



Mothercraft Centres for Early Development

Robertson House

Parent Handbook

March 2024

Welcome to Mothercraft

Dear Parents:

Thank you for choosing Mothercraft for your child's care. Each one of our Centres for Early Development offers a safe, warm and nurturing environment for your child to learn and develop. We ensure that your child experiences positive experiences each day, building confidence and self-esteem. Our childcare programs are designed to support your child to reach their full potential.

Your child will learn:

- Respect for self and others
- How to problem solve
- To play and learn cooperatively with other children
- To think in different ways

Whether you are enrolling your child at Robertson House, Brookfield Place, The Toronto Eaton Centre or Avondale, our staff will work closely with you to ensure that there is always open communication regarding your child's care and development. We believe strongly that parents are the most important teachers/caregivers, and that your views and culture should be respected and valued.

This handbook has been designed to help make yours and your child's transition into Mothercraft as smooth as possible. It covers everything from what you can expect at Mothercraft, to how you can best support your child. We hope that the information will give you a better understanding of our approach and answer any questions you may have. If you have any additional questions after reading the Parent Handbook or would like to speak with us directly, please feel free.

We look forward to welcoming your child and family to Mothercraft.

Sincerely,

Sonia Ferreira, RECE
Manager
Robertson House, Centre for Early Development

Access to Service

Families interested in enrolling their child at Robertson House must complete a waitlist application and submit it to the location with no fee required. Enrollment fees will not be collected until a space is guaranteed. They may contact the centre Manager/Designate to receive updates regarding their waitlist status. Priority is given in the following order: currently enrolled siblings in our CED then community members. Mothercraft has a purchase of service agreement with the City of Toronto and accepts subsidized families. These families need to apply to both the subsidy waitlist and Mothercraft's waitlist. Waitlist binders are reviewed periodically and trends are discussed at Centre for Early Development Department meetings. Your application must be renewed every year in order to keep your child's name active on the waiting list. If Robertson House does not have available the needed program or service, we would support the family to access additional external resources that would help support the child.

Well-trained staff

We pride ourselves on the professionalism of our staff. All staff in our Centres for Early Development are trained in Early Childhood Education, whether at a diploma or certificate level. In addition to this, all Early Childhood Educators are registered with the College of ECE, and are expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice. To help ensure consistency and excellence across our Centres, all new staff members are matched with seasoned Mothercraft staff members, who help mentor them on how to apply Mothercraft's unique approach to child care.

Supporting Students

Mothercraft staff mentor students from Mothercraft's Early Childhood Education program and other community colleges completing placements at our Centres. These students contribute many new and exciting ideas to our child care program. While on placement, students are not included as ratio's, and are not left to supervise children on their own. Each college student in your child's room have a photo and a short bio posted so that you always know who is in the room with your child. Students will be supervised at all times by a Mothercraft staff.

Nutritious snacks & meals

At Mothercraft we believe that good nutrition (Eating well with the Canada Food Guide) is essential for healthy growth and development of children. This is an important and intrinsic part of our program. Children are provided with snacks and a hot lunch each day. The menus are posted on the main parent bulletin board and in each room. Children are encouraged to try everything that is served at each meal "to promote good eating habits" and may have several servings if they wish. If the children do not want to try a meal the staff will respect their wishes. Mealtime is made to be a pleasant experience for all children. The pace of meal time is leisurely, the children can take their time to enjoy their food and staff will model good eating habits. Special arrangements for allergies, religious observation or restriction can be discussed with the Manager. Parents may be required to provide specific special foods that is portioned, labelled and dated. Parents will provide bottle they would like their child to use. The bottles will be marked for your infant, and the infant may have as many bottles as desired. As the infant grows to a toddler, the need and desire for a bottle lessens, and training cups and regular cups take its place. If breastmilk is being provided. Packaging must have the mother's full name, date and child's name on it.

***NOTE:** It is important to note that all Mothercraft Centre for Early Development adhere to an allergen awareness policy. Foods containing any nut-associated product are not permitted in any Centre for Early Development e.g. peanut oil, peanut butter, raw peanuts, almonds, etc.

Daily sleep or rest time

Children under 44 months of age at the Centre will be expected to have a sleep or rest time, by lying down on a cot after lunch; children over 44 months and older need written permission from families to have a rest or sleep time on a cot. This is stipulated by the Child Care and Early Years Act. Sleep or rest time allows the child to relax, and gain energy to carry on their day. For children not sleeping, quiet activities will be provided. Toddlers and younger preschoolers can sleep for up to two (2) hours between lunch and the afternoon snack. The child's blanket should be brought from home, along with a soft sleep friend, if desired. Infants' sleep routine adheres to the Joint Statement on Safe Sleep, unless a child's physician recommends otherwise in writing.

The Joint Statement on Safe Sleep is part of the Government of Canada's continuing commitment to raise awareness of sudden infant deaths and safe sleeping environments. At Mothercraft we conduct sleep monitoring as a part of our commitment to safe sleep environments. Infants are toddlers are checked periodically for signs of distress and this process is documented daily.

A safe environment, with clearly set limits

In the child care setting, there are behaviours that are acceptable and behaviours that are not permitted, to ensure the children are protected, safe and healthy, and to ensure that the rights of others are protected. Therefore, teachers will set clear limits for the children. These limits are consistent, relevant to the developmental stage of the child, and fair. It is our belief that by setting limits children will feel secure in their environment. A major goal in guiding behaviours based on the ages and stages of each child self-control-helping the children take steps towards responsible self-direction. This varies based on the ages and stages of each child.

Our behaviour management strategies focus on redirecting the infant and having an environment with interesting toys, (i.e. if one infant were to take a toy from another infant, the teacher would give the toy back to the original child, while redirecting the other infant to another toy or activity.) This redirection is carried out with a lot of verbal communication about what is happening, so that both infants can begin to understand.

In some situations with toddlers, the focus is placed on redirection along with encouragement for the child to use verbal languages or non-verbal skills the teacher would explain feelings and give the toddler words to help him/her to start to use language. In certain situations, such as the one above, the toddler would be encouraged to say, "That's mine".

