



**PINE FOREST CHILDREN'S CENTER
FAMILY HANDBOOK**

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ABOUT PFCC

WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in Pine Forest Children’s Center. We welcome you to a circle of families and early childhood education professionals dedicated to creating a safe, warm, and innovative learning environment for children and a place for adults to enjoy a community rich with diversity and tradition.

HISTORY

PFCC was created as a program of the Baird Center for Children and Families in 1988 and was originally located on Pine Street. In December of 1997, we moved to our current site at 208 Flynn Ave. Eventually, the Baird Center and the Howard Center for Human Services merged, creating Howard Center. PFCC continued as a program of the Child, Youth and Family Services Area of Howard Center until August of 2010, when PFCC successfully launched itself as an independent, non-profit 501(c)3 program after an amazing grassroots campaign involving our families, staff, and community stakeholders. In 2018, we celebrated our 30th Anniversary and we can’t wait to see what the future holds.

PHILOSOPHY

PFCC is a rich, multi-faceted community that fosters courage, integrity, responsibility and the joy of discovery in children and adults. We are innovative, yet value and uphold tradition. PFCC is diverse and inclusive, ensuring that all feel safe, valued and honored. We view families as the experts on their own child, and ourselves as the experts on early education.

Our curriculum reflects the best research in early childhood development. It is emergent and play-based, allowing children to guide their own learning. We provide developmentally appropriate activities, often nature based, that are both early childhood educator-guided and open ended.

MISSION STATEMENT

PFCC provides high quality early childhood education for children from six weeks through six years of age in an enriched program that is supportive of the growing child, and acts in partnership with the family.

We believe in giving every child a chance to do great by providing opportunities that support children, their families and each other.

Our work....

- ★ Inspires the children, our families and each other.
- ★ Meets children where they are by using their ideas, needs, differences and interests to scaffold them.
- ★ Shows our passion for our field of work and that we are committed to the field of Early Childhood Education.
- ★ Is embedded within a depth of knowledge in child development, curriculum, and learning environments.
- ★ Has us continuously learning with the children and their families.

Our hope is that.....

- ★ Families feel supported and view themselves as part of the team.
- ★ Children in our program learn how to be part of a community.
- ★ Children develop their own unique toolkit of skills for future learning.
- ★ Early childhood educators use self reflection, discussion and observations to improve their teaching, their curriculum and their learning environments.
- ★ Early childhood educators are committed as advocates of early childhood education with a passion for providing the best care, love and scaffolding.
- ★ Families in our program are supported through their early years as parents.

DEFINITION of FAMILY

In this handbook we refer to a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

Each family is a child's first early childhood educator. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

At PFCC we openly discuss the families of the children in our classroom and also extend the conversations to include family make ups that may not be represented at our school. For example, if there are children with parents who parent alone or children with two dads in the classroom, this family make-up will be discussed in the same way we discuss a mom and dad family. If there are family make-ups not represented among the children, those will be discussed when talking about families, while reading books, as children have questions, etc. We work tirelessly to help children see the value of all families and not have them see a certain type of family as "normal" and other types of families as deficient.

CODE OF CONDUCT

PFCC is committed to maintaining a respectful environment that is conducive to learning, as well as ensuring the safety of children, parents, visitors, and early childhood educators in our program and building. In order to maintain an open, positive, courteous, respectful and secure environment, it is essential that all parents/guardians and visitors adhere to the expected Code of Conduct outlined below:

All parents/guardians and visitors involved with the program will:

1. Respect and promote the unique identity of each child and family and will not stereotype on any basis, including gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation, or family composition.
2. Follow program confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and our team members. This includes refraining from taking photos or video without permission, and using extreme caution and exercising good judgment when interacting with PFCC team members on social media platforms or messaging applications. Employees are asked to use extreme caution when accepting a “friend request” or request to communicate via social media with any child’s family member or care provider.
3. Maintain courteous and respectful relationships with early childhood educators, other parents, guardians, volunteers, and children.

PFCC will not tolerate behavior by parents/guardians, visitors, or anyone else involved with the program that violates the Code of Conduct on our property or at a PFCC function. Examples of violations include, but are not limited to the following:

- Using threatening, hostile, intimidating, bullying, harassing, or coercive language or behavior toward employees, volunteers, or children, including a child’s family members and care providers.
- Words or actions that intimidate, harass or discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sex, sexual orientation or disability.
- Physically or verbally aggressive punishment of a child
- Excessive swearing or cursing
- Smoking/vaping
- Quarreling, verbal fighting, loud shouting, and displays of anger
- Possess, consume, sell, distribute or exchange alcoholic beverages and/or controlled substances, or be under the influence of either.

- Possess or use of weapons
- Physical violence
- Violate any federal or state statute, local ordinance or board policy
- Any action that disrupts PFCC daily functions

If a parent/guardian or visitor violates the Code of Conduct, PFCC reserves the right to:

- Request a meeting to resolve any violations and create a plan.
- Restrict parent/guardian or visitor access to program children, classrooms, functions, and/or facilities.
- Contact the Division of Children & Family.
- Contact the police.
- Take civil or criminal action.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PRIVACY

All information and documentation concerning you and your child are held in the strictest confidence. Each child's files containing confidential information are accessible only to early childhood educators who need the information in order to care for the children. Each child's records are also available to his/her parent or guardian at any time. Personnel from our local school districts, Vermont State Licensing personnel, Vermont Department of Health personnel, or police officers may also have access to this information upon request. We do not divulge information about one family or child to another family or child.

In the same manner, we ask that you refrain from taking pictures of other children while at Pine Forest, or while accompanying your child on a PFCC field trip. This is to protect children and their families' privacy as there are many ways these photos could be shared without consent from all parties.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND INCLUSION

PFCC does not discriminate under any circumstances on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic level or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. This includes our policies of accepting children into our care, employing early childhood educators, or appointing members to the Board of Directors. Children with special needs participate in our program under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). PFCC is an equal opportunity employer (EOE). Our educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

PFCC believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for

participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. Our educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students. PFCC early childhood educators will make adaptations and accommodations for activities, interactions, teaching strategies and materials to support the child's needs and development.

PFCC early childhood educators work with families and children's early intervention teams to develop plans that address any health or needs of the child. If your child has an identified special need, please talk with your child's early childhood educator or a member of the administrative team to develop a plan for your child's success.

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

MANDATED REPORTERS

All PFCC early childhood educators are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the State of Vermont's Department for Children and Families. Early childhood educators receive specific training on how to recognize child abuse and neglect and the reporting process. If parents have questions or concerns they may contact the Department for Children and Families at 800-649-5285.

CHILD CARE CONSUMER HOTLINE:

If you have questions about Center Based Child Care and Preschool Program (CBCCPP) Licensing Regulations, you can reach the Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642. If you wish to access the CBCCPP Licensing Regulations or find other information pertaining to the Department for Children & Families please visit: <http://dcf.vermont.gov/>

CERTIFICATIONS

4 STARS

PFCC is licensed with the State Department for Children and Families to serve children six weeks old through six years of age in an integrated setting. PFCC has been awarded the rating of 4 STARS. This certification is through Vermont's **STep Ahead **R**ecognition **S**ystem for demonstrating accomplishments in providing quality child care above and beyond compliance with the State of Vermont's basic regulatory standards for a licensed center.**

CLASS (Classroom Assessment Scoring System) is the leading quality improvement system for teaching, helps us focus, measure and improve classroom interactions — a *key factor* proven to drive children's academic and life-long success. CLASS not only defines teaching

quality through the lens of interactions, it provides the ability to measure and improve the interactions. This tool allows our program to have a continuous improvement plan that is data-driven and focused on what matters most for children - interactions. PFCC uses this tool as the program assessment tool for compliance with STARS. The observation component is completed at minimum every 3 years by a trained observer.

HOURS of OPERATION

The Pine Forest Children's Center's hours of operation are from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, year round. We are closed for approximately 15 days throughout the year for various holidays. We also close at 4:00 once every other month to provide early childhood educators meeting time, and one full day every other month for professional development. These dates vary from year to year, so please see the attached calendar of school events.

Our building opens at 8:00 am and families can enter the building after this time. It is expected that families are out of the building by 5:00. Families that remain in the building after 5:00 will be subject to Late Pick-up Policy.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PFCC is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with representatives from past and current families, administrators and members of the community. The Board employs an active committee system to oversee the operations of PFCC.

TEACHING COMMUNITY

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Executive Director - Oversees the operations of the entire center, including budget, contracts, human resources, fundraising, grant writing and oversight of early childhood educators and families. Provides supervision to all early childhood educators, and supports program development. Oversees all business regarding tuition payments, billing procedures, bill payments, statements and invoices, subsidy certificates and payroll.

