



**First
Environments
Early Learning
Center**



**Parent
Handbook**

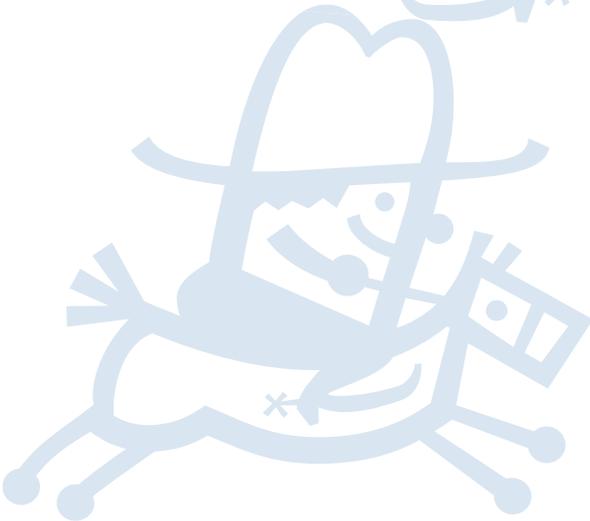


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Welcome

Welcome to FIRST ENVIRONMENTS EARLY LEARNING CENTER, a day care facility organized by parents and supported by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS). First Environments operates as a nonprofit cooperative venture, and is dedicated to providing quality care for preschool children.

This HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS provides general information about the Center's program, administrative procedures, operating guidelines, health and safety policies, and required parental involvement. Parents will find that most of their questions about First Environments are answered in this handbook. For specific situations that may not be covered, parents are encouraged to seek additional information from the Director.



Version control:

This FEELC Parent Handbook was last updated on March 13, 2007.

HANDBOOK FOR PARENTS

1.0 Introduction: Purpose, Philosophy, Goals and General Operation

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the First Environments Early Learning Center (referenced throughout this document by name, as “FEELC”, or as the “Center”) is to support First Environments’ families, and to provide quality programming. To accomplish these ends the Center provides a safe, consistent, and enriched environment where developmentally appropriate activities encourage exploration and “hands on” learning.

1.2 Philosophy

First Environments Early Learning Center strives to provide children with a caring, safe, and secure environment that utilizes a child centered curriculum. This curriculum is based on the emotional, physical, social, and cognitive needs of the individual child. The developmental needs of the child are used to determine appropriate activities carried out with that child. Children grow and develop at different rates, so this approach offers them the opportunity to explore each area of development at their own pace.

Center staff members create an atmosphere of support and affection as well as providing the materials, equipment, and experience required to optimize the experiences of each child. They also serve as examples to the children, since children learn as much by observing others as they do by direct instruction. The teaching staff members act as facilitators rather than directors of activities.

The environment is carefully planned based on an assessment of each child’s skills. Planning is most obvious by the presence of “interest centers” in every classroom. These centers include art, dramatic play, manipulative or small motor skills, gross motor play or blocks, sand, water, books, listening, etc. Teachers make available a wide variety of activities in each “interest center.” Children are encouraged to explore all interest centers. Teachers provide an external structure for the day and provide the children time to work in the centers. Their exploration of the environment is usually self-initiated. Because of the variety of materials, children can learn several different skills in each center. Creativity is enhanced by the open-endedness of the learning materials. A sense of responsibility and autonomy is also promoted by allowing children to choose their own activities.

We believe developmentally appropriate child-centered curriculum is:

- Play is the child's way of working and learning.
- Children's play becomes their work as they discover new materials in the environment.
- Learning is what children do; it is not something that is done to them.
- The classroom environment will be designed to encourage self learning with guided practice from the teacher.
- Children grow and develop at unique, individual rates that are often unrelated to their ages.
- Classroom activities should support this developmental approach for each child.
- Every child has the right to feel good about himself/herself.
- Enhancing of the child's positive self-concept will be the focus of many classroom activities.
- Children's natural curiosity and eagerness to learn are enhanced if children are free to follow their natural interests.
- A discovery approach to learning will be incorporated in the classroom to encourage and develop children's curiosity.
- Children learn from interactions with other people.
- The environment will be designed to encourage children to observe other children working, work with other children, and work individually.
- Children need a variety of opportunities in order to encourage creativity.
- The classroom will contain interest centers thereby encouraging simultaneously occurring learning activities. In this way, each child has an opportunity to work in a variety of centers using a variety of materials.

1.3 Goals

The goals established by the Center are:

1. To provide a safe, consistent and enriched environment where developmentally appropriate activities encourage exploration and "hands on" learning experiences.
2. To enhance the sense of dignity and self worth within the child and his/her family.
3. To encourage spontaneity, curiosity and self-discipline.
4. To enhance the child's mental processes by building confidence and self-esteem.
5. To enhance patterns and expectations of success for the individual child.
6. To provide consistently high quality care by continuously evaluating Center operations.
7. To maintain the lowest possible staff to child ratios.
8. To constantly encourage parent visitation, input, and participation.



1.4 General Operation

First Environments Early Learning Center strives to provide services for young children from the ages of six weeks through five years. The center will provide a safe, secure, and stimulating child care environment within a developmentally centered curriculum. All of the developmental areas of early childhood will be incorporated into an integrated “play as work” organizational concept. These developmental areas will include fine and gross motor development, social skills, moral development, self-help skills, cognitive skills, and pre-academic skills. No one-skill area will be emphasized over any other.

As part of the services of the Center, children will receive nutritious meals and snacks. Nursing mothers will be provided a comfortable space for breast-feeding.

Parent involvement will be an ongoing part of the center’s activities. It is a fundamental concept in early childhood education that parents are a child’s most important teachers. The staff works hard to create strong relationships between the Center and home. It is our hope that our school will become an extension of your family.

1.4.1 Security/Access

The center is located on the federal campus of the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). To enter the campus, guests must pass through manned security gates at the front or rear of the campus. The front gates are accessible all hours but the rear gates are closed at 6pm to incoming traffic and may be closed at times of heightened national security or severe weather.

Our building has a state of the art security system. Each parent will be given a numeric code to enter the building. Be sure to enter or exit the building through the main entrance as you will be required to sign your child both in and out each day. If someone else is going to pick up your child, you must contact us in advance. No child will be permitted to leave with an adult whom is not their parent without prior written permission, as per section 3.6 – 3.8 of this hand book.

Children may not be dropped off or picked up from an outside entrance or over the fence. Please let your child’s caregiver know when you are leaving with your child, as we sign children out at the end of the day.

1.4.2 Staff

The quality of any day care center is a direct reflection of its staff. First Environments Early Learning Center recognizes its employees as the center’s most valuable component. The FEELC personnel policies reflect the respect felt for staff as professionals and provide a basis for understanding and meeting the needs of both the Center and the families. For this reason, we are committed to providing a working environment that exemplifies cooperation and support.



