



**ECRC**

Early Childhood Research Center

# Family Manual

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Thanks to the Administrators at the Child Study and Development Center at the University of New Hampshire for their gracious assistance in developing this manual.

## Our Philosophy & Mission

It is the ECRC philosophy that learning is a developmental process and children learn through play. The Center has adopted a program, which stresses the interaction of social, emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of growth. This program fosters creativity. Development of self-esteem, concern and acceptance for others, curiosity, autonomy, self-motivation, and physical activity are encouraged through staff direction and active play. Children learn to make choices and to be responsible for them. They are encouraged to share, problem solve, and collaborate with each other in a trusting, non-competitive environment. The multi-age classroom nurtures cooperation, camaraderie and a sense of self. The multicultural atmosphere, prepare the children for their lives in a global society.

The mission of the ECRC has four distinct components. First, it provides a model early childhood education program that serves children between the ages two and eight years old. Second, the center serves as a resource for quality enhancement and professional development for early care and education programs and pre-service and in-service teachers of young children. Third, the ECRC is committed to serving the community by partnering with local agencies for purposes of professional development and research. And, finally, the ECRC provides a context in which to enhance the body of knowledge, through research, regarding teaching and child development, while offering an opportunity for professionals to practice developing skills.

### **Early Education Mission**

In concert with national guidelines, the focus of our preschool program is on children learning and developing through child-centered, play-based activities. New York State Preschool Standards are incorporated into developmentally appropriate activities to foster a joy of learning and insure that the children served are well prepared to succeed academically. The center is designed to provide a safe, nurturing environment where the child's physical, mental, and emotional development and well-being are of utmost importance. Our program strives as

well to support families, respect their language and culture, and promote diversity in our classrooms.

### **Teacher Education Mission**

We provide excellent, hands-on teacher preparation in early childhood education in a naturalistic setting, which also offers opportunities to learn about child and family development. Each semester, approximately 40 undergraduate students, enrolled in Supervised Teaching in Early Childhood, complete their practicum experience at ECRC. Our model facility, which includes digital recording and an observation room, provides a setting for practitioners to try new skills, while also receiving support and assistance.

Over 400 students per semester from several departments at UB — including education, psychology, social sciences, occupational therapy, and communication disorders — use the Observation Room to document their experiences, practice specific skills learned in classes, or complete environmental assessments. This affords them the ability to study the children without being intrusive to their play and learning, and hone valuable, practical skills in providing educational services.

### **Community Outreach Mission**

The ECRC is committed to serving the community by providing consultation toward quality early childhood enhancement. Consultation includes program assessment and facilitation of strategic planning, as well as a variety of other areas to meet the needs of early care and education providers and the families they serve. We consult on site or at our center and provide workshops on a multitude of early childhood education topics.

### **Research Mission**

The research mission at the ECRC is to provide a naturalistic setting for researchers to observe and study children, in order to enhance the current body of knowledge relevant to all aspects of early childhood education and development. We have state of the art technology that provides digital data of all research sessions, a flexible schedule, and a diverse population of children that can be part of research studies. We welcome researchers from UB, the community and other institutes as well.

## Program

### **NAEYC Accreditation**

The ECRC is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC accreditation sets the standard for what it means to be a high-quality early childhood program. The program standards are evidence-based and grounded in ten explicit values including the uniqueness of childhood as a developmental phase and the essential role of partnerships with families and communities. For more information regarding NAEYC accreditation please visit [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org).

### **Background & Philosophy**

The Early Childhood Research Center is influenced by a number of philosophies of early childhood education. We must strive to be child-directed and allow the child's interest to guide our communication and play, as Maria Montessori did. Constructivism, with an emphasis on supporting children in building their own knowledge, is a central tenet at the ECRC. This means that teachers facilitate a positive environment with opportunities for play and learning through guided-play and scaffolding. We learned about the importance of planning, reflection, and documentation of experiences through art from the Reggio-Emilia approach. These too are important opportunities that we should incorporate into our routine. The Waldorf approach emphasizes a spiritual aspect of each person and a commitment to natural elements. We strive to meet the needs of the whole child and provide them with opportunities to connect with nature at the ECRC. All of these approaches embrace childhood.

Family involvement is essential for optimal development of children because it integrates the experiences of home with the experiences in early childhood programs. It is our responsibility to develop or to strengthen a positive working relationship with parents so that children's optimal development can occur. Family involvement promotes and supports children's learning and development and enables the growth and development of parents and teachers in a mutually beneficial environment.

### **Admission of Children**

Admission to the ECRC is open to all children in the WNY community, including children of University students, faculty, and staff. Enrollment is generally assigned on a first come, first served basis. When a class roster reaches capacity, a waiting list is started prioritized by date the child was added to the wait list. Children may be admitted from the ECRC waiting list at any time openings become available.

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act the Early Childhood Research Center does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, ethnicity, national origin or physical/developmental disability. Our center, both the indoor and outdoor classrooms, are equipped to support children with physical disabilities, with access to a portable wheelchair ramp and elevators to the entrance of the center. If the nature of a child's disability requires special therapy or special staffing, the child may enroll once these arrangements are made.

### **Tuition for Children**

A \$150 non-refundable deposit is required to hold your child's placement and will be deducted from the total tuition due. Deposits are due upon enrolling your child in the academic or summer program and can be made at the following e-pay link: <https://profschools-buffalo.nbsstore.net/ecrc-enrollment-deposit-150-per-student>

Tuition statements will be emailed during the first weeks of program and are based on the number of sessions your child attends each semester. Tuition is also available on our web site (<http://ecrc.buffalo.edu>) and on the enrollment application. Tuition can be paid online using our e-pay system: <https://profschools-buffalo.nbsstore.net/ecrc-enrollment-tuition>.

### **Claiming Tax Credit**

The ECRC, as an entity of the University at Buffalo, is a non-profit organization. Our tax ID number is 14 602 3200 for reporting these expenses toward the federal dependent care credit on your income tax returns or dependent care expenses. Please request a tax letter from our Associate Director, Dr. Keely Benson.

### **Classroom Descriptions and Hours of Operation**

The ECRC follows the University schedule and has a academic year (fall and spring) and summer program. Each session, a calendar is provided to indicate ECRC's schedule of classes, specials and holidays for each session.

During the academic year, the ECRC preschool provides a morning and full day program (Preschool and PreK only). The Toddler class meets Monday through Friday morning, from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. The Preschool and PreK groups meet Monday through Friday morning from 8:30 am to 11:30 am. Additionally, we do have full day spots for our Preschool and PreK children Monday through Thursday from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm and Friday 8:30 am to 11:30 pm.

During the summer session, the ECRC provides morning program only. Toddler (ages 2-3), Preschool (ages 3-4), PreK (ages 4-5), and School Age (ages 5-8) groups meet Monday through Friday morning, from 9:00am – 12:00pm.

### **Full Day**

The ECRC does have a full day program for our Preschool and PreK students. However, our full day spots are limited.

At about 12pm, the children sit down for lunch as a group. Lunch is provided by the family and should be peanut free. We do suggest including an ice pack in your child's lunch box if items need to be kept cold.

