



PARENT & FAMILY HANDBOOK

Welcome to Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. This handbook will go over the Policies, Rules, and Regulations at Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. Please use this handbook as a reference tool that you can continually reference and answer any questions you may have. Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. reserves the right to make changes to policies and procedures as needed. This handbook, Admission Agreement, and all other forms may be revised as needed to meet the needs of the children, parents, and the business. If revisions occur, families will be notified of the changes at least 30 days in advance of any change and will resign the appropriate form that has been modified, if needed.

Open communication between our families, children and staff of Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. is vital to maintaining a successful relationship. Please provide us with any changes in your child's home life, as well as problems and accomplishments. Working together as a team is important for your child's educational experience, as well as their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. The mission of Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. is to provide a safe, developmentally appropriate environment for every child to grow within. Our focus is to provide a stimulating early care and educational experience which promotes the development of the whole child - head, heart and hands. When this happens we will have succeeded in children attending their "big kid" school as happy, healthy, compassionate, and safe little kindergartners.

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How Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. Came to Be

Hello, I am Heather Lingemann, CEO/President of Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. and Program Director. In the late 1990s I found myself a recent graduate from Cal. State Univ., Chico looking into career prospects and felt wanting. I chose a position of leadership within a large corporation coordinating and hosting fundraiser events for a variety of organizations (e.g., M.A.D.D. & D.A.R.E. America) with the shared mission of preventing youth from engaging in the use of alcohol and drugs. After this brief career in public relations I held a position in retail management with the same corporation. This career pathway taught me to have drive to achieve goals, the ability to collaborate with a team of employees, and have many happy moments helping customers get their needs met. During this time as a retail manager, I was blessed with a daughter to raise on my own. I wanted to find a way to be her mother and have a career. After a few years I realized the retail life was not going to allow me to be the one nurturing my daughter's growth and development into a compassionate, inclusive, and loving little girl. I wanted, no I needed, to be there for her to show her these things; and my small family child care home blossomed from this need.

While providing in-home child care and learning opportunities for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, I began taking early childhood education courses through our local community college. As part of a course, I had a wonderful opportunity to observe and volunteer in a local preschool that served children with exceptional needs right along side their typical developing peers. It seemed that the teachers there had limitless compassion, patience, and creativity for the children they taught. I thought to myself that I must have been brought to this path for a reason and thus went back to CSU, Chico to earn my credentials to teach children with developmental disabilities and other exceptional needs.

During my years of teaching in special education, I found myself always looking for ways to teach the youngest students in elementary school because I felt they had some of the most authentic love for learning. I wanted to be there and take part in the moment when the love for learning is first planted. I took a year off from teaching for reflection and to spend precious time with my preschool aged twins before they began kindergarten. During this time my loving husband shared with me an observation he made when reflecting back to the days when we first began dating and I operated a family child care home. He said, that when he sees me truly happy and enjoying life I am often playing, exploring, creating, and taking adventures with very young children. From this observation, and about a year and a half of extremely dedicated hard work, Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. was birthed. Sharing in the knowledge growth of young children fuels my heart and is a way I can give of myself to help others. I am so honored to be chosen by our local area families to nurture and guide their most precious children.

~Ms. Heather

DAYS, HOURS of OPERATION, and CLOSURES

Creative Minds Early Learning Center (CMELC) has an open door policy. We invite families to be an engaged member of our learning community. We are partners in the growth, development and education of your child. Creative Minds Early Learning Center is a CA state licensed children's preschool program. The program provides high quality child care and early education services to the children of our local community. Our program is designed to meet the developmental needs of children between the ages of 2 years old up through five years of age & attending kindergarten.

Our program is further enriched through the participation of parents. The goal of this handbook is to familiarize parents and guardians with the philosophies, policies and procedures of Creative Minds Early Learning Center. PLEASE take time to read it thoroughly and refer to this document as needed.

Creative Minds Early Learning Center operating hours/days:

Monday through Friday, 7:00 am to 5:30 pm.

HOLIDAYS & CLOSURES

Creative Minds Early Learning Center observes the following Holidays and recess breaks:

- New Year's Day
- President's Day
- Easter Travel Day - Monday after Easter
- Memorial Day (observed)
- Independence Day* (center closes early at 1:00 PM)
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Recess - Wednesday before through Friday after
- Winter Recess 2 weeks - Christmas Eve through New Year's Day

(PLEASE refer to the calendar on our website for exact dates we are closed).

