



EARLY CARE, EDUCATION AND YOUTH RECREATION
PARENT HANDBOOK



Growing Places Main Office - 868-1335 (located at our Lee site)

Administrative Directors

- **Deb Cuddahy** ~ *Executive Director*, 868-1335, debc@growingplacesnh.org
- **Wendy Rousseau** ~ *Director of Outreach and Development*, 868-1335
wendyrousseau@growingplacesnh.org
- **Sarah Nason** ~ *Program/Billing Administrator*, 868-1335 sarahnason@growingplacesnh.org
- **Michelle Guthrie** ~ *Program Director* ~ Infant Toddler Program and Pinkham Road Preschool Program, 868-5263, m.guthrie@growingplacesnh.org
- **Hillary Hughes**, *Program Director* ~ Woodside Preschool Program, 868-5674,
hillaryhughes@growingplacesnh.org
- **Francesca Trial**, *Program Director* ~ School Age Programs, Moharimet Elementary School, 969-8677, francesca.trial@growingplacesnh.org



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WELCOME!!

Dear Family Members:

Welcome to Growing Places. The staff is looking forward to knowing you and working with you to ensure the best experience for your family.

This handbook is designed to be a guide. These policies are reviewed biannually by board and staff members. Feel free to call with any questions.

We encourage you to participate in our programs at any time and to always ask questions, make comments, and offer suggestions. Our goal is to provide a quality child care experience for each family who enrolls in any of our programs. We place great emphasis on the development of partnerships with families, the surrounding communities, and other child care professionals where ideas, information, education and support are shared to create a positive child care experience for all people involved.

Sincerely yours,

Deb

Deb Cuddahy
Executive Director

GETTING TO KNOW US...

WHO WE ARE

Growing Places: Early Care, Education and Youth Recreation is a private, non-profit early care, education and recreation organization governed by a Board of Directors and licensed by the State of New Hampshire's Bureau of Child Care Standards and Licensing. Growing Places currently serves approximately 200 families in the seacoast area. Our organization has programs for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years at three different sites.

Growing Places was founded in 1996 when the Durham Children's Center, the Durham Infant Center and Forest Park Child Care Center merged to become one organization. Each of these three former organizations were founded in the 1970's. The three directors of these centers began working together in 1994 on long range planning and resource development.

OUR PROGRAMS

Early Childhood Program In Lee on Pinkham Road – 56 Pinkham Road, 868-1160 (ages 6 weeks - 6 years)

Early Childhood Program in Durham at Woodside – 60 Strafford Ave, 868-5674 (ages 2 - 6 years)

“Our Time” After School Program - Moharimet Elementary School, Madbury, 969-8677 (ages 5 - 12 years)

OUR MISSION STATEMENT: Growing Places provides early education programs that foster development of the whole child.

WHAT WE VALUE

The number one sign of an excellent early education program is the quality of the teaching staff. Growing Places work culture is designed to support excellence in early childhood teaching. Our teachers provide a loving, responsive and rich environment. They plan open-ended relevant and developmentally appropriate curriculum giving children the opportunity to investigate and explore. Our staff has more than 200 years of combined experience. We are deeply committed to children and to early childhood education.

Growing Places provides loving, safe and engaging environments for children to explore through play in the company of responsive and interactive adults. Knowing that children learn at different rates, teachers intentionally plan curriculum based on individual observations and assessments.

A wide variety of enriching opportunities are designed to support children's cognitive, social-emotional, language and physical development. Teachers extend children's learning by asking open-ended, thought provoking questions. Children's development is documented through child assessments and portfolios.

Teachers in all early childhood classrooms use sign language as a means to promote early literacy skills. Music, dramatic play and storytelling are also cornerstones of our program.

We value the importance of outside play. Teachers provide a balance of time for exploration as well as more structured activities that promote physical development, curiosity, and investigation of the natural environment.

OUR VISION STATEMENT: Our vision for the future is to be a leader in early childhood education.

OUR PHILOSOPHY: Growing Places fosters learning situations that are flexible, developmentally appropriate, child centered and mindful of differences and individuality. As educators we:

- Provide programming based on cognitive, language, social/emotional and physical goals for each child's development,
- Provide stimulating, hands on experiences that promote a love of learning,
- Believe meaningful learning occurs through play,
- Encourage exploration of the natural environment,
- Support and guide children in problem solving and conflict resolution
- Model and encourage the development of healthy, trusting relationships between and amongst children and adults and the world around them, and
- Build partnerships with families to meet children's individual goals.

FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Growing Places is a non-profit child care and educational organization that depends on volunteer support from family members and from the community to ensure top quality programs for children. The following are ways that you can volunteer during the course of the year:

Event Planning for fall and/or spring events
Help Writing and/or Editing Quarterly Newsletter
Fund Raising/Development Committee
Classroom Volunteers during UNH's Winter Break
Classroom Volunteers during UNH's Spring Break

Maintenance Projects
Playground Improvement Projects
Art Show Preparation
Website Editing
Social Media Posts

Parents are welcome and encouraged to share their time, talents and/or hobbies in any of our programs at anytime during the year. Please see your child's Program Director to arrange a time.

Parent's concerns, opinions, and suggestions are encouraged to be shared with staff. Feedback, both positive and negative, help our programs grow. Our name *Growing Places* was chosen because adults as well as children are always learning and growing. We welcome and encourage your feedback!

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors of Growing Places is vested with the role of ensuring that the mission of the organization is carried out while also overseeing the management and strategic planning of the organization. The Board is responsible for planning and policy decisions, for financial stability and the development of adequate resources for the organization, and for the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of the work of the organization.

Please call Deb Cuddahy at 868-1335 for more information about our Board of Directors.

ADMISSION PROCEDURE

1. We strongly encourage every family to have an enrollment interview and tour before their child(ren) attends. Visiting with your child(ren) prior to enrollment is encouraged and can often help with their transition. This can be arranged with the Program Director any time.
2. **A \$75 non-refundable annual registration fee** is required at the time of enrollment for your child. This is a fee that will be charged annually while your child is attending our programs (September - August). This registration fee covers the cost of liability insurance for each child. When a new child is enrolled **after March 1st, the registration fee is reduced to \$25** (which covers 3/1-8/30). Families using our school-age program **only** for school vacations and teacher workshop days, are not required to pay the registration fee.
3. **A school deposit equal to two weeks of care is required** at the time of registration, and is applied to the family's last two weeks of care, provided a two-week written notice is given. If a two week notice is not given when a child has withdrawn from the program, the family will be billed for two weeks of care, which may come out of their deposit. **Families receiving child care reimbursement from the state are exempt** from this tuition deposit provided the state payments come directly to Growing Places.

A payment plan is available for your tuition deposit. Four equal installments may be made over the first 4 weeks of enrollment. Please speak to your Program Director to make arrangements for this payment plan.

4. A child's enrollment is official **after** the registration fee and tuition deposit are paid in full.
5. Upon admission, a weekly schedule is contracted with Growing Places. A minimum of two blocks of time must be contracted for each child. **Payment is required for this contracted time whether or not your child attends.**
6. **Before attending any of our programs**, a registration form completed by the child's parent or guardian and an up-to-date immunization record must be returned to the appropriate site.
7. A health form, completed by a physician, is to be returned to us within thirty(30) days of enrollment. This health form will need to be updated regularly as immunizations are given for children attending our Early Care and Education Programs and every 2 years for children over 6 years of age who are attending the After School Programs.
8. A two week written notice is required when withdrawing your child(ren) from Growing Places. You will be billed for these two weeks if notice is not given.

FEES

1. Child care payments **are due by Monday for that week.** Payments received after Monday will not appear until the next week's billing statement. Prepayments are welcome if that is more convenient. **The organization does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance equal to more than one week of tuition. Late payment will result in the imposition of late payment fees. Failure to pay child care payments will result in child care services being discontinued.**
2. Families will receive weekly tuition bills, which need to be paid weekly by cash, check or money order. Monthly or bimonthly prepayments are welcome. **You are responsible to pay weekly for child care services even if you do not receive a bill.**
3. **Programming Fee** of \$50 per child is charged annually during the first week of November to help cover the cost of art supplies and various program materials. For families enrolling after March 1st, this programming fee is reduced to \$25.00 (March 1st – August 31st).
4. Fees are also paid according to the enrollment contract during the absence of a child due to illness, vacation, or holidays. All snow days, holidays, and sick days will be paid for by the family. The full weeks that our programs are closed during December break and the week at the end of August when we are closed for staff to prepare for the new school year will be charged at half tuition.
5. Please make checks payable to GROWING PLACES.
6. There will be a \$25.00 charge for the first returned check per family. If a family has a second returned check, the fee is \$30.00. A third returned check from the same family will be charged \$35.00 and future payments will be required by money order or cash.
7. **LATE PICK-UP FEE:** If you or your designated pick-up person picks your child up after the closing time at your site, you will be charged **\$1.00 for every minute after closing.** This LATE FEE also applies to pick up time for the morning block (12:00 noon).
8. Families who leave Growing Places and do not pay their bill will have their account turned over to a collection agency.
9. Families receiving Child Care Reimbursement from the state will have checks sent directly to Growing Places. **For those families receiving state funds for child care, you are expected to pay your portion of the bill by Monday for that week. You are required to submit the Claim for Reimbursement form to Growing Places every week** for services to expedite the arrival of checks. Failure to do this could result in your having to pay the entire weekly bill.