After the children finish lunch, the children are provided support to use the bathroom and then to lay down for nap or rest. Our Preschool students (3-4 year olds) are encouraged to nap and have individual cots labeled with their name and nap items (blanket and pillow with pillowcase). The lights are dimmed and nap time music is played during this time to make sure each child is comfortable. Our PreK group (ages 4-5) are encouraged to rest their bodies and are provided individual napping mats labeled with their name and a blanket, pillow and pillowcase.

### **Transition to the Next Classroom**

The majority of transitions to new classrooms occur at the beginning of the fall semester or spring semester. If a space is to become available at a different point during the school year, teachers and administrators work together with families to decide if there is a child within the Center ready to move before looking at the waiting list.

Decisions about whether children can transition to the next classroom are based on developmental abilities, space availability, and chronological age. We strive to move children with a cohort of peers, at least one friend or more. We believe this familiarity of a peer allows

children more comfort when entering a new physical environment as well as the many benefits of strong social relations.

### **Calendar and Closures**

At the beginning of each academic year families will receive a calendar of events for the ECRC. The ECRC follows the University at Buffalo calendar for holidays, as opposed to a public-school calendar. We are closed during the week of final exams and through all University academic breaks.

### **Arrival & Dismissal**

The morning session begins at 8:30 AM. Between 8:30 and 8:45 AM, a teacher from each classroom will be available above the playground to retrieve children from their parents.

Families arriving past 8:45 AM are asked to please park and bring their child down to their classroom. Please be sure to sign your child in with a staff member so that we are aware of your child's arrival.

ECRC staff will bring children out to the parents/guardians at the end of the day. The administration and staff recognize that everyone has an occasional emergency (i.e. accident, delay due to serious inclement weather, car problems or illness). Families are requested to develop a contingency plan to address the pick-up of their children should such an emergency arise. Parents should call to alert the staff to such emergencies as soon as possible at 716-645-2379.

In the event of inclement weather, arrival and dismissal are moved indoors to the lobby of Baldy Hall or the individual classrooms. Once arrival and dismissal are moved indoors (usually January through March), the families will be notified via email.

Our teachers believe that it is important for children to participate in the first large group circle, typically around 9:00 AM. These circle times are important in building a learning community, orienting children to the plan for the day, and checking in with the group. By having all the children at the first circle time, teachers are able to focus their energy and attention on engaging children in the various learning activities.

### **Late Policy**

We understand that circumstances occasionally arise that would cause you to be late to pick up your child. Please do your best to give the ECRC a call in the event that you would be late (716-645-2379).

If you are consistently late, a fee will be added to your tuition based on the following scale:

- 0-15 minutes: \$15
- 15-30 minutes: \$30

If you are more than 30 minutes late and we have not heard from a family member, we are required to call proper authorities.

## Staff

### **Administrative Team**

The ECRC Administrative Team includes the Director, Dr. X. Christine Wang, who is responsible for the strategic leadership of the center, the Associate Director and Dr. Keely Benson, who manages the daily operations. Brief biographies can be found on our web site [www.ecrc.buffalo.edu](http://www.ecrc.buffalo.edu).

Additionally, each classroom has a full-time teacher, an Early Childhood Lead. Our three Early Childhood Leads are Alice Cady (Toddler), Michael Sheridan (Preschool), and Julianna Walker (PreK). All three of these lead teachers have at least a Master's Degree in Early Childhood Education.

### **Teaching Teams**

In addition to our Early Childhood Leads, our classroom teams may include part-time co-teachers, Student Teachers, Interns and Volunteers. Teachers have at least a bachelor's degree in Early Child Education or related fields. Biographies of our current teachers and schedules can be found at [www.ecrc.buffalo.edu](http://www.ecrc.buffalo.edu).

Most of our classrooms also have a student teacher from the Graduate School of Education. These teachers are being mentored by the Early Childhood Leads, as they are in their last year of the Master's program.

All staff exceed minimum standards for working in an early education setting in New York State, pass a background check, and are fully oriented to our policies and programs.

As a major element in meeting our teacher preparation mission, each class has student interns whose task is to develop their skills in teaching young children. Interns are upperclassman who have completed at least one class in child development, in addition to achieving at least junior status at UB. Interns receive guidance, support and coaching from the Early Childhood Leads in a structured and on-going way to help them develop their abilities and determine if teaching young children is their calling.

## **Staff Qualifications**

We are fortunate to have a highly qualified teaching staff. Currently, all teachers meet or exceed the New York State Standard for the position they hold. In addition, they have completed a rigorous screening and interview process. An annual physical and TB screening is also required for employment in our program. Our teaching staff maintains American Red Cross certification in Infant & Child CPR and Pediatric First Aid, are expected to adhere to the NAEYC Code of Ethics, and participate in on-going staff development opportunities, such as attending credit-bearing coursework, conferences, regular staff meetings, and workshops. All members of our Teaching Teams sign a detailed confidentiality statement and wear nametags. Please feel free to introduce yourself!

## Curriculum

### Curriculum Philosophy and Framework

The ECRC philosophy and pedagogical approach is rooted in constructivist theory and practice. Our center has been inspired by the ideas of early educators in *Reggio Emilia*, Italy, that emphasize the social construction of knowledge, the inquiry process of long term investigations by learners, the role of symbolic languages in developing understanding, and the importance of reflecting family and culture in our environments. The children's program is built upon the belief that children learn best when provided rich experiences that encourage collaborative inquiry and study of the world in which they live. We seek to create a learning context that is relevant and meaningful to the lives of the children in the classroom. Diverse materials and media should be provided to them to support the many ways children represent knowledge. Our primary goal is to create a pedagogy of *collaborative inquiry* – one in which teachers, children, and parents construct knowledge as processes of learning are developed that support inquiry (e.g., resourcefulness, critical thinking, problem-solving, autonomy, and deliberate attention).

We strive to create group experiences in which children will develop relationships with people, materials, and space from which discoveries can be made. It is the responsibility of teachers and interns to purposefully create and provoke rich experiences for child discovery and to extend previous, more serendipitous experiences that occur at home, school, and the greater community.

Taking a responsive curriculum approach, we must act as learning partners and modify our practice in response to children's questions, theories, and misconceptions.

### Our Vision and Goals for Children

We are committed to supporting each child at the ECRC to:

- Develop curiosity, a sense of wonder, and a life-long love of learning;
- Be an effective communicator through language, literacy, and diverse forms of representation;
- Solve meaningful and challenging problems;

- Have a confident sense of self and an understanding of diversity in the world;
- Be a respectful and competent friend, community-member, and citizen.

### **Curriculum Investigations**

We must explore, observe, and converse with children about issues and questions that engage their interest and curiosity. Investigations consist of study and discoveries about the many components of a particular topic or idea a child or children want to pursue. In addition, many of the topics emerge (with our support) from the cultural, environmental, social and historical setting that makes the ECRC unique. Within this inquiry-based curriculum, multiple media (paint, collage, drawing, writing, etc.) is used to further the process of learning in all areas of curriculum and development. These areas are intertwined as adults and children travel together along this exciting road of learning. We must support children's autonomy, encourage and celebrate their individual strengths, and respect their need for nurturance and guidance.

### **Curriculum Documentation**

Our curriculum documentation process involves an ongoing cycle of adults asking questions, collecting data (e.g. photos, video, anecdotes, conversations), analyzing, developing curriculum and sharing what they uncover with others. Drawing on inspirations from early educators in *Reggio Emilia, Italy*, we use documentation as a tool to acknowledge, respect and value the capabilities, intentions and development of children. Documentation displays present children's work and development in a thoughtful, organized, manner with the children and their work as the focal point. Displaying the documentation throughout the school helps to educate visitors and families about what we do and about the capabilities of young children.

