

Vermont Hills Family Life Center



Parent Handbook School Age Program

*We Inspire the Promise
Of Tomorrow!*

VERMONT HILLS FAMILY LIFE CENTER WELCOME!

Dear Parents:

Vermont Hills Family Life Center welcomes you! Thank you for selecting us as your child's school-age care provider. Vermont Hills is proud to service the child care needs of children at several locations throughout the Portland metropolitan area.

We believe each child is unique and we strive to meet each child's individual needs. Our program provides opportunities to develop physical, mental and social skills while giving attention and encouragement in a safe and healthy environment.

Our staff is there to help capture your child's zest for learning as well as provide support for your family through a well defined program curriculum and nurturing child care.

This Parent Handbook features the philosophy of our curriculum, staffing standards, and daily structure. In addition, you will find information important to maintaining communication with Vermont Hills Family Life Center about children's needs.

We are here to assist you. Please feel free to call the Vermont Hills Family Life Center with any questions.

Sincerely,

Brenda Dengo
Executive Director

VHFLC Inspire the Promise Of Tomorrow!

VERMONT HILLS FAMILY LIFE CENTER (VHFLC) is a not for profit organization which has provided child care in the Portland metropolitan area continuously since 1979 and currently services approximately 225 preschoolers at 3 locations and 800 school age children at nearly 30 sites.

VHFLC is open to all children, regardless of religion, race, nationality or creed, who may benefit from our type of program. While working to remain visible as a business, we strive to place the needs of the children above the ability of parents to pay.

The monthly fees charged to parents are set at a point where our income offsets our monthly expense for space, toys, operation supplies, administrative and staff costs. The cost of our program does not vary with individual daily absences (e.g. due to illness), so we do not make daily or hourly adjustments.

Mission:

VHFLC is dedicated to enriching the lives of children through a secure and warm environment that promotes self-esteem. Our program involves each child in his/her various developmental stages. We support the family as it encourages each child's special worth.

Philosophy:

The philosophy of VHFLC is to provide families with education, development and support, through childcare and other family services.

Values:

VHFLC values and respects each child's individuality as well as the child's opportunity to experience fun, wonder and challenge in a social setting with positive, health role models.

VHFLC values and supports families within a diverse arena.

Vermont Hills Family Life Center places a high value on open communication while providing a safe emotional and physical environment.

VHFLC values, promotes and provides opportunities for staff growth and development as well as fostering teamwork and professionalism.

STAFFING:

VHFLC seeks to provide the highest quality school-age programs possible. Toward that end efforts are made to recruit and attract the most qualified staff that are then trained extensively.

All staff must meet educational and work experience requirements appropriate to their position and pass a criminal background check, including an FBI check if they have lived outside of Oregon. Every staff member is trained in First Aid, CPR and Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse. All staff serving snack or lunch have a current Food Handler card. Our staff receives yearly training through in-services, workshops and staff meetings. All staff must meet the Child Care Division's requirement of 15 hours per year of training in child development or related field.

VHFLC values, promotes and provides opportunities for staff growth and development as well as fostering teamwork and professionalism. The majority of our staff are experienced providers with a wide variety of abilities and education. We feel very committed to competitive salaries and benefits. Staff benefits include

vacation, paid holidays, well-plan and a flexible spending account that can be spent on health insurance, tax sheltered annuity, or medical spending. Staff salaries account for at least 80% of our budget.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

VHFLC works intensively to be a resource for parents as well as a caregiver for their children in the following ways:

- * Daily contact with parents
- * Informal meetings
- * Formal meetings/child conferences
- * Training sessions where requested
- * Parent Advisory Council
- * Newsletters

The key to a positive partnership is **communication**, with parents being responsible for making sure their care provider is aware of the parents' goals, the provider being responsible for learning parents' goals, and ensuring that they fit within the overall philosophy of the care provider.