If your family takes a vacation or your child/children are absent due to illness you are still required to pay your full tuition regardless of the amount of time absent. **Holidays & Recess closures are NOT deducted from Tuition.**

We at CMELC are lifelong learners. To further the professional development of our staff, in-service days are scheduled once every other month for professional development. The **center will close** the 1st Friday of ALL odd numbered months at **12:00 pm**, for staff in-service.

TUITION & ANNUAL ACTIVITY/MATERIALS FEE

I understand that tuition is paid in advance of care received. Tuition is paid monthly, I will submit my tuition by the **6th day of the month**. If the 6th calendar day falls on the weekend, tuition is due by 5:30pm on the *preceding* Friday. Accounts are considered delinquent on the 7th day, and a notice of termination will be issued by certified mail by the 10th day. A

late payment fee of \$30 will be added to the outstanding monthly tuition for each month tuition is past due. If a payment plan has been submitted and approved by the program Director prior to the date of termination, the decision to suspend care will be rescinded. Failure to meet the terms of the payment plan will result in termination from the program.

An **annual activity/materials fee of \$150 per child will be due upon enrollment** and then reassessed annually in two payments to be assessed \$75 in March and \$75 in September. These activity fees are non refundable.

Tuition paid late three (3) times within a six (6) month period will result in termination of childcare services. In addition, the family will be ineligible for child care services with Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. until the outstanding balance is paid in full and prior to readmission. Readmission for services will be determined by placement on the CMELC Waiting List.

Program Schedule Options & Corresponding 2023/24 Monthly Tuition**

***Tuition will be reviewed semi-annually and increased as needed to maintain our exceptional programming. Written advance notice of not less than 30 days will be provided to parents of any changes in tuition.*

5 days Full-time (≤ 9.5 hours/day)	\$ 935	7:00 AM - 5:30 PM; M-F
3 days Full-time (≤ 9.5 hours/day)	\$ 795	7:00 AM - 5:30 PM
2 days Full-time (≤ 9.5 hours/day)	\$ 575	7:00 AM - 5:30 PM
5 days Part-time (4 hours)	\$ 750	AM: 7:30-12:00 PM: 1:30-5:30; M-F
3 days Part-time (4 hours)	\$ 540	AM: 7:30-12:00 PM: 1:30-5:30
2 days Part-time (4 hours)	\$ 405	AM: 7:30-12:00 PM: 1:30-5:30
Kindergarten After-school 5 days	\$ 525	1:30-5:30 PM; M-F *No transportation provided

30 day written notice to terminate services from the Authorized Family Representative must be submitted to the Program Director. Refunds for unused tuition will be prorated and issued if CMELC receives at least 30 days written notification of termination for services from the Authorized Family Representative. The refund will be returned by mail to address on file via a check within 2 weeks of the last date child(ren) is enrolled. Activity/Materials Fees are non-refundable.

Method of Payment: I understand that Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. accepts checks, money orders, cashiers checks, Visa and MasterCard. Credit cards are only accepted via the childcare management website/app. All checks and money orders shall be made payable to **Creative Minds Early Learning Center** and may be submitted via US Mail to the

Administrative Office located within the center in sufficient time to be received by the 6th calendar day of each month. Payment may also be dropped in the on-site tuition box at the center. Please be sure to list your child's name in the memo line on all checks/money orders. There will be a fee of \$40.00 for returned checks. If more than one check is returned as non-sufficient funds, then money order, credit card or cashiers check will be required for future payments of tuition.

Late Pick-Up Fee: Creative Minds Early Learning Center, Inc. Policy states that a parent pays a fee of \$2.00 every minute (per child) after 5:30 PM. (*Example: pick up at 5:33 PM will result in a \$6.00 late fee*). Parents or designated representative will be required to sign the Late Pick Up Form which documents occurrences of late pick-up. Parents will be charged late pick-up fees in the month following the occurrence. I understand that CMELC Policy states that if my child is picked up late excessively without a valid reason that my childcare services will be terminated.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

There is a 3-week probationary period for each child enrolled, commencing from the first date of attendance. If at the end of those 3 weeks, the Director, staff, or parent feels that a child is not benefiting by being enrolled in our program, termination of the contract for services will take place immediately; a 30-day written notice to terminate services is NOT required to be submitted by the parent/authorized representative. The authorized representative may request a refund for unused tuition and a refund will be remitted within 5 business days from the date requested to the mailing address on file for the child.