### **Reflecting Culture and Respecting Diversity**

We must ensure that our practices are both *anti-bias and culturally relevant*. Classroom environments and curriculum should be continuously reviewed to ensure that materials and activities are intentional in promoting a community that is diverse and inclusive. Anti-bias practices focus on supporting children to answer their questions about similarity and difference, develop tools for identifying and combating bias, and engaging children in social activism in developmentally appropriate ways in the classroom and community. We seek to

reflect family and cultural values and practices in our classrooms and dialogue respectfully with families when alternatives need to be negotiated.

### **The Role of External Standards**

Efforts to ensure greater accountability in the public schools have led to the development of frameworks that articulate learning expectations for children at different grade levels. Most notable in these efforts is the *New York State PreKindergarten Learning Standards* legislation that led to states and school districts establishing grade level expectations for the PK-12 years with a focus on language arts and mathematics. Critics of these frameworks point to the increasing use of formal testing and the resulting narrowing of the public-school curriculum as teachers feel pressured to “teach to the test.” In 2002, the *Good Start Grow Smart* Federal initiative required states to develop early learning guidelines for the preschool years. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) advises that in order to be effective, early learning standards need to address all areas of a child’s development, recognize the importance of individual differences in ability and interests, and be responsive to socio-cultural background.

At the ECRC we use an emergent, negotiated curriculum model in which teachers develop goals for children based on what they have learned about the specific children in their classroom, their families and cultures, as well as the unique qualities and ecology of the surrounding community.

In this model the curriculum includes initial core values, broad goals and intentions for children’s learning, but it is not pre-determined by external standards. Instead, teachers must work actively to uncover, document, and respond to children’s ideas, questions and problems, and then develop curriculum in response. By doing this, we naturally incorporate the New York State PreK Learning Standards, but we do not let these standards prescribe our curriculum.

At the ECRC we are also committed to supporting children in making a smooth transition to the public-school system. We believe that we can do this best by providing children with a broad-based and meaningful education, while also helping the children to be familiar with and competent in the expectations they will encounter in school settings. Teachers should have a working knowledge of the appropriate learning standards for the age and developmental level

of children in their classroom and for the following developmental level. These include the NYS Early Learning Guidelines. In addition, the ECRC teachers must draw on and reference other published developmental guidelines such as the *National Council of Teachers of Mathematics* (NCTM) Standards, *Ages and Stages* and the *Creative Curriculum* developmental continua among others.

Rather than prescribing the content and methods of teaching at the ECRC, external frameworks are used as a tool for informing our choices about curriculum direction and as an important guide in assessment of children's learning. For instance, teachers might identify through their observations that the preschoolers are engaged in learning more about how light creates shadows in the playground. Teachers would discuss what questions children have about light and develop experiences that support children to investigate these questions. As part of this planning process, teachers would also identify appropriate learning goals based on their knowledge of children's development and a review of external standards. For instance, a teacher might decide to ensure that the activities include opportunities for children to develop the ability to share ideas and to acquire an understanding of specific mathematical concepts. Research and experience confirm that the course of learning and development varies greatly during the early years and that an effective model of early education has its foundation in an in-depth knowledge of the unique qualities of every child in the classroom.

## Assessment

### **Assessment**

#### *Initial Parent Questionnaire:*

Families are asked to complete a questionnaire, the 'Getting to Know You' form, at the beginning of each year. The responses provide teachers with important information and insights regarding individual children and their prior experiences, family culture, and learning goals.

#### *Observation and Checklists:*

Skillful, systematic observation of children engaged in play and activity throughout the year is central to our work at the ECRC. Observations are often intended to identify children's questions and theories as the basis for developing curriculum investigations. Teachers' record anecdotal observations of significant interactions and then transfer them to folders or portfolios organized according to curriculum areas, developmental domains, or individual children's interests. Observation checklists, arranged according to typical developmental pathways, are also used as a short-hand way to collect specific developmental information regarding individual children.

#### *Evidence of Learning:*

We collect a variety of documentation materials that show evidence of children's learning. These materials include selected digital photos and video, children's products and representations (e.g., drawings), and transcriptions of key comments or conversations. Often the focus is on collaborative efforts between children that provide us with insight into designing curriculum that is relevant to the children. Documentation is more than collecting "artifacts," it includes careful analysis by the teachers in order to figure out children's questions, strengths, and challenges. Documentation (e.g., photos, transcripts of conversations, etc.) is regularly shared with children to encourage self-reflection. Teachers will also create displays and portfolios for families to review.

#### *Individual Portfolios:*

We also use a portfolio structure to collect information regarding children's development across the year. A portfolio is typically organized by areas of development (e.g. physical) or learning domains (e.g. literacy) and include representative samples of children's work collected throughout the year or photos of them accomplishing milestones.

Included in the portfolios is a developmental narrative regarding each child's overall development during each semester or session, e.g. fall, spring, and summer. These reports, intended to provide a detailed story about the child, form the basis for further discussion and sharing of information with parents.

#### *Classroom Teaching Team Meetings:*

Classroom teachers meet at least weekly to discuss and analyze their ongoing documentation of children's learning and plan future curriculum. Teachers should decide on the area of development that the observation and documentation will be focused for the coming week.

#### *Parent-Teacher Meetings:*

At least one member of the teaching team formally conferences with parents/guardians on two occasions during the year, if parents would like, using portfolios, developmental checklists, and other assessments as supporting documentation. At these meetings, we look at the forms of assessment together and discuss student progress or any questions/concerns the family may have.

#### *Diagnostic Testing:*

Based on ongoing informal assessments, ECRC teachers, in collaboration with families, may identify the need for more formal assessments and testing. **ECRC teachers never diagnose** a developmental delay or concern. Appropriate intervention specialists from the school district, county or other agency conduct an initial screening and, if indicated, proceed with further assessments and standardized testing (most often involving observation of children performing specific tasks). Results are used in conjunction with teachers and parent assessments when making decisions.

### **Children with Special Rights and Needs**

An important goal for the ECRC is to strengthen our ability to serve all families and their children, regardless of ability. We are committed to accommodate children with special rights. The Center Associate Director and Curriculum Coordinator are our Special Rights Coordinators at the ECRC. The focus on “rights” is borrowed from the work of early educators in Reggio Emilia, Italy where every child is believed to have the right and capability to participate and contribute.

Teachers should consult with an ECRC administrator during the initial steps of identifying a potential challenge and work closely with families throughout the process. Assessment can be provided anytime to help identify a potential need. Children under three years of age are provided with assessments and an Individualized Family Services Plan, if eligible, by the local Health Department. Children three years of age and older are assessed and provided with a plan as needed by their local school district in collaboration with the ECRC. These plans could include access to inclusive services provided at the ECRC, specialized home-based or specialized district-based services. In some situations, families may need to use health insurance to pay for specialist services at the ECRC.

The Center reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child from the Center if it is in the best interest of the child and the Center.

