspected child abuse by a member of staff must be brought to the Director immediately. Reports of concerns with childcare providers can be made confidentially or anonymously. If any allegations of child abuse or neglect concerning a staff member are made, a formal investigation must take place. The staff person will be given administrative leave until the investigation is completed and a decision concerning continued employment can be made. If the allegations prove true, the staff person will be terminated, and leave will be unpaid. If the allegations are proven false, the staff person may return to work and the administrative leave time is paid to the employee.

If a staff person has concerns about licensing violations occurring at Our Place to Grow, they should report these violations to the Director or Executive Director immediately. An investigation will commence to assess and address any concerns. Should licensing violations be identified, the person responsible for the infraction will contact the State of Maine Child Care Licensing and make a self-report of the identified violations. If the violations are not tied directly to a staff person, the Director or Coordinator will report the violation to licensing. A corrective plan of action will be made among the faculty and licensing to appropriately rectify the situation. The Director

will notify all relative parents about the violation and steps being taken to rectify the violation. Please note that staff who report suspicions of child abuse/neglect where they work are immune from discharge, retaliation, or other disciplinary action for that reason alone unless it is proven that the report was intended to do harm.

Additional situations that require immediate written notification to The Department include;

- Legal proceedings brought against the childcare center or any staff member
- Arrests, indictments or convictions for sexual or violent crimes involving children or adults
- Any illegal acts involving children whether, prosecuted or not
- Any arrest, indictment or conviction for OUI
- Investigations by Child Protective Services
- Any protection from abuse orders or findings of domestic of family abuse
- All child deaths and serious injuries that require medical care by a licensed medical professional

### **Discipline and Guidance**

Our Place to Grow uses positive guidance methods in order to help children learn self-control and self-direction without loss of self-esteem. The center encourages children to use words to solve problems with others. A balanced schedule of activities suited to your child's development, and a positive environment promotes cooperation. The center uses a variety of methods to encourage children's cooperation, including the clear statement of limits in positive terms, redirection, choices between acceptable behaviors, and positive reinforcement through praise and encouragement of good behavior. Teachers work closely with parents to understand each child and to determine which methods work best for him or her.

Discipline is based on an understanding of each child's individual needs and level of development. When correcting a child's behavior, the caregiver's response is individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child's level of understanding, and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control. When a child repeats a challenging behavior, the center uses a variety of methods for encouraging cooperation. These include the positive methods described above, and conferencing with other staff, parents, and center administration. The center makes every effort to understand children's needs and modify classroom practices, so each child is successful. Staff members anticipate problems and plan to prevent them by maintaining an appropriate learning environment.

Discipline at Our Place to Grow shall:

- Be individualized and consistent for each child.
- Be appropriate to the child's level of understanding.
- Be directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

Positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction shall be used, including:

- Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior.

- Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements.
- Redirecting behavior using positive statements.
- Using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the age of the child. There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child.

The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

- Corporal punishment. Corporal punishment means physical actions harmful to a Child's body, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a. Slapping, striking, shaking, shoving, spanking, pinching, twisting, kicking, biting, ear pulling or ear twisting;
  - b. Forcing a Child to taste or eat spicy, bitter or otherwise distasteful products for the purpose of Discipline;
  - c. Spraying with water as a means of controlling behavior;
  - d. Placing tape over a Child's mouth;
  - e. Mechanical restraints, such as tying a Child to a chair;
  - f. Requiring or forcing a Child to take an uncomfortable position such as: squatting, kneeling, standing and holding arms outstretched at sides or overhead, bending, or requiring or forcing a Child to repeat physical movements
- Other forms of aggressive contact harmful to a Child's body.
- Cruel or severe punishment, humiliation, or verbal abuse, including but not limited to:
  - a. Shaming and embarrassing; or
  - b. Punishment for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet;
  - c. Humiliating or verbally abusing a Child in any other way.
- Withholding food, drink, rest or outdoor playtime as punishment or threat of punishment, or being forced to eat or drink against the Child's will;
- Requiring a Child to be silent or inactive as a disciplinary measure for a period exceeding that Child's age in minutes;
- Unusual confinement, including but not limited to developmentally inappropriate use of high chairs, play yards, cribs or leaving a Child unattended in any room;
- Withholding any adaptive equipment that would result in loss of a Child's independence;
- Using physical restraints, unless trained, and with the review and approval of a Licensed clinician;
- Lack of supervision;
- Derogatory remarks to or about Children or parents;
- Rough handling.