OUR PHILOSOPHY FOR LEARNING

At Creative Minds Early Learning Center we strive to develop the children's intellectual, artistic, and practical skills in an integrated and holistic manner. The cultivation of the child's imagination and creativity is a central focus. We offer a play-based learning environment for your children.

Further, we believe that:

- Children develop at their own pace. They do not acquire knowledge by force. They are motivated by their own desire to make sense of their world.
- Children learn through interaction with the materials and people in their environment. Play provides this interaction and is the natural mode of learning for the young child.
- Children learn self-discipline as they learn respect for themselves, others, and their environment. Pride in their abilities, family, and culture adds to their developing self-esteem.
- Children need a balanced program which fosters independence, choice, and challenge. They also need structure and well-defined limits in order to feel secure, safe and confident in their environment.

Young children's developmental tasks are to build trust, learn social skills, begin mastery of academic skills, and develop positive self-esteem. These tasks are best supported by a program that provides developmentally appropriate activities, well trained and consistent staff, and a safe and healthy learning environment.

GOALS

Our school has been established to meet the needs of the child from 2 years through kindergarten, whose parents must be away from home for part of the day. Our desire is to provide an environment in which children can thrive and find out for themselves who they are and what they can do.

We feel that to do this a child needs an environment that is saying to him or her "you are loved here; we feel you are a unique and worthwhile person; we have faith in you as a growing individual". In this environment the child needs a great number and variety of experiences in order to find a basic way of dealing with life that is comfortable and satisfying.

CURRICULUM

The Center's curriculum is based on developmental theory. Children move through sequential stages of development in a variety of skill areas and at varying speeds. A child's development may be quick in some areas and slow in others, and all areas of growth are important and interrelated. Children need mastery at each level before moving on to the next. Therefore we place equal importance on all major areas of development and tailor our program to meet individual growth needs.

Our curriculum is child focused and allows for teacher flexibility. Teachers coordinate age appropriate curriculum for each group which is organized around the following areas: Physical (gross and fine motor); social (peer interaction, social skills and awareness); emotional (self-esteem, awareness and recognition of feelings, healthy balance); and cognitive (comprehension, language development, problem solving, and skill acquisition). Curriculum is carried out with the belief that children are learning at all times and that the teacher's role is to facilitate and enrich the learning process.

We accept and support both the child's dependence and independence. We have a fundamental belief that all children are initiators, explorers and self-learners. It is the sole responsibility of our expertly trained staff to create an environment for children that is physically safe, mentally stimulating, emotionally nurturing and abundant in choice.

Curriculum Domains:

Reading Readiness

Our program begins with an exploration of the world around us – "reading" by looking, touching, smelling, listening – to become familiar with the new-to-us things the letters and words will tell about. Listening to stories about our children, we realize they often think about the same things we do, and in the very same way! Books tell us about exciting escapades and far away places. Reading itself is an adventure. Let's begin!

Language Arts

Learning to distinguish the sounds of words and letters through participation is very satisfying. The emphasis here is on conversation and dramatic play with poetry and puppets.

Math Readiness

Our program is designed to present children with the concepts and vocabulary basic to mathematics. This includes counting, number recognition, number relationships and values, sequencing and comparisons and classification.

Creative Arts

Our purpose is to bring out the creativity latent in every child. Our program has been devised to present the children with a variety of creative experiences they might not otherwise have. Our goal is always to develop the child's full potential as a child, not as a future talent. Through arts and crafts the children learn to express themselves in a variety of media, including finger painting, drawing, clay, collages and crafts. Dancing and interpretive body movements, singing experimentation with various musical instruments, making a rhythm band — these are ways children learn to communicate with joy and meaning.

Nature Studies and Science

Learning about animals, insects and birds; watching things grow under our care, exploring nature and tending our garden... all this nurtures a sense of respect and love for the fragile world around us. Simple experiments teach basic scientific concepts. Why doesn't a Polar Bear get cold? (hint: is has something to do with blubber).

Guided & Self-Directed Play Experiences

Play is the natural mode of learning for the young child. The child develops feelings of competency and motivation for learning when provided opportunities for play and individual choice. Learning occurs when the child is actively involved with the materials of the environment. Through careful observation of play, teachers are able to assess development and add challenges or direction as needed to further individual growth. The classroom environment is arranged to provide ample choices for children to encourage independent thinking and a gentle unfolding of abilities.