### **Exclusion/Suspension Policies**

Our center is highly committed to keeping children enrolled and not excluding them or suspending them. However, for extreme circumstances or situations (i.e. injury to the child or others, property damage), the child may be asked to leave the program. There also may be circumstances when the developmental needs of a child are not in line with what our center can provide. If a child must be asked to leave, the center and family will make every effort to obtain any services that are needed and find a suitable placement for the child. This is rare, and we try very hard to avoid it.

Exclusion or suspension will only be considered when all other possible interventions have been exhausted.

#### **Steps that will be taken before a child is asked to leave the program:**

- A intervention and support plan for the child will be set up with staff and family.

- If the situation does not improve after these interventions, a professional evaluation (through the local Health Department or the child's school district) will be recommended. This evaluation can provide insight into the reason for the child's struggles and will deem if the child is eligible for services such as Special Education (SEIT), Occupational Therapy (OT), Physical Therapy (PT) or Speech and Language support.
- If the child is eligible for support services, the ECRC staff and service providers will work closely together.
- If behavior becomes increasing aggressive and the child is severely hurting themselves or others, the family may be asked to come and pick their child up.
- If the child continues to struggle and/or the behavior persist, the child will be asked to leave the program. In this situation, the ECRC staff would provide the family support in identifying another appropriate program for their child.

## Day-to-Day Experiences

### Behavior Guidance and Setting Limits

ECRC teachers, interns, and volunteers work proactively with children to develop a caring community in which there is respect for each other and the environment. This process may include developing classroom expectations and taking on classroom responsibilities. Based on our knowledge of each child's developmental level, we must support children to be able to make good choices and to think through conflicts. We also seek to understand why the child may be behaving in a certain way. In many situations we are able to offer an alternative, but acceptable option that meets the same goals. Our first step in supporting children to act responsibly and to abide by reasonable limits is to provide a challenging and meaningful curriculum. We also want children to learn how to work through conflict with peers that is respectful and leads to collaboration.

When limits are challenged, we should first engage the child (or children) in problem-solving the situation to see if they can identify the problems and find a solution. If our intervention is needed, we phrase things positively, clearly, and, if needed, firmly, rather than using commands or negative phrases to redirect children. Provide some explanation as to WHY certain limits are being set, so the children begin to understand the reasoning. Providing a choice for children is ideal because they then feel more in control of the decision and thus take more ownership of their behavior. Be sure the child is redirected to a positive activity so they remain engaged. Pointing out what you would like the child to do as an alternative to a challenging behavior is helpful. After that, move on.

While prevention is the most effective and positive method of classroom management, we use guidance or redirection when challenging behaviors occur. We do not use any type of punishment including time-out, although children may be required to choose another activity or space in the classroom if they are experiencing problems. We believe that physical punishment of children, such as hitting, spanking, slapping, along with shaming, ridiculing, teasing, rough handling, or forcing a child to complete a task, is never acceptable.

The Center reserves the right to require a child be withdrawn from the program if the child's behavior is determined to be detrimental to the program or if the health and safety of other children or staff is compromised or jeopardized. Our goal at the ECRC is to limit the use of suspension, expulsion and other exclusionary measures. Suspension or expulsion from the Center will culminate only after all appropriate acceptable guidance techniques and approaches have been exhausted, and both the family and Center agree that another setting would be more beneficial for the child. We believe communication between the Center and the families is essential, and for this reason, expulsion will not be considered until the family and the Center meet to discuss other options for the family such as alternative placement or childcare. In line with federal and state civil rights laws, we guarantee that all children at the ECRC receive equal treatment and we do not discriminate against families.

### **Celebrations & Holidays**

The ECRC uses the following values/goals in making decision about celebrations:

- In order to ensure all feel welcome and included, it is important to acknowledge practices and values that are important to families and to find ways to make these visible in our environments.
- Each family reflects larger cultural practices and values in their own unique ways as "home culture." Families (and children) should take the initiative in sharing home culture in the classroom.
- Building strong relationships of respect and trust with families is an essential building block to being able to share culture in the classroom.
- Teachers are "real people" who also bring their cultural identity into the classroom in various ways.
- It is important that colleagues, children and families get to know teachers beyond their "teacher" role.
- We realize that as "teachers" we hold a position of power/authority in the classroom community and need to be mindful not to present or initiate discussions and activities related to religion or culture that could exclude or offend families.

- We are conscious that we must consider the pervasiveness of dominant (majority) religious and cultural practices and values in our community and ensure that all families feel included at the ECRC.
- There is a negative impact of consumerism, classism, and the mass media on young children that is often associated with cultural celebrations. We must work to minimize this within our environment.
- Children’s spirituality is valued and we should foster this through numerous practices. Spirituality and religion are not the same.
- Any celebration of cultural practices should be developmentally appropriate, meaningful to young children, and child oriented - just as we seek to do with all curricula.

### **Birthdays**

Parents may provide a special store-bought snack for their child’s class, accommodating children’s allergies, to celebrate their birthday. Our families are always welcome to join the class in celebrating their child’s special day.

### **Field Trips**

The surrounding community is an important resource in extending the curriculum and providing children with opportunities to learn about people and places in their “neighborhood.” Parents grant permission for recurring trips using the Parent Letter of Understanding. This grants permission for us to go on walks and visit different areas on campus. Permission will be granted for off campus trips with a specific permission slip for that trip.

### **Classroom Photos**

The ECRC offers the opportunity for a professional school picture to be taken each fall. There is no obligation for children to have a picture taken. During the year teachers often share digital documentation of children engaged in activities and this may include informal group photographs as well.

## Communication

### **Confidentiality**

The ECRC operates as a community in which the building of trusting relationships between families and center personnel is important to the quality of our programs, the delivery of a developmentally appropriate curriculum, and our mission as a research and teacher training laboratory. To be in compliance with federal and state regulations and to respect the privacy of everyone, confidentiality of information is of primary importance at our center.

### **Child and Family Records**

1. All child/family records are confidential and kept in secure cabinets.
2. Only regular staff members have access to children's records on an educational or administrative need to know basis. Other staff/students/faculty view files only under the supervision of an administrator or staff member. Parent permission is secured as required.
3. Parent questionnaires and developmental records may be reviewed at the ECRC by interns and student workers for children in their assigned classroom with permission from the classroom teacher.
4. All ECRC staff, interns and volunteers sign a confidentiality policy form.
5. Parents/guardians can review records of their own child in the ECRC office.
6. Under no circumstances should records be left out unattended.
7. The status of children and families is discussed in an appropriately private space only by ECRC personnel who are working with or have a legitimate educational need regarding that child or family.
8. Limited information regarding a medical condition of a child that is necessary for the safety of the child (e.g., allergy information) is provided as needed to personnel working directly with children.
9. Personal information regarding children and families is only shared as needed or requested by the family/staff and with respect to the privacy of each individual.

10. Information about families and children may not be released to other agencies or individuals without written permission from the parent/guardian. Current law permits the ECRC to transfer educational records to an appropriate public school.

### **Research and Teacher Training**

1. ECRC Parents/Guardians sign a release on admission to ECRC which stipulates the use of educational documentation (e.g. photos, children's work) by staff and students, and the use of photographs by ECRC, UB and the media. When prior permission is not given, the ECRC will seek verbal approval to the extent possible.
2. All research projects that require UB Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission will also be reviewed and approved in writing by the ECRC Associate Director.
3. All research projects involving direct collection of data from children/families require prior parent written informed consent and, as needed, oral consent from the child.
4. When writing for college assignments and other research, students and researchers use only the child's first name, initials, and a date of birth.
5. Visitors to the ECRC are not permitted to take photographs that include children's faces, except with parent permission.