Assistant Directors- Coordinate partnerships with outside agencies, support families seeking additional services, and oversee the food program, enrollment, waiting list and all admissions paperwork. Both Assistant Directors also teach in the classrooms.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

PFCC is fortunate to have qualified, dedicated early childhood educators who offer diverse learning opportunities and experiences to children of all ages. Early childhood educators have

certificates, associates, bachelors and masters degrees in related fields such as education (early childhood, elementary), human development and family studies, psychology, child psychology, social work, and special education. Each year our early childhood educators participate in 18+ hours of professional development that supports their interests, their classroom interests and their areas of interest for professional growth. We also participate in whole group training to support curriculum development and to enhance our practice. Our teaching community shares common goals to improve our curriculum, learning spaces and materials. In total our community of early childhood educators have over 400 years of experience. Each early childhood educator has a bio in the front hallway!

Our early childhood educators work in teaching teams in classrooms to provide children with high quality learning opportunities. Each team has a built in system to ensure that every day children have a familiar adult in the classroom. By working in collaborative teams, we are able to offer children ongoing learning prompts, stability, scaffold their growth and provide appropriate next steps.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR/CHILD RATIOS

StarBabies- 6 weeks to approximately 12 months old. Ratio- 2 early childhood educators for 8 infants. State: 1:4 ; PFCC- 1:3 babies

Pandas- 6 months to approximately 24 months old. Ratio- 2 early childhood educators for 8 children. State: 1:4 PFCC: 1:4

Dragonflies- 1 year to approximately 2 years old. Ratio- 4 early childhood educators for 12 children. State: 1:4 PFCC: 1:3

Coyotes- 2 years to approximately 3 years old. Ratio- 4 early childhood educators for 15 children. State: 1:5 PFCC: 1:4

Star Dancers- 3 years to approximately 4 years old. Ratio- 3 early childhood educators for 16 children. State: 1:10 PFCC: 1:6

Older Preschoolers- 4 years to approximately 5 years old. Ratio- 3 early childhood educators for 16 children. State: 1:10 PFCC: 1:6

VOLUNTEERS

PFCC is fortunate to have volunteers throughout our program in a variety of functions. Volunteers come through the United Way Foster Grandparent program, community members, work programs or high school programs. Volunteers are unpaid and are within the program to engage with the children and support classrooms. Volunteers complete a background check and are not allowed to assist children with self care tasks or be left unsupervised with children. Volunteers are expected to maintain confidentiality and follow all program policies.

STUDENT TEACHERS

PFCC is committed to partnering with Vermont higher education colleges and universities to help develop and build the early childhood education workforce. Throughout the school year we partner Champlain College, Saint Michael's College and the University of Vermont to provide practicum experiences for students in both infant/toddler and preschool placements. Students complete a background check and are not allowed to assist children with self care tasks or be left unsupervised with children. Student teachers are expected to maintain confidentiality and follow all program policies. Families may receive specific permission forms related to practicum experiences that allow student teachers to document learning over the course of the semester.

PFCC PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

WAITING POOL

There is a \$30.00 annual fee charged per family to be in the waiting pool. When a space becomes available, first priority goes to the children of current PFCC employees. Second priority goes to siblings of current families at PFCC. All remaining slots are filled within the community based on the date the application and fee was received. PFCC Administration will contact waiting pool families as slots arise, however applicants may reach out to check in at any time. Waiting pool applications are valid for one year.

WELCOMING YOUR CHILD AND FAMILY INTO THE CENTER

In your first days at PFCC, you and your child will be adjusting to the new surroundings, early childhood educators, other children, activities and routines. To help you and your child feel more comfortable, we have a four step transition process. The duration of your child's transition is based on the comfort level and developmental needs of your child.

1. A short (about one to two hours) visit for you and your child together.
2. A short (about one to two hours) visit for your child alone.
3. A half day for your child.
4. A full day for your child.

Please schedule these visits with the Executive Director.

PEDAGOGY & CURRICULUM

Early childhood educators at PFCC are committed to providing a holistic learning experience for each child. PFCC's philosophy is that the use of open-ended, child-directed curriculum enhances learning opportunities and experiences as children are invested in their own learning pathway. We base our curriculum on each child's individual interests, learning style and developmental stage. Early childhood educators create a stimulating environment which supports children's emerging skills, seek out the interests of the group and then facilitate a variety of ways to explore these interests. As children immerse themselves in play-based

activities, early childhood educators provide support and create challenges to further the learning experience. We incorporate natural world exploration as well as story, dance, and song which make up a part of our all-center events. All curriculum is aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

Your child's growth is documented in a portfolio and through Brightwheel that contains weekly anecdotes that track developmental skills. Twice a year our early childhood educators create developmental summaries which illustrate your child's growth in the areas of gross motor, fine motor, social-emotional, cognitive-analytical and language development. We distribute these narratives and provide scheduled time for a Family Conversation with your child's early childhood educator. You are also welcome to schedule a conference at any other time, as needed.

INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

We ask all families to bring in pictures of their families (including pets and special community members) they feel comfortable with the early childhood educators posting in the classrooms. We make the pictures accessible and place them around the classroom so children can easily see the pictures and discuss who is in their family. It is helpful in order to scaffold conversations with and between children if photos are labeled with names of the people in your family. Feel free to bring in pictures throughout the year if you would like the pictures to change. PFCC is also able to help obtain pictures - by printing any emailed pictures, or taking pictures of families at pick-up time to print out.

We encourage our early childhood educators to have pictures of their families on display in the classroom. The pictures are on display because these are important people to our early childhood educators and so that the children in the classroom can see their early childhood educators as members of families and our community. Early childhood educators are encouraged to talk about their families and to answer questions the children may have about the members of the early childhood educator's families.

We work hard to have high quality literature in the classroom that is developmentally appropriate and exposes children to people, places and things that are both familiar and new. We encourage families to look through the books in the classroom and to ask questions about any of the books we have in the classroom. We encourage families to share any suggestions for books, or topics that they would like to explore.

Children are encouraged to interact, play, and learn with all of the other children enrolled in our program. At no point will a child be excluded from play or will children be allowed to exclude children from play based on the child's race, color, national origin, gender, gender identity, religion, disability, age or family makeup. At PFCC, this would entail narrating social

scenarios, helping children understand each other's behaviors and scaffolding conversations to help both parties begin to understand the other's perspective. We believe that a large part of this process for early childhood educators is the ability to listen, support children in voicing their needs, and building trust with children. For children, we believe that this process helps to support them in understanding the nuances that make us all human and unique individuals. At PFCC, this engagement process occurs across all age groups as children develop new skills and build layers of meaning about the world around them.

Children are allowed to ask questions and talk about anything at the center. If, however, the questions or comments are hurtful to specific children, their families, or certain groups of people, the early childhood educators will explain how the words are hurtful without shaming the child.

Children (and adults) are free to express their religion as long as it doesn't include negative remarks about other people.

FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS

All of our events are open to all members of a child's family.

At PFCC, we have shifted from celebrating Mother's Day or Father's Day specifically as we realize families come in many different make-ups and the celebration of these two days may exclude members of families or make children feel "less than" because of their family make-ups. Rather, we celebrate Parent's Day with non-gender specific crafts and gifts. We encourage our families to share with us their family dynamics, and tell us what titles their children call them.

We celebrate our seasonal curriculum with opportunities to have families join us at whole community gatherings, called All Center Circles, which take place during the school day and occasionally after hours. Classrooms take turns planning the circles and the traditions within them. It's a great way to be part of the PFCC community and to see what curriculum the children have been exploring during the weeks prior. You and your extended family and friends are invited to all of the following:

September – Autumn Equinox: Goodbye Summer/Hello Fall: We gather elements of the last of summer and sing songs and tell stories in a natural world setting.

October – Elders' Day: We celebrate Halloween by honoring our ancestors and community neighbors with gifts, songs and storytelling that relate to the changes happening in the natural world.

November – Harvest Dinner: We gather after-hours as a whole community to celebrate the harvest with songs and stories and food from our homes and classrooms.

December – Festival of Lights: We gather together to joyously celebrate the many holidays of the season and the common thread of light and community throughout.

January – New Year’s Celebrations: honoring the turning of the year.

February – Friends and Loved Ones Day: We gather together with treats and songs to celebrate our community and loved ones. A PFCC tradition is to support children in mailing artwork and notes to those we love that are farther away.

March – Spring Equinox: Goodbye Winter/Hello Spring. We gather in the morning to celebrate the end of winter and our mud-filled journey into spring with songs and stories. We also celebrate a week full of fun outfits called March Madness week.