Physical Development

Gross motor skills are developed as children run and play on the playground, as they jump, hop, skip, run, etc. in the classroom and outdoors, either in free play or as a structured activity, e.g., circle time and singing games, music and movement activities, responding to verbal commands, e.g., hop, hop, stop... walk, walk, stop, etc., or moving to the rhythm of a drum or hand claps, imitating motions of animals or wind and rain, etc. in dramatic play. Small muscle activities include manipulating playdough, Legos, small blocks or tiles, cutting and pasting, painting, drawing, coloring, working puzzles, etc.

Children have opportunities throughout the day to choose a manipulative activity (self-directed), as well as participating in teacher directed activities e.g., cooking (measuring,

stirring, rolling), structured art projects and patterning with pegs, Lego, etc., and finger-plays.

Field Trips

Creative Minds ELC occasionally supplements the in-class curriculum with off premises field trips. Your child's world is expanding rapidly; s/he is eager to see what lies beyond the familiar yard, the house next door. To help expand that world, our staff takes the children on carefully supervised field trips through our surrounding neighborhood. These excursions are coordinated with our other activities and add an important new dimension to the childcare experience. Off-site field trips will be offered to children of our older class groups located in Suite 2. Children enrolled in our younger class groups in Suite 1 will have the opportunity of having the field trip experience come to them. Special visitors and community helpers will be scheduled to come into the Flower class and share their knowledge and experiences during a classroom visit.

Parent/Guardians are required to give written permission for their child to attend each field trip, participation and field trip attendance is not required of any child. Notification of a field trip will be sent home in advance of the trip, with all pertinent trip information including, destination, date, time, and reason for the trip. These are often walking field trips to places or events nearby (i.e. fire station, lower Bidwell Park, library, etc.). Accompanying the notification paper, teachers will include a permission slip to be filled out, signed, and returned to the teacher prior to the date of the trip. The field trip permission slip, with statement for authorization to seek medical treatment in the event of an emergency, must be filled out completely and accurately, and all trip costs must be paid in advance in order for your child to attend. If family members wish to attend the trip with their child, they should discuss attending with the classroom teacher. Creative Minds Early Learning Center provides all required supervision for all field trips, but always invites and welcomes adult family members to attend.

CHILDREN'S DRESS CODE

Children are engaged in various activities during the day; some of these activities can be messy, and/or athletic in nature. Additionally, children are engaged in outdoor play daily, weather permitting. Due to these activities, children are required to be dressed in seasonably appropriate and comfortable clothing. Parents are advised to carefully consider dressing children in overalls, rompers, or clothing with difficult closures. These types of clothing present challenges for children in relation to toileting. Coats, hats, gloves, scarves and weatherproof shoes must be provided in the winter months.

***** Children are not permitted to wear flip-flops or thongs, footwear must have a heel strap or closed heel. ***** Parents are advised that open toed shoes are also discouraged, but not prohibited. The most appropriate type of shoes for participation in school activities are rubber-soled, sneakers/tennis shoes.

Children are required to have one seasonably and size appropriate complete change of clothing at the center at all times. A complete change of clothing includes shirt, pants, underwear, socks, and shoes. Teachers will post reminders for parents to update changes of clothing as the weather begins to change. All clothing items must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name. This includes coats, hats, gloves, scarves, and boots. When choosing accessories for your children, please be mindful of the potential safety issues they present not only for your child, but also for the older and younger children attending Creative Minds ELC. **Toilet training children must have a minimum of three (3) bottom sets of clothing stored at the center in case of potential "accidents"**. Please LABEL all clothing items with child's first and last names that are to be stored at the center to prevent items from being misplaced.

Please do not bring toys or other personal belongings to school. This will avoid hurt feelings and loss of items. Please do not bring CANDY, GUM OR MONEY into the center. There are times when your child might need a special item that helps in their transition from home to school, if this is the case please label this item and touch base with your child's teacher so they are aware of what item your child brought to the center.

Creative Minds Early Learning Center is not responsible for damage to or loss of any articles of clothing, including personal items brought to the center from home or elsewhere outside of the center.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES

Outdoor Safety: To protect against cold, heat, sun injury, and insect-borne disease, the Center ensures that:

- Children wear clothing that is dry and layered for warmth in cold weather.
- Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun, they wear sun protective clothing, applied skin protection, or both. Applied skin protection will be either sunscreen or sunblock with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher that is applied to exposed skin with **written parental permission**.
- When it becomes necessary to use insect repellents due to a high risk of insect-borne disease, only repellents **NOT** containing DEET are used. Staff apply insect repellent no more than once a day and only with **written parental permission**.