Our teachers exceed the requirements set by the State of North Carolina for qualification and annual training. All staff members are required to obtain certification in CPR and First Aid. The cost of training is paid for by the Center.

Prior to hiring, each employee must have a criminal record check. FEELC only accepts teachers with a commitment to parents and children. In order to optimize your child's growth and development, we hire teachers who are interested in providing quality care and stimulating environments.

1.5 Corporate Organization

The FEELC is sponsored by a nonprofit Corporation, First Environments Parents' Organization, and is licensed by the State of North Carolina Office of Child Day Care Licensing to serve a maximum of 188 children ranging in age from six weeks to five years.

First Environments Early Learning Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and meets North Carolina's highest day care standards (Five Star).

The Center abides by all relevant State rules and procedures.

The 1985 North Carolina Legislation on Child Care and the Child Abuse Reporting Act are on file in the Director's Office. These documents are available to parents to view upon request.

The daily operation and management of the Center is the responsibility of the Director, while overall direction is the responsibility of the First Environments Parents' Organization Board of Directors. There are five members on the Board of Directors and annual elections alternate between two and three new members.

Members of the Corporation include all parents of children enrolled in the center. Parents are encouraged to serve on the Board of Directors and/or Committees (See section 5.0 Parental Involvement).

2.0 Programs

2.1 General Information on Programs

First Environments is committed to maintaining low staff to child ratios. We firmly believe that the beginning of any quality environment begins with creating close and nurturing relationships between teachers and children. The following are the maximum teacher/child ratios at our center:

Infants (6 weeks to 13-15 mos.)	1 teacher to 3.5 children
Toddlers (13-14 mos. to 25-27 mos.)	1 teacher to 4.5 children
Middlers (25-27 mos. to 37-39 mos.)	1 teacher to 5.5 children
Preschool (3 to 4 yrs.)	1 teacher to 8 children
Preschool (4 to 5 yrs.)	1 teacher to 10 children

* Please Note: First Environments has Rotating Teachers that are not counted in the staff/child ratio stated above. These Teachers work in classrooms when needed, but also have specialty areas to enhance our program.

The First Environments Early Learning Center offers care for infants and children from six weeks old to 5 years old or until they are eligible for kindergarten. The following sections provide a brief description of program emphasis for each age group. Please note that the age ranges given are only approximate and actual placement depends on developmental milestones and individual needs along with space availability.

2.2 Moving From One Classroom to Another

It is our expectation that parents and the Center's staff will work together when a child needs to move from one age group to the next. We want parents to play an active role in this process.

Teachers, parents or the Director may initiate a class change. Teachers will be notified in writing by the center about when and where a child will move. Your child will be assessed to determine his/her readiness to move from one group to another. Moves are based on the needs of the child, developmental criteria, and the occupancy of the classrooms.

You will receive a written notification of a pending move. Parents are encouraged to interact with the new teacher to learn more about his/her classroom. We try to give children a transitional period of at least two weeks before the move takes place. Transitions are based on the individual child and the time it takes is up to him/her. During the transitional period children, make regular visits to the new classroom. Also during the transitional period, your tuition fees remain the same until your child officially starts in their new classroom.



3.0 Enrollment and Procedures

3.1 Application for Enrollment and Waiting List

Application for enrollment of children ranging in age from six weeks through five years old will be considered without regard to race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. However, priority will be given as follows:

1. Children of Federal employees will have first priority for admission to First Environments Early Learning Center.
2. Children of visiting fellows, other trainees on stipends at Federal facilities, and children of FEELC staff will have second priority for admission.
3. Non-Federal siblings of current or past students of FEELC will have 3rd priority for admission as well as the children of contractors for the Federal government agencies.

Please note that siblings of enrolled students will effect priority.

First Environments Early Learning Center wants to make a difference in the lives of families and understands that parents or guardians may have many different working schedules. We do not offer part-time spots but we do allow families to share days of the week. The rules are as follows:

1. You may only share with one family.
2. You have to share a minimum of two days a week and no more than three.
3. We do not allow children to share hours of the day only days of the week.
4. There are only two shared spots per classroom.

First Environments will contract with one sharing family only. In the event that the child whose family holds the contracted spot leaves our school, the child who shares the spot will no longer have placement at our school. Children on FE waitlist will be selected to fill any openings within the center.

3.2 Required Fees

3.2.1 Signup Fees

REGISTRATION FEE: First Environments requires a \$50.00 wait list registration fee. This is charged per child and will be applied to your first tuition payment.

*** Please note: This fee is non-refundable if First Environments offers a spot within one year of list date and the spot is not accepted at that time by the offered family.

DEPOSIT: A \$300 deposit is required prior to attendance. This deposit, minus any monies due, will be refunded upon withdrawal from the Center. The Center requires a 30 day notice of intent to withdraw, with the exception of rising Kindergartners, in which we require a 45 day notice of intent to withdraw.

FAILURE TO ACCURATELY COMPLETE FORMS OR PAY FEES IN A TIMELY MANNER MAY RESULT IN CANCELLATION OF THE ENROLLMENT AGREEMENT.

3.2.2 Tuition and Late Payments

TUITION: Tuition is drafted every two weeks on Friday, coincident with the federal pay schedule. The Board sets the tuition when the annual budget is presented at the May general membership meeting. The Board will attempt to approve no more than single digit (%) annual increases in tuition.

First Environments uses a draft program for tuition that follows the above schedule.

Any family that participates in a FEELC recognized tuition assistance program will be responsible for any charges or tuition that is not covered by their assistance program.

LATE PAYMENT FEE: FEELC reserves the right to charge a late fee of \$10 for any payment or draft that is more than three business days late. Payments that are more than fourteen business days late will constitute notice of intent to cancel enrollment. A fee of \$25 will be charged for each check or draft returned due to insufficient funds.

LATE PICKUP FEE: A fee of \$15 for each 15-minute period past the Center's closing time of 5:30pm will be charged for late pick up.

Fee payments are required whether or not the child is in attendance. Payments will not be adjusted for vacation, sickness, or closure of the Center.

3.3 Withdrawals

To withdraw your child from enrollment at FEELC, it is the Center's policy that parents should:

- Use the Center's withdrawal form to provide written notice of the intent to withdraw from FEELC. Contact the Center's Enrollment Specialist to obtain the withdrawal form, or go to the FEELC website Enrollment page.
- This written notice must be provided 30 days (minimum) prior to the date of withdrawal. In the case of rising Kindergarteners, the Center requires 45 days notice.
- Failure to provide written notice before withdrawal will result in Parents being held responsible for 30 days of tuition costs beyond the date of withdrawal and possibly forfeiture of the security deposit.