April –Earth Day Birthday: We honor Mother Nature with clean-up projects and stories and songs as we celebrate her birthday!

May – Art Night. We gather after-hours to celebrate our creativity and honor the artistic experience of our children throughout the past year. Parent’s Day Celebration to honor all the people in our lives who help us learn, grow and succeed.

June- Summer Equinox: Goodbye Spring/Hello Summer. We gather to sing songs and tell stories in a natural world setting. Family Day Celebration to honor all the people in our lives who help us learn, grow and succeed.

July – Summer Picnic and Raffle at Oakledge Park: Our biggest fundraising event with a barbecue, fun, and visits from our alumni.

August – Graduations and year-end Celebrations: We gather together to honor and say goodbye to our current children, early childhood educators and classrooms and continue the transition to our new groups.

ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK

All enrollment paperwork must be submitted before your child's first day of attending the center without a parent or guardian **OR** prior to the upcoming school year. Prior to your child’s first visit or beginning of the new school year, you will receive a packet that includes paperwork including admissions forms, developmental history questionnaire, family information, authorized pick up form, ADM/ELP, immunizations and wellness exam forms, walking and field trip permission slip, non-medication and medication permission, pacifier permission, sleep sack/swaddle blanket permission, enrollment agreement and food program paperwork. **We must have ALL paperwork before your child’s first visit without you at PFCC.**

TRANSITIONS WITHIN THE CENTER

The movement from room to room traditionally occurs at the end of August, after in-service. During the summer months, early childhood educators make plans that ensure all children are spending time in their future classrooms and getting to know their new early childhood educators. The Executive Director and Assistant Directors reserve the right to move children to

a new classroom prior to the summer transition. The goal is to ensure that a positive transition plan is created and utilized with parental knowledge and support when a child is moved from one group or room to another group or room. (CBCCPP 6.2.8.3) If a family does not support a transition, PFCC will respect their wishes to the extent possible and make other enrollment plans for filling open slots. When possible, mid-year classroom transitions will be done with one or more of their peers.

WHAT TO BRING

REMINDER- EVERYTHING YOU BRING IN MUST BE LABELED (full name)

12 Months and Younger:

- Crib sheet (pack n' play sized sheets or standard crib sheets) This will be sent home for laundering at the end of the week.
- Pacifier, if used (permission slip required)
- Sleep sack, if used (permission slip required)
- Diapers and wipes – please label the package, check the supply and replenish as needed.
- Creams and lotions as you wish and any specialized instructions (permission slip required)
- Labeled sunscreen (6 months +) **Important: Aerosol or forced air sunscreens are not permitted per licensing regulations**
- Prepared breastmilk bottles- one per feeding (Please ensure all tops and bottoms are labeled with full name)
- Extra bottles
- Frozen breast milk supply (must be less than 2 weeks old; must be labeled with child's FULL name)
- Sippy cup (if used)
- Family photos
- 3-4 complete changes of clothing, including extra onesies and socks.
- Outside clothing appropriate for weather - hats, mittens, boots, mud pants, etc.

12 months and older:

- Crib sheet (regular size) & Blanket. These will be sent home for laundering at the end of the week.
- Soft stuffed animal for nap time (Please label)
- Pacifier, if used (please label)
- Diapers, wipes and/or underwear—please check the supply and replenish them daily.

- Creams and lotions as you wish (also, any specialized instructions and labeled)
- Labeled sunscreen (Important: Aerosol or forced air sunscreens are not permitted per licensing regulations)
- Family photos
- 3-4 complete changes of clothing, including extra underwear and socks.
 - Outside clothing appropriate for weather - boots, hats, mittens, mud pants, swimsuits, shoes, etc.
- Reusable water bottle (labeled)
- Sippy cup for milk (toddler rooms only)

If your family needs support to provide any of the above items, please contact the Executive Director for support. Oftentimes we have supplies in the building for families to access and can access resources to help us attain necessities.

TOYS AND OTHER ITEMS FROM HOME

Soft appropriate toys for nap times and transitions are welcome. **Other toys from home will not be permitted.** We find that toys from home can be a very big distraction in the classroom and may also spread unnecessary germs. PFCC requires that toys that depict weapons or violence are never brought into the learning environments.

Books from home can be a cherished item for children. If books are brought from home the expectation is that they are for sharing, are used to enhance the learning environment, are not based on movies, TV shows or commercialized products. Books will be treated with care, but there needs to be an understanding that they may get lost or damaged.

CLOTH OR DISPOSABLE DIAPERS

Families are expected to provide either disposable or cloth diapers for their children and maintain adequate supplies to allow for frequent diaper changes each day. In addition, families must provide their own wipes and any lotions or ointments needed for diaper changes. Disposable and cloth diapers will be changed at a maximum of every 2 hours. Disposable diapers shall be placed in a trash container that is washable and has a cover that prevents children from accessing the diapers (this is provided by PFCC). Families are welcome to provide cloth diapers and are expected to know and follow these guidelines. During diaper changes, nothing will be removed from the diaper (i.e., feces or an inner liner) and outer diaper covers will be changed each time. It is important to ensure that your child has enough covers and liners for the day. On average that means 6-8 sets. All components of the diaper will be placed into a sealable container or “wet bag,” which will be provided by parents. Each bag will then be placed into a pail or bag (provided by parents), which must be taken home by parents and disinfected daily.

TOILETING

Early childhood educators will positively support children in learning sanitary and safe toileting habits. We believe in allowing children to guide this process and scaffold their learning by offering them the choice to use the toilet when interested and during every trip to the bathroom. Children will be accommodated in a timely manner when they need to use the toilet. Early childhood educators will collaborate with parents to ensure that toileting practices at home and at school are consistent, developmentally appropriate, and progress is communicated daily. PFCC does not require that children are potty trained by the time they enter preschool as every child learns at their own pace.

SAFE SLEEP & NAP POLICY

Space for sleeping/resting is provided in each classroom with lighting that allows for supervision by early childhood educators. An early childhood educator will be present while children are sleeping/resting on nap mats to visually supervise. There is space and equipment provided for children choosing not to rest to engage in quiet play. We use soothing music and sound machines to create a restful environment.

PFCC adheres to Safe Sleep Policies as outlined by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP).

- Each day is active at PFCC and all children who are present (over 12 months) for at least five hours will be given the opportunity to sleep or rest.
- Any child who falls asleep will be permitted to remain asleep until they wake naturally.
- Children will rest for a minimum of 30 minutes; if children have not fallen asleep after the 30 minutes of rest, they will be provided space and materials for quiet play if they choose.
- Each child will have an individual mat (provided by PFCC). Families must provide linens for resting that will be sent home every Friday (or the last day present of the week) for washing. Sheets must be provided as no child will be permitted to nap directly on the nap mat.

Infant Sleep (up to 12 months):

- Infants will be allowed to nap when tired.
- Infants will be placed on their backs to sleep.
- Each infant must have a firm, tight-fitting crib sheet supplied by families. Each infant will have their own crib with a tight-fitting mattress that meets CPSC 16 CFR 1220 (provided by PFCC).
- Soft or loose bedding is not permitted. Blankets, bumpers, pads, pillows, quilts, comforters, flat sheets, stuffed animals, small blankets/comfort items, bibs, etc. are not permitted.
- Sleep sacks or similar clothing are permitted for use with a signed permission form.

- Pacifiers will be permitted with a signed permission form.
- Infants will not be placed in car seats, swings, high chairs, jumping chairs, or similar equipment to sleep. Any child who falls asleep in such equipment will be removed promptly and placed into their own crib.
- No positioning devices are permitted without a note from the child’s healthcare provider.

MANAGING CLASSROOM BEHAVIORS

When it comes to managing classroom behaviors, PFCC engages in disciplinary methods that focus on redirection, active listening and reinforcement for positive behaviors. Early childhood educators will give children words they can use to express themselves, notice the feelings and needs of others, and will help them negotiate when conflict arises. When children are unsafe with their bodies, they may be asked to take a “body break” in which they are given time and space to regain physical control so they can re-enter play. Our goal is for children to acknowledge when they need to manage their emotions and support them in doing so safely.

BITING

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and both families will be checked in with by the classroom early childhood educator. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

CIS EI/EEE

PFCC partners with Children’s Integrated Services Early Intervention (CIS EI) and Essential Early Education (EEE) to provide services to children with developmental needs. EI and EEE assist our program by providing observation and evaluation services, classroom consultation and access to developmental educators, speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists. These resources are beneficial as PFCC works in concert with families. Referrals can be made by families, early childhood educators (with permission from families) and other agencies.