Administration of Sunscreen and Insect Repellent Purpose: To promote the health and safety of young children by protecting them from the damaging effects of the sun and adverse reaction to insect bites and to encourage life-long health habits for children and families. The Center encourages families to provide children with lightweight long-sleeve shirts, pants, skirts and wide brimmed hats to protect from the damaging effects of the sun.

Procedure: Each classroom is equipped with a bottle of sunscreen and insect repellent. The sunscreen specifies "for use with children", includes the words "broad-spectrum" on the

label and contains a sun protection factor of at least 15. Prior to applying sunscreen or insect repellent on a child the following steps will be taken:

- Parents interested in having classroom sunscreen or insect repellent used by their child will apply a small amount of sunscreen or insect repellent on their child's back as a "reaction test" prior to taking their child home.
- A certified staff member witnessing the application will note an "A" next to the child's name on a Tracking Sheet labeled "Sunscreen/Insect Repellent Reaction Test."
- The next time the child returns to school the certified staff member greeting the child will check with the parent to see if there has been a reaction. If not, "NR" or "no reaction" will be noted next to the "A" on the "Sunscreen Reaction/Insect Repellent Test."
- If there are no reactions and the parents wish to have the classroom sunscreen or insect repellent applied they will sign a "Permission to Give Medication" form.
- The permission slip authorizing the administration of sunscreen and insect repellent will be attached to the child's emergency card.
- Staff will wash their hands after applying sunscreen or insect repellent to a child.

Parents will also have the option of furnishing their own sunscreen or insect repellent. If they choose this option, a "Permission to Give Medication" form must be completed and signed by the parent before the sunscreen may be administered.

Medication: It is the policy of Creative Minds ELC that we **DO NOT** administer medication with the exception of the following non-prescription preventatives such as sunscreen, insect repellent, non-medical diaper cream, lotion, lip balm and which are not considered medications and only require a parent/guardian consent. A "Permission to Give Medication" form must be completed and signed by the Authorized Family Representative prior to administration.

Exceptions to this policy to administer prescribed medications will be evaluated on a case by case basis and determined after the Director/Administrator has met with the child's parents.

In Case of Medical and/or Dental Emergency: In the event of a medical or dental emergency occurring at the Center parents/guardian has an emergency release form on file giving staff permission to call 911 to dispatch the appropriate medical or dental emergency responders. Immediately or simultaneously the parent/guardian will be contacted and informed of the situation. The child/adult would be taken to Enloe Hospital, unless parent/staff have otherwise specified. At enrollment, and as needed for a child or staff an individual emergency care plan is developed with the parent/guardian or staff member. Children/staff with known medical or developmental problems or other conditions that might require special care in an emergency (allergies, asthma, seizures, orthopedic or

sensory problems and other chronic conditions; conditions that require regular medication or technology support) will be treated as the plan on file specifies.

Center staff are trained and certified in basic first aid and CPR to provide support and care to the victim until emergency responders arrive.

EXCLUSION POLICY FOR MILDLY ILL CHILDREN

Appropriate reasons to exclude mildly ill children from the child care center are:

- Children's diseases are highly communicable and previously unexposed, susceptible children might be exposed.
- The sick child often does not feel well enough to participate in general activities.
- The staff is often not able to adequately meet the needs of a sick child.
- A child may be temporarily excluded in case of an ***outbreak of a disease/virus for which that child has not been immunized***. Staff will be informed who those children are and ensure the family is notified of the temporary exclusion.

Decisions must be made on a case by case basis. The basic question is, "Can the child participate with reasonable comfort and receive adequate, appropriate care without interfering with the care of other children?"* The final decision as to whether or not a child is well enough to stay at the center rests with the staff.

Refunds are not given for attendance days not used due to illness, nor for periods of required quarantine/isolation.

The following is a list of common childhood illnesses and exclusion guidelines. This list is not exhaustive of all possible childhood illnesses for which exclusion may be necessary.