To obtain more information about this process, please contact the Center's Enrollment Specialist.

3.4 Special Needs Children and Their Families

First Environments welcomes all children to participate in all areas of our program. The center enrolls children with special needs and challenges. The center, however, does not primarily serve such children.

FEELC reserves the right to ask a parent to withdraw their child from enrollment at FEELC if it is determined that the child cannot be adequately cared for in the Center. In such a case, FEELC may waive the required 30 day notice of intent to withdraw.

3.5 Pre-Enrollment Visit

FEELC would like parents to spend from two to three hours at the Center with their child before the child comes to the center alone. This helps make your child's first experience at our Center a pleasant one. It also gives you an opportunity to get to know the staff. We encourage you to set up a series of "mini" visits (less than one hour). Short stays help your child gain trust in the staff and become familiar with the surroundings. If at all possible, we encourage both parents to accompany the child during these "mini" visits.



3.6 Required Enrollment Information

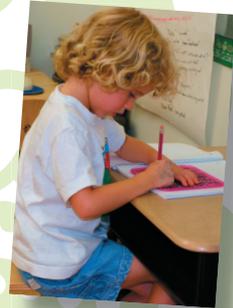
(All forms below are located in the enrollment package given to you upon accepting a spot within FEELC.)

3.6.1 Child's Application for Child Care

This form asks for information about the family like addresses, phone numbers and places of employment. It asks information about your child and emergency care information.

3.6.2 Enrollment Agreement

Included in the parent packet, there is a form that parents should sign to indicate that they have read the handbook and agree to abide by all policies and procedures stated.



3.6.3 Health Data: Medical Form and Immunization Records

Prior to enrollment, your child must receive a physical examination. Our Medical Information Form must be completed prior to enrollment by your child's physician and returned to the center.

It is North Carolina policy that your child receives immunizations in order to attend day care. Therefore, it is extremely important that your child's immunization records be kept up to date. It is the parent's responsibility to bring the Center a copy of their child's immunization records for their files and update them as immunizations occur throughout the year.

3.6.4 Travel and Activity Authorization

The Travel and Activity Authorization form is a blanket permission for staff at First Environments to take your child for a walk outside the fenced-in areas.

3.6.5 Infant's Feeding Schedule

Parents are responsible for letting teachers know their infant's individual schedule. North Carolina law requires that FEELC post these individual infant schedules in your child's classroom. These schedules help ensure your child's needs will be met.

3.6.6 Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Participant Enrollment Form

The Center participates in the Child Care Food Program sponsored by the Department of Public Instruction. The goals and purpose of the program are to promote good nutrition, introduce different types of foods, and help teach good eating habits.

3.6.7 First Environments Website Permission Form

This form gives FEELC permission to use your child's photo on our website.

3.6.8 Discipline and Behavior Management Policy

This agreement states that no child shall be subjected to any form of corporal punishment by the owner/operator, or staff of any day care facility. This policy is in accordance with the goals and philosophy of First Environments as well as the State of North Carolina, Office of Day Care Licensing requirements.

3.6.9 Infant/Toddler Safe Sleep Policy

This states our Center's policy regarding positioning infants/toddlers for safe sleep at First Environments. It states many of our safe sleep practices and what we do to reduce the risk of SIDS. The state requires every Center to have a safe sleep policy.

3.6.10 Media Consent Form

This form is a EPA document that gives permission to use various media forms (i.e. photographs, videotapes, etc..) for non-profit governmental purposes.

3.6.11 Summary of the NC Child Care Law for Child Care Centers

This form is required by the state of North Carolina. It is a brief summary of NC child care law for child care centers. You will need to read and sign it.



4.0 Center Practices and Policies

4.1 Times of Operation

4.1.1 Daily

Operating days and hours will be Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Please pick up your child in time to exit the building by 5:30 p.m. For the safety of our children, parents are asked to leave the property at 5:30 and not to visit on days when the Center is closed. Security cannot distinguish between visiting and loitering and may ask individuals to vacate the area.

4.1.2 Calendar

The following calendar includes important events and closings. As other important events are scheduled for the Center, calendar updates will be distributed and will be posted in the Center.

A sample of closed days (and typical months of occurrence) follows:

- New Year's Day (January)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (January)
- President's Day (February)
- Memorial Day (May)
- Independence Day (July)
- Labor Day (September)
- Columbus Day (October)
- Veteran's Day (November)
- Thanksgiving Day (November)
- Fall Break (The day after Thanksgiving) (November)
- Winter Break (The day before Christmas) (December)
- Christmas Day (December)

When a date to be closed falls on a Saturday, the Center will be closed on the previous Friday. When a date to be closed falls on a Sunday, the Center will be closed on the following Monday.

4.1.3 Special Circumstances

Under certain severe conditions such as inclement weather, facility crisis (i.e. loss of water or power) or national emergency, the Director, in conjunction with the Board, may close the center for the protection of the children and staff. The Center will contact parents through phone, e-mail, and all-hands notices during working hours at NIEHS and EPA so children can be picked up as quickly as possible. Outside of working hours, please call 541-KIDZ (5439) for the center's

operating hours. Emergency situations can be very stressful on children and the staff is trained at maintaining order in a calm and friendly manner. Parent cooperation during these crises is greatly appreciated.

4.2 Attendance

Regular attendance is expected of all children in the program. In order to maintain staff/child ratios, it is important to call the Center if you will not be bringing your child. We also ask that you call the Center should you be bringing your child in later than your scheduled time. We do ask that parents bring children to school in time for morning activities. We know that from time to time schedules may not permit, but it is for the benefit of your child that he/she comes in time for group activities.

4.3 Arrival & Departure

Arrivals and departures are transitional times for children and need to be handled delicately. Your child may cling to you in the morning or cry when it is time for him/her to leave in the evening. Do not take tears as a personal rejection or the clinging as a sign of dislike for the center. This reaction is normal for a young child. We can work together to make these difficult times a little easier for you and your child.

Accompany your child to his/her classroom, wash hands appropriately, and ensure that your child's teacher is aware of his/her arrival. Children should never be left unaccompanied in the parking lot, dropped off at the front entrance, left in the lobby, playground, or halls.

Inform the staff in writing of any special instructions or information that might be needed for that day. We request that you say goodbye to your child rather than merely disappear. Your child may cry briefly, but ultimately will trust you more.

Please enter the Center quietly so as not to disturb the activity in progress. We ask that you remember to be courteous to all of our children. A smile and a friendly greeting are always appropriate.

When picking up your child, we ask that you come into the Center through the front entrance of the building. If your child is outside on the playground, we ask that you let your child's teacher know you are picking him/her up. Children may not be picked up from an outside entrance or over the fence. It is for the safety and security of your child(ren) that we have established these policies.