### **Dress Code**

Children are engaged in various activities during the day; some can be messy, and/or athletic. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children must be dressed in seasonably appropriate, comfortable clothing. The most appropriate type of shoes for participation in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes. For safety reasons, children may not be allowed to ride tricycles or use certain climbing

equipment if they do not have appropriate footwear. Please bring a pair of non-slip shoes for your child to wear inside.

Children's play can be messy at times. We encourage creative exploration that can sometimes result in wet or messy clothing. We ask that you take this into consideration when dressing your child for school and do not send them in clothing you will be upset about being messy. We also require families to provide an additional set of clothing to wear should your child need to change during the day. If your child is in the process of potty training, we ask that you send multiple additional outfits with footwear included.

### **Immunizations**

Immunization records must be maintained to ensure proper medical treatment is determined and given in the event of a disease outbreak or public health emergency.

- All Children in care must meet the following requirements:
  - a. The Child Care Facility must have a current record of immunization on file for each Child, which clearly documents each Child's present immunization status based on the Department's Day Care Immunization within 30 days of the Child's first admission to the Childcare and updated as needed thereafter or
  - B-. A blood test documenting immunity to measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox), placed in the Child's record and updated in a timely manner.
  - c. Pursuant to P.L. 2019, Ch. 154, § 11, effective September 1, 2021, Children must be immunized as set forth herein and exemption from immunization requirements are limited to medical reasons. The Child's physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant must provide documentation that immunization is medically inadvisable.

**Unimmunized Children and Child Care Staff Members** - The Child Care Facility must maintain a list of all unimmunized persons, regardless of age. In the event of a disease outbreak as defined by CDC reporting standards, a Child not immunized must be excluded from the Child Care Facility in accordance with CDC guidance or until the Child receives the necessary immunization or proof of immunity is on record.

**Immunization records** - The Child Care Facility must make immunization records available to the Department of Health and Human Services, Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention, upon request.

### **Illness/Communicable Diseases**

Our Place to Grow follows all health/communicable disease policies as outlined in the American Academy of Pediatrics Model Health Policies and Procedures Manual. Parents are required to pick up an ill child within 45 minutes of notification by phone. If a parent is reached but cannot pick their child up within 45 minutes, it becomes the parent's responsibility to arrange for alternate pick up with someone listed on the child's emergency contact form. The faculty will not continue to call those listed on the emergency contact list once a parent is reached. If a parent cannot be reached, the faculty will begin to call the people listed on the emergency contact form, until arrangements can be made for the child to be picked up. Children will be excluded from participation in the program if they exhibit symptoms of any communicable disease. They will not be permitted to return to the program until they are no longer contagious. Guidelines for

determining the contagious period for a specific illness are based on the recommendations by the American Academy of Pediatrics. Our Place to Grow reserves the right to refuse to allow a child to return if the Director or designee believes the child to be too ill to participate in the program. Children excluded from the program due to a fever may not return to the program until they are fever free, without fever reducing medication, for 24 hours. If your child is sent home due to a fever, they are not permitted to return to school the following day at a minimum. A fever is defined as a temperature reading on a thermometer of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more. Children are required to be excluded from the program for loose bowels or diarrhea which occur 2 or more times during the school day. Children may return to school when they have been free from loose bowels or diarrhea for 24 hours without medication. Children excluded from the program due to vomiting may not return to the program until they are symptom free, without medication, for 24 hours. Children will be sent home after vomiting once and he/she is not permitted to return to school the following day at a minimum. If your child will be absent due to illness, we request that you notify the school. This enables our faculty to keep track of any illnesses which may occur at our school. This information will only be shared with faculty on a “need to know” basis. If your child has a communicable disease, we ask that you share the diagnosis with the center director, so that the parents of the children in the school may be notified that a communicable disease is present. Once again, only the communicable disease information will be shared. Our Place to Grow will take all measures necessary to protect your child’s confidentiality. You are not required to disclose this information by law, and your continued enrollment will not be based whatsoever on your decision to share, (or not) the reason for your child’s absence from school.