The ECRC website provides a resource of information regarding the history, activities, and policies of our center.

### **Newsletters**

A center-wide newsletter is published monthly. Newsletters include logistical information (remembering outdoor clothing, tuition reminders, etc.), but primarily focus on curriculum information, documentation, and relevant pieces on child development.

### **Parent/Guardian Meetings**

Each year the ECRC hosts a center-wide evening meeting for parents on a topic of current interest related to our curriculum. Recent meetings have focused on fostering literacy development, emergency planning, and safety. In addition, each classroom provides a schedule of events intended to encourage family participation in our programs.

### **Conferencing with Parents/Guardians**

Scheduled conferences are held with parents/guardians on two occasions each year (mid-semester in fall and spring) to discuss the child's development and experiences at the ECRC. We encourage a reciprocal dialogue in which observations and insights are shared from home and center. The ECRC teachers and administration also often informally meet with a parent in-person, by e-mail, or over the telephone, as part of an ongoing commitment to communication and building a collaborative relationship. Conferences may be initiated by a parent outside of the bi-annual scheduled conferences.

### **Communicating Children's Progress**

The communication of children's progress is carried out in a number of ways: home-school journals, developmental narratives, portfolios, parent-teacher meetings among others. Please also see the section on *Assessment* in this booklet.

### **Family Language Goals and Translation**

Currently about 9 languages other than English are spoken in the homes of the children attending the ECRC. We are inclusive and supportive in assisting families to maintain language traditions. We also recognize that language is an integral element of culture and identity. In pursuing this goal we consider (1) the family's goals regarding maintaining the home language and learning English, and (2) best practice for ensuring that all families are able to participate fully in our programs through accessible communication tools.

Teachers are encouraged to dialogue with families regarding their goals and our willingness to support the use of languages other than English. We also need to know if a parent/guardian will need access to a translator for meetings or translation of key ECRC documents. Teachers are also encouraged to access materials (books, songs, games, etc), learn basic phrases and words, and to reach out to families and the community to include multiple languages in the typical classroom schedule (including ASL) even when all the children speak English.

### **Negotiating Difficulties/Differences**

As we, both the ECRC staff and you, as the parent, work together to care for and provide support for your child's growth and development, we may disagree on approaches to best

support your child. If conflicts arise, we aim to come to a compromise with your child's best interest at the forefront. To resolve conflicts, we first:

1. Work together in meetings with the parents/caregivers and child's teaching team.  
These parent-teacher conferences will be documented to discuss the issue at hand and each parties stance/reasoning. Our main goal is to work with you, as you know your child best, and we hope that we can come up with a solution together.
2. As a mediator and support to both parties, the Associate Director and/or Curriculum Coordinator will join the next meeting.
3. Finally, if we still cannot come up with a compromise, our Director will join the last meeting to help make final decisions.

### **Advisory Board**

#### *Purpose and Activities:*

The purpose of the board is to promote the Early Childhood Research Center in the University and greater community. The committee can serve to enhance communication with stakeholders and advise the Administration Team regarding issues related to the Center and its families. The Director reports on the activities of the center, including annual survey results, outlines proposed initiatives, and seeks input from members regarding center policies and activities. The committee may take the lead or facilitate fund-raising and volunteer activities intended to support major projects or initiatives.

AB representatives act as a conduit for information and feedback between the ECRC administration and families. This is not a formal decision-making body and does not have oversight or responsibility for the center budget. Funds raised by the board are deposited in a UB Foundation Account and are distributed for identified activities outside of the general budget.

#### *Structure:*

The AB consists of the Director, the Associate Director, the Curriculum Coordinator, a parent representative from each classroom, a Fisher-Price Executive, community stakeholders with expertise specific to the needs of the ECRC, at least one tenure track Early Learning faculty member, and a researcher in Early Childhood Development. Parents are invited to let their teacher/s or the Associate Director know that they are interested in being a representative. Any

parent or teacher may attend and participate. Agenda items are sent by the Director prior to the meetings, which are held each semester during the academic year.

**Annual Evaluation and Feedback**

An evaluation of program quality is completed annually, usually in April. Families, teachers, and interns are asked to provide information about their experiences with the ECRC, in terms of strengths and needs. The feedback is summarized and discussed with teachers and the Advisory Committee. A copy of the summary is emailed to all families.

## Health

### **Reporting Accidents and Illnesses**

If an injury occurs at the center a form will be filled out for parents to read and sign. This procedure is to ensure that parents have all information regarding the incident. If the child's injuries are more serious than what would be expected from typical activity in the class, the parent should be notified of the injury immediately to determine if they would like to pursue medical attention prior to the scheduled end of the child's class.

### **State Mandated Reporting of Child Abuse & Neglect**

As New York early childhood teachers and staff, we are mandated reporters. This means that if we have any suspicion of abuse or neglect that we are required to report it immediately. If a staff member is accused of child abuse or neglect, they will be placed on administrative leave while an internal investigation takes place, as is consistent with the appropriate Collective Bargaining Agreement.

### **Staff Training in CPR and First Aid**

All regular ECRC staff members must be certified in pediatric first-aid treatment including CPR for infants and children within their first 90 days of employment. In accordance with NYS OCFS and NAEYC guidelines, at least one staff member who has certification in emergency pediatric first-aid treatment including CPR for infants and children, and emergency management of choking from a licensed health professional, is always present in each classroom.

### **Illness Policy**

Our utmost concern is children's health followed by the ability of the staff to meet the needs of children who are ill, while at the same time caring for well children in the program. The focus of this policy is on the comfort level of the child and his/her ability to participate in the normal schedule of the day. In addition, consideration is given to whether the staff is able to meet his/her increased needs, such as needing to be held or monitored continually. Our

policy draws on information obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Because we are working with an early childhood group environment, our policies may differ from those recommended by a pediatrician for a home setting or policies used in elementary school settings. In cases where an outbreak of a particular illness occurs, the ECRC may alter exclusion policies in accordance with expert advice.

The utilization and success of the Center's policy is dependent on:

- A trusting relationship between families and staff
- A commitment by families and staff to understand the burden that child illness creates for everyone
- A commitment to make every attempt to ease this burden on families, staff, and on the child

Acknowledgement by families that ECRC teachers:

- know the children in their care very well
- use careful judgment when making a decision that a child is behaving atypically
- can recognize when a child is uncomfortable in this setting
- will reach an agreement among the team, and if needed, the Director/Assistant Director, that the symptoms indicating illness are sufficient to warrant a sending a child home

Acknowledgement by teachers that parents use the best judgment possible when making decisions about whether their child is well enough to attend the ECRC.

## **Health Record and Immunization Requirements**

Child Enrollment Requirements:

- No child may be accepted for care in a child care program unless the program has been furnished with a written statement signed by a health care provider verifying that your child is able to participate in child day care and currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable diseases. Your child's medical statement and vaccination records must have been completed within the 12 months preceding the date of

enrollment. As your child has annual visits to the doctor, please send the Daycare Forms to the Associate Director, Keely Benson at ko23@buffalo.edu.