Since children will not know when they will be leaving, they may be involved in an individual or group activity. Allow your child to "shift gears" by giving him/her a warning period, i.e. "we will be leaving in two minutes" or "after you finish that picture, we will leave." If you need to rush, please call us in advance so that we can help prepare your child prior to your arrival. Please

remember to collect any artwork, soiled clothing, and outerwear in the cubby area on your way out.

In addition to security and employee issues, it is very difficult for young children to understand why they are being picked up late. Parents are strongly encouraged to arrive for pickup prior to center closing. A \$15.00 fine will be assessed for every fifteen-minute period or portion thereof that a parent is picking up their child late.

If a parent is more than one half hour late and has not contacted the center, the front office will attempt to locate the parent. Emergency contact persons will be called to pick up the child as soon as possible. If after one hour, there has been no contact with a parent and no other family member can be located, the center director may decide to contact the Department of Social Services.

** Please note: You will be required to sign your child in and out at the front desk every day.

4.4 Parking

Parking tags (up to 2) will be provided to facilitate parent access to the EPA campus. FEELC has a temporary parking lot in front of the child care center. These designated child care parking spaces are for use while dropping off or picking up your child only. It is necessary that you have the proper identification tag on your car to be able to park in this lot.

4.4.1 Parking Lot Safety

For health, safety and legal reasons, FEELC must insist on the following parking regulations

- Never leave unattended children in your car.
- Park in marked spaces only. This also applies if you are just waiting in the car for someone.
- Do not park along the curb in front of the building. This type of parking can block drivers' and walkers' vision.
- Do not leave the motor running.
- Do not drop children off in the parking lot. Enter the building to drop off and pick up children (including those attending camp).
- Children must be properly restrained in appropriate safety seats when on FEELC property.
- During busy drop-off/pick up periods parents may park in the FEELC Emergency spot. At all other times (9 am-4 pm), This spot is reserved for First Environments' designated vehicles.
- If no parking spots are available, please use the adjacent EPA parking lot.
- Please use the sidewalks when walking into and out of the center and refrain from walking out in the parking lot itself.



4.5 Meals

The Center participates in the Child Care Food Program, sponsored by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The goals of this program are to provide nutritious and appetizing meals and snacks for children, introduce different types of foods and help teach good eating habits. We will avoid serving overly sweet items and encourage children to appreciate the natural flavors of a variety of wholesome foods. Service will be family style with lots of opportunities for children to develop their skill in feeding and serving themselves. Seconds will be available for those children who want more. Our monthly menus will be posted for your convenience.

Children may bring breakfast, lunch and/or snacks from home as long as it meets state nutrition standards. If your child has a food allergy, please make sure that the staff is aware of it; it must be documented, posted and a copy kept in your child's file. We prefer that you bring your infant's breast milk, juice, or water in a plastic bottle. Please label all food items and bottles with your child's first and last name and date.

Your child will receive meals and snacks depending upon the length of his/her stay at the Center. Typically, breakfast is served from 8:45-9:30 a.m., lunch from 11:45 - 12:30 a.m., and afternoon snack from 3:30 - 4:00 p.m. The Center complies with USDA and the School Food Service requirements.



The serving sizes are outlined below:

	1 - 2 yr. old	3 - 5 yr. old
Breakfast		
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Juice, fruit or vegetable	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Slice of bread/cereal	1/2 slice or 1/4 cup	1/2 slice or 1/4 cup
Lunch/Dinner		
Milk	1/2 cup	3/4 cup
Meat/protein	1 oz. or 1/4 cup	1 1/2 oz. or 3/8 cup
2 Vegetables/fruit	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
Bread or equivalent	1/2 slice	1/2 slice
Snack		
Milk, juice, fruit or vegetable	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
Bread product, protein	1/2 slice or 1/2 oz.	1/2 slice or 1/2 oz.

*** First Environment's portions generally exceed the above guidelines.

4.6 Children's Personal Belongings

4.6.1 Infants

Diapers are provided by the Center, so you do not need to bring anything except several changes of clothing for your child.

The Center provides formula for infants. Parents are required to bring bottles with water to be mixed at the Center. Mothers who are breastfeeding can store milk in the classroom refrigerator. Frozen breast milk can be stored in the freezer for up to three months. Opened jar food can be left in the refrigerator for 24 hours. All formula and breast milk (except frozen) not used in a day's time must be taken home. It cannot be left at the Center overnight.



Parents who prefer a type or brand of diaper, formula, or baby food not provided by the Center may bring such items at their own expense.

4.6.2 Toddlers and Preschoolers

Dress your child in clothing that is washable and comfortable. When children are hard at work and play, they do get dirty. We view this as a part of healthy growth and development. Some of the “most fun” and best learning activity materials are sand, water, mud, paint and play dough. These will be available to your child regularly.

Please bring several changes of clothing if your child is under the age three. During toilet training time, we request you send your child in clothing that he/she can manage by his/herself. Toddlers and preschoolers need an extra set of clothes, a sweater, and appropriate seasonal clothing for active outdoor play (mittens, boots, bathing suit, etc.). Appropriate shoes for running, climbing and playing are needed (flip-flops and thong sandals are inappropriate).

Toys belonging to your child may be damaged or misplaced at the Center, so we ask that your child leave these items at home. We will provide enough materials for all the children. We do encourage children to share nature, books, and special interest items with us. Children may choose to bring a special interest item for show and tell; however, guns and weapons of any sort are not appropriate and will not be allowed in the Center.

If your child has a “special” blanket or “comfort” item that he/she likes to use at rest time or bedtime, please feel free to bring it. It is most important that you plainly label all your child's clothing and personal items in permanent ink. The Center cannot be responsible for items not labeled.

4.7 Birthday Celebrations

Birthdays can play an important role in the life of a youngster. We welcome you to celebrate your child's birthday at the Center. No balloons or gift bags are allowed and food is limited to snack time.

4.8 Toilet Training

When you feel your child is ready to potty train, we will be happy to assist you. Your child may be ready to potty train if he or she is:

Staying dry for several hours

Able to communicate the need to use the toilet

Appears to be aware of wet or soiled diapers

Is in a cooperative mood

There is no definite age when a child is ready, and many toddlers and two-year olds alternate between periods of cooperative and negative behavior. It is our experience that toilet training is best started sometime between 24 and 36 months of age. Both the parent and staff should use the same procedures for training so that they do not confuse the child. If there is too much anxiety or stress, then it may be better for the child to wait and try again at a later time. During potty training, it is very important to dress your child in uncomplicated clothing that the child can easily manage on his/her own and to provide clothing changes.

We would like to reiterate that toilet training in a group affects individual children differently and can actually accelerate or slow your child's training while at the Center.