A **PARENT HANDBOOK** is given to all parents and presents information, including the program's philosophy and policies, as well as the services of the program. Hours, fees, parent requirements and responsibilities, as well as those of the program, are also discussed. Information is concise, arranged logically, and clearly written. A copy of the Parent Handbook is also available on our website at www.vhflc.org

PARENT CONFERENCES, when necessary, can take several forms, including large group, small group, and individual conferences. Group conferences are utilized to present general information, and gather information from parents. Individual conferences, which may be either informal (eg, a brief discussion as to whether a teacher is free during pick-up), or formal.

Parents are often busy and rushed when they arrive to pick up their children, but **parent visits** to the site are welcome and encouraged! Parents should always feel welcome and should feel free to participate with the current activity.

PARENT VOLUNTEERS are most welcome. As little as 15 or 20 minutes spent with a small group of children provides those children the opportunity to interact with other adult models, a wonderful learning experience. Larger scale volunteering could include field trips, work parties, etc.

SPECIAL NEEDS:

Please advise your child's teacher of any allergies, disabilities, fears, strong dislikes or any other conditions which affect your child's health, happiness or ability to function in a group. While every effort is made to serve all children who need care, occasionally a child's special condition may limit VHFLC's ability to care for him/her in a group setting. Each case will be evaluated on its own merits and concerns or restrictions will be addressed with parents on a one-to-one basis. Care of differently able or exceptional students should be discussed individually with the site staff and Director to determine the ability of VHFLC to meet those needs.

OUR PROGRAM is developmentally appropriate and provides a variety of activities through which VHFLC seeks to engage each child in enriching explorations. These various opportunities are designed to make the children's after school time enjoyable and productive.

While all VHFLC sites share a similar educational philosophy and create nurturing environments, there is some latitude allowed for directors and teaching staff to evolve schedules and curricula that works best for them and their children.

VHFLC SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS OFFER BALANCE. Staff create interest areas and plan activities that offer active and quiet experiences, take place indoors and outdoors, and involve individuals as well as small and large groups. Some activities are planned and introduced by staff and some are initiated by children. Children can spend time in same-age and multi-age groupings, participate in cooperative and competitive ways, and use socio-emotional, physical, and cognitive skills.

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN NEED MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE CHOICES. Children can choose what they want to do and with whom. For example, children lead group meetings, participate in routines, and choose from multiple activity options each day. Staff establishes and stock interest areas according to children's skills and interests. They use surveys and other techniques to keep up with children's changing interests. In addition, the daily schedule provides long blocks of time when children can plan and carry out their ideas.

THE PRIMARY ROLE OF SCHOOL-AGE STAFF IS TO FACILITATE CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE PROGRAM. Staff set up an interesting and challenging environment, provide materials, and plan activities that reflect children's needs, skills, and interests. Staff responds to children's requests for assistance in carrying out their plans and encourages children to develop and use new skills.

CHILDREN ARE PART OF A COMMUNITY WITHIN THE PROGRAM AND IN THE LARGER WORLD BEYOND. School-age programs encourage children to be a part of both communities. Staff provides many opportunities for children to be meaningfully involved in program planning and operations. They coordinate with other agencies and youth programs to involve children in the larger community so children can develop and use their skills and interests.

ACTIVITIES:

Activities presented are designed to enhance children's development in such areas as:

- * Self-esteem
- * Sports & recreational activities
- * Creative expression
- * Socialization
- * Motor skills
- * Intellectual skills (i.e., problem solving)

Activities and experiences, which facilitate this, include:

- * Art Expression
- * Dramatic Play, Music & Dance
- * Board & Table Games
- * Science & Math Projects
- * Life Skills (cooking, sewing, etc.)
- * Manipulative & Building
- * Sensory & Nature
- * Games & Sports
- * Literacy
- * Homework & Quiet Area

VHFLC works toward supporting in-school activities and children's academic success.