ASQ3 & ASQ-SE2

A child's development can be followed by observing how they play, move, learn, speak, and behave. Families and early childhood educators have a vital role to play in nurturing and guiding each child's development. Our unique knowledge of each child's interests, behaviors, and interactions both at home and school is key to understanding how each child is developing their communication, social and problem-solving skills, and their physical abilities.

PFCC uses the ASQ3 and ASQ-SE2 as assessment tools for all children at PFCC at least twice a year. The assessment tool is online so that families can complete the home assessment and we have paper copies as well. We use developmental monitoring which means observing and noting each child's growth and changes over time and whether each child meets the typical developmental milestones in playing, learning, speaking, behaving, and moving. Developmental monitoring often involves tracking a child's development using a checklist of developmental milestones. This documentation and monitoring happens in portfolios and through Brightwheel.

Developmental screening provides a quick check of a child's developmental progress. This is where the online screenings from both early childhood educators and families are used. The tools used for developmental and behavioral screening are formal questionnaires or checklists that ask questions about a child's development, including language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions. Completing a developmental screening tool can help identify your child's strengths as well as any areas where your child may need additional help or practice. These screening tools help to inform our curriculum, classroom supports and are tracked using developmental monitoring.

PRE-K AND EARLY LEARNING (ACT 166)

PFCC partners with the area's public school districts through the Pre-Kindergarten Early Learning Partnership through Act 166. The purpose of this program is to ensure high quality, accessible and affordable preschool education. Requirements for participation by centers include maintaining at least a 4 STAR accreditation, ensuring that at least one of our preschool teaching staff is a licensed early childhood educator, aligning our curriculum with the Vermont Early Learning Standards, and tracking and documenting developmental milestones with the framework prescribed by Teaching Strategies Gold and the Vermont Agency of Education. Children are eligible for ELP funding once they enter the Star Dancer room (younger preschool) and are 3 years old by September 1 of the new school year. We are required to track attendance during the school year. Children must attend school 10 hours a week (2 days a week minimum) in order to qualify for funding. If children have excessive absences (10 consecutive days) then a family may lose funding from their school district. As per our absence policy (see page 35), we ask that families call the mainline (802-651-9455), email the Administrative Team, or enter a message in Brightwheel no later than 9:00 am to let us know if your child will be out of school and the reason for the absence.

TEACHING STRATEGIES GOLD

As an accredited preschool through the state of Vermont, PFCC uses Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) as an assessment tool and screening. Early childhood educators gather observations throughout the fall and spring semester and align them with learning dimensions and objectives for each child. At the end of each semester, the observations are assessed and used as a screening tool to ensure each child is progressing and meeting their developmental milestones. This data helps us identify areas for enhancing curriculum, skills each child could work on, and areas where early childhood educators can improve their practice. This data is correlated and shared with families during Family Conversations twice a year. Additionally, this data is shared with each child's school district to create a portfolio as children progress toward Kindergarten.

OUTSIDE TIME

Our early childhood educators strive every day to allow children at least 60 minutes of supervised outdoor play and/or walking trips around the neighborhood, weather permitting. When the weather is adverse, we will try to get outside for 30 minutes, but we will always be aware of extreme weather conditions, such as excessive heat and humidity, cold temperatures including wind chill factors, or poor air quality that could affect the well-being or health of children. In the event that children cannot be outdoors, we will provide at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise indoors. The Administrative Team and early childhood educators at PFCC will use the Child Care Weather Watch Chart as a guide when assessing outside conditions for children's safety. (CBCCPP 6.1.2)

APPROPRIATE RISK TAKING

PFCC believes that children should be protected from hazards and also encouraged to take appropriate risks. Healthy risk-taking to us means that while there is risk of a child getting hurt, it is not serious and the benefits the child might gain outweigh the possibility of harm. A few resources are listed below.

Here are five ways reasonable risk-taking benefits kids:

1) **Practice of Independent Thinking and Self-Reflection:** When a child considers a risky decision, they practice the process of decision-making in a matter of moments. "Should I jump from this log to the ground?" Once they make a decision to take a leap, they must evaluate the decision. Taking time to reflect on the outcome of an action taken is incredibly important. Did the risk lead to success? Or, was it not the best plan to take? Thinking about what to do differently next time leads to more strategic, thoughtful risk-taking in the future. Each time they go through this process, they strengthen their independent thinking skills.

2) **Improving Strength and Safety Awareness:** In order to stimulate the senses and develop

healthy motor skills, children need the opportunity to take reasonable risks. A child's neurological system was designed to seek out the sensory input it needs on its own in order to reach the next developmental level. By taking daily risks, children start to develop age-appropriate strength, coordination, and good body awareness. On the other hand, when we consistently keep children from taking risks, we start to see some delays in sensory and motor development that may not have been an issue if they had been given daily exposure to these experiences. This can lead to poor spatial awareness and in essence, without an efficient amount of exposure to risk-taking, children can become more accident-prone and unsafe in the long run.

- 3) **Development of Social Skills:** Although some risk-taking is done independently, children often take risks while interacting with others. Reasonable risk-taking allows kids to find and utilize their voice among peers. The risk itself might be to share an idea with friends. Reasonable risk-taking allows kids to develop the assertiveness and self-confidence they need to participate positively in social settings. Practice and more practice help the young risk-taker learn to balance assertiveness with respect and compassion. And, while voicing an opinion or thought is important in social circles, over time, children recognize that peers may have alternative ideas to consider.
- 4) **Cultivation of Confidence:** A good dose of reasonable risk-taking in play results in a comfortable willingness to make mistakes and learn from failure. For instance, let's say a child skins his knee climbing a rock wall, but in the process -- learns that he can still reach the top. This assurance that a child can overcome obstacles quickly translates to other risky-life decisions presented in childhood. Choosing to step onto the school bus for the first time or signing up for the school play are decisions that children confront with confidence if they've practiced reasonable risk-taking. This confidence is key in childhood psychological development. It's important that children learn the excitement of success, the coping skills needed to move through failure and frustration, and the perseverance to try and try again, even if it is uncomfortable and hard.
- 5) **Avoidance of Other Risky Behaviors:** Reasonable risk-taking keeps kids from participating in another kind of risky behavior—the unhealthy kind. Parents may think they can protect their children by keeping a close eye on them in the house, but too much sedentary time at home may be spent inactive in front of a screen. Playing outdoors requires a good amount of reasonable risk-taking, but staying indoors puts our children at an even greater risk for health issues and motor and sensory delays.

Here is some additional information regarding Risk-Taking and Healthy Development (taken from <https://wehavekids.com/parenting/The-Importance-of-Risky-Play-in-Early-Childhood> and changes noted with [...] to modify for teaching rather than parenting:

What risky play is not

- Letting children do whatever they want without supervision.
- Letting children put themselves or others at risk of serious physical harm.

- Not stepping in when a child is doing something dangerous.
- Encouraging children to do things that are blatantly dangerous, or that we know they are too young to do safely.
- Being too physically far from our children to help them if needed.
- Ignoring children altogether while they play.

What risky play IS (from a [early childhood educator's] perspective)

- Closely supervising and observing children so that we are aware of their physical abilities and play choices.
- Being physically close enough to step in at a moment's notice if a child falls or is suddenly in danger of being seriously harmed.
- Using our own judgment to assess the "risk versus reward" of what a child is doing. (More on assessing risk vs. reward later).
- Being conscious of our own anxiety and making an effort not to transfer that to a child.
- Offering help when necessary, but erring on the side of simply empathizing with our child's struggle.
- Rather than physically intervening when a child is struggling, offering suggestions. "Try holding onto that next branch and pulling yourself up!"
- Acknowledging the challenge and celebrating our child's success. "You worked so hard to climb that tree! It was really difficult at times, but you made it to the top!"

What risky play is (from a child's perspective)

- Practicing my balance as I carefully hop from one rock to another.
- Using my left brain and my right brain in tandem as I climb the ladder at the playground.
- Working on my planning skills as I figure out how to scale a tree.
- Learning what it feels like to be a little nervous but try something anyway (i.e., bravery!)
- Learning that I will sometimes fall and get hurt, and it's usually no big deal.
- Seeing my [early childhood educators] model an attitude of helpful encouragement and genuine empathy, traits which I will carry with me into my interactions with others.

OUTINGS AND FIELD TRIPS

A Walking Field Trip Permission form is included in all enrollment packets. By signing this, you will give PFCC permission to take your child on a walk/wagon ride around the surrounding neighborhood. (A map is included)

From time to time, there will also be supervised field trips, and we encourage you to join your child on the trip. *Permission Slips* for each trip must be signed by the child's family. We will notify families of any field trips that fall outside the parameters of the general walking

permission form at least 24 hours prior to the trip. Written permission forms will be required and parents will be notified if we are using any type of transportation. (CBCCPP 5.10.7.1)

For field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking and make it difficult for your child.

