

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, so 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 are 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 about maintaining communication with Vermont Hills Family Life Center, concerning your child(ren)'s needs.

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

Sincerely,

Vermont Hills Family Life Center
Administrative Staff

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. We currently service approximately 175 preschoolers (at 3 locations), and 175 school age children (at 9 sites).

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

VHFLC respects, nurtures and supports an environment that reflects the individuality of our families, children, and staff while celebrating the diversity of our programs.

VHFLC will not allow discrimination or harassment, based on race, color, sex, marital status, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability, in any program, during any activities, or during the employment process.

The monthly fees charged to parents, are set at a point where our income offsets our monthly expense for space, toys, operating 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 also support the family, as family involvement helps promote and encourage 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, healthy, 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 for children, families, and staff.

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

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, who are then trained extensively.

All staff must meet educational and work experience requirements, appropriate to their position, and pass a criminal background check, which includes an FBI fingerprint check. Every staff member is trained in First Aid, CPR, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse, and other State mandated trainings. All staff serving snack or lunch, must have a current Food Handler card. Our staff, also, receive annual training, through in-services, workshops and staff meetings. All staff must meet the Child Care Division's training requirement, of 15 hours per year, 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 are very committed to providing staff with competitive salaries and benefits, in order to ensure we have the best staff possible. Staff benefits include vacation, paid holidays, % towards health and dental insurance, child care discounts, and sick plan. Staff salaries account for at least 80% of our budget, which is typical of most not-for-profit childcares.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT:

What VHFLC does to be the best caregiver for child(ren), as well as a resource for parents:

- * **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**. Parents are responsible for making sure their childcare provider is aware of the family goals. The provider is responsible for learning family goals, and ensuring that they fit within the overall philosophy of the program.

This **PARENT HANDBOOK** is available to all parents. It presents information about the program's philosophy, policies, services and responsibilities of the program, including hours, fees, parent requirements, and parent responsibilities.

PARENT MEETINGS each site will hold parent meetings, at least three times per school year, unless there are Covid restrictions. 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.

PARENT CONFERENCES 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 (e.g., a brief discussion during pick-up), or formal (e.g., a scheduled face to face meeting).

Parents are often busy and rushed, when they arrive to pick up their children, but **parent visits** to the site are always welcomed and encouraged (with Covid precautions). Parents should always feel welcome, and should feel free to participate in current activities.

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. This becomes a wonderful learning experience, for them. Larger scale volunteering could include field trips, work parties, or weekly site visits, 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 setting. 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 them in a group setting. Each case will be evaluated on its own merits. Concerns or restrictions will be addressed with parents on a one-to-one basis. Care of differently abled or exceptional students should be discussed, individually, with the site staff and school-age manager, to determine the capability of VHFLC to meet those needs.

PROGRAM:

VHFLC provides a variety of developmentally appropriate activities, through which VHFLC seeks to engage each child in enriching explorations. These various opportunities are designed to make the after-school experience enjoyable and productive, for children.

All VHFLC sites share a similar educational philosophy, and create nurturing environments. However, there is some latitude, in order to allow directors and teaching staff the autonomy, in developing schedules and curricula that works best for each site.

VHFLC school-age programs offer balance. Staff create interest areas and plan activities that offer active and quiet experiences. These experiences take place both 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 choose to 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, group meetings led by children, participate in routines, and choose from multiple activity options, each day. Staff establish 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 respond to children's requests for assistance, in carrying out their plans, and encourage children to develop and use new skills.

Children are part of a community, within the program, and in the larger world. School-age programs encourage children to be a part of both communities. Staff provide 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. In this way, children can develop their skills and interests.

ACTIVITIES:

Activities are designed to enhance children's development in the following areas:

- * **Self-esteem**
- * **Sports & recreational activities**
- * **Creative expression**
- * **Executive Functioning Skills**
- * **Social Emotional Skills**
- * **Fine/Gross Motor skills**
- * **Academic enrichment**

Activities and experiences which facilitate this development:

- * **Art Expression**
- * **Dramatic Play**
- * **Music & Movement**
- * **Board & Table Games**
- * **Science & Math Projects**
- * **Life Skills (cooking, sewing, etc.)**
- * **Active Play (Outside whenever possible)**
- * **Screen Free Care (except when required to complete assigned homework)**
- * **Manipulatives & Building**
- * **STEAM Learning**
- * **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 where VHFLC provides time when children may choose activities that are of interest to them. This encourages 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. These spaces include Literacy, Sensory/Nature, Dramatic Play/Music, Science/Math, and Clubs. Materials and activities, at play spaces, are frequently changed, to continually provide 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 allows them to discover their individual talents. Clubs can be organized around almost anything that interests a small group of children. Children can sign up for the clubs they are interested in. Clubs may be offered up to twice a week. Some examples of clubs are, sewing, chess, bicycle repair, changing a tire, beads, Legos, 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 Area: 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. These will change, periodically, to keep it interesting. Computers/Tablets may be used for teacher assigned homework, only.