- The written medical statement from the health care provider must also state if your child is a child with special health care needs and, if so, what special provisions, if any, will be necessary in order for the child to participate in child day care. When the written statement from the health care provider advises that the child being enrolled is a child with special health care needs, the ECRC must work together with the parent and the child's health care provider to develop a reasonable health care plan for the child while the child is in the child day care program. The health care plan for the child must also address how the day care program will obtain or develop any additional competencies that the staff will need to have in order to carry out the health care plan for the child.
- The ECRC must keep documentation of immunizations the child has received to date, in accordance with New York State Public Health Law.
- Any child not yet immunized may be admitted provided the child's immunizations are in process, in accordance with the requirements of New York State Public Health Law, and the parent gives the program specific appointment dates for required immunizations.
- Any child who is missing one or more of the required immunizations may be admitted if a physician licensed to practice medicine furnishes the program with a written statement that such immunizations may be detrimental to the child's health.
- With the exception of children meeting the criteria of the two points above, children enrolled in the ECRC must remain current with their immunizations in accordance with the current schedule for required immunizations established in the New York State Public Health Law.
- Religious exemptions for immunizations are not accepted.
- The ECRC must to keep a copy of a lead screening certificate for each child under the age of six years.

## **Exclusion for Health Reasons**

The following are used as guidelines for teachers in reaching a decision regarding exclusion of a child from the ECRC (also see Head Lice policy below):

Exclusion generally is not dependent upon a single criterion, but on a combination of symptoms which includes both physical and behavioral factors. As the degree of severity and number of physical and behavioral changes increases so does the probability of exclusion. When two or more symptoms are present in concert, the teaching team will determine whether or not the child should be sent home. The age of the child, the severity and longevity of symptoms and the existing outbreak of similar symptoms in the classroom/Center will impact a decision to exclude a child from the group.

**The ECRC follows public health and center for disease control instructions regarding exclusion due to a communicable disease. However, in keeping with state licensing guidelines, exclusion is warranted for:**

- Injuries and symptoms of illness that impair or prohibit the child's participation in the regular educational activities
- Injuries and symptoms of illness which require more care than teachers are able to provide without compromising the health and safety of the ill or injured child or the other children in their care
- A fever of 100.0F or higher
- Skin lesions which have not been diagnosed or treated by a licensed health care practitioner
- Unusual or extreme fatigue or lethargy
- More than one episode of diarrhea in one day;
- Uncontrolled coughing or wheezing
- Fever combined with any of the following: uncontrolled diarrhea (defined as increased number of stools compared with the child's normal pattern and that are not contained by the diaper or toilet use); rash; ear ache; sore throat; or vomiting.

When a decision to exclude a child is made, we ask that parents or caregivers make every effort to pick up their child within 30 minutes of being notified.

When a child has vomited, had more than one instance of diarrhea, or has a prolonged fever at school or at home, they must be out the day of the incident (day 1), out the next day (day 2), and may return the following day (day 3) provided they are symptom free all of day 2 without the

assistance of medication. This means a child must be fever free for 24 hours prior to returning to school.

The ECRC reserves the right to require a doctor's note in relation to any visible rash or prolonged illness and/or communicable disease.

### **Head Lice Policy**

The presence of head lice is not an illness but it does require special attention, in part because of misinformation in the past. Maintaining a sympathetic attitude and avoiding stigmatizing or blaming families who are experiencing lice infestation is important. While parents have the primary responsibility for the detection and treatment of head lice, the ECRC community will work in a cooperative and collaborative manner to assist all families to manage head lice effectively.

#### **It is the expectation of parents and families attending the ECRC that:**

- You will proactively check your children's hair for head lice on a weekly basis, at home.
- You regularly inspect all household members and then treat them if necessary.

#### **If you find live head lice on your child:**

- You notify the ECRC and advise when safe and recommended treatment was begun;

#### **Your child will be allowed to return to the ECRC after proper treatment for live lice, or other advice by a health professional, and no live lice remain;**

- You should check your child daily to ensure that no live lice remain. Re-treatment is sometimes required;
- Follow recommendations for eradicating further head lice from the home or other high contact areas;
- Parents or caregivers of other students will be notified so they have an early opportunity to detect and treat their children if necessary.

In order to achieve a consistent approach to head lice management the ECRC will notify a child's parents immediately (or at the close of the day if appropriate) when visible live lice are identified by a teacher.

#### **The child will need to be excluded and will be allowed to return to the ECRC after proper treatment for live lice, or other advice by a health professional, and no live lice remain.**

Because direct head-to-head contact is difficult to avoid at the ECRC due to the frequent interactions between children the exclusion policy is stricter than typical in a school setting. Prompt treatment is in the best interest of the child and his/her classmates. We will maintain a sympathetic attitude and avoid stigmatizing or blaming families who are experiencing difficulty with control measures. We will only inspect children who are showing symptoms of head lice. To help reduce the

stigma and maintain confidentiality when conducting head lice inspections, the ECRC will inform the families of all children when an infestation has occurred.

### **Conjunctivitis Policy**

Conjunctivitis is an infection of the eyes commonly known as “pink eye” which can come in various forms including viral, bacterial, and as an allergic response. Because the ECRC is unable to make a definitive diagnosis, a child with conjunctivitis-like symptoms will be required to be examined by a healthcare provider and can return when approved to be in a group educational setting, with or without treatment. Parents will be notified and asked to take their child to a health care provider as soon as possible to minimize the risk of spreading infection.

### **COVID-19 Policies**

We are committed to keeping our staff, children and their families healthy and safe, especially in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As such, we will abide by governmental and CDC guidelines when possible as we strive to balance public health concerns and needs of providing child care and education. These policies are based on guidelines from the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and UB Administrative Services. Given the fluidity of the pandemic situation and ongoing updates on these agencies’ guidelines, these policies are subject to change and updated accordingly.

The following are policies/procedures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at the ECRC and are based on current Office of Children and Family Services COVID requirements for child care programs released on August 22, 2022:

1. Each classroom will have designated arrival and dismissal locations to reduce the co-mingling of classroom children and families.
2. Face coverings are **optional** for all ECRC staff, families, interns and children on the ECRC grounds. If you prefer that your child be masked at school, we support and understand your decision. Please communicate this request with your child’s teachers.
3. Hand hygiene is important to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. As such, staff and students are required to perform hand hygiene:
  - a. Immediately upon entering the ECRC
  - b. Before and after diapering, using the restroom, and/or assisting in the bathroom
  - c. Any time after assisting a child with bodily secretions
  - d. Before and after snack
  - e. Upon coming in from outside
  - f. Before leaving the ECRC for the day

4. Daily health screenings are conducted daily by your child's classroom teacher upon arrival at school. If your child appears to be unwell, you will be required to take your child home. (Please see 'Exclusion for Health Reasons' section regarding symptoms.)