4.9 Outdoor Play

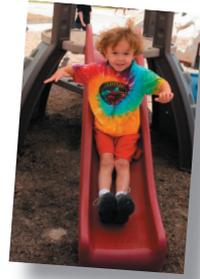
Outdoor play spaces have been designed with the concept of "continuous" play in mind. A variety of challenging activities will stimulate creative and social play. The equipment and designated play areas will provide gross motor activity, which is so important to healthy growth and development. On days when weather will not permit outdoor activity, our multipurpose room will be converted to a gross motor play area. North Carolina State law requires each child to play outside daily, weather permitting.

When ozone levels are in the orange or red ranges, outdoor activities will be restricted. On orange days, outdoor time will be limited to the mornings and all children will be inside by 4p.m. in the afternoon. On red days, children will be outside only in the morning. Parents of susceptible children are encouraged to discuss their child's condition with the classroom teachers.

4.10 Playground Rules

Children may not be out on the playground unless they are being supervised and the appropriate teacher/child ratios are maintained.

Teachers must use good judgment on the number of children to allow to play on one piece of equipment at the same time, suggesting that children take turns, or directing their attention toward other equipment or activities.



All playground equipment must be used appropriately and safely. Teachers are to make periodic checkups, and keep the administrative staff informed as to what pieces of equipment need to be repaired or replaced. Children should not be allowed to play on or with broken or damaged equipment.

4.11 Health and Safety Policies

Summary

FEELC has designated a Health Coordinator, Wendi Boggess (541-4782), who will coordinate all illness and exclusion decisions, questions and communications with parents. For your reference, all incidents of child exclusion will be documented and available upon request.

4.11.1 Illness

If your child has any sign or symptom that requires exclusion from the facility, FEELC follows guidelines set by the NC Licensing Authorities for Childcare facilities and the standard set by the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care (NRC) for Inclusion/Exclusion/Dismissal of Children (standard 3.065 stated in Health Promotion and Protection in Child Care).

Symptoms requiring exclusion include:

- Temperatures of 100°F (measured axillary) or above.
- Significant bodily secretions, including vomiting, diarrhea and persistent discharge from eyes.

Any of these symptoms require the child to be excluded from FEELC for 24hrs, which effectively means the next school day.

Do NOT send a child to FEELC if: they have any of these symptoms.

If your child does not have these symptoms, but you have administered a fever reducing medication (eg. Tylenol), do NOT send your child to FEELC. These medications may mask important symptoms.

Please remember that exclusion of a child for illness is critical to minimize the impact it may have on the child population as a whole.

Parents will also be notified if their child is lethargic or exhibits unusual behavior.

4.11.2 Medication and Medication Forms

Ref: 10A NCAC 09 .0803 ADMINISTERING MEDICATION

The following provisions apply to the administration of medication in child care centers:

- (1) No prescription or over-the-counter medication and no topical, non-medical ointment, repellent, lotion, cream or powder shall be administered to any child:
 - (a) without written authorization from the child's parent;
 - (b) without written instructions from the child's parent, physician or other health professional;
 - (c) in any manner not authorized by the child's parent, physician or other health professional;
 - (d) after its expiration date; or
 - (e) for non-medical reasons, such as to induce sleep.
- (2) Prescribed medications:
 - (a) shall be stored in the original containers in which they were dispensed with the pharmacy labels specifying:
 - (i) the child's name;
 - (ii) the name of the medication or the prescription number;
 - (iii) the amount and frequency of dosage;
 - (iv) the name of the prescribing physician or other health professional; and
 - (v) the date the prescription was filled; or
 - (b) if pharmaceutical samples, shall be stored in the manufacturer's original packaging, shall be labeled with the child's name, and shall be accompanied by written instructions specifying:
 - (i) the child's name;
 - (ii) the names of the medication;
 - (iii) the amount and frequency of dosage;
 - (iv) the signature of the prescribing physician or other health professional; and
 - (v) the date the instructions were signed by the physician or other health professional;and
 - (c) shall be administered only to the child for whom they were prescribed.
- (3) A parent's written authorization for the administration of a prescription medication described in Item (2) of this Rule shall be valid for the length of time the medication is prescribed to be taken.
- (4) Over-the-counter medications, such as cough syrup, decongestant, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, topical antibiotic cream for abrasions, or medication for intestinal disorders shall be stored in the manufacturer's original packaging on which the child's name is written

or labeled and shall be accompanied by written instructions specifying:

- (a) the child's name;
- (b) the names of the authorized over-the-counter medication;
- (c) the amount and frequency of the dosages;
- (d) the signature of the parent, physician or other health professional; and
- (e) the date the instructions were signed by the parent, physician or other health professional.

The permission to administer over-the-counter medications is valid for up to 30 days at a time, except as allowed in Items (6), (7), (8) and (9) of this Rule. Over-the-counter medications shall not be administered on an "as needed" basis, other than as allowed in Items (6), (7), (8) and (9) of this Rule.

- (5) When questions arise concerning whether any medication should be administered to a child, the caregiver may decline to administer that medication without signed, written dosage instructions from a licensed physician or authorized health professional.
- (6) A parent may give a caregiver standing authorization for up to six months to administer prescription or over-the-counter medication to a child, when needed, for chronic medical conditions and for allergic reactions. The authorization shall be in writing and shall contain:
 - (a) the child's name;
 - (b) the subject medical conditions or allergic reactions;
 - (c) the names of the authorized over-the-counter medications;
 - (d) the criteria for the administration of the medication;
 - (e) the amount and frequency of the dosages;
 - (f) the manner in which the medication shall be administered;
 - (g) the signature of the parent;
 - (h) the date the authorization was signed by the parent; and
 - (i) the length of time the authorization is valid, if less than six months.
- (7) A parent may give a caregiver standing authorization for up to 12 months to apply over-the-counter, topical ointments, topical teething ointment or gel, insect repellents, lotions, creams, and powders --- such as sunscreen, diapering creams, baby lotion, and baby powder --- to a child, when needed. The authorization shall be in writing and shall contain:
 - (a) the child's name;
 - (b) the names of the authorized ointments, repellents, lotions, creams, and powders;
 - (c) the criteria for the administration of the ointments, repellents, lotions, creams, and powders;
 - (d) the manner in which the ointments, repellents, lotions, creams, and powders shall be applied;
 - (e) the signature of the parent;