Board & Table Games Area: a designated area where children can participate in board games, card playing or puzzles. Staff rotate the materials, in the area, to keep the activities fresh and interest levels high. Games and puzzles bolster creative thinking, strategizing, spatial relationships, and social skills.

Art Expression: allows children to explore areas creatively using art materials to express their ideas. By experimenting with different mediums, children begin to understand their world. They also start to learn how to control the tools they use. We understand that 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 that rotate through this space include, books, magazines, word puzzles, music listening (low volume), and puppets.

Literacy Area: can consist of any materials or activities that advance children's reading, writing, oral communication skills, and vocabulary. Books provide a strong foundation for oral language, letter recognition and literacy, comprehension, fluency, and writing development. We use "Kidzlit" and The Magic Tree House curriculum that was developed, especially, for after school children.

Sensory Area: these activities allow children to use their senses, as they make distinctions and comparisons, through hands-on, meaningful experiences.

Nature activities provide children with 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 find conclusions.

Through **Dramatic Play**, children have the opportunity to "pretend," and have experiences outside their world. They can experience different cultures, explore different careers, and other endless possibilities. Children's interpersonal relationship and communication skills are improved, through dramatic play. **Music & Movement** 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 gives 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, while encourage cognitive development. These curricula evolved from the statistics that show minorities and women would benefit from more opportunities to practice Math and Science. VHFLC seeks to provide all children, enjoyable enrichment experiences, in these areas.

Group Activity is enhanced through structured and unstructured play. Participation in individual and group movement and games, is encouraged, but never forced. Opportunities to participate, in individual and group activities, will be offered daily. Additionally, each child is allowed to develop gross motor skills, at his or her own rate. This is done with time spent outdoors, or by utilizing the indoor gym. At least half of the, designated, gross motor time, is spent on organized games.

Television and Video time is used, only, on a limited basis. Videos are shown, no more than once a month, and only “G” ratings or educational programming is allowed. Chromebooks are only allowed during homework time, and only when actually assigned by the child’s teacher. VHFLC believes that children get enough screen time outside of school age care.

Music VHFLC, as an organization, believes that only a parent or guardian should select the music that is right for their child(ren). 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.

Our programs encourage decision-making. Thus, we allow children to make choices about how their time is spent, as this is developmentally appropriate, for young school-agers. In this way, we promote each child’s responsibility and self-esteem.

NUTRITION:

Vermont Hills Family Life Center provides appropriate, organic and vegetarian snacks daily. Menus are posted on the program info board, which is visible at each pickup.

MEDICATION:

Medicine is administered only with a, signed, permission slip, from a parent or guardian. Medicine will be stored in a locked container, and kept in a locked cabinet. When a teacher administers medicine, the name and dosage are checked, and then logged in a log book. Parents may check the medication log book, at any time.

In the event that your child must be given medicine, either 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, and inaccessible to children.

ILLNESS:

If there is any illness or injury to a child that needs specific instructions or action, parents or guardians will be notified immediately. If you cannot be reached, the person(s) listed as your child’s emergency contact, will be notified to pick your child up. Therefore, it is important that information is current, and up to date. (You should be sure to let people know that you’ve selected them, as an emergency contact for your child). If no one is available to respond, VHFLC will exercise its judgment, depending on the situation. We may have to contact local law enforcement, should we be unable to contact you, or your emergency contacts.

If a child is suspected of having a communicable disease, or fever (100.4 or above), such as rash, pink eye, diarrhea, or skin infection, s/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 has a doctor’s statement. (Please see Covid insert)

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. ***Failure to notify VHFLC, when your child will not be attending, will result in a Finder's Fee of \$10.***

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROCEDURES:

VHFLC works hard to provide a high degree of positive health and safety practices and policies.

All VHFLC staff members are required to be CPR and first aid certified; including infant, child, and adult.

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 hours before school age care begins, which necessitates closing your child's site, there will not be available care for your child, later that day.

INCLEMENT WEATHER: *(Snow, Ice, Smoke, other)*

We hope the following information will assist you in planning ahead for our winter season. Our main objective, during bad weather, is to ensure the safety of all staff and children. Thank you, in advance, for understanding our need to prioritize 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 even crucial.

1. If **Portland Public Schools** are **closed**, our St. Andrew's location is closed.
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. If **Banks School District** is **closed**, our Banks location is **closed**.
5. If **Vancouver School District** is **closed**, Our Lady of Lourdes location is **closed**.
6. For those VHFLC sites having AM Programs: If the **Public School** associated with your child's site opens late, VHFLC will **not** provide morning care.
7. IF THE SCHOOL, ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR CHILD'S SITE, CLOSSES PRIOR TO REGULAR DISMISSAL, VHFLC WILL NOT PROVIDE CARE FOR THE BALANCE OF THE DAY. SEE SCHOOL POLICY.
8. Should weather conditions get worse, during the time VHFLC is providing care in the afternoon, VHFLC may decide to contact parents to request children be picked up, as soon as possible.
9. 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, and on the VHFLC website.

Check in and Out Policy: To ensure the safety and supervision of all children, please abide by the following: upon arrival to the **morning** program, please walk your child into the designated VHFLC area. Upon checking your child out of the afternoon program, 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.**

Without prior arrangements, we will not release your child to anyone that is not either a parent, or on your child's emergency contact list. If you are unable to pick up your child, please call and let us know who will be picking your child up. A staff person will check identification, when someone other than you, comes to pick up your child. If the staff person does not recognize the individual, or they don't have identification, we will not release the child to the individual. Instead, we will call you, to let you know that we were unable to release your child to that individual.

VHFLC programs close promptly at 6:00 pm, so there are no caregivers scheduled to care for children after this time. Anytime you pick up your child after 6:00 pm, you will be charged a late fee, of \$1.00, for every minute that you are late. The clock located at the site, determines the correct time. Abuse of this policy, may result in restriction of care.

PLEASE READ CAREFULLY:

VHFLC will not release children to anyone appearing to pose imminent danger to the health or well-being of child(ren) or staff. Vermont Hills Family Life Center staff will contact local law enforcement. 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 with, at least, one parent, we will contact local law enforcement for further instructions. 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, you would like us to follow, in circumstances such as outlined above, please provide them to us in your enrollment form.

TUITION:

VHFLC 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 inclement 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. However, June is ½ the regular monthly tuition.

* When you pay the Monthly PM tuition rate, **all early dismissals** are included, if they fall on your child's regular scheduled day. (This does not include budget reduction day or furlough day.)

* During Winter and Spring break, there is no charge on your regularly scheduled days and hours. You will only be charged for the additional hours needed, at a daily or hourly rate.

REGISTRATION FEE: There is a \$100.00 registration fee for one child or \$150.00 registration fee for the family.

CHANGING YOUR CHILDS SCHEDULE: Schedule changes must be submitted, in writing, to our Main Office. We require a two-week advance notice, for any schedule changes.

If you pay the monthly tuition, half days and early dismissals are included in your regular tuition. Please note they must fall on your regularly scheduled days.

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 be notified of where the programs will be held, and be advised of the fees for each week. **Registration must be complete, and all fees must be paid, by the due date.** Care will not be provided to those with an outstanding balance.

WINTER & SPRING BREAK: Current VHFLC families will be offered priority camp enrollment. Camp costs are not included in the yearly program tuition.

PAYMENT CHOICES:

Tuition may be paid monthly through Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT), or with check mailed by the 1st of the month. It can also be paid in equal payments, made on the 1st and 15th of each month. Lastly, for families currently enrolled, drop-in care is available. Drop-in care is for those last minute or emergency needs, but parents MUST contact the VHFLC main office, to ensure there is an available spot in the program that day.

VHFLC Tuition rates may increase each September, but we reserve the right to adjust the rates at any time.

Unpaid balances are subject to collection and all collection fees charged by the collection agency. Should it be necessary to send any account, receiving assistance, to collections, the assistance will be rescinded, and the full amount will be charged and sent to collections.

There is a Late fee of \$30.00, per occurrence, if payment is not received in our Main Office, by the 5th or the 5th and 20th of the month, including NSF fees. Two or more late fees, will result in restricted payment options.

There is an extra charge for attending any AM or PM, not covered in the tuition. You must call our office, at 503-452-8633, to see if space is available. **There are no substitutions for days missed for absences, illness, vacations or school closure days (including weather-related closures).**

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 to cancel a program. We will make every attempt to keep each program open, but if cancellation is necessary, at least 2 weeks' 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 upon request. Depending on the number of requests we receive, it will take up to 2 weeks to process your request. Contact our 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 email, mail or fax (503-715-4944) your written notice to our Main Office.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE: VHFLC attempts to assist low-income families with childcare assistance. VHFLC works very hard to ensure that families are not denied care for financial reasons. Amounts awarded vary between 20% and 80% depending, on the individual circumstances.

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 for a scholarship, simply call 503-452-8633, for a financial assistance application. The assistance will be reviewed in August, November, and February, and is subject to the availability of funds. New applications will be accepted at any time, however, late forms will not.