PLAY SPACES:

Play spaces are how VHFLC defines time when children may choose activities that are of interest to them. They encourage children's active participation and maximize the development of their intellectual, socio-emotional and physical abilities. These areas provide for group or individual activities. Play spaces are to be open during free time and special activities. Children may decline to participate in special activities and explore the play spaces if they wish. Manipulative/Building, Homework, Board & Table Games, Art Expression and Quiet Area are play spaces that are present every day. In addition to these play spaces, staff plan and prepare other more involved play spaces on a weekly basis that include Literacy, Sensory/Nature, Dramatic Play/Music, Science/Math and Clubs. Materials and activities at play spaces are frequently changed to continually provide the children with new learning experiences and to keep their interest levels high.

The following list explains the different activities and play spaces which we provide.

CLUBS are an excellent vehicle for encouraging school-agers to explore a topic of their interest. Clubs give children the chance to develop new skills and allow them to discover their individual talents. Clubs can be organized around almost anything that interests a small group of children. Clubs are offered twice a week and children sign up for the clubs they want to participate in. Some club examples are sewing, chess, bicycle repair, changing a tire, beads, cooking and fashion.

MANIPULATIVES are materials that children work with their hands in a skillful manner to create or make comparisons between materials. In building areas children combine materials in temporary or permanent ways to design or create structures. **Manipulatives and Building** promote fine motor development, creative thinking, problem solving, cooperation as they work together, expressive language as they talk about building and flexible thinking as they use new and unique materials.

HOMEWORK is a quiet area established for the purpose of working on school assignments. Materials such as pencils, paper, rulers, etc, that children may need while completing assignments will be accessible. This area can change periodically to keep it interesting.

BOARD & TABLE GAMES is a designated area where children can participate in board games, card playing or puzzles. Staff rotates the materials in the area to keep the activities fresh and the interest level high. Games and puzzles bolster creative thinking, strategizing, spatial relationships and social skills.

ART EXPRESSION explores areas where children can be very creative and enjoy using art materials to express their ideas. By experimenting with different media, they begin to understand their world and how to control the tools they use. The process of creating is more important than the product they develop. A free art expression area is conducive to enhancing creativity fine-motor skills and self-confidence.

QUIET AREA is an inviting, comfortable, restful place where children can relax. Materials to rotate through this space include books, magazines, word puzzles, music listening (low volume) or puppets.

The **LITERACY** area can consist of any materials or activities that advance children's reading, writing, oral communication skills or vocabulary. Children's books provide a strong foundation for oral language, reading and writing development. A "**Kidzlit**" curriculum is used by VHFLC and was developed especially for after school children

SENSORY activities allow children to use their senses as they make distinctions and comparison through hands-on meaningful experiences. **NATURE** activities provide children with even more opportunities to discover and classify characteristics of the environment in which they live. Sensory and nature activities strengthen children's observation skills and ability to draw conclusions.

Through **DRAMATIC PLAY** children have the opportunity to "pretend" and have experiences outside their world. They can experience different cultures by traveling to other countries, they can explore different careers, and the possibilities are endless. Children's interpersonal relationship and communication skills are improved through dramatic play. **MUSIC & DANCE** inspires many emotions and can be another vehicle for children to express themselves. A music space encourages children to explore sounds produced by many different objects and instruments, learn about different music styles and, and give them the opportunity to hear a variety of music.

“FAMILY MATH” and **“FAMILY SCIENCE”** curricula are utilized in our school age program, and help promote the wonder of curiosity and encourage cognitive development. These curricula evolved from the realization that minorities and women scored below others in Math and Science standardized tests, the VHFLC seeks to provide enjoyable enrichment in those areas.

GROUP ACTIVITY is enhanced through structured and unstructured play. Participation in individual and group movement and games is encouraged and the opportunity to participate is offered daily. The child is allowed to develop gross motor skills at his or her own rate. This time is either spent outdoors or by utilizing the indoor gym. At least half of the designated time is spent on organized games.