- (f) the date the authorization was signed by the parent; and
 - (g) the length of time the authorization is valid, if less than 12 months.
- (8) A parent may give a caregiver standing authorization to administer a single weight-appropriate dose of acetaminophen to a child in the event the child has a fever and a parent cannot be reached. The authorization shall be in writing and shall contain:
- (a) the child's name;
 - (b) the signature of the parent;
 - (c) the date the authorization was signed by the parent.
 - (d) the date that the authorization ends or a statement that the authorization is valid until withdrawn by the parent in writing.
- (9) A parent may give a caregiver standing authorization to administer an over-the-counter medication as directed by the North Carolina State Health Director or designee, when there is a public health emergency as identified by the North Carolina State Health Director or designee. The authorization shall be in writing, may be valid for as long as the child is enrolled, and shall contain:
- (a) the child's name;
 - (b) the signature of the parent;
 - (c) the date the authorization was signed by the parent; and
 - (d) the date that the authorization ends or a statement that the authorization is valid until withdrawn by the parent in writing.
- (10) Pursuant to G.S. 110-102.1A, a caregiver may administer medication to a child without parental authorization in the event of an emergency medical condition when the child's parent is unavailable, providing the medication is administered with the authorization and in accordance with instructions from a bona fide medical care provider.
- (11) A parent may withdraw his or her written authorization for the administration of medications at any time in writing.
- (12) Any medication remaining after the course of treatment is completed or after authorization is withdrawn shall be returned to the child's parents. Any medication the parent fails to retrieve within 72 hours of completion of treatment, or withdrawal of authorization, shall be discarded.
- (13) Any time prescription or over-the-counter medication is administered by center personnel to children receiving care, including any time medication is administered in the event of an emergency medical condition without parental authorization as permitted by G.S. 110-102.1A, the child's name, the date, time, amount and type of medication given, and the name and signature of the person administering the medication shall be recorded. This information shall be noted on a medication permission slip, or on a separate form developed by the provider which includes the required information. This information shall be available for review by a representative of the Division during the time period the medication is being administered and for at least six months after the medication is administered. No documentation shall be required when items listed in Item (7) of this Rule are applied to children.

4.11.3 AIDS Policy

Children infected with the HIV virus will be eligible for enrollment at the center. The Director, parent and child's physician will determine whether the child will be able to receive proper care at the center, and whether the child poses a threat of HIV transmission to others. Note: most infected children, particularly those under 18 months of age, do not pose a risk to others. Only persistent biting behavior or the presence of exudative skin lesions would be a reason for exclusion. (Reference: The American Academy of Pediatrics).

It will be the Center's policy that the child's and family's rights to privacy are respected. All records of the child's HIV status will be kept strictly confidential. The number of personnel aware of the child's condition will be restricted to those needed to ensure proper care of the child and to detect situations in which the potential for transmission may change.

Day care practices, as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics concerning universal blood and body precautions and procedures, will be routinely followed by all employees.

4.12 Emergencies

In case of an emergency, the staff will follow specific procedures:

Minor Accident:

Classroom teacher will administer first aid

An accident report will be prepared. One copy will go in the child's folder and the other will be given to the parent.

Serious Accident:

Staff member brings child to the Center office if the child can be moved. If the child cannot be moved, then a senior staff member will come to assess the child and Center office is notified immediately.

Rescue squad contacted at 9-911.

The child is taken to the Emergency Room.

The Director or other senior staff member will take the child's folder with him/her to the Emergency Room.

The parents will be called as the child is being taken to the Emergency Room.

An accident report is prepared. One copy will go in the child's folder and the other will be given to the parent.

Emergency contact information must be kept current at all times. Please notify the Director of any change. Our staff receives training in First Aid and CPR. We will contact you or your emergency contact person as soon as possible in the event of an emergency.

4.13 Fire Drills

North Carolina law requires that the Center hold fire drills monthly. During the fire drills, the staff will evacuate all the children. Please do not be alarmed if you hear the drill or happen to be in the Center at a time when a fire drill is taking place.

4.14 Inclement Weather Policy

First Environments makes decisions on whether the Center will operate during inclement weather separate from NIEHS and the EPA. The Board President and the Director take into consideration the road conditions, travel advisories and area schools & business openings/closings. Information will be available on news channel websites and TV, as well as on First Environments inclement weather message line @ (919) 541-KIDZ (5439).

4.15 FEELC Emergency Plan

FEELC has developed an emergency plan to cover situations ranging from severe weather conditions to a widespread RTP area threat. For your convenience, an overview of this plan is at the back of this Handbook (section 6.0). A full copy of the FEELC Emergency Plan is available from the Center office upon request.

4.16 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All staff will comply with the provisions of the Child Abuse Reporting Act by bringing suspected cases of abuse and neglect to the attention of the Director. If necessary, the Director will report the suspected case to the County Department of Social Services.

4.17 Behavior Management Policy

It is the policy of the Center and the laws of the State of North Carolina to neither spank nor physically punish a child. A constructive technique for managing behavior and maintaining a child's self worth should be applied. The Director and administrative team will provide guidance in these skills. The goal of behavior management is to teach the child self-control and self-correcting techniques. Employees are required to sign a statement stating they will follow the FEELC guidelines for child behavior management.

While each child and each behavioral situation is unique, we shall use a few basic management strategies to help the child learn to manage his/her own behavior. For example, we shall focus our attention on positive behavior while ignoring negative behavior. In addition, when negative behavior arises, we shall redirect the child to another activity. When conflicts arise, problem

solving and comforting of feelings will occur. Room arrangement shall be inviting and classroom activities shall be stimulating in order to reduce behavioral problems. Directions or suggestions are stated simply and positively. Actions of the child, not the child's personality, are the focus. Corrective action will be immediate. Consistency will be maintained.

Children will not be isolated, denied food, sleep, or bathroom use due to negative behavior.

Under certain situations, First Environments may require a parent to pick up their child due to aggressive behavior.

The Center's behavior management policy does not allow threats or physical punishment by staff. Parents must abide by the same policy when in the Center. Children are subject to suspension for a period of two weeks should parents violate Center policy. Fees will be required during the two-week suspension to ensure the child's slot is available at the end of the suspended period.

Parents are required to sign a statement on this policy, stating that they have received a copy and agree with this policy. (This form is included in the enrollment package).

Recurrent Uncontrollable Behavior:

It is the goal of FEELC to work proactively and constructively on behavioral issues with each child and family using the strategies described above. However, if a child displays persistent uncontrollable behavior and the above approaches are to no avail, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to remove the child from FEELC immediately. Admitting the child back into FEELC will only occur after appropriate steps have been taken by the parent(s)/guardian(s) to correct the child's behavior, and only after consultation between the Executive Director and the parent(s)/guardian(s).

5.0 Parent Involvement

5.1 Home Center Communication

Parents are the most significant adults in a child's life. We strive to create mutual respect between parents and the center staff; a partnership for the benefit of the child. Our doors are open to parents at all times.

During the year, the Center sponsors events that all parents are encouraged to participate in, such as afternoon festivals, graduation, and luncheons. Suggestions and volunteers are always appreciated.

Calendars are provided on a monthly basis with upcoming events for each classroom. In addition, room parents are encouraged to work with the teachers to distribute classroom specific information.