### **Sunscreen / Insect Repellent / Diaper Cream**

Parents are required to complete an authorization form to apply sunscreen, insect repellent or diaper cream if they want these items to be applied while in care. Parents must apply sunscreen and insect repellent to the child prior to coming to school. Our Place to Grow will apply sunscreen and insect repellent to children prior to outdoor time during the school day. Parents must provide the school with the child’s sunscreen and insect repellent. It must be kept in its original container and labeled with both the child’s first and last name. All items will be stored in a dedicated classroom medication box, cabinet, or refrigerator if necessary. These items may not be stored in a child’s cubby, lunch box or backpack. Only children in the same family may share these products.

### **Children with Severe Allergies**

For the safety of your child, parents are required to provide a signed copy of the “Severe Allergies” form detailing any allergies, food or otherwise, from which their child suffers, at the time of enrollment or when the allergy is discovered. This form must be filled out by the child’s physician in its entirety and parent(s) or legal guardian(s), and must be updated every twelve months, or more frequently, as needed. In addition to this form, parents must provide a copy of any additional physician’s orders and procedural guidelines relating to the prevention and treatment of the child’s allergy. Parents must also execute a “Release and Waiver of Liability for Administering Emergency Treatment to Children with Severe Allergies” form. This form releases Our Place to Grow from liability for administering treatment to children with severe allergies and taking other necessary actions set forth in the “Severe Allergies” form, provided Our Place to Grow exercises



reasonable care in taking such actions. Any medication required to treat an allergic reaction must be provided in accordance with the Medication Policy detailed herein. It is the parent's responsibility to monitor the expiration date of their child's medication and replace it with the updated medication. The center reserves the right to exclude any child with severe allergies who does not have up-to-date rescue medications in their classroom. Attendance can resume once the proper medications are provided and accompanying paperwork for the medication is completed.

### **Medication**

Medication may be administered ONLY if a Medication Authorization Permission Form is on file, completed and signed by the child's parent. Whenever possible, the first dose of medication should be given at home to see if the child has a reaction. All medication is to be kept locked at the front desk, or in a locked box in the fridge if medication requires refrigeration. Medication must be in the original container with the following information on the label:

- Child's name
- Prescription name
- Doctors name and dosage
- Pharmacy name and phone number
- Instructions for administering

### **Emergency Drills**

Our Place to Grow conducts monthly fire/evacuation and quarterly severe weather and lockdown drills. Parents, faculty, and children will not be made aware of drill dates or times, as this is the most effective way to assess the effectiveness of fire and emergency/evacuation plans. During an emergency drill parents may not sign children in or out of the school. Parents must wait until the drill is complete to sign their child into the school. Parents may wait with the child's class in the designated safe zone outside of the building until the drill is complete. In the event of a real fire/emergency/lockdown situation, the Executive Director or designated administrator will inform each classroom teacher that the school will be closing. At this time, any parents waiting to sign their child in will have to leave the premises with their child. When parents arrive to pick up their child, parents will be required to wait until the director or designee has accounted for all faculty and children and has given the faculty permission to release children. Parents will be notified via email, the parent engagement app, and/or the telephone of the situation. Children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the notification.

### **Alternate Safe Location**

Should the Administration of Our Place to Grow or any emergency services personnel determine the building to be too dangerous to be occupied, the faculty and children will be taken to Sandy River Nursing Home. Once the children are assembled there, the faculty will begin contacting parents or emergency contact persons for pick up. As stated before, children must be picked up within 45 minutes of the notification.

## **Medical Emergencies**

In case of critical illness or injury during school hours, appropriate first aid or CPR will be given immediately, and 911 will be contacted, staff will follow emergency personnel directions. Parents or guardians will also be notified immediately after the child is safe.

If necessary, the child will be transported at parents' cost, to the closest emergency facility.