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of child care programs. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the child care program as well as during field trips.

If we are using any playgrounds while on a field trip, staff shall ensure that all playgrounds are safe, secure, and have the appropriate safety measures. (CBCCPP 5.10.7.4)

TRANSPORTATION

At this time, PFCC does not own our own transportation. Occasionally we utilize Green Mountain Transit (GMT). We communicate with families and ask for written permission prior to using GMT for field trips. When using GMT, we notify them in advance to ensure that the bus can accommodate the number of children and adults attending. We do not allow parents or early childhood educators to transport children in personal vehicles for field trips at this time.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA/SCREEN TIME

Our normal daily routine does not include electronic media (television/TV, video, DVD) viewing and computer use. No children under 2 shall have access to screen time. In the East Woods classrooms we may use online educational resources as a teaching aid and discussion prompt that align with the children's interest. All electronic media will be screened prior to use and will consist of non-violent and high-quality educational material. These may include but are not limited to audiobooks, movement activities, webcam videos of animals in their natural habitat, researching animals or insects discovered, or exploring other worlds beyond our classroom walls. Our focus is to provide your child a positive experience with increased understanding of the world. Electronic media will be offered only as a free choice, used to meet a developmental goal, supervised by staff, and limited to no more than 30 minutes per day per child. Devices used for electronic media will include classroom laptops and may at times be cell phones or classroom tablets. Early childhood educators will be using electronic media throughout the day for Brightwheel, however every effort is made to limit this time, and any additional time to time outside the classroom or during rest time.

GATES AND HALF DOORS

For safety reasons, PFCC has a policy that all gates must be opened before entering and all half doors must be lifted up before entering. Signs with the language: **“Open gates or lift up half doors before entering. Stepping over is not allowed. This includes all adults and visitors”** posted on or next to every half door and gate throughout the center and we ask that

all adults follow this policy. This is for the safety of the children, families and early childhood educators. This is a licensing requirement.

DOORS

It is the policy at the PFCC that **ONLY ADULTS** open doors. This is for everyone's safety, to assure that children are not leaving a room without a person on their authorized pick up form or an early childhood educator's knowledge. **During pick up and drop off, please do not allow your children to open doors.** While it is helpful for you if your arms are full, it is not helpful for the overall safety of our community. Children have a hard time shifting rules based on the adults or context they are in. Therefore for consistency, **ONLY ADULTS** open doors.

OPEN DOOR POLICY

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Families are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes families to nurse or feed their infants.

Our Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked on and off throughout the day.

Our team will always do their best to speak with families during midday visits. Since our days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion you can arrange a phone call or meeting.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

PFCC has an open-door policy for families who wish to visit their child's classroom. We also encourage your involvement in our community in the following ways:

- Attend Family Conversations, offered twice yearly. You may also request additional meetings with your early childhood educators at any time.
- Come to the celebrations and other events on our yearly calendar.
- Volunteer to spend time in the classroom, such as reading books, assisting with an activity, sharing a hobby or having lunch in your child's classroom.
- Volunteer for a work day or assist in a fundraiser.
- Volunteer to do the laundry in your child's classroom.
- Serve as a member of PFCC's Board of Directors which includes past and present families, and community members. It meets monthly and minutes are posted on the bulletin board in the front entryway. If you're interested in board membership, please let our Executive Director know.

FAMILY COMMUNICATION POLICY

In the last few years, PFCC has changed the way we look at early childhood education and our daily practices and procedures in a group setting. Therefore, throughout the school year there may be changes in procedures and practices that need to be made in order to support the health and safety of your children and your families, as well as our team and their families. The intent behind any changes are based on thorough research, guidance and when applicable, family input.

Communication has always been at the cornerstone of our practices and building strong family/child(ren) relationships. Open communication is important as we work together closely to communicate any concerns, questions, or needs throughout the school year.

PFCC firmly believes that best practice is continuous communication between home and school. This exchange of information, always for continuous care that meets the needs of each child. This may include:

- Telling us about your child's night and morning
- Sharing when a parent/guardian or both parents/guardians are out of town
- A new routine is added at home or new behavior emerges
- There is a change in family structure such as a family member moving away or the loss of a pet.
- Anything else you feel is relevant to your child's day

BRIGHTWHEEL

PFCC uses Brightwheel to support communication with families. Your child's early childhood educators will share photos, videos, and messages throughout the day. Those enrolled in our Infant/Young Toddler classrooms will receive real-time updates relating to feeding, sleep, and diapering & toileting. In the Older Toddler and Preschool classrooms these updates will be in real time as often as the classroom pace allows. We use Brightwheel to share updates from school, to ask questions that are not time-sensitive, send reminders, ask for more supplies to be brought in, and for daily communication with each other.

Communication through Brightwheel can occur at any point; however, PFCC early childhood educators are only able to respond to messages during our hours of operation (8:00 am - 5:00 pm). When messaging outside of our hours of operation (after 5:00 pm or before 8:00am) you will receive a response as soon as possible within our hours of operation.

It is our daily goal to use all features of Brightwheel for communication. Families are encouraged to use the messaging feature to ask questions, check in and engage in conversation. We try to check and respond to messages every 2 hours from the start of the day until closing and all early childhood educators are expected to communicate with families. Our tablets rely on WiFi, which means while we are outside, our tablets do not receive updated information until they reconnect. This can sometimes delay responses.

Brightwheel offers two messaging features: **All Staff and Admin.**

The ***All Staff*** feature will send messages directly to your child's classroom early childhood educators. This messaging is only visible to the classroom and by the Administrative Team.

The ***Admin*** feature will send messages only to the Administrative Team and is not visible to our classroom early childhood educators.

PFCC relies on Brightwheel for accurate attendance which is essential for safety, ratio, and reporting to state agencies for funding. Families may use Brightwheel to report an absence such as an illness, stay home day or vacation. If you are reporting an illness please let us know the specific symptoms.

Parents are required to sign their child in upon arrival and sign their child out when taking them from their classroom. During Check In, parents must acknowledge the daily health screening in the app ensuring their child is well and able to participate in a full day at PFCC at that time.

Checking In: Please sign your child in using the QR code as this will signify that your child is now in our custody and our sole responsibility.

Checking Out: Please verbally confirm with an early childhood educator that you have your child and sign them out using the QR code. This will signify that your child is now in your custody (or other legal guardian) and your sole responsibility.

Parents/Guardians are given a unique 4 digit pin that allows you to check in and out each day. This pin is specific to each person and should not be shared with others. If an Emergency Contact picks up your child and does not have a pin, an Admin or early childhood educator will sign your child out.

In the event of an emergency or matter where urgent communication is needed the ***ALERT*** feature on Brightwheel will be used. This feature will allow us to message and text all accounts with important time-sensitive information. Using this feature shortens our call-list and ensures the

most timely communication possible. It is recommended that families turn the push notifications on to receive timely notices from early childhood educators and administrators.

In order to use Brightwheel, PFCC will send your family an invitation to join. You can then download the app to your smartphone.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES, PROCEDURE, AND PRACTICES

- Please complete all enrollment paperwork and return it no later than the due date. Your child will not be allowed to attend Pine Forest Children’s Center without 3 Emergency Contacts on file. It is imperative that families ensure that we have up-to-date contact information for their family and child(ren).
- You must also enter these contacts into your child’s profile in Brightwheel.
- It is important for families and our team to communicate often and to be transparent with one another. Please voice concerns or questions you have with our team as soon as possible.
- Our team will use multiple methods to offer updates and communicate with families. Methods may include Brightwheel, Email, our Website, Telephone or Social Media.
 - Families are encouraged to check their email and Brightwheel messages regularly
 - Read the Weekend Update each week distributed through email.
 - If you must receive notifications in another way, please notify the Administrative Team.
- It is the family’s responsibility to actively engage and follow up on communications.
- Families may follow our social media page for program updates. We use Facebook (pineforestcenter) and Instagram (#pfccbvtv).

DROP-OFF TIMES

We are open daily from 8:00 am-5:00 pm. Doors are unlocked at 8:00 am and no families can be in the building prior to this time. We require families to drop off between the hours of 8:00 am and 9:30 am, unless prior arrangements have been made. If your child has an appointment or you are running late we ask that you notify us by 9 am that day by phone (802-651-9455), Brightwheel, or email. If the door is locked when you arrive, please ring the doorbell that is to the right of the double front door.

ABSENCES

If your child is out for an illness, stays home for a day or is out for vacation PFCC needs to be notified that day by 9 am or in advance. Notification can happen by leaving a message on the main line (802-651-9455), emailing the Administrative Team or entering a message in

Brightwheel. If your child is out due to illness, please provide specific symptoms.

DROP-OFF PROCEDURE

It is very important to develop a simple, predictable routine for dropping your child off in the morning.

Current Operation:

We ask that you bring your child to the front entrance and into the main hallway for drop off in the morning. An early childhood educator will help to disinfect your child's water bottle and other cups and sanitize their hands. Early childhood educators will help children wash their hands once they reach their classroom after drop off. A classroom early childhood educator will come down to greet you, check in and then walk your child to their classroom.

After saying goodbye to your child, please use the QR code to sign them in for the day. This will signify that your child is now in our custody and our sole responsibility.

Sometimes separating can be challenging. If your child becomes upset, an early childhood educator will provide comfort and engage your child in the activities in the classroom. Always feel free to call or check in via Brightwheel later in the morning to see how your child is doing.

Normal Operation:

Families will help children wash their hands upon arrival at the center every morning. **This is a licensing requirement.** Families will also wash their hands. Hand washing is one of the best ways to help prevent the spread of illness and reduce allergen contamination in the center. We ask that you wash your child's hands, greet your child's early childhood educator and pass on any necessary information before you say goodbye. If you have time, engage in a simple activity with your child and then say goodbye once and leave the center. Sometimes separating can be challenging. If your child becomes upset, an early childhood educator will provide comfort and engage your child in the activities in the classroom. Always feel free to call later in the morning to see how your child is doing.

PICKUP POLICIES

Children will be released only to their parents/legal guardians or to people specified by their legal guardians on the Authorized Pick Up Form. In case of an emergency, the center contacts parents/legal guardians first, followed by those individuals specified on your child's enrollment forms. If you choose, you may give written permission on the Authorized Pick Up Form for other adults to pick up your child; staff will request a photo ID to confirm their identity. It is important that you make sure that the center is informed of any changes in your emergency contact information.

Current Operation:

At pick up, families are allowed into the building to pick their child up inside or from outdoor spaces. Upon your arrival (or other legal guardian) at your child's classroom, a QR code will be located by the entrance. Please use the code to sign your child out using Brightwheel. Please verbally confirm with an early childhood educator that you have done so. This will signify that your child is now in your custody (or other legal guardian) and your sole responsibility.

During after hours Community Events, all children are signed out to their parents/legal guardians or to people specified by their legal guardians on the Authorized Pick Up Form. Children are then in care of their family and are not the responsibility of the PFCC team. It is our expectation that parents will be attending to their child's needs and safety during all events.

RIGHT TO REFUSE CHILD RELEASE

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency Contact or Authorized Pick Up, pick up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. As Mandated Reporters, the PFCC team is legally bound to report any suspicions of child harm or endangerment.

CHILD CUSTODY

Without a court document, PFCC will assume both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to follow the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation. We are legally bound to follow a restraining order until we receive a court order that it has been ceased.

HOME TO SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

We have implemented and are expanding upon our Food Program in a myriad of ways. In response to COVID and our inability to host in person events during the 2020/21 school year, PFCC created a Take Home Meal Program. This monthly offering provided a home cooked meal to families. The goal being that this bonus meal allowed families one night a month to have no meal prep or dishes and an extra hour or more together.

Each summer from July through October PFCC receives a weekly CSA from the Intervale. We use the produce provided as a supplement to the Food Program as a way to round out

meals or offer children opportunities to try new foods. We then allow the classroom to take produce for taste testing in their classrooms and anything remaining is offered to families to take home.

As part of our celebrations throughout the year, PFCC hosts four community meals which allows our entire community to gather, eat and spend time together. These meals vary between being prepared on site, potluck or picnics.

SCHEDULED CENTER CLOSURES

PFCC is closed for 16 holidays and 10 professional development days during the year. PFCC also closes early, at 4 pm, for 6 staff meetings that occur every other month. (Late pick up policies apply at 4:00 on the days of scheduled early closures.) PFCC provides a calendar of school closures at the start of each school year, so that you can plan properly. The calendar is also posted in the front hallway and a reminder is posted on the front door. Tuition is required for all closed days, whether planned or unexpected, as our staff are paid regardless.

DRUG FREE ENVIRONMENT

PFCC is committed to providing all employees and children with a safe and healthy environment, including protection from the effects of individual negligence. Therefore, anyone who enters PFCC appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, whether prescribed or other, to any degree or who possesses or consumes these substances on our property may be asked to immediately leave the property without their child and law enforcement will be contacted.

NO SMOKING

There is no smoking inside the center, on or near the playgrounds of the center, nor in the area of our front walkway or back deck. Please do not smoke in the vicinity of the children and dispose of cigarettes properly.

DANGEROUS WEAPONS

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

NO IDLING YOUR ENGINES

Please turn your car engines off in the parking lot. When engines are running, exhaust collects in the parking area and near the front walkway where families enter PFCC. Help us to preserve our environment, protect small developing lungs, and individuals suffering from asthma.

SAFE ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES

PFCC performs yearly Essential Maintenance Compliance (EMP) Statements with an accredited inspector. We perform yearly fire inspections with the Burlington Fire Marshal's office. We also comply with testing the drinking water at PFCC for lead and other contaminants through the VT Health Department laboratory. In 2018 our water tested safe for consumption on sinks throughout the building that are used for cooking, washing dishes, and filling water bottles.

PARKING

Spaces for PFCC families are located in front of the building. We ask that parents park in designated spots (spaces indicated by yellow lines) when picking up their child(ren). Parking is prohibited in the gravel in front of the building as this is the fire lane. Parking is also prohibited along the side of Select Design and immediately in front of the walkway as these also impede the fire lane and make it challenging for other drivers to access the parking lot.

RESPECT FOR NEIGHBORS

We request that families refrain from climbing in the trees in the front walkway. There are deep concrete window wells behind and underneath the trees which add risk to this type of play. There are also not adequate fall zones underneath the trees in the walkway should a child fall from this height. Additionally, our neighbors landscape their businesses and we need to respect these spaces by not walking through the landscaping, climbing on their buildings or pulling apart their landscape design.

FOOD PROGRAM

FOOD PROGRAM AND NUTRITION

PFCC participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Children are automatically enrolled in the food program at 6 weeks old. PFCC provides two nutritious meals and one snack daily, therefore, it's not necessary to send food with your child.

PFCC offers nutritious meals that comply with USDA regulations and the CACFP. PFCC employs a chef for 25 hours a week to complete meal prep, cooking and menu planning. Our

chef participates in professional development related to their work. While we encourage all children to explore and try new food, no child is forced to eat, and food will not be withheld or used as a reward.

Our food program is designed to encourage children to build a healthy relationship with food. We ask that families not send in sweet treats (cupcakes, doughnuts, brownies, ice cream, etc.), except for special occasions, such as a birthday or holiday celebrations. Vegetarian meals are served at least twice per week, and vegetarian alternatives are provided when necessary. Milk is served with all meals, with whole milk served to children 2 and under and 1% milk served to children 2 and over. We do not serve juice with any meals, only for special occasions and always 100% juice. Water is available to the children at all times. Whole grains will be offered at least once a day and organic foods are served whenever possible.

PFCC is a **PEANUT-SAFE** center. Peanut allergies can be life threatening, and children with these allergies may react to even tiny traces of peanut on another child's hands. Please be sure to note any allergies/food preferences on the admission sheet and provide whatever "emergency medicine" is required.

PFCC also recognizes that tree nuts are another serious allergen. While we don't serve any products that have tree nuts as an ingredient, we do serve foods with "trace amounts" of tree nuts. If your child is allergic to tree nuts, as with any other allergen, we will provide alternatives.

For our infant families we encourage you to begin serving more solid foods when you are ready, after consulting with your pediatrician. PFCC provides wholesome, homemade purees for children to have in conjunction with foods they are eating at home. We will work closely with families to make sure they are comfortable before their child participates 100% in the program.

MEAL AND SNACK SCHEDULE

Breakfast: 8:00-10:00 Foods served include grain, fruit/vegetable, milk, protein required for children 6-12 months. optional protein for children 12 months and older.

Lunch: 10:30-12:30 Foods served include grain, fruit/vegetable, protein, milk.

PM Snack: 2:00-4:00 Foods include two of the following – grain, fruit/vegetable, protein, milk.

*If your child arrives after the 10:00am breakfast, food may still be offered but it may need to be a mobile snack.

BREASTFEEDING

PFCC provides comfortable spaces throughout the building that allow mothers to breastfeed and/or pump. Both nap rooms and classroom spaces in the Star Babies and Pandas have comfortable chairs for breastfeeding and we have a Mamava pod in the basement for breastfeeding or pumping.

Families can store a daily supply of breastmilk within their child's bin in the classroom fridge. Additional breastmilk can be stored in the classroom freezer, but we encourage mothers not to store their entire reserve at PFCC in case of a power outage. All breast milk must be labeled with the child's first and last name.

POLICIES

BABYSITTING POLICY

Families from time to time will ask about the availability of PFCC early childhood educators to babysit for families in their personal time outside of PFCC. PFCC understands how valuable it can be for families to have a babysitter they already know and trust, who comes with all the qualifications and experience of a PFCC early childhood educator, and who is already familiar with their child(ren). As such, PFCC does not prohibit independent babysitting arrangements, but does require that families and PFCC early childhood educators understand and agree to the following rules:

- All babysitting arrangements are made independently by families and babysitters. PFCC will not advertise, coordinate, set up, or otherwise manage any babysitting. ● All arrangements are entirely voluntary by both families and staff. Early childhood educators are not required, obligated, expected, or encouraged to babysit outside of their normal work for PFCC. Families agree to respect each early childhood educator's wishes and willingness to take on any babysitting work at any time.
- Babysitting is not part of the care provided by PFCC. Babysitters are hired directly by families, and while babysitting, are working for individual families, not for PFCC. PFCC will not supervise or be responsible for any activity involved in babysitting. Families expressly understand and acknowledge that they assume full responsibility for the care provided by babysitters, and that PFCC cannot assume any liability for care provided by a babysitter.
- Babysitting should not interfere with PFCC care. Families agree not to hire babysitters to perform care during times that PFCC is open, to ask a PFCC early childhood educator to do anything that conflicts with their obligations to PFCC, or to engage in

any way that interferes with any PFCC early childhood educator's ability to perform their work for PFCC. **Families agree not to call or text PFCC early childhood educators during their working hours to arrange or discuss babysitting.**

- Pickups: if babysitting involves picking up a child from PFCC at the end of the day, families should clearly communicate the pickup authorization to PFCC in advance in writing and ensure that the babysitter is added to the child's authorized pickup list. Families are responsible for ensuring that any babysitter (whether a PFCC early childhood educator or not) will properly sign their child(ren) out at the end of the day. **PFCC will not release a child to a PFCC early childhood educator at the end of the day who is not an authorized pickup for the child.** Children are considered as no longer in the care of PFCC from the time they are signed out each day, at which point they become the responsibility of the family and whoever the family has authorized to sign out the child. Families understand that this applies even if the person signing the child out is a current PFCC early childhood educator that the family has hired to babysit that child.
- PFCC is optimistic that this policy will work for the benefit of both families and early childhood educators. However, if at any time babysitting arrangements are creating issues for PFCC, PFCC reserves the right to revise this policy as necessary, or to request that a family find another babysitter.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Concerns should first be addressed with a member of the Administrative Team. The Administrative Team is comprised of the Executive Director and the Assistant Directors. The Administrative Team will research the grievance/situation and work towards reaching a satisfactory outcome for all parties involved. The Administrative Team will follow up all grievances with a written letter to the grievant and document all pertinent information. If you are not satisfied with the outcome, you may then contact the Board of Directors for further consideration. If you have a grievance with the Executive Director, you may contact the Chair of the Board of Directors.

EXPULSION POLICY

It is our priority to keep all children and members of Pine Forest Children's Center community safe at all times. If a child develops a pattern of disruptive or destructive behavior, either physical or verbal, the following steps will be taken:

1. The early childhood educator will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) and the Administrator(s).

2. The parent(s)/guardian(s), early childhood educator, and Administrative team will schedule a meeting where they will develop a mutually agreeable plan (including support systems and resources that are available to the child and to PFCC early childhood educators) to address the challenging behavior.
3. If such a plan cannot be agreed upon, the parent(s)/guardian(s) may be asked to permanently remove the child from PFCC and they will not be permitted to return. The family will be permitted 5 days notice in writing from this meeting of the expulsion.
4. If a plan is developed but fails to prove successful after two weeks, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and early childhood educators will meet again.
5. A new plan may be developed OR the parent(s)/guardian(s) may be asked to permanently remove the child from PFCC and they will not be permitted to return. The family will be permitted 5 days notice in writing from this meeting of the expulsion.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Tuition Policy

Pine Forest Children's Center (PFCC) provides high-quality early care and education services for young children and their families. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, we depend on timely, consistent tuition payments in order to operate our program. Our financial policy is in place to help our center remain fiscally strong, for the benefit of all our children.

Tuition Payments: Tuition is due in advance of service. Tuition is billed monthly. Payments will be considered late if not paid in full by the 1st of the month. Invoices are emailed to families each month. It is preferred that families use the link in the email to make payment electronically from your bank account. If that is not possible, checks can be placed in the bird box in the front hallway.

Declined Payments or Insufficient Funds: If your check is returned to Pine Forest for insufficient funds, a fee for insufficient funds will be charged. The payment will also be considered late, if it is not received prior or on the 1st of the month.

The fee will be as follows:

1st payment returned for insufficient funds: \$10

2nd payment returned for insufficient funds: \$25

Any additional payments returned for insufficient funds: \$40 per instance

Failure to Make Payment: If your account is not paid in full by 7:30 am on the 2nd business day of the month, Pine Forest's policy is to not accept your child into care until your account is paid. Pine Forest reserves the right to cancel your child's enrollment in the program if you fall more than one week behind in payments. Please contact a member of PFCC's Administrative Team immediately if your financial circumstances change and you are unable to make your tuition payments. We will work with you to apply for tuition assistance and/or develop a payment plan.

Tuition Statements: Families may request a financial statement at any time. A financial statement for all tuition paid during the prior calendar year will be issued in January for tax purposes.

Sick Days and Vacations: Tuition is due for all contracted days, even if a child is absent. No credit is given for family vacations, holidays, sick days, in-service/training days, emergency closings, days your child is not brought to PFCC, etc.

Late pick-up: PFCC closes at 5:00 pm. It is considered a late pick-up if you have not exited the building prior to 5:00. We suggest you arrive by 4:45 to allow sufficient time to be out of the building by 5:00. A fee will be charged for any late pick-ups. The late fee structure is as follows:

\$2.00 per child for every minute starting at 5:00;

\$5.00 per child every minute starting at 5:15.

Chronic lateness is grounds for disenrollment.

After three late pick-up charges, the fees double:

\$4.00 per child every minute starting at 5:00;

\$10.00 per child every minute starting at 5:15.

If it is 5:30 pm and our repeated attempts to reach you and/or your emergency contacts by phone or email have not resulted in contacting the appropriate parties, we will contact the Burlington Police Department. Please follow our policy by arriving with sufficient time for you and your child to exit the building no later than 5:00.

Late charges will be billed separately from regular tuition payments.

Extra Days: Families whose child(ren) is/are enrolled part-time may request to add days during a given week. Space is available at the discretion of the Executive Director or his or her designee in order to maintain appropriate staff/child ratios. Extra Days may not always be available. Inquiries should be directed to the Executive Director. Extra day tuition charges are billed separately from regular tuition and use a daily rate for tuition charges. If you have questions about the cost of an additional day, please contact the Executive Director.

Student Deposit: In order to secure a slot for your child at PFCC, a nonrefundable \$500 deposit is required. The deposit is due at the time the Enrollment Agreement is signed. The deposit will be applied toward tuition for your child's last two weeks enrolled at PFCC and/or any other outstanding payments due to Pine Forest. The Deposit will become non-refundable if you do not follow the Withdrawal policy listed below (i.e. by providing 4 weeks notice before withdrawing your child). For families who will receive Vermont State Child Care Assistance, a \$50 deposit is due to secure your child's slot at PFCC.

Withdrawals: If you choose to withdraw your child from PFCC, you are required to give us four weeks advance notice. You are responsible for tuition during that four-week period. Your deposit will be applied toward reducing your tuition during the final two weeks of your child's enrollment.

Act 166 Universal Pre-K: Act 166 Pre-K funding covers the cost of 10 hours of prekindergarten education programming for all children who are 3, 4, or 5 years old on or before September 1st, and are not enrolled in Kindergarten. PFCC is a prequalified provider with the Agency of Education. This funding reduces preschool tuition over the course of 35 weeks during the school year (September to the end of May); the tuition reduction is \$3,536 for the 2021/2022 school year. From June through the end of August, preschool families are charged full tuition rates (\$1,365/month). **It is your responsibility to enroll your child with your local school district in order to access the funding at PFCC.** If a family enrolls at PFCC, but does not enroll with their local school district in a timely way, the regular, unsubsidized tuition rate will be charged.