5.2 Parent Teacher Communication

5.2.1 Weekly Communication

Communication between the parent, child, and teacher is important to ensure a good working relationship. We encourage daily communication between parents and teachers. Parents will receive daily information about their infant's and toddler's progress. For older children, teachers will communicate through daily discussion with parents as well as information boards. Parents are encouraged to visit the classrooms and speak with the teachers as often as possible.

5.2.2 Parent Teacher Conferences

Our responsibility is to communicate with the parents regarding their children's progress. Our primary method of communication is daily information shared between the staff and parents. The preschool staff is required to hold two Parent Teacher Conferences annually. If a child has problem areas, they will be brought to the parents' attention along with the teacher's strategy to correct the problems. It is our experience that when parents and teachers are able to work and plan together for the child's educational progress, the child benefits greatly.



5.2.3 Children's Records

All records kept on your child are confidential. Your child's records include enrollment information, medical information, accident reports, and assessment/progress reports. You have a right to view your child's records. We ask that you call the Center office in advance, if you would like to see the records.

5.3 Parent Visitation

The open-door policy at the Center welcomes parents at any time they wish to visit. Parents are encouraged to visit and to share as many experiences with their children as considered feasible and desirable. It is important for the parent to understand that all may not go smoothly at first. Children may not understand the coming and going of parents and at the beginning may be confused or upset by visits especially when the parents leave. Our staff are trained to understand the children's need for special attention and reassurance during this time. Once the

children are well adjusted to the routine at the Center and to the parents going back to work, visits by the parents can become a truly wonderful experience. This means parents can be more involved with their children's daily lives and activities and can participate more fully in their early learning experiences

When a parent has time and wishes to come to the Center, it is helpful to let the staff participate in the child's preparation for the visit. Otherwise, it may be inconvenient for a parent to wait for the child to disengage from an activity. To the child the interruption could suggest that the child's activity is not very important and that finishing a task is not necessary, so parents are encouraged to call ahead if possible.

Whenever there is a question or a problem regarding visiting the Center or participating with the children, parents are encouraged to confer with the Director or staff.

5.4 First Environments Parents' Organization

5.4.1 Special Interest Areas

The Center encourages parent support and participation, which enriches the program. Parents may work with the classroom teachers, the Director, or Board members to determine areas where volunteers are needed within the Center. One specific volunteer role is that of room parent. Individuals who serve in this capacity serve as a liaison between the teachers, the Board, and the parents.

5.4.2 Required Hours

Each family with a child enrolled in the Center is required to contribute a minimum of six hours per year to the Center. Families who fail to complete their hours by the end of the year will pay a fee of \$50 for each hour not met. Work projects that qualify for parent hours are posted in the classrooms and in the FEELC lobby. It is expected that each family will contribute some of its six hours by participating in such classroom activities as art, music, cooking projects, or sharing special talents.

5.4.3 Penalty Fees

Families who fail to complete their hours by the end of the year will pay a fee of \$50 for each hour not met. For purposes of computing hours, the year starts September 1 and ends August 31. Families will owe 0.5 (1/2) hour for every calendar month or fraction of a month that your child is enrolled in the center.

Parent participation can enhance the quality of the Center without adding to the cost. It is also a

wonderful way to keep in touch with what is going on in your child's life and to provide support for the staff that are creating a nurturing environment for the children. Please contribute of your time as generously as you can.

5.5 Parent Meetings

All parents of children who attend the center will be invited to attend the biannual Parent Organization meetings. These meetings are held in May and November. Next year's budget will be discussed at the May meeting and the November meeting provides a time for updates and discussion on any issues that concern the entire Center.

5.6 Volunteers

Whenever possible, parents are invited to share their time and talents with the children. Please check with your child's teacher, as she/he will know the best time to set up a visit and may suggest materials for you to bring. If you would like to spend time in your child's classroom, or assist with a classroom or center event, contact your child's teacher.

At times, volunteers from the community may be brought in to work with the children. Volunteers provide the center with additional adults, lowering our teacher/child ratio so that children are able to receive more individual attention.

5.7 Parent Conduct

Parents are expected to conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner. The relationship between parents and teachers impacts the wellbeing of all our children and should serve as a role model for healthy, adult interactions. While issues with teachers should not be discussed in front of children, parents should feel that they can communicate their concerns and complaints directly to the caregiver of their child provided it is done in a civilized and considerate manner. Parents may also talk directly to the Director. Displays of anger or hostility are not appropriate. Neither the Director or teachers have the authority to change center policy; issues of policy should be brought before the Board of Directors.

Certain actions are so serious that they will lead to immediate disciplinary action. Such actions include but are not limited to:

- Comments of a sexual nature
- Racial, ethnic or religious slurs
- Violence or inappropriate language
- Smoking or drinking on school property
- Disrespect of the staff, children or other parents



Disciplinary Action

If a parent is in violation of Center Policy, this violation will be brought to the attention of the parent. First time violations or minor incidences may be discussed verbally with the parent by an individual Board member. The Board member, however, shall make it clear to the parent that this is a formal verbal warning and a written record will be kept in the Board minutes. More serious violations or repeated minor violations will result in a written warning from the Board of Directors to the parent. The parent will be asked to formally acknowledge the warning and corrective actions may be required. As a last resort, the Board

may ask a family to leave the center. Timing of the departure will be at the discretion of the Board of Directors. A parent who disagrees with any disciplinary action may submit a written complaint as directed below.

Complaint Resolution and Grievance Policy

In cases where problems or misunderstandings arise, the parent should attempt to resolve the issue through discussions with the teacher involved and the Director. If the parent is unable to resolve the issue in this manner, she/he should contact a Board member and may submit a formal complaint as directed below.

When a parent disagrees with the Director or Board, she/he shall submit the complaint in writing to the Board of Directors. The Board will investigate the situation and determine a resolution. The decision by the Board will be binding and will end all further discussion of the issue.

Any parent who continues to discuss the issue after the Board has determined the resolution will be in a state of non-compliance and subjected to disciplinary action.

5.8 Solicitations Policy

It is our policy at First Environments Early Learning Center that neither parents nor staff may solicit either parents or staff for funds, services, or products that are not specifically related to fund-raising activities for the Center. If a parent or staff member is participating in a fundraiser for another non-profit organization, he/she may request permission from the Board to post notices at the Center. The Board will approve or disapprove such requests on a case-by-case basis.

6.0 Overview of FEELC Emergency Response Plan

This is an overview of the First Environments Early Learning Center's (FEELC) Emergency Response Plan on the EPA Campus. An Inclement Weather and Emergency Hotline has been established to help notify parents of certain situations at FEELC. The number is **541-KIDZ (5439)** and will be updated by staff to keep parents informed. Email and a Parent Phone Tree are other options which may also be used.