*COVID-19 Positive Case and Quarantine Guidance:*

- **If your child tests positive for COVID-19, please email our Associate Director, Dr. Keely Benson, at [ko23@buffalo.edu](mailto:ko23@buffalo.edu) immediately.** When an exposure is identified (whether student or ECRC staff), our Administration Team will work quickly to inform families that were exposed via email so that they can monitor for symptoms.
  - Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 should remain isolated at home for a period of at least 5 days and symptoms should be improving and be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to the ECRC.
  - Anyone who tested positive for COVID-19 and is returning to program between days 6 and 10 should wear a well-fitting mask up through day 10, if they are able to tolerate one. Children who are unable to wear a mask may still return to the ECRC if they do not have any symptoms.
- If your child exhibits symptoms of COVID-19, he/she should stay out of the ECRC for 5 days OR until they receive a negative COVID-19 test (whichever is first). Before returning to the ECRC, symptoms should be improving and your child should be fever-free for at least 24 hours.
- If your child comes to the ECRC with symptoms or develops symptoms while at the ECRC, your child will be sent home and encouraged to get tested.
- If your child has had close contact with someone with COVID-19 (this means when they were within six feet of someone with COVID-19 for more than 15 minutes in a 24-hour period), they should wear a mask for 10 days whenever feasible. If they do not have symptoms, they do not need to quarantine and can attend the ECRC.

### **Medications Policy and Procedures**

Families are asked not to use medications that may mask undiagnosed illnesses. Giving a child Motrin/Tylenol may get them through the morning, but may also expose other children to unidentified ailments unnecessarily. If a family has given medication in the morning at home, we ask that the teacher is informed at drop off.

Trained staff at the ECRC will administer medication only if the parent or legal guardian has provided written consent and the medication is available in an original labeled prescription or

manufacturer's container. We must have the written instructions from the manufacturer or the prescribing clinician on file to administer the specific medication.

1. For prescription medications, parents or legal guardians will provide teachers with the medication in the original, child resistant container that is labeled by a pharmacist with the child's name, the name and strength of the medication; the date the prescription was filled; the name of the health care provider who wrote the prescription; the medication's expiration date; and administration, storage and disposal instructions.
2. For over-the counter medications, parents or legal guardians will provide the medication in a child-resistant container. The medication will be labeled with the child's first and last names; specific, legible instructions for administration and storage supplied by the manufacturer; and the name of the health care provider who recommended the medication for the child
3. Instructions for the dose, time, method to be used, and duration of administration will be provided to the teachers in writing (by a signed note or a prescription label) by a physician or other person legally authorized to prescribe medication. This requirement applies both to prescription and over-the-counter medications.
4. A child with a known serious allergic reaction to a specific substance who develops symptoms after exposure to that substance may receive epinephrine from a teacher who has received training in how to administer.
5. Medications will be kept at the temperature recommended in a locked container.
6. Medication will not be used beyond the date of expiration on the container or beyond any expiration of the instructions provided by the physician or other person legally permitted to prescribe medication. Instructions which state that the medication may be used whenever needed will be renewed by the physician at least annually.
7. The Authorization to Administer Prescription and Non Prescription Medication Form will be maintained by the ECRC staff to record the instructions for giving the medication, consent obtained from the parent or legal guardian, amount, the time of administration, and the person who administered each dose of medication. Spills, reactions, and refusal to take medication will be noted on this log.
8. Medication errors will be controlled by checking the following 5 items each time medication is given:
  - a. Right Child
  - b. Right Medicine
  - c. Right Dose
  - d. Right Time
  - e. Right Route of Administration

***Teachers may not dispense non-prescription medications.*** The only exceptions to this is if a physician has specified the use of over the counter medication through an Emergency Health Care Plan or written medical order, including the use of over the counter topicals, such as sun block and insect repellent. Sun block and insect repellent may be dispensed with written parental or guardian permission. Parents may dispense medication to their children in the ECRC at any time.

### **Sunscreen Policy**

Parents must sign a **Sunscreen Permission Form** upon enrollment to allow the ECRC staff to apply ECRC provided sunscreen (e.g., Banana Boat). Sunscreen should be applied by the parent when the child arrives at the Center on days when the weather is warm and the children will be outside for extended periods. If preferred, you provide your own sunscreen to the ECRC staff for your child, which must be labeled with the child's name and will be used only by that child.

The ECRC Staff will follow these procedures when applying sunscreen:

- Apply sunscreen during late spring and summer and other times when the sun seems intense.
- Apply sunscreen in the morning or afternoon and anytime necessary in between, preferably ½ hour prior to exposure.
- Apply sunscreen liberally, with special attention to cheeks, shoulders, backs of legs and upper arms.
- Apply sunscreen before and after water play.

### **Reducing the Spread of Germs**

The teachers at the ECRC implement practices that have been determined to help control the spread of germs. These procedures include:

- washing hands upon entering the classroom, after changing diapers, assisting children in toileting, and after helping children blow noses;
- opening classroom windows when leaving the room for outdoor play;
- containing diapers in separate closed containers;
- disinfecting diapering, bathroom, and eating areas; and,
- In addition to these precautions, we require staff and students to follow Universal Precautions, including wearing gloves when changing diapers and when bodily fluids are present, and when handling food.

### **Outdoor Safety and Health**

Outdoor activity is very important for young children and is a planned daily activity at the ECRC. An adult or child who is well enough to be in the center is well enough to play outdoors. This

provides the fresh air, contact with nature, and movement needed daily for your child's general well-being and healthy development. Children and adults must be properly dressed for the weather to enjoy outdoor activities. In winter, this includes boots, warm coat, mittens (not gloves), coat zipped, snow pants, and hat.

Temperature and wind chill are two factors that determine the safety of children being outdoors during winter months. The temperature can actually be quite cold and still be conducive to healthy outdoor play, while wind chill tends to be the factor that makes outdoor play dangerous. The cold, blowing cold air quickly gets into children's apparel, regardless of their level of activity, and puts them at risk for frostbite. Therefore, our policy at the ECRC is that any day when the wind chill factor is 10 degrees or below (even though the air temperature might be lot warmer), children will not go outdoors. It's simply too unpleasantly cold. We will use the weather channel's data that posts wind chill temperatures throughout the day to make a determination.

Outdoor temperature is a different situation. It can be ten degrees, perfectly dry with no wind chill factor and be safe and healthy for children to be running around outdoors for a few minutes. The key here is that children be ACTIVE and appropriately dressed for the cold. For children who are not mobile or have special health considerations, this policy would be modified at the discretion of the classroom teacher. Therefore, our policy at the ECRC is that any day when the temperature is ten degrees or higher (with a wind chill factor of 11 degrees or higher), children will be actively playing outdoors dressed in appropriate apparel for an appropriate length of time.

Another factor in determining outdoor activity is clothing. **Mittens (not gloves), hats, scarves, snow pants, warm socks and a hat are essential for conserving body heat in cold weather.** At the first sign of chilling or shivering, a child should go indoors.

## **Nutrition**

A snack is provided during each three-hour session. Snacks are based on US Department of Agriculture guidelines for balanced meals. A menu is posted on the bulletin board in the kitchen with suggested portion sizes recommended by the USDA. Snack is another opportunity for learning and fun for children. It can be completed as a center or a large group activity. In either setting, teachers should be with the children to converse, assist them, and extend their learning.

Children should use as much independence in serving their snack as is appropriate for their developmental ability, e.g., pouring, scooping crackers, cutting bananas, etc. We provide nutritious and relatively low-sugar snack. Snacks should consist of items from two food groups, e.g., bananas and milk, crackers and milk, cheese, crackers and water, etc. Following drinking their first portion of

milk, children should be given water to drink. The spring water is in the office and is available for use during snack. All food is cut or handled using the gloves provided and all fruits and vegetables must be washed prior to serving.