In certain circumstances, as required by childcare licensing, the staff of the center must also notify The Department of Health and Human Services of certain occurrences including but not limited to, all Child deaths and serious injuries that require medical care by a licensed medical provider, following notification of emergency medical personnel and the Child's parents/guardians.

## **Handwashing**

Handwashing must be done with soap and running water. The Child Care Facility must ensure that all adults and all Children wash their hands in at least the following circumstances:

1. Immediately before and after eating snacks and meals,
2. After each diaper change or toileting;
3. Before and after handling food;
4. Before and after administering medication.

## **Outdoor Play**

Children must have opportunities for indoor and outdoor activities. Children shall have a minimum of 60 minutes of active play outdoors daily. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate clothing for the weather. When weather presents a risk to Children in accordance with Child Care Weather Watch and the Air Quality Index, gross motor activity will be substituted for outdoor time.

## **Rest Time**

The State of Maine Child Care Licensing Rules state that children must have an opportunity for rest or relaxation daily. Our Place to Grow will provide individual mats/cots for each child to use during this rest period. Parents are responsible for providing appropriate bedding and any comfort items as needed for their child. This may include a crib sheet, blanket, and 1 personal item such as a stuffed animal. Mats are cleaned daily and sanitized weekly by center staff and all bedding must be taken home by the parent at the end of each week or sooner if soiled for laundering.

## **Meals and Snacks**

Our Place to Grow provides a nutritious morning and afternoon snack for all children. Families are responsible for providing their child's own healthy lunch. Parents have the opportunity to send breakfast with their child for them to eat at the center if they arrive prior to 8:30 AM. Snacks are served daily at approximately 9AM and 2 PM. Monthly menus are posted within the center.

Drinking water is always available to children. For sanitary and environmental reasons, we ask that all parents send an empty reusable water bottle to school with their child. These bottles will be labeled and filled with water for your child to access whenever needed throughout the day. We will wash and sanitize them at the center daily.

On special occasions throughout the year, parents may wish to send a snack to school for the class. If this is the case, please be sure to speak with your classroom teacher first to ensure that there is a plan for any allergies or dietary needs. Food and drink not cleared with a staff member prior will not be allowed to be distributed. We do ask that you limit these instances to special occasions.

### **English Language Learner Policy**

At Our Place to Grow we accept learners from all ethnic backgrounds. The primary language we communicate in is English. If you communicate more comfortably in another language, please let us know. We will make every effort to make our materials and communications accessible for you in your home language. We will also incorporate your child's language and culture into our visuals and communications as much as possible.

### **Inclusivity**

To create inclusive environments for every young child, early childhood educators must intentionally design and adapt the learning environment based on children's diverse and unique assets, strengths, abilities, and needs (which are sometimes undiagnosed or still being determined in formal ways) (NAEYC 2020). By making even small adjustments to everyday routines and activities, educators can promote the engagement of and be responsive to young children with varying abilities. Our Place to Grow strives to create a diverse and welcoming environment for all children and families and will work to fulfill all reasonable accommodations needed to help students thrive included but not limited to; environmental modifications, modified schedules and welcoming therapeutic service providers in the center to provide services in the least restrictive environment. Please speak directly to your child's teacher should you have any questions or needs in this area.

### **Curriculum**

Our Place to Grow uses the Maine DOE approved curriculum Pre-K for me as it's guiding foundation. This research-based, whole child curriculum is intended to support any preschool teacher in providing a rich, play-based, intentional curriculum that is aligned to Maine's Early Learning and Development Standards. Pre-K for ME builds social-emotional, executive function, language, literacy, math, and vocabulary skills. Recognizing the need for student engagement, individuality and a desire to follow the interests of our students, the staff will also couple this approach with the flexibility to incorporate emergent curriculum as demonstrated by children's interests. We encourage you to share with your child's teacher any interest areas you would like to see us explore further

Our classrooms are grounded in a commitment to principles of ideal learning:

- Equity
- Play
- Relationship-based interactions
- Nature connection
- A child-centered perspective

- A strength-based and inquiry-based approach with children, educators and families. (MaineAEYC 2023 strategic Plan)