There are three basic responses to an emergency situation at the FEELC based on the assessment made by the Executive Director. In an emergency, the Executive Director has the authority to make the determination to 1) Shelter in Place, 2) Evacuate, or 3) Relocate the children and staff.

6.1 Shelter in Place

In certain emergency situations (eg. severe storms, tornadoes, snow, hazardous materials) the need to Shelter in Place may be determined. This action provides short or long term care for children when normal routines are interrupted. This may be temporary until FEELC can resume normal operations or until all children are picked up by parents.

6.2 Evacuation (assembly)

In the event of an evacuation, FEELC children and staff will report to nearby evacuation assembly areas located outside of the facility. This evacuation may be temporary until FEELC can resume normal operations or until all children are picked up by parents.

The four designated assembly areas are:

Infants and One Year Old (Toddlers) Classrooms: evacuate and meet at Assembly Area 1 (grassy island area in front of the facility)

Multipurpose and Kitchen Areas: evacuate and meet at Assembly Area 2 (grassy area in front of the facility on the far side of the bicycle rack)

Two Year Old (Middlers) Classrooms: evacuate and meet at Assembly Area 3 (playground area in the back of the facility along the fence but inside the perimeter of the fence)

Preschool Classrooms: evacuate and meet at Assembly Area 4 (playground area in the very back of the facility inside the perimeter of the fence)

If the evacuation poses an immediate area threat (i.e., bomb threat, flood, other major building problem, etc.), or if the situation is prolonged or if there is inclement weather, the Executive Director, in conjunction with EPA Security, may elect to relocate the children and staff to the Cafe on the first floor of EPA's Building C. EPA Security will escort the children and staff from the assembly areas to the Cafe.

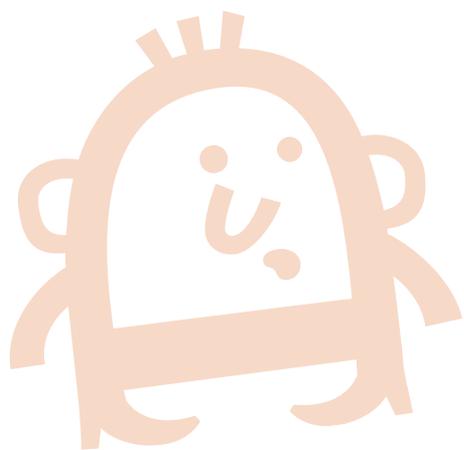
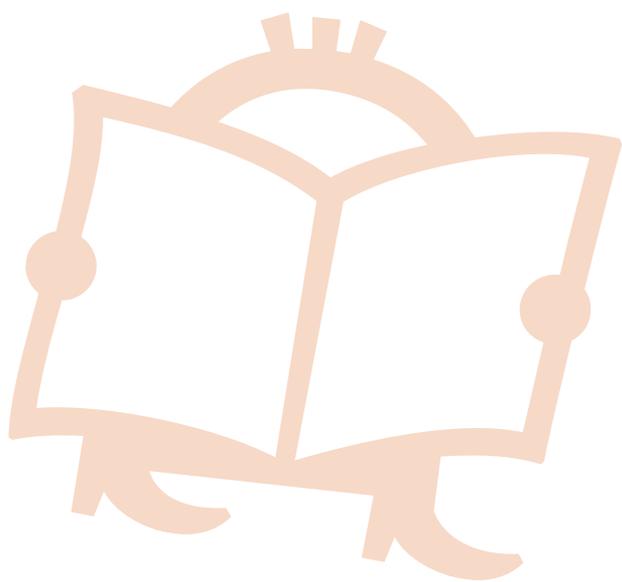
If it becomes necessary for parents to pick up their children from the Cafe, they will be notified via email, telephone, and/or the Inclement Weather and Emergency Hotline, 541-KIDZ (5439). Parents should drive up to the main EPA visitor's parking lot in front of Building C, park their vehicles, and go into the lobby. FEELC staff will coordinate the pickup of the children in the lobby. The children in the Cafe will be escorted by staff upstairs to the lobby to meet up with their parents or designee.

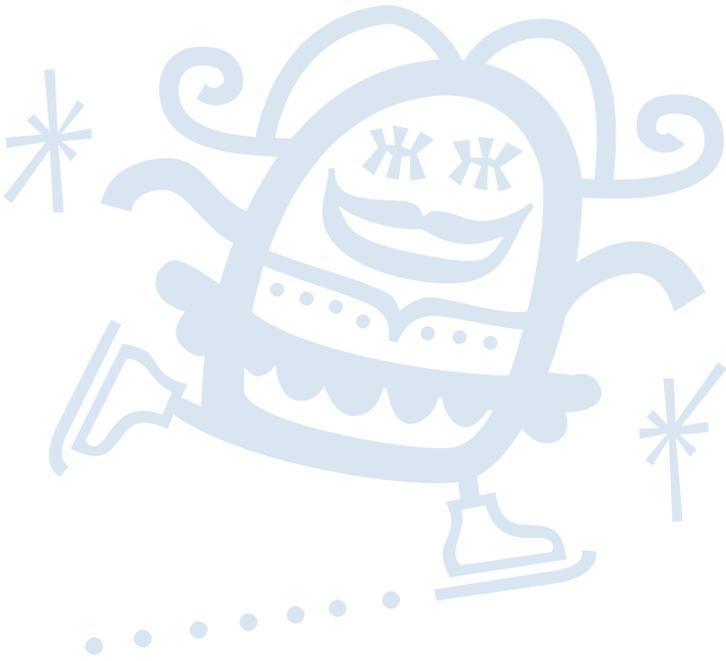
6.3 Relocation

In the event of a more widespread area threat (i.e., sponsor evacuation, chemical spill, widespread fire, etc.) or a mass ordered evacuation (i.e., Code Red Homeland Security Threat), a relocation of FEELC will be necessary. Under such circumstances, children and staff will either be relocated to the Cafe on the first floor of EPA's Building C or relocated elsewhere. It must be stressed that such actions (to relocate off the EPS Campus) will only be taken under extreme situations where the danger to the children is imminent. At the time of such emergency, the Executive Director, upon consultation with EPA Security, will specify the relocation site in and around RTP. Under these circumstances, the Executive Director will keep parents informed via email, telephone, local media, and the Inclement Weather and Emergency Hotline.

FEELC will continue care of all children until they are picked up by the parents or the authorized individual. Thirty minutes after the center closes during an emergency and the child has not been picked up, the staff will call the parents and the authorized individual. One hour after the center has closed and there is still no contact from the parents or the authorized individual, the Department of Social Services (DSS) will be contacted. If help from DSS is not available, the Executive Director will authorize the Preschool Director or one of the Program Coordinators (lead teachers) or herself to take the child(ren) home with them.







first environments

early learning center

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