**Allergies: ECRC is a NUT-restricted environment**

We proactively restrict the potential for specific allergic reactions in the center environment and in so doing hope to minimize the hassles for families of children with allergies.

**Tree nuts, peanuts, and nut products are the most serious and prevalent allergen at the ECRC. Accordingly, foods with nuts (including nut pastes and flour) are not allowed at the center.**

We recognize that this policy is an inconvenience for parents and children but ask for your help since for some children exposure to nuts poses a serious health risk. In some cases the allergy is so severe that simply smelling nut products can lead to a dangerous reaction. We also encounter other allergies (e.g. dairy, soy, and shellfish) and classroom staff will always work with the families of children concerned to create as safe an environment as possible.

**ECRC cannot guarantee that the center is a nut-free environment.** Teachers will inform parents if they see food from home that includes visible nuts or they already know the product contains nut products. Removal may be necessary if there is a known nut allergy. Teachers do **not** read product labels. We depend on your assistance in monitoring foods from home. We have not excluded the many commercial products that include a warning about trace elements of nuts and the possibility of contact with nut-contaminated machinery. If there is a known allergy in the room, individual classrooms may ask families to adhere to additional safety practices as needed.

## Safety

### Conduct of Adult Community Members

As members of a community, every adult who spends time at the ECRC (including staff, parents, guardians, students and visitors) should strive to provide the children with a model of civil and respectful behavior. Interactions by and between adults at the center should support a caring and safe environment for everyone. Language or behavior that is disrespectful, harassing, rude, or abusive to others, including children, is never acceptable within our environment. This policy extends to all forms of communication.

### Arrival and Dismissal Safety

Because of the flow of traffic near the entrance to Baldy Hall, it is particularly important that families are mindful of arrival and dismissal safety. When arriving and departing each day please be sure that your child is within arm's length of you and help us in reminding children that running is *not* allowed when going to school or leaving school. While we typically encourage children's autonomy we do not permit children to open the front door or playground gates. This practice ensures that an adult is always taking responsibility for safe comings and goings from the center. During the program, ECRC teachers also model these expectations. Because of the potential for confusion at departure time it is also important to note that you are responsible for your child once you arrive for pick-up if you are picking up your child from their classroom. At arrival, you need to bring your child to the teacher *and* check-in verbally and sign-in before leaving. This procedure helps us with maintaining an accurate count of children in the group.

In accordance with State Law, we want to remind you that no child under 12 years of age should be left in a car unattended. We understand that this can be inconvenient, but past experience has shown us that young children are not ready for this responsibility. We appreciate your support in ensuring the safety of everyone at the ECRC.

At arrival and departure, please be sure to check in with your child's teacher. At arrival, your child's teacher will conduct a daily health check and touch base with you regarding your child's morning. At departure, we will always give you a report about your child's day, so please be sure to check in with us each and every day.

### Building Safety & Authorization for Pickup

Being on the UB campus, safety is of utmost importance to us. The ECRC is located in the basement of Baldy Hall. All classroom doors (including playground doors) are self-locking doors and only ECRC Administration and Staff have keys to open these doors. We keep the classroom doors

closed throughout the duration of the program. Any visitors to the program must enter through our main office, 15 Baldy Hall, and must sign-in before entering the classrooms.

At the time of enrollment, parents must provide the names and telephone numbers of persons authorized to drop-off and pick-up the child. It is the parent's or guardian's responsibility to notify the Center of any changes in this authorization. If someone other than authorized persons indicated on the Form is to pick up your child, the ECRC must be notified in writing by the parent and delivered by the parent in advance. We will release children to authorized persons only. Photo identification or other official identification may be requested by a staff member before the child is released. Copies of legal documents must be provided to the office before any staff member can actively prevent non-custodial parents from picking up their child.

### **Emergency Plans**

The ECRC conducts monthly evacuation and lock down drills and has posted emergency information in all rooms. The center will use the nearby Lockwood or O'Brien buildings as the evacuation staging area if needed. All staff members are trained in emergency preparedness.

In the event of a campus emergency you will be contacted by a member of our staff or a member of the University Police Department (UPD) with details and instructions.

### **Parking**

You have three options for parking during drop off and pick up of your child(ren) at the ECRC:

1. You can drop off your child(ren) in their classroom and park briefly within the ECRC spaces on Putnam Way (South and West).
2. You can park in any student lot while displaying your ECRC parking permit and take a shuttle to the ECRC. (The Center for Tomorrow and Stadium lots are recommended. From the Stadium lot take the shuttle heading toward the ECRC.)
3. You can park in metered lot at Park Hall without paying while displaying the ECRC parking permit.

To use the ECRC designated spaces:

- Please come in the Coventry entrance **OR** proceed to the intersection of Coventry Road and Augsperger Road near the stadium, then make a left onto Coventry Road
- Continue on Coventry Road which turns left into Mary Talbert Way in front of the Center for the Arts
- At the first stop, Lee Road, turn left
- Parking spaces on the right are designated for ECRC families.

If you would like to observe your child, it is advisable for you to park in the Center for Tomorrow or Stadium parking lots, take the short shuttle ride and walk to Baldy Hall. The Shuttles run approximately every 10 minutes. One bus drops off at the Flint Loop and you walk to Baldy Hall. Another takes a longer trip around Putnam Way (West) and drops you off in front of Baldy Hall.

## Staff to Child Ratios

Recognizing the correlation of small group size and smaller numbers of children per adult to quality care and education, the ECRC's standards for group sizes and teacher to child ratios are based on best practices. Ratios and group size are met during all hours of operation including: indoor time, outdoor time, and during field trips. Regular staff and interns are included in our adult to child ratios. Classrooms including children from 2-3 years old will have no more than 12 children with three teachers, and typically two interns. Classrooms including children 3-4 years old will have no more than 14 children with two teachers, typically one to two interns. Classrooms with children four to five years of age will have no more than 16 children with two teachers, and typically two interns. Our mixed age classrooms always follow the ratio of the youngest child. For example, our mixed age classroom has children 2-4 years old, in which there will always be one teacher for every 5 children. Classrooms with school age children will have no more than 16 children and two teachers, and typically one intern. These regulations follow NYS Office of Children and Family Services teacher to student ratios.

## Snow Day Policy

As a unit of UB, the ECRC will close when UB closes for any reason. In addition, the ECRC reserves the right to close if weather conditions are too dangerous for the children and staff, for example:

- Treacherous roads/conditions
- Inclement weather anticipated
- Wind chills reaching lows of -20 to -25 degrees

The ECRC has allocated 3 snow days for this academic year. Thus, families will not receive any accommodations for the first three snow days. If a child's enrollment is affected by weather-related closures beyond these three days, there are two accommodation options:

- Option 1:** Attending designated make-up days that take place during breaks and/or weekends.
- Option 2:** Receiving a prorated voucher as credit towards future tuition.

Closings will be announced via email, Facebook, the ECRC website (<http://ecrc.buffalo.edu>) and on TV and radio stations:

- WGRZ channel 2
- WIVB channel 4
- WKBW channel 7
- WBFO 88.7
- WBNY 91.3
- WGR 550 AM

The decision to close the ECRC will always be made out of concern for the safety and well-being of the children, families and staff.

*\*The ECRC reserves the right to amend the policy in the future.*