TELEVISION & VIDEO time is only used on a limited basis. Videos are shown no more than once a month and only “G” ratings or educational programming is allowed.

Our programs encourage decision-making. Allowing choices for children and how their time is spent, is what we feel is developmentally appropriate for young school-agers, thus promoting responsibility and self-esteem.

INCLEMENT WEATHER:

We hope the following information will assist you in planning ahead for our winter season. Our main objective during bad weather is to insure the safety of our staff and children. Thank you in advance for understanding our need for safety. Even the best laid plans may not meet what the weather has in store. Inclement weather is a prime example of when names, photographs, phone numbers of people authorized to pick up your child(ren) is extremely important and crucial.

1. If **Portland Public Schools** are **closed**, our Portland Sites are **closed**. **St. Ignatius, Holy Family and St. John Fisher** also follows this schedule.
2. If **Beaverton Public Schools** are **closed**, our Beaverton Sites are **closed**. **St. Cecilia's** also follows this schedule.
3. If **Hillsboro Public Schools** are **closed**, our Hillsboro Sites are **closed**.
4. **German American and Forest Hills** schools follow their own schedule, please listen for announcements. See our web site at www.VHFLC.com for updates on weather closures.
5. **St. Francis School** follows the Banks School District.
6. **Visitation School** follows the Forest Grove School District
7. For those VHFLC sites having A.M. Programs: If the schools associated with your child's site opens late, we will **not** provide morning care.
8. IF THE SCHOOL ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR CHILD'S SITE CLOSES PRIOR TO REGULAR DISMISSAL, CALL THE MAIN OFFICE FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS. SEE SCHOOL POLICY.
9. **Teacher In-Service Days and Down Days:** VHFLC opens if the school district associated with your school have asked their teachers to report. VHFLC will open @ 10:00 a.m.
10. Should weather conditions get worse during the time VHFLC is providing care in the afternoon, VHFLC may decide to contact parents and request your child be picked up as soon as possible.
11. During the **Holiday** breaks, when VHFLC is providing all day care, any closures will be announced on KEX 1190 or KXL 750 & on the web sites of channels 2, 6, 8, and 12.

MEDICATION:

Medicine is administered only with a signed permission slip from parent or guardian. This medicine is stored in a locked container and is kept in a locked cabinet. When a teacher administers medicine the name and dosage are checked and then logged in our log books. Parents may check this at anytime.

In the event that your child must be given medicine prescribed or over-the-counter, you must fill out a **Medicine Authorization Form**. These forms are available from the VHFLC site staff. **Medication must come in its original container. Children may not bring medicine in backpacks or lunch boxes, etc. The State requires that medications be maintained under locked custody.**

Chemicals and dangerous products, cleaning supplies and medicines are stored in labeled containers in locked cabinets inaccessible to children.

ILLNESS:

If there is any illness or injury to a child needing specific instructions or action, parents or guardians will be notified immediately. If you cannot be reached the designated person(s) will be contacted to pick up your child. Therefore, it is important that information is current and up to date. If no one is available to respond, VHFLC will exercise its judgment depending on the situation.

If a child is suspected of having a communicable disease or fever such as rash, pink eye, diarrhea, or skin infection, she/he shall be placed in an isolated area. The parent/guardian shall be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible. Any child who has had a communicable disease shall not return to the school age site until they are no longer contagious or they have a written doctor's statement.

When VHFLC is aware of a case of head lice, the parent will be notified to pick up their child. The child may return to care when they are "nit free" (no eggs visible upon inspection).

It is very important that you call if your child is ill or absent from our program. In order to avoid many calls in an attempt to track down your child in the event of an absence, it is imperative that you notify us on the day she/he is out. Please call our Main Office (503-452-8633) at any time before school dismissal and we will forward the information to your child's teacher.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES:

VHFLC works to create a high degree of positive health and safety practices.