Vermont State Child Care Assistance (CCFAP): Families receiving financial assistance from the State of Vermont are responsible for completing all necessary documents and providing all required documentation to the State. It takes about a month or more for the State to process subsidy applications. Sometimes there are processing lags. If our staff reviewed and faxed your application prior to its due date, a one-month grace period may be granted. Your child may continue to come to PFCC while the application is pending. If PFCC is not part of the application process and the child's certificate expires before we have a new approved certificate in hand; the date of expiration is the child's last day, unless the family is

able to pay the full tuition rate. **It is very important to re-apply for subsidy a minimum of 4 weeks before your certificate end date.** PFCC maintains records indicating start and end dates for child care financial assistance certificates to assist if you have questions as to when your certificate expires. Our staff is available to help you complete a new child care financial assistance application. If your subsidy application is denied and your child has been attending PFCC for the one-month grace period, the full tuition rate for the one-month grace period will be immediately due to PFCC.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH POLICY AND GUIDELINES

Parents and staff share the responsibility for maintaining health and preventing the spread of contagious diseases. PFCC will conduct daily health checks of your child to ensure they are well enough to attend and participate. In addition:

- Immunization records must be provided by parents and kept up to date. If we do not have an up-dated record, your child may not attend Pine Forest Children's Center until we receive your immunization form. This is a state regulation.
- Pine Forest Children's Center requires that a complete Wellness Exam form and Immunization form be filled out for each child attending PFCC. This must be updated every 365 days.
- Our program is active and varied and your child needs to be able to participate fully. If your child is unable to participate in all activities (including outdoor play), they may be sent home at the discretion of the director.
- If your child is sent home with a fever of 100.4 or higher, they may not return until they are fever-free for 48 hours without the assistance of any anti-fever medication within that 48-hour period.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunization records must be obtained for your child and be up-to-date. If you are in the process of complying with immunization requirements in accordance with the Vermont recommended immunization schedule, we will need a completed Vermont Department of Health form. If you have an exemption from the Vermont Department of Health we will need a copy for your child's file.

PFCC is required to do the Vermont Immunization Child Care report once a year for the State. This includes an Administrator logging into the Immunization Registry and ensuring all

children are up to date on immunizations. Permission for this is included on the Permissions Form. Please note that during this process your family may be notified that additional documentation or forms may be required.

ILLNESS POLICY

An Illness Form will be completed by our team when your child is asked to be picked up due to illness. Due to state regulations and because children who don't feel well can have a very hard time in group settings, we require that a child be picked up within an hour of notification of any of the following symptoms:

- Axillary fever of 100.4 degrees (measured under the arm), which is 101 degrees orally

- “Goop” around the eye that returns after being wiped away
- Unexplained rash
- Two episodes of diarrhea if in underwear
- One episode of diarrhea not contained in a diaper
- Vomiting (one or more episodes)
- Severe cold (Bad cough, constant runny nose, watery eyes, chest congestion)
- Contagious diseases or infections such as bronchitis, strep throat, red or German measles, chicken pox, mumps, bacterial meningitis, fifth disease, herpes virus, molluscum contagiosum, shingles, warts, cold sores, giardia, campylobacter, salmonella poisoning, polio, impetigo, diphtheria, hepatitis A, whooping cough (pertussis), scarlet fever, or roseola.
- Infestations such as lice, scabies, pinworms, or ringworm

In the absence of any of these symptoms, the Administrative Team retains discretionary ability to send a child home who is exhibiting any type of severe illness-related discomfort.

If your child is sent home during the school day, they MUST NOT return to school for 48 hours meaning 2 full school days. Return after 48 hours is based on your child's appetite returning (eating well), sleeping well through the night and being ready and able to participate in a full active day both indoors and outdoors.

The following illnesses require that your child be seen by a healthcare professional. The health care professional must fill in and sign the back side of the illness form given to you at pick up by your child's early childhood educator.

- “Goop” around the eye that returns after being wiped away
- Severe cold (Bad cough, constant runny nose, watery eyes, chest congestion)
- Infestations such as scabies, pinworms, or ringworm
- Contagious diseases or infections (to be determined on an individual basis)

RETURNING TO PFCC AFTER ILLNESS

Before a child can return to PFCC after any of the above, they must be eating well, sleeping well through the night and ready and able to participate in a full active day both indoors and outdoors. AND all of the following that apply must be true:

- The child has medically improved, meaning free of any of the above symptoms, for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication during those 24 hours.
- If the child was suffering from a communicable disease, the child is no longer in the contagious stage of that disease.
- The child has been on antibiotics for more than 24 hours in cases of bacterial infections.
- The child has been treated for and is free of lice, scabies, pinworms or ringworm.

ALLERGY PREVENTION

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter or action plan from their pediatrician detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main office, classrooms, and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves with and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

At this time PFCC will not be administering over the counter medications to children while they are in care. We strongly discourage children being given medication in the morning prior to arriving at school, however please make sure to communicate this to your child's early childhood educators. Please keep in mind that most often over the counter medications mask symptoms which can mean a child appears fine in the morning, but not by lunch time. Please help us all to work together to ensure children are safe.

We highly recommend that if your child needs medication, you give it to them at home. However, if the medication needs to be administered during school hours, all medications should be handed to an early childhood educator with specific written instructions for administration. All families must fill out a Medication Form. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our team will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- **Prescription medications** require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The

medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication as well as the last dose time.

Non-prescription medications will not be administered while in care at PFCC.

Written general permission shall be obtained annually from parents prior to the application of ointments, creams, sunscreens, tick and insect repellents, and other topically applied ointments and lotions. These forms must be updated every time a new brand or type of product is introduced or changed. Classrooms have these copies of these forms for parents to access when making changes.

NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Signs will be posted on the front doors if a child or staff member has been diagnosed with an infectious (communicable) disease. A sign will specify the disease, the date the child or early childhood educator was last in the center, and possible symptoms. Information sheets pertaining to the illness will be provided when available.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

INJURIES

Safety is a daily focus at PFCC, so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we contact you or an emergency contact.

EMERGENCIES

- All team members are trained in First Aid and CPR.
- Regular scheduled team members are trained in Medication Administration.
- For a minor bump or bruise, PFCC team members will administer first aid and the parent will receive an accident report.
- For a more significant injury, PFCC team members will administer first aid and

contact parents to decide if further medical treatment is necessary. An accident report will be completed.

- For a more serious accident, PFCC team members will call 911, which will provide emergency medical care and transport to UVMMC. Team members will contact parents or emergency designees immediately.

EMERGENCY PLANS FOR BUILDING EMERGENCIES

PFCC has an extensive Emergency Plan that our team is familiar with. It outlines all procedures related to fire, lockdown, power outage, loss of water, or other emergency situations.

In the event of an emergency where we cannot return to PFCC, we will relocate to Select Design. Select Design is located to the right of our main entrance. The phone number for Select Design is 864-9075. For building emergencies where we cannot return to our entire complex, we will travel to Champlain Elementary School, located at 800 Pine Street. Their number is 864-8477. **IT IS CRITICAL THAT WE HAVE YOUR UPDATED CONTACT INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES.**

FIRE DRILLS/LOCKDOWNS

State licensing regulations require monthly fire drills. Records of monthly fire drills are posted in the main hallway by the entrance. We try to perform these drills in all kinds of weather and at varying times of day, using different evacuation routes. Throughout the year we practice lockdown drills.

UNEXPECTED CENTER CLOSURES

Occasionally, we may need to close for reasons other than a planned holiday or in-service.

Inclement Weather –If we close due to the weather, the voicemail on 651-9455 will be changed by 6 am, indicating our status. PFCC will also be listed on the school closings list under the Vermont Association of Broadcasters (WCAX Channel 3 or WPTZ Channel 5) We will also make every effort to send out a text blast, email and/or update our website.

Building issues – To remain open, we need to be able to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children. Therefore, if our building has heating/air quality issues, no running water for an extended amount of time, or some other unforeseen issue, we may need to vacate the building. We will contact you and/or your emergency contacts and immediate pick up will be requested.

Health/Illness/Unusual incident – In the rare circumstance where enough staff members

are absent, or fall ill during the day, that the center is not able to maintain legal child/early childhood educator ratios, we will need to close.

We look forward to building a partnership with you and your family. Welcome to the community of Pine Forest Children's Center!

Please sign and return the 22/23 Enrollment Agreement.