GENERAL OPERATING POLICIES

Contracted Hours:

Contracts will be arranged when your child enrolls in one of our programs. Families are responsible for payment of contracted hours whether or not their child attends the programs during those hours. **THIS INCLUDES HOLIDAYS, SNOW DAYS, AND SICK DAYS.** When dropping scheduled time, families must give a two (2) week written notice to the Program Director of the program in which their child is enrolled.

Adding Blocks/Days:

Any child currently attending any program may add days or blocks at the regular rate when space is available. You are still financially responsible for your regularly contracted blocks or days.

Sign-In/Sign-Out:

Parents (or alternate) must sign their child in when leaving their child at the early childhood sites and sign out when taking their child from the program. School-age children are responsible for signing themselves in when they arrive at either of the After School Programs. On full days when parents drop their children off at the After School Program, they will need to sign them in. Parents (or alternate) must sign their child out when taking their child from any program.

Clothing:

Please send appropriate clothing with your child at all times. This includes a change of clothes and outdoor clothing. We play outdoors every day, weather permitting. Please make sure outdoor attire is appropriate for the weather. Shoes that enclose children's feet are strongly recommend for outdoor play.

Nutrition:

The desire to feed the children in our programs foods and snacks that are healthy and nutritionally rich goes hand in hand with the practice of providing quality care. Growing Places snack program provides opportunities for the children in our care to eat nutritious foods that promote proper growth and reinforce healthy eating habits. It is our goal to partner with parents to support a lifetime of good health.

Food allergies in children and the severity of reaction to certain foods are common and are even on the rise today. Effective management of food intolerances and allergies in a child care center requires a team approach which includes appropriate written policies, good communication and thoughtful planning, training and preparation. The Americans With Disabilities Act requires that we make accommodations such as modifying our menu and preventing certain foods from being in the program. To include children with diverse needs and to remain in compliance with the law, some Growing Places' sites are **Nut Free Environments**. Families will get detailed information from those sites upon registering.

Illness Policy:

As a state licensed organization, Growing Places must follow regulations regarding the exclusion of ill children, along with our own organizational guidelines. Children's health is of our utmost concern followed by the ability of staff to meet the needs of children who are ill while still caring for well children in our programs. **Children who are not well enough to participate fully in our programs should be kept at home to rest.**

Although some illnesses do not require exclusion, sometimes illnesses do require a child or staff member to be excluded from care to prevent the spread of infection to other children and staff, and to allow the child time to rest, recover and be treated for illness.

Children with diarrhea, vomiting, excessive congestion or a temperature of 101 degrees or higher (100 under arm) must be excluded from our programs, and may not return until they are symptom free for at least 24 hours, along with the resolution of any secondary symptoms. For certain contagious bacterial illnesses (e.g. strep throat) that typically require antibiotics, your child will also need to be excluded for a period of time, depending on the illness ~ typically 48 hrs. A child may also be excluded if their illness prevents them from participating comfortably and fully in our programs, or if the ill child requires more care than the staff can give, which may result in compromising care for other children. There are other less common illnesses which also require exclusion. Feel free to contact your Program Director with questions or for more information about symptoms or length of time a child must be excluded from the program. If your child will not be attending due to illness, please call that site to inform your child's teacher.

Staff receive First Aid and CPR training and follow Universal Precautions to help control the spread of germs. Rubber gloves are worn when caring for an injured child when blood is present. Staff wash hands frequently during the day, also after administering first aid, diapering, assisting with toileting, and helping children wipe noses. Growing Places follows federally mandated regulations regarding confidentiality and inclusion for diseases such as Hepatitis B and HIV.

Medication:

Non prescription medication may be administered to children after the parent or legal guardian fills out the authorization form. Prescription medication may be administered to children with authorization from a parent or legal guardian and a licensed health practitioner who has prescribed the medication for that particular child. When manufacturer's instructions are not available for a specific child's age, signed and dated written instructions from the child's parent and written approval from the child's licensed health practitioner are required.

All medication must be in its original container labeled with the child's name and the date the medication is to be administered. Expired medication may not be administered. Dosage requirements by the manufacturer or licensed health practitioner must be followed.