Illness	Exclusion Guidelines
Any illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.	Exclude until able to tolerate general activities.
Chicken Pox	Exclude until 6 days after onset of rash & until all sores have dried and crusted.
Conjunctivitis (pink eye), Bacterial (white/yellow discharge)	Isolate and exclude until 24 hours after effective therapy.
Conjunctivitis, Viral	Exclude until symptoms resolve.
Diarrhea & Fever	Isolate & Exclude until treated and fever and diarrhea are gone for 24 hours.
Mild Diarrhea (2+ incidents of diarrhea in 24-hour period)	Exclude until symptoms resolve. May return after diarrhea is gone.
Fever	Exclude with a temperature $\geq 100.4^{\circ}$. Must be fever-free for 24 hours without the use of medication or fever reducers before returning to

	school.
Fifth's Disease	Exclude until able to participate in daily activities.
Giardia	Exclude until diarrhea is gone and clearance from health professional.
Hand Foot And Mouth Disease	Exclude until able to participate in daily activities.
Head Lice	Isolate and exclude until 24 hours after treatment. Children may then return if they are nit-free and parents provide proof of treatment either by bringing in the bottle or box from medication.
Herpes Simplex (cold sores)	Isolate and exclude children with open, oozing sores that cannot be covered. Exclude until blisters have completely crusted over.
Human Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) COVID-19	Exclusion of SYMPTOMATIC children may discontinue 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications AND other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving able to tolerate general activity. Exclusion of ASYMPTOMATIC children may discontinue 10 days <u>after</u> their first positive COVID-19 test.
Impetigo	Children and staff do not need to be sent home in the middle of the day if a suspected impetigo is noticed. Wash a child's rash area with soap and water and cover it loosely with gauze, bandage or clothing. Notify the parent upon pick up and tell them to check with a health care provider. Exclude until 24 hours after treatment initiated, and blisters can be covered.
Influenza	Exclude until fever free for 24 hours and symptomatically able to tolerate general activity.
Mouth Sores with Drooling	Exclude until a health care provider determines that the condition is noninfectious.
Otitis Media (Ear Infection)	Earaches are non-contagious. There is no need to isolate the child. They may return to school as soon as they are able to participate in the daily activities.
Pertussis (Whooping Cough)	Exclude until antibiotic treatment has been given for at least 5 days and symptomatically able to tolerate general activity.
Pinworms	Exclude until treated.
Rash with Fever or Behavior	Exclude until a health-care provider determines that the condition is noninfectious.
Respiratory Infections, (upper respiratory infections, colds, bronchitis, RSV)	Exclude only if child has a fever or is unable to participate in the daily activities.

Ringworm	No need to exclude once treatment has started.
Rubella	Exclude until 7 days after the rash appears.
Scabies	Isolate and exclude until 24 hours after treatment and fever free.
Scarlet Fever	Exclude until child has been on medication 24 hours and is symptom free.
Strep Throat	Exclude until 24 hours after treatment initiated and cessation of fever.
Vomiting (2+ times within 24 hours) &/or Vomiting with fever/hives/blood/green in color	Exclude until vomiting has resolved and child is able to tolerate general activity.

Sources: *Healthy Young Children, [A Manual for Programs](#);

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs (rev. 8/25/2021)

FOOD SERVICE/NUTRITION

CMELC provides the enrolled children with breakfast at 8:30am, lunch at 11:30am, and an afternoon snack at 3:00pm. Food is prepared on-site in our fully equipped kitchen and served family style. Children are allowed to bring their meals and snacks from home, so long as it does not include the following items: soda & other high sugar artificial drinks, candy, fast food, and large quantities of dessert related items (1 is ok). In addition, any food brought from home shall meet USDA’s CACFP guidelines and will be dated and labeled with the child’s name. Any special eating or dietary plans must be developed in consultation with the Director or Site Supervisor. This includes any foods brought from home.

Our meal program is supported in part by the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) through the California Department of Social Services, Nutritional Services Division. Children are encouraged, but not required, to eat or taste everything on their plate. Special dietary needs will be accommodated to the best of our ability. In certain cases this will require documentation from a physician. Families of a child with food allergies will be asked to give consent for posting about that child’s food allergies. Families may choose to decline to participate in the Food Program by completing a Decline to Participate form. Families choosing this option are declining all meals and agree to provide for their child’s nutritional needs while at school.

Menus

Weekly menus are posted in each classroom, and copies available for families. Menus are kept on file and are reviewed by CACFP for compliance.