Additionally, two VHFLC staff members are Red Cross certified instructors (including infant and child CPR), enabling them to work directly with VHFLC staff and facilitating VHFLC's ability to keep all staff "First Aid current."

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES follow mandated guidelines, with monthly fire drill (recorded), staff training on earthquake emergencies, as well as other potential "threat" emergencies. Fire drill procedures are posted, and fire emergency equipment, when required, is available and maintained per schedule. However, should an emergency occur during the operating hours, when we have not yet arrived, which necessitates closing your site; we will not be available to care for your child later that day.

CHECK IN AND OUT POLICY: To ensure the safety and supervision upon arrival in the **morning** program, please walk your child into the designated VHFLC area. Upon checking your child out in the afternoon please indicate that you are leaving to a VHFLC staff member. Your child will only be released to those individuals you have designated on your child's enrollment form.

A photograph of everyone permitted to pick up your child from our program is required, including parents. These photos will be kept at the site with our staff. It will be up to the staff person or substitutes to check ID when someone comes to pick up your child. If the staff person does not recognize the individual and there is not a photo you have submitted, we will not release the child and the parent will be called. Please write the child's name and the name of the person in the photo on the back of each picture you submit.

VHFLC PROGRAMS CLOSE PROMPTLY AT 6:00 P.M. and no caregivers are scheduled to care for children after this time. Any time you come later than 6:00 pm you will be charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute that you are late. You must pay the caregiver who has volunteered to stay with your child(ren). The clock located at the site determines the correct time. Abuse of this policy may result in restriction of care for your child.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

If any individual authorized to pick a child up from the Site, who appears to pose an imminent danger to the health or well-being of child(ren), or staff, Vermont Hills Family Life Center is authorized to contact local law enforcement officers and refuse to release the child(ren) pending investigation, or to follow the instructions of the local law enforcement officers. If the individual in question is not a parent, we will attempt to contact a parent for further instructions. If the individual is a parent, we will attempt to contact the other parent. If we are unable to make contact or are unable to obtain instructions which appear to correct the imminent danger of harm to your child(ren), or staff, we will contact local law enforcement agents and will refuse to release the child(ren) until we have been authorized by those local law enforcement agents. Harassment of staff, children or parents is always inappropriate and may be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program. If you have any particular instructions which you would like us to follow in circumstances such as outlined above, please provide them to us on your enrollment form.

TUITION:

VHLFC is a not for profit organization. The fees charged to the parents are set at a point where our income offsets our monthly expenses for space, toys, operating supplies, administrative and staff costs.

The cost of our program does not vary with individual daily absences, illnesses, school closures or vacations, so we do not make daily or hourly adjustments. Therefore, **we do not provide any credit for absences, illnesses, school closures or vacations, including weather closures.** In addition, **parents may not trade days** when those situations occur. Annual costs are divided into 9 equal months resulting in payments due every month of the school year. June is ½ the regular monthly tuition. As a result, there are no credits given for Winter or Spring break weeks, when care is not needed.

- ❖ When you pay the Monthly tuition rate **all early dismissals** are included.
- ❖ If you attend **5/4 days per week** either After School or Before & After School **ALL INSERVICE** days are **included** in your tuition.
- ❖ If you attend 3 or less days there is a \$150 yearly charge for in-service days.
- ❖ If you would like to attend **only** INSERVICE DAYS there is a \$250 fee for the year.
- ❖ During Winter and Spring break there is no charge on your regularly scheduled days and hours, just for the additional hours needed at a daily or hourly rate.

REGISTRATION FEE: There is a \$60 registration fee for the first child, \$50 for the second and \$40 for the third. If you elect to pay via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) the registration fee is \$40 for the first - \$34 - \$27 for the siblings. Generally registrations received by noon allows care to begin the following day.

PAYMENT CHOICES:

Tuition may be paid monthly through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) or with a check mailed by the 1st of the month or in equal payments made on the 1st and 15th. There is also the option of pre-pay for those whose schedule changes on a weekly or daily basis. Lastly, drop in care is available for those last minute or emergency needs.