Holiday Closings:

Growing Places follows most University holidays, with the exception of University breaks. A schedule of holidays is on our website and is distributed to families every year. **Holidays are fully paid by families.** We recognize the challenge this places on families; because we want our professional staff to have a year round job that includes holiday pay, we must have weekly income to support this. **The Winter Holiday week is charged at 50% your weekly tuition rate.**

Snow Policy:

The organization uses UNH and the public schools as a guide in determining whether or not to open during inclement weather. **The School Age Programs will not operate on days the Oyster River School District is closed.** Delayed openings or closings will be announced on WMUR television station and listed on the WMUR website as well. **All snow days will be paid for by the parent.**

Child Pick-Up:

The safety of all children enrolled at Growing Places is of vital importance to staff. If a person other than the parent will be picking up the child, the alternate(s) should be listed on the child registration form and must be at least 16 years of age. If the person is not listed, we require written permission from the parent or legal guardian. The alternate pick up person will also be required to show a photo identification at the time of pick up. In an emergency we will accept a telephone call from the parent or legal guardian about an alternate pick up person. The parent or guardian must speak directly to the Program Director or to their child's Teacher to inform them of this arrangement.

There have been occasions in the past when staff have been concerned that an adult arriving to pick up a child has consumed alcohol or other impairing drugs, is experiencing emotional upset or any other event that could put the child's safety at risk. We are not trained to determine what is harmful or could be too much. We can not refuse to release a child to their parent or legal guardian, but we are liable to ensure a child's safety. If any of the above occurs, staff may take one or more of the following actions:

- Explain that they are concerned about the adult's ability to drive safely.
- Ask the adult if they are willing to secure an alternative ride for the child and themselves.
- Ask the adult to wait for the police to come and ascertain the adult's ability to drive safely.
- Call the police if the adult leaves with the child and tell the police the concern, the kind of car and the license plate number if possible.
- Inform the Program Director (who will inform the Executive Director) that day and the adult in question will be asked to meet with one of the directors about the incident.
- Document the incident including the reasons for concern.

Child Abuse/Neglect:

Growing Places follows all state guidelines for reporting abuse or neglect. Any persons suspecting or having knowledge that a child is being abused or neglected is **required** to report such to their supervisor and to the Director. As employees working in the State of New Hampshire, we are liable under New Hampshire law with fines up to \$1,000 and up to a year's imprisonment for failure to report when there is suspicion. The Program Director or Executive Director will assist an employee in reporting to the Division of Children and Youth Services and notes will be placed in the child's file.

School Age Programs' Behavior Policy:

Respect is the key to all of our interactions and expectations at Growing Places and at Our Time After School Programs. Respect is defined as treating people with high regard or concern. We acknowledge the merit and worth of every individual and strive to be respectful in our conduct and attitudes towards others. Staff foster an atmosphere of mutual respect by being respectful of children. We expect that the children will be respectful toward staff, other children, themselves and the environment. We believe that children learn by being held accountable for their behavior. Therefore the following behavior expectations have been developed.

If a child acts disrespectfully toward a teacher or another child, Growing Places may decide to suspend the child for the day. If a child causes or with careless disregard causes harm or injury to another child by his/her actions, willfully destroys property, or behaves in such a way that staff would be concerned for the child's safety or the safety of others, Growing Places may decide to suspend the child for the day. If there is concern for the child's safety and well-being on a field trip, Growing Places may decide that the child not be allowed to attend the

program on the day of a future field trip. Parents need to arrange care at their own expense for that day. Two suspensions from the program may result in the child being dismissed from the program.

Terminating Care:

A two week written notice must be given when withdrawing from any of our programs. If a two week written notice is not given, you will be billed for two weeks and your deposit may be applied to those two weeks.

In rare circumstances, the Executive Director of Growing Places with input from appropriate staff may make the decision that our program is not the right place for a child, or the right fit for your family, which may result in the termination of care. Before terminating care staff will take steps to improve communication, to implement behavior strategies for the child, to make modifications to the environment when appropriate and to seek additional resources to try to help the child be successful in the program. If the decision is made that a child may no longer participate in our program, staff will make every effort to give the family notice.

Situations that may result in that decision would include but not be limited to the following:

- Program staff are unable to meet the emotional, social or cognitive needs of the child or of other children in the program because of the child, or
- Program staff are concerned for the safety of the child or for the safety of other children or of staff in the program because of the child, or
- Communication between program staff and the family has deteriorated to such an extent that a relationship based on mutual trust and respect no longer exists.

Staff Who Offer Babysitting or Other Outside Services:

Often staff from Growing Places are willing to babysitting outside of their work at Growing Places. It is important for families to know that hiring a staff member to babysit for your family is separate and distinct from enrolling a child at Growing Places. Staff at Growing Places are closely supervised. We recommend that you check references carefully when hiring someone to babysit your child/children including Growing Places staff. Growing Places is not responsible for anything that occurs when a family hires a staff member for services outside of the organization.