Choking Hazards

The Center does not serve the following foods and/or to children younger than four years at any time: nuts-unless chopped and an ingredient in a recipe; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. Staff will cut foods into

pieces no larger than 1/2-inch square for toddlers/twos, according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability.

Embedded in the monthly tuition are the costs for meal service and food. The children will be served the following meals: Breakfast (at ~8:30AM), Lunch (~11:30AM), and Afternoon Snack (~3:00PM).

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

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

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), (AD-3027) found online at: [How to File a Complaint](#), and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call 866-632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

fax: 202-690-7442; or

email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

DISCIPLINE & BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

One of the most important goals of our program is to teach the children in our care the social skills they need to get along with others. These skills include cooperation, friendship skills, communication, conflict resolution, self-control, and coping with stress, frustration, and anger. We treat the children with kindness and respect and expect them to treat all others in the same manner.

The key to effective discipline (from the word "disciple" which means "to teach") is consistency and setting clear reasonable limits. We set limits based on two guidelines: not

hurting yourself or others, and respecting the physical environment. When disciplining a child, our goal is to guide the child in developing **self-control** as opposed to external or adult control. We believe that it is important for children to know that it is all right to have both negative and positive feelings. We help the child learn constructive ways to express emotions and settle conflicts with an emphasis of verbal problem solving.

In guiding children, our goal is to help them learn to trust the people around them and the environment, to feel good about themselves, and to develop self-discipline. Our discipline techniques are practiced to help children develop self-control; not behave according to adult-imposed control or fear. It is expected that our teachers will ask questions at staff meetings and try out new ideas while working at the Center to further their appropriate use of effective discipline methods.

Discipline is based on a positive philosophy emphasizing acceptable behavior. At no point is a staff member to engage in corporal punishment, fear is not a tool to gain compliance from children. The following is the typical procedure to be utilized by our staff:

1. The rules are discussed to ensure a child's understanding. Redirection and reminders are used. Child will be asked to "reset" and be reminded of the acceptable choices for that moment.
2. If same misbehavior is exhibited by the child and is being demonstrated repeatedly over the course of a few consecutive days, parents will be contacted by the director to discuss a team approach to helping the child to participate in the program successfully.
3. Additional offenses by the child for the same behavior may prompt a discussion with parents regarding dismissal from the program.

CHILD ABUSE /NEGLECT

By law my staff and myself are Mandated Reporters and we are required to report any suspected case of child abuse and or neglect to Child Welfare Services. If at any time a parent/guardian attempts to pick up a child from the school under the influence of alcohol or drugs we will attempt to arrange alternative transportation for you and your child to your home. Children are required by CA law to be seated in an appropriately sized child restraint seat (e.i., carseat or booster) whenever transported in a motor vehicle. Please make arrangements to share your carseat with your child's authorized family representative who will be picking up and dropping off your child at the center.

RELEASING YOUR CHILD/CHILDREN

Your child/children will only be released to his/her parent/guardian and those that you have **Authorized** to take your child from the school on your Identification and Emergency Information paper form. Those that are authorized by you will be required to show ID when picking up for the first time, if they have not had their photo taken to pair with their electronic signature PIN code, then one will be taken at that first pick-up/drop-off. If the person is not on your Identification and Emergency Information form **we MUST have written permission** from the parent/guardian or your child will not be released to them. If your authorized person who is picking up your child is

late you will be responsible for the late fee. Late fees are added to following months tuition invoice. To add additional adults as authorized family representatives the parent/guardian will need to update our Identification and Emergency paper form located in your child's file in the business office. Making an update on the childcare app is **not** acceptable in the eyes of CA Community Care Licensing. After the form has been updated then the Director will update your child's electronic profile in the app.

SIGN IN/OUT PROCEDURE

Our center utilizes an electronic signature to sign-in/out children from our care. Each parent, guardian, or authorized family representative dropping off or picking up your child is responsible for signing your child in and out for the day. Each authorized adult will be assigned a 4-digit PIN code to input into the Parent Kiosk. The PIN code is your unique electronic signature and may not be shared with other persons. The tablet system that is set up for this function is located on the stand above the coat locker cubby in the front of both Suites 1 & 2. Our center is using Brightwheel childcare management software for this function. When you first enter the center it is set-up for you to sign your child/children in and out. We also have the option of using the contactless sign-in/out feature by scanning the QR code attached to the front doors of the center. To use this feature you must have the Brightwheel app active on your cell phone. If for some reason we are experiencing technological difficulties, a paper log is available to physically sign-in/out your child, and a full legal signature is needed.

BIRTHDAY/HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Creative Minds Early Learning Center will celebrate children's Birthdays and a variety of multicultural Holidays. We will normally provide a special snack on these days and we may do special activities. Parents may bring a special snack on these days as long you have notified us in advance and it is preferably store bought.

SMOKE, DRUG, & WEAPON FREE CENTER

CMELC prohibits smoking/vaping anywhere on the premises. This includes on the grounds, in the parking lot, and in the building. It is illegal to smoke in a vehicle with a child under the age of 18. If you are smoking in your vehicle when returning to the preschool you must dispose of your cigarette prior to entering the parking lot. If you dispose of your cigarette on school grounds it is immediate dismissal from the program!

Drugs: The use of controlled substances, including alcohol and marijuana, are prohibited from being brought onto or consumed while on the center premises. This includes on the grounds, in the parking lot, and in the building.

Weapons: At no time is any person permitted to carry any type of firearm or weapon onto the property of Creative Minds Early Learning Center for any reason, regardless of legal permits to carry. Violation of this policy will result in immediate dismissal from the program!

TIPS FOR A SMOOTH TRANSITION AT DROP OFF AND PICK UP

Transition times can be stressful for some children, let's face it-some adults too. In the morning, they may not want to say goodbye to you and at pick up time they may not want to go because

they are involved in a fun activity. This is a natural occurrence and may vary with your child's age and developmental stage. **Never sneak out, please.**

To ease their transition, I encourage parents to take a minute to help their child feel comfortable and offer positive statements such as "you are safe," "I love you, have a great day and I will see you soon". Make your goodbye brief, 1-3 minutes at the most, this will help them in the transition. When a parent shows reluctance or gets emotional in front of their child when departing, it makes it harder for the child. It is OK and normal for parents to also be emotional, just please wait for the door to close so they do not see you. Your child may cry and this too is natural. Usually they will stop crying within a few minutes.

The rules at Creative Minds ELC apply from the time your child walks in the grounds until they walk out. During the transition times of drop off and pick up your child from time to time may test the different authority figures that are present (Parent and/or Teacher) to see if the rules still apply. If your child misbehaves during one of these transition times, please correct their behavior. If staff are present we will remind your child about rules and appropriate behavior. Please be prepared to have our back, as we will have your back if you feel your rules or desires are being tested.

When arriving, or leaving the school please do not allow your child/children to run to or from your car. If you are bringing your child's siblings in to drop off or pick up your child/children, please remind them of the rules here at Creative Minds ELC as SAFETY IS NUMBER ONE!

CODE OF CONDUCT

Our pledge to the families enrolled at CMELC is to treat you with the same respect and courtesy that we ask from you. Basically we operate on the "Golden Rule". Be respectful of others and mindful of confidentiality of the children enrolled in care. For that reason we ask that parents and any Authorized Family Representative refrain from any form of digital image capturing while at the center. Our pledge to our families enrolled here is to assist your children in becoming respectful, responsible, and safe little humans; in return we ask that the adults and other children in the family unit do their best to model these same expectations. Egregious violations of the stated standards for our center's code of conduct may result in the immediate termination of child care/preschool services. Please speak directly with the Program Director if further clarification is needed.

Creative Minds Early Learning Center Parent & Family Handbook Agreement

I, parent/guardian of _____, have read and understand the Parent & Family Handbook. By signing this form, I agree to comply with all the rules and regulations set forth within the Parent & Family Handbook. In the event I do not comply, I am aware Creative Minds Early Learning Center will follow through with any legal actions as necessary.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Program Director: _____ Date: _____

LATE FEES

You are required to stay within your contracted hours for care, anything over your contracted hours will result in a \$2.00 per minute late fee. We schedule our staff to meet the contracted hours of enrollment. When a parent/guardian is late it results in over-time, unbalanced child/adult ratios, and typically anxiety within your child. Please notify the center at least 2 weeks in advance of your need for a change in contracted hours. Creative Minds Early Learning will do our best to accommodate the new schedule, but cannot guarantee its availability.

Contracted Hours for Care (not to exceed 4.5 hrs/day@Part-time, 9.5 hrs/day@Full-time):

Mon: _____ - _____ Tue: _____ - _____ Wed: _____ - _____ Thu: _____ - _____ Fri: _____ - _____

Thank you for your compliance and understanding.