Redirecting preschoolers more fully involves allowing the children to problem solve for themselves, and encouraging the use of language verbal/nonverbal. In the event that the children themselves cannot resolve a problem, the teacher acts as a facilitator and provide direction in the solution and possibly, to set restrictions.

Unacceptable staff behaviour includes:

- using corporal punishment which includes, but is not limited to, striking, shaking, shoving, requiring a child to maintain an uncomfortable position
- forcing the repetition of repetitive behaviours
- depriving a child of basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing or bedding
- forcing the consumption of food
- using harsh, threatening, humiliating treatment, either verbal or non-verbal, emotional or physical
- withholding transitional objects
- locking the exits of the centre for the purpose of confining a child or using a locked or lockable room or structure to confine a child if he or she has been separated from other children

- using time-out without engaging a child in an individual quiet activity **unless a Resource Consultant, the staff and the parent have agreed that this practice best meets the needs of the child**
- using deliberate harsh or degrading measures on a child that would humiliate a child or undermine a child's self-respect
- using derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth

It is recognized that in some extreme situations (wherein a child is endangering his/herself or others) staff may find themselves having to respond to a crisis situation using physical guidance as a method to defuse and/or de-escalate a volatile situation. Physical restraint is only used in situations where a child is in imminent danger of compromising the safety to themselves, staff or to other children in the program. Any time physical restraint is used a serious occurrence must be filed with the Ministry of Education.

Open communication regarding your child's care

At Mothercraft, we are committed to keeping the lines of communication open. Each family has a primary teacher along with the support of additional staff in the room. The primary teacher is responsible for helping your child with transitions, conducting regular developmental assessments and addressing any specific concerns. You will receive daily communication from our staff so that you are kept informed of the day's events. Electronic mail is sent to parents by the CED Manager along with messages posted within the Centre. Parents can receive resources on a number of topics relating to early childhood, development, health and safety (for example, Canada's Food Guide for nutrition in various languages, activities to try at home and product/food recalls). In addition, family involvement opportunities would include but not limited to (Parent Advisory Committee, family BBQ) are a great way to meet other Mothercraft parents and learn more about plans for the childcare program.

A Respectful Environment

We believe that all children and adults have the right to feel safe and to be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party. Mothercraft expects that all staff, parents and persons entering into any of the Centres and Mothercraft facilities conduct themselves in a respectful manner. Mothercraft has a no tolerance policy for behavior that affects the emotional and physical safety of children, families and staff while attending a Mothercraft program and facility. If at any point a parent/guardian or staff member feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the Centre Manager or other supervisor/manager. Failure to adhere to this expectation may result in denied access to the program, Centre and/or facility.

Complaints Process

Mothercraft values the creation of positive learning environments and experiences for children, supporting positive and responsive interactions among children, parents, staff and child care providers, and fostering the engagement of, and ongoing communication, with parents about the program and their children. Mothercraft values and encourages the feedback of parents, students and community members about the programs and services of the organization.

Complaints can provide important opportunities for improving programs and services. A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or unmet expectation. A complaint can be made by a parent, student, or community member with support if necessary. The complaint can relate to any aspect of the organization's programs and services.

Mothercraft is committed to listening to parents, students and community member issues and concerns and responding in a fair, timely and respectful manner. All complaints will be given due consideration without reprisal or discrimination. All aspects of a complaint will be handled in confidence. All complaints are documented. The following outlines the steps to be followed when parents have any issues or concerns:

STEP 1: Making a Complaint

Parents are encouraged to raise any issues, concerns, or complaints with the staff member directly involved with their child/ren and family. The staff member will offer to discuss a concern at the earliest convenience and within 2 working days. If the staff member is unable to satisfactorily resolve the issue, or if the concerns are staff-related or operational, parents have the option to proceed to Step 2.

STEP 2: Discussion with a Manager

Parents are invited to discuss unresolved issues, concerns or complaints with a Manager. The Manager will meet with parents within five working days of initial contact with the parent regarding a complaint. The role of the Manager is to resolve the matter to the mutual satisfaction of the parent, the staff and Mothercraft. Failing this, the Manager will inform the parent of their right to seek resolution through a meeting with the Director, and will provide the Director's contact information. The parent will receive a written response from the manager within two weeks, summarizing their discussion.

STEP 3: Discussion with an Associate Director/ Director

Upon the request of the parent, the Director will meet with the parent within two weeks. The Director will attempt to resolve the problem to the mutual satisfaction of the parent, staff and Mothercraft. The Director will summarize the discussion and outcome with the parent in writing not more than two weeks after the meeting. If the parent, is not satisfied with the response from the Director, the director will inform the parent of their right to contact the Executive Director and will provide the name and contact information of the Executive Director.

STEP 4: Meeting the Executive Director

Upon the request of the parent, the Executive Director will meet with the parent within two weeks. The Executive Director will attempt to resolve the problem to the mutual satisfaction of the parent, staff and Mothercraft. The Executive Director will summarize the discussion and outcome with the parent in writing not more than two weeks after the meeting. If the parent is not satisfied with the response from the Executive Director, the parent will be informed of their right to contact any of the following:

At any time during or following this process, you have the option to access:

Ministry of Education	1-877-510-5333
Toronto Public Health	416-338-7600
City of Toronto – Children's Services	416-397-7359

*Please find attached the full Parent, Student and Community Complaints Policy.

Regular Summaries of your child's progress

Individual checklists and profiles are completed twice a year, in December and June, to assess the progress of your child. In order to accommodate all parents, interviews will be limited to 20 minutes. Parents or staff may wish to meet over a particular concern, and this can be arranged on an individual basis, at any time throughout the year. The assessments are not a diagnostic tool however, should a developmental profile indicate a need for further investigation in some area of development, your child's teacher or the centre manager would come to the meeting with suggestions for further testing. Parents are required to give receipt of this document and are given the opportunities to meet with the teachers.

How You Can Support Your Child While at a Mothercraft Centre for Early Development

Your support and involvement is critical to your child's ability to adjust to his/her new childcare arrangement. Here are some of the ways we suggest parents help make their child's experience a positive one:

Transition Week(s)

The first week or two of the child's entry can be used as a transition week. We recognize that this is an exciting, but difficult time for both the child and the parents, while everyone becomes familiar with the surroundings and new faces.

For parents who can arrange an entry transition, a flexible schedule can be made with the Manager and staff. We do recognize that for many busy parents, this time is not available. Parents should be reassured that staff understand this situation and will try to make this time as smooth as possible. Parents should feel free to phone the centre at any time to find out how their child is doing.

When your child moves to the next age group

Movement to the next age group is available only if space is open in that group. Movement is based on the child's age as well as the child's developmental readiness, and is determined by the Manager and staff, in conjunction with parents. Fees are set so that the fee amount will change in accordance with the room the child is in, not the age of the child. A transition schedule will follow.

Drop-off and pick-up times

The Centre is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. Parents are free to drop off their child at any time, however, if your child coming in later than normal, it would be ideal to notify the centre by 11:00 am if they will not attend. CED Manager will make a courtesy call if not notified by 11:00 am. We ask that all parents leave enough time to pick up their child on time to be respectful of staff and their time by doing so. (Refer to Safe Arrival and Dismissal Policy attached)

Late pick-up Fee-Non Base

On rare occasions, a parent could be late picking up their child. In these exceptional cases, a late fee will be charged. The late fee schedule is:

- \$5.00 for any time within the first 5 minutes
- \$1.00 for each minute thereafter

Parents are required to sign off indicating time late and the amount charged. Payment is collected upon arrival by staff.

Parking

Parking rules must be followed. Parking at Robertson House is free in the designated areas for 15 minutes for drop off and pick up only. At Robertson House there is no parent parking allowed on the West side of the childcare. Families wishing to stay longer can park in the Public Parking lot located across the street from the Centre. Classrooms have parking vouchers that will validate ½ hour free of parking.

Access and Security

Mothercraft child care staff will provide a safe and secure environment at all times for all children within their care. Families are additionally expected to follow security protocol.

- Families must supervise their children at all times while in their care.
- All doors/gates are closed when exiting or entering an area.
- Door codes are periodically changed.
- To ensure security families, staff and students will only receive the code.
- **It is imperative that families take responsibility and follow safety protocol and do not share access code with others without CED manager's approval.**
- Only persons listed on children's release form have permission to pick up. Persons not known to staff will be asked for photo identification.
- Staff are always informed of scheduled visitors.
- Authorized, uniformed personnel from Brookfield Place and Toronto Eaton Centre are permitted access.
- Any outside visitors who arrive without an appointment will not be granted access to the child care centre.
- In an emergency situation persons can be given authorization to pick up in writing from the family for that day (i.e. email). Otherwise permanent changes need to be made on the original form that families can obtain from the staff/manager.

When your child is sick

If your child is sick, we ask that you please keep him/her home from the Centre. We find that treating the illness quickly and at home, results in children recovering faster, and it reduces the risk of cross infection to other children. Specifically you should keep your child home if his/her activity levels are reduced and coping mechanisms are low, or there are physical symptoms present including vomiting, diarrhea, fever, discharge from the eye, skin rash or difficulty breathing. **Children must be free from fever, diarrhea or vomiting for 24 hours before returning to the Centre.** In the event of an outbreak, the exclusion period may be increased. Please notify the Centre if your child is going to be absent.

Individualized Plans for Children with Medical Needs or Life Threatening Allergies

Parents are requested to advise the Manager if their child develops an allergy or requires medication for a chronic or acute condition (for example diabetes, seizure or asthma). An individual anaphylaxis emergency plan or medical needs plan shall be developed in consultation with a parent/guardian of the child and with any regulated health professional who is involved in the child's health care and who, in the parent's opinion, should be included in the consultation to

prevent serious reactions and to support each child's treatment and health. The Manager will make parents, staff, students and visitors aware of any life-threatening allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) that may pose a risk to any child enrolled at the CED. Individual plans will be reviewed as a child transitions to an older age group or as needed.

Become an active participant in your child's care

Mothercraft encourages parents to participate in both their child's program and the child care as a whole. Parent participation in the program can be done in a variety of ways:

- Participating in special events
- visiting your child throughout the day*
- sharing family traditions

*For some children, parents visiting the centre during the day can be difficult. Some children go through stages that make it difficult for them to understand the difference between a visit and home time. This may be upsetting to the child. If this occurs, it may be in the best interest of the child to stop the visits until the child is ready to enjoy them. This can be discussed and monitored by parents and staff together.

Each Mothercraft centre supports the participation of parents through the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). PACs inform families of issues and external information and situations and makes recommendations to improve the operation of the centre. Parents who cannot attend PAC meetings are encouraged to read minutes of the meeting, and discuss any issues with the centre manager or by requesting agenda items to be placed before PAC when an issue of particular concern or interest arises.

Open communication between parents and Mothercraft staff will ensure that we are creating the best environment for your child. Parents should inform staff of any relevant information that would help them better understand and care for their child. Parents should always feel free to discuss their concerns and suggestions with staff.

Scheduling and Fees

Hours of Operation

Mothercraft Robertson House Centre for Early Development is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday to Friday. The Centre will be closed on Statutory Holidays, as well as Easter Monday to accommodate our annual Staff Professional Development Day.

Base Fee Rate schedule for January 2024 * Including taxes.

Age Group	Ages	Rate/month	Ratios (staff : child)
Infants	3 – 18 mths (approx.)	\$1020.13*	1 : 3
Toddlers	18 mths. – 2 ½ yrs. (approx.)	\$880.27*	1 : 5
Preschool	2 ½ - 4 yrs.	\$653.94*	1 : 8

Please Note- Mothercraft has opted into CWELCC (Canada Wide Early Learning and Childcare programs)

Included in Your Fee

Included in your childcare fee are all snacks and meals. Parents are required to provide diapers and formula for infants.

Fee Payment

On the day of acceptance, a non-refundable deposit of one month fee is due (based on the fee for the age group your child will be entering into). The deposit cheque should be made through the Centre Manager. Monthly fee payments are made through your bank or financial institution. Please ensure payments are directed to: **Canadian Mothercraft Society**. Payment is due on the first of each month and families must obtain a client number from **Canadian Mothercraft Society** to complete the payment.

A \$15.00 non-base service charge is applicable to any NSF deposit payment. When fee payments are in arrears for two months, and an agreed upon payment schedule is not maintained, a two week withdrawal notice will be given to the family.

Cash will not be accepted as a payment method. Fee payment receipts are distributed by the end of February of each year for income tax purposes.

Please note that parents will be charged for all days regardless of whether the child is in attendance. (i.e. family vacations, medical leave).

Withdrawal Notice Requirement

If you are planning to withdraw your child from our childcare program, you must provide a minimum of **4 weeks written notice** to the Centre Manager.

Parents will be charged for four weeks of full fees from the day we are notified of your child's withdrawal, regardless of whether your child is in attendance. Provided sufficient withdrawal notice, your original deposit is applied to your last month's fee.

Celebrating your child's birthday

Birthdays are special occasions and they should be celebrated. Snack time on the child's birthday will be set aside to acknowledge their day with candles and singing. Unfortunately, due to our **allergies and nutritional needs policy**, we cannot allow parents to bring in birthday cakes. We will arrange for staff to prepare a special cake with the children so that they can still have a celebration.

In order that all children are treated equally and in accordance with each parent's beliefs, no other form of celebration is encouraged (i.e. loot bags). Parents, siblings and grandparents are welcome to join us at this snack time.

Important Policies that Protect Your Child

The following is a summary of key policies that we have in place to ensure your child's safety and well-being. For a complete listing of our policies, please speak with your Centre Manager.

Ensuring the Health & Safety of Your Child

a. Illness

For everyone's well-being, ill children cannot be admitted to the Centre. It has been our experience that prompt treatment of any illness will facilitate the child's early return to health and to the Centre, and will minimize the possibility of cross infection for the other children.

If the childcare staff consider a child too ill to be exposed to other children, the child will be removed from the group and the parent(s) notified. The parent(s) are expected to make arrangements to pick up their child as soon as possible.

The following signs and symptoms will be used as indications that the child is ill: activity level of the child is reduced, coping mechanisms are low, as well as physical symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea, fever, and discharge from the eye, skin rash and difficulty in breathing.

Your child should not return to the Centre until he/she has been without symptoms for 24 hours.

This is in order to support the health and safety and well-being of all children, staff, and families within our programs in compliance with the Toronto Public Health Regulations. A detailed Health Policy is available from your Centre Manager. In some cases, at the discretion of the Manager, parents may be asked to provide a doctor's note before the child is able to return to the Centre.

b. Emergencies

Parents must fill out a form with information on where they can be reached and provide alternative emergency phone numbers. Should an emergency occur, parents will be notified and the child will be taken to the nearest hospital. If the child needs to be transported by the staff, this will be done by ambulance. On enrolment to the Centre, parents must sign an emergency release form, giving the child care staff permission to act in an emergency. This form has relevant information needed in an emergency. Staff are trained in First Aid/Child CPR, and there is at least one designated First Aid staff member at all times to deal with any minor or major situations.

c. Health and Safety Emergencies

In case of an emergency where we need to close the Centres for Early Development (i.e. hydro outage, weather emergency, disease outbreak, etc.) parents will be initially notified with an electronic message (e-mail), followed by telephone call if necessary.

The decision to close programs is at the discretion of Mothercraft's Executive Director or designate. Families are required to ensure contact information is correct and updated.

Mothercraft will take every precaution to protect the health and safety of children, families, staff and students, in the event of a communicable disease pandemic. In the event of an outbreak, Mothercraft must comply with any directives from Toronto Public Health to shut down childcare centres or programs where people congregate.

Emergency Management Policy and Procedures

Mothercraft has an emergency management policy and procedures. In the case that it has been deemed 'unsafe to return' to the Centre for Early Development, we will proceed to our evacuation site at Yorkminster Park Baptist Church at 1585 Yonge Street. As soon as possible, the CED Manager or designate will notify parents/guardians of the emergency situation by email.

d. Serious Occurrence Reporting

The safety and well-being of our children in licensed child care programs is the highest priority. Operators of licensed child care centres work diligently to provide a safe, creative and nurturing environment for each child. In spite of all the best precautions, serious occurrences can sometimes take place.

New serious occurrence reporting policies require CED's to post Notification Forms in a visible place for 10 days. The posting requirements support greater transparency for parents about licensed child care while protecting personal information. The Ministry of Education requires this serious occurrence policy to further support the safety and well-being of children in licensed child care. Should you require further information, please speak to your centre's Supervisor or refer to the CED policy and procedure manual at the centre.

e. Duty to Report-Child Abuse

Mothercraft is committed to the safety of children, and it is the responsibility of all staff who work with children to follow Section 72(1) of the Child and Family Services Act. Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child may be in need of protection, the staff must immediately report his/her suspicions and the information on which the concern is based to a Children's Aid Society of Toronto (CAST). In some situations, a CAST worker may request that a staff member speak to the family regarding their suspicions and in other situations a CAST worker may inform the staff not to discuss this with the family. Ongoing child abuse training will take place for all employees, students and volunteers. The complete practice can be accessed in our Policy and Procedure manual available at the centre.

f. Evacuation

Fire drills are held on a monthly basis. Centre staff and students know and practice these routines regularly and copies of the procedures are posted in each room. Verbal review and orientation of this procedure is given to all staff, students and parents upon enrolment.

g. Medication

Prescription medication can be given by the RECE teacher in your child's room. The medication must be a recent prescription, in its original container, dated and parents must sign a Medication Form indicating permission to administer the medication, times and dose of the medication. Staff will sign this form each time that the medication has been given.

Over-the-counter medication may only be given with the written authorization of a medical doctor.

h. Supervision

Mothercraft staff are responsible for ensuring that no child is ever left without adequate supervision. In particular, on the playground, staff will ensure that children are visible at all times. Any accidents that do occur are documented; a report will be given to parents requiring his/her signature of acknowledgment. A copy will be provided to the families and the original will be kept on file at the Centre.

i. Ratios of staff to children

Mothercraft employs a policy of staff to children ratios that are above the requirements of the provincial Child Care and Early Years Act. These are our “ratio” staff.

j. Smoke and Vape-Free Environment

All Mothercraft properties are smoke and vape-free. This also includes playgrounds and entrances to the building whether children are present or not.

k. Food Products & Snacks from Home

Due to severe, life-threatening allergies to peanuts and nut products, all of the Mothercraft Centres for Early Development are allergen-aware. If you give your child a snack in the morning, please ensure that they eat it before entering the Centre.

Celebrating Holidays

To provide respectful and appropriate planning regarding holiday celebrations, we actively seek input from our families and staff regarding knowledge and information around holidays of importance and of value to them. This information is re-evaluated on an ongoing basis and incorporated into our practices pertaining to holidays.

The following is our position regarding holiday practices (as we learn more and discuss each celebration as it comes along, our position may be adopted or/changed):

1. Holidays/celebrations will be talked about, activities engaged in, and celebrations will occur:
 - in an age appropriate manner for each group
 - in a manner sensitive to the cultural diversity of all the families and staff in the Centre
 - where appropriate, extending understanding of holidays in a global perspective
2. Families, children and staff will be encouraged to talk about how they do or do not celebrate holidays/special days.
3. Appropriate learning opportunities will be offered as long as we remember our curriculum goal: to help children develop a positive understanding and respect for the world around them.
4. Holidays can be fun when everyone feels acknowledged and respected.

We hope these guidelines will enable all families, children and staff in our Centres to feel valued and included.

Guidelines for Outings/Walks

Special community outings are included in the program, with parental consent. Parents will be notified in advance of any outings. Only Mothercraft staff and placement students will be permitted on the outings/walks. At Mothercraft we do not have volunteers.

At the time of entry to the childcare centre, parents are asked to sign a general waiver form for outings in the community, that do not require transportation (i.e. walk to local park).

Bringing Toys to the Centre

Any toys brought to the Centre from home must be left in the child's cubby to avoid damage or loss. Exceptions will be made for transitional toys including blankets, soft toys or puppets. Research suggests that "superhero action figures" (i.e. Ninjas, Spider Man and Batman) promote aggressive behaviour. Please do not allow your child to bring these toys to the Centre. Similarly, weapons of any kind (i.e. water guns, swords, Nerf guns, light sabers, etc.) are not permitted at the Centre.

What happens if your child needs extra support?

Mothercraft provides a number of additional programs and services that can be accessed should your child or family require extra support. Through referrals to community services, we support families to access developmental assessments, early intervention, enrichment programs, parenting support groups and workshops, and professional help. If you would like to learn more about our other programs and services, please speak with your Centre Manager.

We have tried to include the most relevant information for you in this handbook however, it is not possible to touch on every aspect. Please consult your Centre Manager or your child's teacher if you have any other questions about our policies, practices, and procedures.

Our Commitment to Excellence

Across the organization, core values and beliefs form the basis of our work.

Mission

To support healthy child development and strengthen families.

Vision

Every family has the knowledge and support they need to provide a loving environment in which their child is able to thrive. Every professional who works with families is confident in their skills and committed to providing the highest quality services to their communities.

Values

Mothercraft is committed to delivering its programs and services based on evidence, research and current best practices. As a result, our work is rooted in a framework that is built upon three theories—attachment, relational and developmental—to ensure that we are meeting the highest standards of service delivery. This commitment is articulated in a set of values that encompass all that we do:

The First 3 Years Matter

We believe that infancy and early childhood are critical periods in every child's life and that healthy attachments are the foundation of healthy development.

Diversity & Inclusion

We believe in diversity and practice inclusion to ensure that each child and every family is accepted for who they are.

Partnership & Leadership

We believe in working collaboratively with our community partners to strengthen communities and build a system of services in which children and families are at the centre.

Professional Excellence

We believe that fostering strong, positive working relationships are integral to our commitment to our staff and are fundamental to the provision of high quality services. We believe in accountability and integrity in all of our relationships.

Mothercraft Programs are Grounded in the Following Theoretical Frameworks

Programs at Mothercraft are grounded in the following theoretical frameworks and are transferred to practice based on a comprehensive understanding of the individual needs and experiences of the infants, young children and families attending our programs:

1. Developmental Theory

Children's development is a product of the combination of their inborn qualities and the contributions from their experience. Developmental theory calls for the consideration of the combined contributions of both the prenatal and postnatal environments. This allows us to understand and respond to every child in our programs based on their unique strengths and vulnerabilities, and to tailor our programs and interventions appropriately.

In our Centres for Early Development, the priority of Mothercraft teachers is to fully understand every child in their care. This includes understanding the complex ways in which every child's temperament, as well as their prenatal and postnatal experiences, have combined to contribute to the way in which they experience their world. Through keen and sensitive observation, developmental screening/assessment, and ongoing communication with parents, Mothercraft

teachers come to understand each child as completely as possible. Because of this, each child experiences a caregiving relationship that is respectful of and responsive to their unique developmental needs and experiences. Teachers' interactions with children are empathic, consistent, affectionate, caring and growth-promoting.

Developmental theory recognizes the importance of the child's connectedness to a primary caregiver, to family, as well as to community and environment. A child's developmental outcome is described as a continuous dynamic process of interchange between the child and its environment over time.

2. Attachment Theory

Attachment theory proposes that it is within the emotional relationship between infant and primary caregiver that the young child's cognitive and emotional sense of self and others is developed, in ways that have a critical influence on the infant's perception of the environment and others, and on later personality development and social functioning, and on learning. The primary pathway to a secure attachment is caregiver sensitivity to the infant's cues and signals, as well as an appropriate and consistent response to those signals.

Attachment develops out of patterns of early interactions between the infant and his/her primary caregiver. As the attachment relationship develops, it serves four major functions: (a) providing a sense of security; (b) regulating affect and arousal; (c) promoting the expression of feelings and communication; and (d) serving as a base for exploration. A sensitive, responsive caregiver is fundamental to the development of a secure attachment bond during the early years of life. Consistency, sensitivity, and contingent responsiveness on the part of the primary caregivers are essential to the young child's cognitive and psychological development.

In our Centres for Early Development, attachment theory is applied through the implementation of a primary caregiver model. One Mothercraft teacher is identified as the primary caregiver for each child, a model that is familiar to the children in our care and that ensures the integrity of individualized programming. Through the use of small groups, Mothercraft teachers promote quality interactions between staff and children and between the children themselves. In their day to day interactions and relationships with children, teachers model prosocial interactions and respect for others. Through such interactions, children learn about their role in a civil society and interdependence with nature and all living things.

Through their interactions with children, Mothercraft teachers also promote key social-emotional milestones during the infancy and preschool years, including regulation, attachment, and exploration of their social and physical worlds, all of which are the foundations for learning. We recognize the importance of consistency, predictability in routines to facilitate smooth transitionary processes as children move through various stages in their young lives.

3. Relational Theory

A central principle of relational theory is that people, institutions and systems grow through relationships with others. Relational theory calls for attention to larger systems changes, including reduction of service fragmentation and access issues as part of the solution for families and children. At Mothercraft, we have learned the importance of relationships and connections between previously disconnected service sectors and providers to create environments that facilitate engagement of children and families in services that promote child development, family functioning and access to services. Through the creation of strong program and cross departmental team we maximize internal expertise and internal capacity to respond to the complex needs of children, families and communities.

What Can You Expect from Mothercraft?

At Mothercraft, we believe that there are no limits to what children can achieve if given the right start in life. Since 1931, we have been a leader in healthy child development. Our success is based on our ability to listen to the needs of children and their families and on our commitment to continually test new concepts and ideas at our Centres for Early Development. Specifically, here's what you can expect for your child:

A play-based child-centred approach

The Early Learning Framework (ELF), Early Learning for Every Child Today (ELECT) and How Does Learning Happen? are guides to support our understanding of early year's development, curriculum and pedagogy in Ontario's early childhood settings. Mothercraft Centre's for Early Development programs are based on established best practices in early child development and follow the principles set out in the ELECT document and *How Does Learning Happen?*, which is Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years. It is a professional learning resource guide about learning through relationships for those working with young children and families. It is intended to support pedagogy and curriculum/program development in Early Years programs. *How Does Learning Happen?* is organized around four foundational conditions that are important for children to grow and flourish: Belonging, Well-Being, Engagement and Expression. We tailor our learning opportunities to each child's individual interests and stage of development. Regular documented observations and bi-annual developmental summaries help us set goals and objectives to ensure your child builds important social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical skills they need to prepare them for life-long learning.

Resources:

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/howlearninghappens.pdf>

https://www.ontario.ca/page/find-and-pay-child-care?_ga=1.55682723.904026985.1408107104

Program Statement

Since 1931, Mothercraft has dedicated itself to the promotion of healthy child development and support for families with young children. We believe every child is competent, curious, capable of complex thinking, and rich in potential (as articulated in *How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years, 2014*).

Regularly documented observations and bi-annual developmental summaries help Mothercraft staff to set goals and objectives that will ensure your child builds the important social, emotional, cognitive, language and physical skills they need to prepare them for a life of learning, wellness and active participation in society.

Mothercraft's licensed child care programs – known as our Centres for Early Development or CEDs– provide a play-based, child-centred approach to early learning and care. We believe that the health, safety, nutrition and social-emotional needs of every child are paramount. We encourage children to explore, play and inquire throughout their day. Our success is based on our ability to listen and respond to the needs of the children and their families, as well as to utilize new or emerging, evidence-informed practices to continually improve our programs. Mothercraft's curriculum balances the individual developmental needs of each child with the unique characteristics of every group of children to provide a caring and inclusive environment.

The following principles and approaches guide us in our day-to-day work:

- Emotional wellbeing enables children to interact and communicate in a positive way, which supports their ability to self-regulate. Through responsive, individualized and age-appropriate interactions (such as positive guidance, modeling, redirection, and space to regulate emotions), children are empowered to problem-solve.
- Parents are their child's first teacher. We support the whole child through transition and intake meetings, which enable us to gather information such as the interests, needs and temperament. Transition plans are designed on an individual basis and take into account the unique strengths and/or needs of each child and their family.
- Children are active participants in their own learning. They are involved in the program planning process through expression, inquiry, choice, play and exploration. Responsive programming, documentation and learning objectives allow for extension and adaptation of plans.
- Children develop at their own rate so opportunities for learning are planned accordingly. One way this is achieved is through small group experiences which allow for more one-on-one interactions.
- Learning environments are carefully designed to foster a sense of belonging and to encourage exploration. A variety of concrete, representational and symbolic play materials are provided to accommodate all learning styles and needs.
- Our centres are designed to maximize health, safety and well-being, through secure door-code access, sleep monitoring, monthly safety checks of all play spaces. Nutritious meals, made daily on-site and menus are reviewed annually by a dietician.
- Indoor and outdoor active play, as well as rest and quiet time, are part of the day. In addition, a balance of teacher-supported and child-initiated learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum.
- Engaging local community partners such as resource consultants, family resource programs, referring agencies, libraries, schools, Community Colleges, which help to build partnerships that support the children, their families and staff.
- Children are engaged learners who explore the world with body, mind and senses. We encourage this by incorporating children's interests and developmental needs into the program. We also create opportunities for spontaneous learning by incorporating activities like neighbourhood walks and field trips into our curriculum as appropriate. Creativity, innovation and global citizenship are encouraged.
- Each child's progress and development is assessed in a variety of ways: through daily observations, administering of the Nipissing District Developmental Screen, review of developmental checklists, overall assessment of the children's interests and development.
- Ongoing communication and engagement with families ensures meaningful participation in the program. Parents receive important information about their child's learning and development in a variety of ways: individual child portfolios, developmental profiles, newsletters, calendars, curriculum meetings, parent handbook, parent surveys, parent advisory committees and daily information charts.
- Highly-trained and well-qualified staff are critical to the success of the program and the achievement of child and family outcomes. Mothercraft staff are supported in their roles through: regular professional development opportunities, agency-wide staff meetings and trainings, mentoring, classroom team meetings and reflection activities, and regular staff meetings. We are committed to ongoing documentation, discussion, review, reflection and improvement for all staff.

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Policy Name and Number:	Parents, Students and Community Complaints Policy
Category:	Programs and Services
Approved by:	Board of Directors
Approval/Revision Date:	February 27, 2012
Review Date:	August 2017, November 2017
Scope:	This policy applies to all staff, students and volunteers

PREAMBLE

Mothercraft values and encourages the feedback of parents, students and community members about the programs and practices of the organization. Complaints can provide important opportunities for improving programs and services. A complaint may be defined as an expression of dissatisfaction or unmet expectation. A complaint can be made by a parent, student, or community member with support if necessary. The complaint can relate to any aspect of the organization's programs and services.

POLICY

Mothercraft is committed to listening to parents, students and community member complaints and responding in a fair, timely and respectful manner. All complaints will be given due consideration without reprisal or discrimination. Language support for non-English speaking service users or community members will be provided.

Mothercraft actively informs parents, students and community members of their right to register complaints (verbal or written) and seek resolution. This information is accessible and publicized in Mothercraft's *Client Rights and Responsibilities Statement* and the *Mothercraft Parent Handbook*. Parents, students or community members who speak languages other than those covered by the latter documents or who have reading difficulties are encouraged to have this policy explained to them by a Mothercraft staff person at the beginning of service.

All aspects of a complaint will be handled in confidence. However, if the complaint involves allegations of illegal or unethical behavior, information may need to be shared with external authorities.

All complaints are documented. The maintenance of complaint files is the responsibility of department Directors.

Complaints deemed a risk to the organization are brought forward to the board of directors by the Executive Director. Complaints related to the violation of board governance policies are reviewed by the board. Directors (senior management) will provide information about complaints to the Executive Director's office so that a summary report can be created and submitted to the board annually.

Responses to complaints that involve an allegation of child abuse or neglect should be guided by the *Child Abuse Reporting and Documentation Policy* and the *Child Abuse - Investigation of Allegations Against Staff Policy*.

Clients with questions, comments or complaints about Mothercraft privacy policies and procedures or about the collection, use or disclosure of their personal information will be directed to the Privacy Officer.

LIMITATIONS N/A

DEFINITIONS N/A

PROCEDURES

As the goal of Mothercraft is to give sufficient local authority to meet the needs of parents, students and community members, complainants will be encouraged, but not required, to work through the lines of authority within the organization.

The complaint resolution process begins with the involvement of the staff person who provided service, unless this is not in the best interests of the parent, student or community member.

STEP 1: Receiving a Complaint

- a. If the person providing service receives the complaint the parent, student or community member should be offered the earliest opportunity and within 2 working days to discuss their concern(s).
- b. If the complaint is received by any staff member or volunteer of the organization other than the person providing service the parent, student or community member should be directed to the person providing service with an explanation of Mothercraft's policy. If the complainant is reluctant to speak directly to the person providing service they should be referred to that person's immediate manager. The person providing service should be alerted to the existence of the complaint.
- c. In hearing a complaint the person providing service may decide to involve or consult their manager at any stage. This option should be taken if the service user brings a friend or advisor.
- d. If the complaint is handled to the mutual satisfaction of the complainant and the person providing service, the complaint and resolution is documented on the *Complaint Form* and a copy is forwarded to the manager of the person providing service and the department director.

STEP 2: Discussion with a Manager

- a. If the person providing service is unable to resolve a complaint, the complainant is offered the opportunity to speak with the manager.
- b. The preferred method is to have the manager call the parent, student or community member. This affords the staff person the opportunity to discuss the matter with the manager prior to any further action or outreach to the complainant.
- c. The manager calls the parent, student or community member as soon as possible after consulting with the person who provided the service.
- d. If a parent, student or community member calls a manager to complain about the person providing the service or about the service provided, the manager should hear the complaint, but offer no action without discussing the matter with the staff person involved.

- e. From the point a manager takes a call from a parent, student or community member or calls a complainant about a complaint, a meeting between the manager and complainant should be offered within five working days.
- f. The staff person(s) and manager should jointly plan the response to the parent's, student's or community member's complaint. Whenever possible the plan should support the integrity of the relationship between staff and parents, students and community members. and unless clearly contraindicated, the staff person will be present at any meeting between the manager and complainant.
- g. The role of the manager is to resolve the matter to the satisfaction of the parent, student or community member and staff person(s) or, failing this, to inform the complainant of their right to seek resolution through a meeting with the Director.
- h. A letter must be sent to the parent, student or community member within two weeks of the meeting. The appropriate director is informed of the complaint and the resolution or lack of resolution.

STEP 3: Meeting the Department Director

- a. If the parent, student or community member is not satisfied with the response from the manager, the initiative for carrying the complaint to the Director rests with the complainant.
- b. The parent, student, or community member should be informed of the name and phone number of the Director if she/he wishes to pursue the complaint. The Director is alerted immediately if a call is anticipated and a copy of the completed *Complaint Form* is provided.
- c. If requested, the Director will meet with the parent, student or community member within two weeks of receiving the request.
- d. Prior to this the Director will contact the manager and the staff person and seek any necessary consultation. Whenever possible the Director will attempt to involve the staff and manager in the planning process and may invite one or both to the meeting.
- e. The Director will attempt to resolve the problem with the parent, student, or community member. Whatever the outcome the Director will inform the complainant by mail not more than two weeks after the meeting.
- f. The Director will inform the Executive Director of the meeting with the parent, student or community member and the outcome.

STEP 4: Meeting the Executive Director

- a. If the parent, student or community member is not satisfied with the response from the Director the complainant may take the complaint to the Executive Director and should be informed of the name and phone number of the Executive Director.

- b. The Executive Director should be alerted immediately if a call is anticipated and a copy of the completed *Complaint Form* should be provided.
- c. If requested, the Executive Director or her or his designate will meet with the parent, student, or community member within two weeks and attempt to resolve the matter.
- d. Prior to this, the Executive Director will inform the Director, manager and the staff person(s) of the approach and seek any necessary consultation.
- e. Whenever possible the Executive Director will involve the staff person(s) and manager in the planning process and may invite one or all of them to the meeting.
- f. Prior to the meeting the Director will ensure that a letter bearing his/her signature is sent to both the parent, student or community member and the Executive Director outlining the complaint and all the steps taken to resolve the complaint.
- g. Within two weeks of meeting the parent, student or community member, the Executive Director or her/his designate will send a letter to the complainant setting out any agreement reached, or failing this, the Executive Director's decision regarding the complaint.

The person(s) providing the service and those at the first level of authority will be kept informed throughout all attempts to resolve complaints. In instances where there is an allegation of criminal or serious ethical breach of conduct by Mothercraft personnel, the Executive Director may waive the requirement to inform personnel until legal and/or police advice is sought and may continue to refrain from informing the person during the course of an investigation providing there is no breach of a legal or contractual standard.

While every attempt should be made to achieve a positive resolution with the complainant, the integrity of Mothercraft policies and the integrity and safety of Mothercraft personnel and other parents, children and students must be maintained.

Documentation

All complaints received from a parent, student or community member are initially documented by the staff person who received the complaint using the *Complaint Form*. A flag noting that a complaint has been received is placed in the child, family or student record. A copy of the complaint is forwarded to the staff person's manager.

The complaint file (includes all documentation, correspondence, resolution and follow up) is maintained separately from the child, family or student's record in the appropriate director's office.

A record of the complaint will be made available to the complainant on request except in the case where the confidentiality of another parent, child, student or community member may be breached. These records will be retained according to Mothercraft's Record Storage Policy.

FORMS/ATTACHMENTS

Complaint Form

CROSS-REFERENCING

Child Abuse Reporting and Documentation Policy

Child Abuse – Investigations of Allegations Against Staff

Record Storage, Retention and Destruction Policy

6.1.39 Safe Arrival and Dismissal

Policy Name:	Safe Arrival and Dismissal
Category:	Programs and Services
Approved By:	Executive Director
Approval/Revision Date:	December 2023
Review Date:	As needed
Scope:	All staff and students on placement in CEDs

PURPOSE

The safety and well-being of children in the care of Mothercraft is of primary importance. This policy is intended to fulfill Mothercraft's obligations regarding the safe arrival and dismissal of children at Centres for Early Development (CED), as set out under Regulation 137/15 of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*.

POLICY

When a child does not arrive as expected at a CED, Mothercraft will make a courtesy call to parent/guardian. Mothercraft will ensure that children are only released to the child's parent/guardian or an individual for whom the parent/guardian has provided written authorization.

Centres will not release children from care without supervision. Where a child does not arrive or is not picked up at a CED as expected, staff will follow the safe arrival and dismissal procedures set out below.

DEFINITIONS

Individual authorized to pick-up/authorized individual: a person that the parent/guardian has identified on Mothercraft's release form as having the authority to pick-up their child(ren) from care.

Parent/guardian: A person having lawful custody of a child.

PROCEDURES

Arrival

1. Parents/guardians will be asked to inform the CED manager of any planned absences (i.e., vacation) or unanticipated absences (i.e., illness or late arrival).
2. When accepting a child into care, program staff in the room will:
 - I. Greet the parent/guardian and child and record any changes to the child's daily pick-up (i.e., someone other than the parent/guardian picking up).
 - II. Document the change in pick-up procedure in the daily written record.
 - III. Sign in the child on the classroom attendance record.
3. In the event that a child does not arrive at the CED by 11:00 am and the parent/guardian has not advised the CED of a late arrival or absence, program staff in the room will inform the CED Manager or designate.
4. The CED Manager or designate will make a courtesy call to the child's parent/guardian by phone or email, including leaving a voice message when necessary.
5. The CED Manager or designate will document the steps taken to confirm the absence and program staff will document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence in the daily written record.

Dismissal

1. Program staff will only release a child to the child's parent/guardian or an individual for whom the parent/guardian has provided written authorization. Where the parent/guardian has indicated that someone other than the child's parent/guardian will be picking up, staff will confirm that the person is listed on the CED Release Form. Where the person is not listed, staff will ask the parent/guardian to provide all required details in writing (e.g., add to Release Form, provide note or send email). No children will be dismissed without supervision.
2. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual), staff will:
 - confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
 - where the above is not possible, ask the parent/guardian/authorized individual for photo identification and confirm the individual's information against the parent/guardian/authorized individual's name on the child's file or written authorization.
 - Where the individual is not the parent/guardian or an authorized individual, staff will contact the parent/guardian to confirm that the person is authorized to pick up the child and request that the parent/guardian send a written confirmation (i.e., email or text) authorizing staff to release the child to the person. The person will be added to the list of authorized individuals who may pick up the child on the Release Form.
3. Where a parent/guardian has not picked up their child by the CED closure time, at least two staff will remain in the centre to supervise the child until the parent/guardian or an authorized individual arrives. Staff may provide a snack and will engage the child in appropriate activities.
4. A second staff will contact the parent/guardian by phone. If they can't be reached, staff will call the emergency contact. If they can't be reached a call will be made to an authorized individual an authorized individual(s) will be contacted and, if necessary, the emergency contact(s).
5. Where staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file after 30 minutes of the CED closure, the Manager and then the Associate Director will be informed. The Director will be informed within 24 hours.
6. Where staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file one hour after the closure of the CED, the staff will contact the Children's Aid Society of Toronto (416-924-4646) and follow their direction regarding next steps.
7. Staff will remain with the child until they may be safely released into the custody of a parent/guardian, authorized individual or the Children's Aid Society.

CROSS REFERENCE:

- *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*; Regulation 137/15, Sec. [\[O. Reg. 137/15: GENERAL \(ontario.ca\) \]](#)
- CED Release Form
- *Attendance/Head Count Practice Policy*
- *Missing Child Policy*
- *Child Safety Policy*