### **Developmental Screenings**

Developmental screening is a process involving partnerships with parents to identify concerns about a child's development. As many as one in four children under the age of 6 are at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Screening alone is not enough to identify a developmental concern. Rather, it helps staff and parents decide whether to refer a child for more evaluation by a qualified professional. The earlier a possible delay is identified, the earlier a program can refer a child for further evaluation and additional supports and services. Completing these screenings will be a joint effort between teachers and parents, as you know your child best. Your input is invaluable. Developmental screenings will be done at least 2ce annually in partnership with the teacher and parent. Results of these screenings will be shared with parents. If any developmental concerns are identified in the screenings, resources will be provided to the family and referrals for further assessment can be made.

*\*\*It is important to conduct screening and evaluations in both English and the primary/home language with the use of an interpreter to better determine the child's developmental abilities.*

### **Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)**

Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) provides reliable, accurate developmental and social-emotional screening for children between birth and age 6. Drawing on parents' expert knowledge, ASQ has been specifically designated to pinpoint developmental progress and catch delays in young children – paving the way for meaningful next steps in learning, intervention, or monitoring.

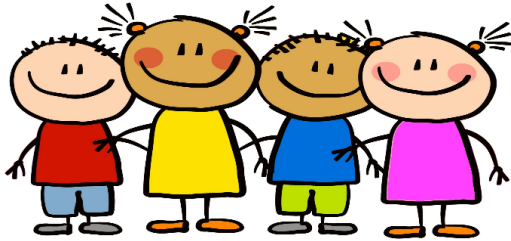
### **Rights of Children and Parents**

**Rights of Children - Children receiving Childcare from Child Care Facilities have the following rights.**

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
4. Each Child must be provided Childcare services without discrimination to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.

### **Rights of parents and legal guardians of Children receiving Childcare from Child Care Facilities.**

1. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian must be fully informed of items or services which are included in the rate they pay for Childcare services.
2. A Child's Parent or Legal Guardian has the right to be fully informed of findings of the most recent inspection conducted by the Department. The Child Care Facility must inform Children's Parents or Legal Guardians that the licensing inspection results are public information and inspection results must be posted in a prominent place on the Premises.
3. Parents or Legal Guardians must be notified by the Child Care Facility within two business days of any actions taken against the Child Care Facility by the Department, including but not limited to, decisions to issue conditional Licenses, refusal to renew a License, or to impose fines or other sanctions.



### **Daily Schedule**

Our day begins with the first child's arrival and ends with the last child's departure each day. Children will be encouraged but will never be forced to participate in any activity.

6:00-8:00– Arrival Time, Free Choice  
8:00-8:30 – Morning meeting/Calendar  
8:30-9:00 – Bathroom/wash hands  
9:00 – 9:30 -Snack  
9:30-10:30- Centers  
10:30-11:30 – Music and Movement/Outdoor play  
11:30-12:00 – Bathroom/wash hands  
12:00- 12:30 Lunch/ clean up  
12:30-2:00 – Rest Time  
2:00-2:30 – Bathroom/Hand wash  
2:30-3:00 – Snack  
3:00-3:45– Small Group Learning Activities  
3:45-4:00- pick up/pack bags  
4:00-6:00 – Outdoor Play/Free Choice/Pick Up

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RECEIPT OF THE PARENT HANDBOOK

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Our Place to Grow Parent Handbook. I understand that it contains important information on policies and procedures. I realize the handbook is not intended to cover every situation which may arise but is simply a general guide to refer to.

I understand that it is my responsibility to familiarize myself with the materials and that I agree to follow the provisions and other policies/rules of the center.

I further understand and acknowledge that the center may change, add or delete any policies or provisions in this handbook as it sees fit in its sole judgment and discretion.

I acknowledge and understand that this Parent Handbook supersedes and replaces any and all prior handbooks or materials previously distributed.

You are required to read the handbook in its entirety. By initialing next to each of the bulleted points below, you signify that you have specifically paid close attention to the following sections of the Parent Handbook that are of particular importance.

- Illness Policy \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- Late Pick Up Policy \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- Code of Conduct \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)
- Tuition and Fees \_\_\_\_\_ (Initial)

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_