WHEN ON PRE-PAY you will receive a monthly calendar prior to the start of the new month. When your payment is made it must be postmarked by the 20th prior to the start of each month to avoid a \$50 late fee. Please indicate your child's schedule, including days and hours needed. Then pay for only those hours and days that you have selected based on \$6 per hour.

DROP-IN CARE is expensive. This should only be used in an emergency or unforeseeable circumstance. You must call our main office on the day your child will be coming and be currently registered. Billing will be at \$10 per hour and due by the 5th of the following month.

- ❖ Any unpaid tuition is subject to collection.
- ❖ VHLFC tuition rates may increase in January but we reserve the right to adjust the rates at any time.
- ❖ A late fee of \$25 per occurrence will be charged if payment is not received in our Main Office by the 5th or the 5th and 20th of the month or for NSF fees. Two or more late fees will result in restricted payment options.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:

Financial Assistance is awarded on the basis of your gross and supplemental family income. All individuals may apply. The application process will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, age or national origin. To apply simply call 503-452-8633 for a financial assistance application. The assistance will be reviewed in August, November and February and is subject to availability of funds. New applications will be accepted at any time, however late forms will not.

Attendance is granted only when space is available. There is an extra charge for attending any AM or PM not covered in the tuition. There are no substitutions for days missed for absences, illness, vacations or school closure days (including weather-related closures).

WINTER & SPRING BREAK: Tuition for the months that Winter and Spring Break fall will remain the same unless full day care is needed for which an additional amount will be charged. Fees are determined by the activities planned for each week and therefore may vary.

Before the weeks of Winter and Spring Break you will receive a flyer with a calendar of planned activities for these special all day programs. You will also be notified of where the programs will be held and be advised of the fees for each week. **All fees must be paid and registration completed by the due date.** Child care will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis, as space may be limited. Care will not be provided to those with an outstanding balance.

ATTENDANCE ON CLOSURE/TEACHER PLANNING DAYS: You will be asked to sign up for closure days in advance at your VHFLC site. This will ensure that we will have adequate staff supervision for these days. We may combine schools and ask you to bring your child to an alternative site due to lower student enrollment on these days.

CANCELLATION OF PROGRAM: If a before or after school program drops below 8 children per day on a consistent basis, it will be subject to a VHFLC review. An effort to market the program will go into effect, as well as other funding alternatives before a final decision is made by the Executive Director to cancel a program. We will make every attempt to keep each program. If cancellation is necessary at least a 15 day notice will be given.

PERSONAL ITEMS: We request that personal toys and belongings as well as gum, candy and money be left at home. VHFLC is not responsible for the loss of personal items, which includes damage or loss to backpacks and clothing.

TAX STATEMENTS/RECEIPTS: Tax statements will be provided to parents for the current year at no charge. Depending on the number of requests we receive, it may take a few days to process your request. Contact the Main Office **after January 15th** for a statement.

WITHDRAWALS: Should you decide to withdraw your child from VHFLC, a two-week written notice is required. You may send or fax your written notice to our Main Office.

MUSIC: VHFLC as an organization believes that only a parent or guardian should select which music is right for their children. We limit our group listening to what is acceptable to all music that is targeted for children, classical music and soft instrumental jazz may be played. Music with more “adult” themes will not be allowed.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT: Each site will hold parent meetings at least three times per school year. Regional Supervisors will post meeting dates and agendas in advance. These meetings are opportunities for parents and VHFLC staff to communicate and work together to ensure the quality of care provided.

SCHOLARSHIP POLICY: VHFLC attempts to assist low-income families via scholarships. VHFLC works very hard to ensure that families are not denied care for financial reasons. Amounts given vary between 20% and 80% depending on individual circumstances. Scholarships given exceed \$10,000 per month.

USDA NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the State of Oregon prohibit discrimination in all USDA programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability.