

Small Town Hope
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
2214 Bigler Ave. Northern Cambria, PA 15714
2022

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INTRODUCTION

Small Town Hope has developed this document to provide information about all aspects of operation: Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope (Childcare), Small Town Hope Pre-K Educational Program and Small Town Hope Tod-Pod Educational Program. This document is subject to updates as needed. You will be aware of any changes made and may request a copy or review our in-house copy at any time.

MISSION / INCLUSION POLICY

Within the eyes of every child lies the power of HOPE. Every child is special and has needs that are unique. At the end of the day, hope is all that some children have. At our center, we recognize the value of hope and believe it is within every person, big or small and it is our MISSION at Small Town Hope to actively meet the needs and support the inclusion of all children, families and staff of our center regardless of ability, need, background, culture, religion, gender or economic circumstances. We will work hard to support hope, nurture it, and encourage it to grow by promoting participation of children of all abilities in all learning and social activities of our center. It is our goal that Small Town Hope offers opportunity, warmth, encouragement, a sense of belonging, and support to all children and their families.

For more information, please request to see a copy of OCDEL's Announcement: Inclusion of All Children in Early Childhood Programs in Pennsylvania

LICENSING AND REGULATIONS

Small Town Hope, Inc. is licensed under a current Certificate of Compliance issued (and renewed annually) by the Department of Human Services under 55 Pa. Code, Chapter 20 to operate a child care facility. The Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope, Inc. and all programs and activities held at the facility during operating hours (including but not limited to: child care, educational programs, or summer enrichment activities) by the Department of Human Services 55 Pa. Code § 3270, Child Care Centers. This information can be found at www.pacodeandbulletin.gov under Code 55 Human Services, Chapter 3270 Child Day Care Centers. **A printed copy can be found at our center by request.**

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope operates Monday through Friday from 6 am until 6pm. Since these exact times may vary daily dependent on current child schedules, please contact us as soon as possible if you need to drop off earlier or pick up later than your usual scheduled time. Small Town Hope's Educational Programs operate on the second floor of Hope's Villa Children's Center. Preschool operates Monday through Friday from 9:00am-12:00pm. Tod-Pod operates in two different sessions, Monday / Wednesday or Tuesday / Thursday from 9:00am until 12:00pm. If you need to coordinate childcare prior to or after our programs, please contact us to arrange care. Please note that our doors **remain locked at all times**. Please call our center upon arrival at 814-420-8362 and a staff member will greet you and your child(ren) at the bottom of our ramp.

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

Parents must complete an enrollment packet prior to their child attending any of Small Town Hope's Childcare or Educational programs. This packet is provided by Small Town Hope and contains all documents required to be on file for each child by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Regulations for Child Care Centers found in 55 Pa. Code § 3270.181-185. Not returning enrollment documents in advance of the initial attendance date could result in the delay of services. A deposit or full payment of the childcare fees or educational program tuition are required before the start date.

WITHDRAWAL

If a parent decides to withdraw their child from the childcare portion of our center, we request a notice of at least 30 days. All childcare dates billed to date request was made will still be owed to the center regardless of whether services were rendered for those days (we bill 2 weeks in advance).

If a parent decides to withdraw their child from any of our educational programs, they may do so at any time. However, they will not receive a refund of their preschool deposit or for any tuition paid to date. This includes if they have paid the entire school year in advance as we will not have the opportunity to fill that empty seat for the remainder of the program year.

SCHEDULES, RATES AND PAYMENTS

Schedules and Billing

Since our staffing schedules are done in advance of the current date (to ensure we are always properly staffed for the children scheduled), we bill two weeks in advance of your child's attendance date. Any changes to your child's schedule **MUST** be made at least **ONE WEEK** in advance to avoid being charged for days your child does not attend and to ensure we have spots available for your child. Since you will have been billed in advance, any days canceled with adequate notice will be adjusted as a credit on your next bill. Excessive schedule changes may be evaluated at our discretion and may not be subject to credit.

2022 RATES

Hope's Villa Children's Center (Childcare):

Infant – 1 year: \$35/day (5+ hours)

1 year – 2 years: \$30/day (5+ hours)

2 years – 3 years: \$28/day (5+ hours)

3 years – Kindergarten: \$27/day (5+ hours)

School age: \$25/day (5+ hours)

Extended day cost (> 10 hours): \$5/hour each additional hour

Educational Programs

Pre-K Program Full Year Tuition: \$2,700.00

Tod Pod Program Full Year Tuition: \$1,080.00

Thanks to grant funding from various generous donors, we are able to offer some form of tuition assistance to lower the cost of each of our education programs for every family. Please refer to Step 4 on our Roadway to Enrollment for your financial obligation to your child's 2020-2021 tuition.

Payments

Childcare payments will be due on the Friday of the week you receive your bill. Any payments not made by their due date will incur a weekly late fee of 5% of your total bill until payment is made. Please note that we do offer two "sick-days" to be used per child/month for unexplained absences on a day your child was scheduled but did not attend. Since you will have already been billed in advance, any sick-days will automatically be applied as a credit to your next bill. **Please note that for our Pre-K and Tod Pod educational programs, tuition is program-based and does not reflect daily cost.** Sick-days apply only to childcare at Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope; tuition payments for Pre-K and Tod Pod never change depending on attendance or schedules once enrolled. Pre-K and Tod-Pod payments are due the first of the month (or the nearest class day).

CLOSINGS, DELAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Holidays

Families will be provided with a holiday schedule and made aware/reminded at least 2 weeks in advance of any holiday or unforeseen closing. Small Town Hope, Inc. is closed for the following holidays: New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, the Monday after Easter Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day. Small Town Hope, Inc. reserves the right to close their center if the need shall occur and will provide families at least 24 hour notice.

If weather is too severe for our staff to arrive safely and we make the decision to close our center, we will notify through ClassDojo. Any families who do not read the message on dojo after a half of an hour of posted will be contacted privately.

ILLNESSES

In order to maintain the health, wellness and safety of all our children and staff members at Small Town Hope, sick children are asked to be kept at home to recoup and help us prevent the spread of germs and illness.

In accordance with Caring for our Children: Health and Safety Basics, 3.6.1.1 Inclusion/Exclusion/Dismissal of Children, staff at Small Town Hope will notify parents/guardians when children develop new signs or symptoms of illness. Parent/guardian will be notified immediately for emergency or urgent issues. Staff will notify parents/guardians of children who have symptoms that require exclusion. **Parents/guardians should remove children from the early care and education setting as soon as possible if any illness:**

- a) Prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities;
- b) Results in a need for care that is greater than the staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children;
- c) Poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others;
- d) Causes a fever and behavior change or other signs and symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, and diarrhea).

Children must be kept home and be symptom free for 24 hours with any of the following symptoms:

- **Vomiting or Diarrhea** – Any child who vomits or has 2 or more loose stools will be sent home. Child must then be symptom free (unmedicated) for 24 hours before returning
- **Rash** – Any child presenting any type of rash besides common diaper rash will be sent home and will require a doctor's clearance stating that the rash is not contagious before returning to our center while symptoms are present.
- **Conjunctivitis** – Any child presenting irritation with discharge in their eye(s) will be sent home and will require a doctor's clearance before returning to our center while symptoms are present.

Children must be kept home and be symptom free (unmedicated) for 48 hours with any SINGLE sign of illness which could indicate COVID-19, including cough, flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat or extreme fussiness.

During this time, if any additional symptoms above appear, your child will need to be seen by a physician or Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner (CRNP) to ensure their ability to return to care (55 Pa. Code § 3270.137. Children with symptoms of disease: *An operator who observes an enrolled child with symptoms of a communicable disease or infection that can be transmitted directly or indirectly and which may threaten the health of children in care shall exclude the child from attendance until the operator receives notification from a physician or a CRNP that the child is no longer considered a threat to the health of others.*)

Medication – If any medication needs to be administered by the staff of Small Town Hope, a Medication Log MUST be completed before any medication can be left at our center or administered. Any prescription medication must be current and prescribed to your child ONLY and will require a Medication Log and parental signature. Over the counter medication (including diaper cream) will also require a Medication Log and parental signature to be administered. Please send medicine cup/spoon/applicator with appropriate measuring guide for all medications.

In accordance with Caring for Our Children Basics, 3.6.3.1/3.6.3.2 Medication Administration and Storage, The administration of medicines at the facility are limited to:

- a) Prescription or non-prescription medication (over-the-counter) ordered by the prescribing health professional for a specific child with written permission of the parent/guardian. Prescription medication should be labeled with the child's name; date the prescription was filled; name and contact information of the prescribing health professional; expiration date; medical need; instructions for administration, storage, and disposal; and name and strength of the medication.
- b) Labeled medications (over-the-counter) brought to the early care and education facility by the parent/guardian in the original container. The label should include the child's name; dosage; relevant warnings as well as specific; and legible instructions for administration, storage; and disposal.

Payment/Charges during illness – Since we were staffed to care for your child regardless of their unexpected day(s) off, you will be charged for days your child scheduled but home sick. For information on monthly "sick day," please refer to Schedules, Billing and Payments.

ABSENCES

Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope (Childcare)

Any absences from our childcare services will still be billed with the exception of two "sick-days" to be used per child, per month. A phone call or other communication is expected to let us know your child will not be attending that day. Any days your child does not attend as scheduled and is not reported absent via phone call or Class Dojo message is considered a "No Show." After 3 "no show" days, your child may be suspended or unable to return for care.

Small Town Hope Tod-Pod and Pre-K Programs

Class work missed will be compiled and sent home the next school day the child attends. Children are not required to return the completed work to school, however, having the child do the work at home is very good for continuing class content and keeping them on track. If a child has excessive absences, Small Town Hope staff may contact the parents to check in and be sure that they are still committed to completing the program.

INJURIES

Minor injuries such as trips, paper cuts, and little bumps will be treated by Small Town Hope staff members. All staff members are First Aid and CPR Certified. First Aid boxes are present in the classroom. When a minor "boo-boo" occurs, your child will bring home a "Boo-Boo Paper" explaining what happened and how it was treated.

It is important to understand that young children often struggle with how to deal with frustrating situations and sometimes resort to hitting, pushing or biting. This behavior will always be discouraged and addressed immediately and will also be discussed with parents.

EMERGENCY PLAN

Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

Immediate Evacuation Children are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc. In case of inclement weather, we may then proceed indoors to our Emergency Relocation facility (Ken's BiLo - Bett's Ave).

In-Place Sheltering Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.

Evacuation Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to a relocation facility. Our Emergency Relocation facility is Ken's BiLo, located at 2423 Betts Ave, Northern Cambria, PA 15714. If it ever becomes necessary to relocate, a sign will be posted on the door stating that we've relocated to BiLo.

Modified Operation May include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children, but may be necessary in a variety of situations.

Important Notes

- Please check WJAC-TV for announcements relating any of the emergency actions listed above, including delays, closings, or cancelations of our childcare or educational services.
- We ask that you not call our main line during the emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information.
- The facility director may provide an alternate phone number (i.e. cell phone number, etc.) to call in an emergency event.
- Only those listed on your Emergency Contact Form will be permitted to pick up your child

We realize that emergency circumstances may require changes to your plans, but we urge you to not attempt to make different arrangements if possible. This will enable a smoother execution of our emergency procedure, reduce confusion and allow our staff to focus on their assigned emergency duties.

In order to assure the safety of your children and our staff, we ask for your understanding and cooperation. Should you have additional questions regarding our emergency operating procedures, please don't hesitate to contact us.

DAILY ROUTINE

Parent Drop-Off / Pick-Up + Sign-In/Out

Drop-off/Pick-Up and sign-in/out takes place outside on our ramp. We ask that you call our center at 814-420-8362 upon arrival so a staff member can greet you and/or your child(ren) outside the entrance to our center, at the bottom of the ramp with the sign-in sheet (pens will be disinfected between each use). **If your child or anyone in your family is sick or exhibiting any symptoms of illness such as fever, cough, flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing, please keep your child home for the health and wellness of our staff and children.** For pick-up, please ensure you are pulled up to the Child Loading sign alongside the ramp. One child (or siblings) will be brought out at a time. If another parent is at the designated pick up spot at the end of the ramp, please pull behind them in line for pick-up. Once parked in the loading spot, please meet the staff member and your child(ren) at the end of the ramp. The staff member will have the sign-out sheet in hand for you to sign your child(ren) out.

Arrival + Admittance Into Our Center

All staff and children will be screened upon arrival. This will include having their temperature taken in addition to a visual inspection for signs of illness which could include fever, cough, flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing, fatigue, sore throat or extreme fussiness. Staff or children with a temperature over 100.0° or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted to the facility. All staff and children will wash their hands immediately before entering the care portion of our center. According to CDC Guidelines, all adults and children over 2 years *must* wear a cloth face covering or mask that covers nose and mouth. While we know this will be a challenging task, we do request that all children over 2 years of age have a mask to be left at our center so we can do our best to adhere to this guideline.

Items from Home

No items may be brought in from home except for your child's outerwear and shoes. If your child does not already have a blanket at our center, you may send one to be left at the center. Blankets (extra clothes, and masks) will be laundered at our center until further notice. **Backpacks, toys or bags of any kind will not be permitted.** Tablets may be sent if labeled with your child's name and given to a staff member upon arrival to be disinfected. It is recommended to leave a tablet at our center when possible. If there is anything that your child may need daily (such as a special cup, diapers/wipes, an extra outfit, etc.), please send extras labeled with your child's name to be kept at our center. Please see our seasonal handouts for items you will need to send in for your child as weather/seasons change.

Meals

Small Town Hope, Inc. provides meals based on CDC Guidance utilizing a dedicated staff member for meal preparation each day, ensuring meals are served individually rather than family-style, and with increased hand-washing before and after meals by all staff and children. Although we will continue to provide meals, packed meals are recommended (in disposable bags/containers rather than lunch boxes) to decrease sharing during mealtimes. Packed lunches will be refrigerated as needed.

Rest Time

All children in the childcare portion of our center participate in rest time daily following lunch. Rest time begins around 1:00pm and last until approximately 3:00pm. Children who nap will sleep at this time and older children are required to rest quietly during this period. We recommend sending a blanket/pillow/lovey for your child to help them relax and feel at home for our rest period. You may send a blanket/pillow/lovey to be left at our center. These items may not be taken home and returned until further notice. They will be washed here weekly and must be machine washable. Children from different households will be distanced by at least 6 feet (siblings by minimum mandated distance) during rest time so children will not need to wear masks during rest.

Toileting

Children wearing diapers are checked hourly and changed as needed. Please provide a supply of diapers/pull ups and a pack of wipes for us to keep on hand for your child. We aid in potty training stages and encourage you to communicate with us which toilet training procedures you are using at home so we can mirror those as much as possible at our center. Older children will have group bathroom breaks before and after snacks and meals and are permitted to use the restroom as needed throughout the day.

CHILD NUTRITION POLICY

Small Town Hope, Inc. implements the following Child Nutrition policy:

This policy provides guidance to support Small Town Hopes adoption of Go NAPSACC (www.gonapsacc.org) best practices related to child nutrition practices.

We at Small Town Hope are committed to providing healthy foods and beverages and positive mealtimes so that your child can learn good eating habits and grow up strong.

In order to meet the Go NAP SACC best practices, this policy is written and covers a variety of topics.

The Go NAP SACC child nutrition best practices help us to ensure that our policies, menus, and activities address:

- Foods provided to children
- Beverages provided to children
- Creating healthy mealtime environments
- Teacher practices to encourage healthy eating
- Not offering food to calm children or encourage appropriate behavior
- Planned an informal nutrition education for children
- Professional development for our staff on child nutrition
- Education for families on child nutrition
- Guidelines for foods offered during holidays and celebrations
- Fundraising with non-food items

FOODS AND BEVERAGES

- Children are offered a fruit and/or vegetable at every meal and snack.
- We do not serve fried foods, high fat meats, or vegetables cooked in fat.
- Sweets and salty snacks are offered once a month or less.
- We offer healthy beverages like milk and water.
- As documented in file, any food allergy is handled individually per child. Staff are aware and:
 - Prevent exposure to the specific food(s) to which the child is allergic
 - Recognize the symptoms of an allergic reaction
 - Treat allergic reactions appropriately

MEALTIMES

- Teachers and children eat meals together, family style, so that children can learn and practice table skills.
- Television and other screens are turned off so that teachers can talk with children about healthy habits and healthy foods, and check-in with them about hunger and fullness.
- Teachers never force or bribe children to eat any particular foods or to clean their plates.

CELEBRATIONS AND FUNDRAISERS

- Celebrations and fundraisers are focused on healthy foods and fun non-food items.
- We think healthy treats can be just as fun as cookies and cake. As such, we consider providing healthy treats or non-food items to help celebrate your child's birthday. Healthy treats include fruit salad, fruit or vegetables with dip, whole grain graham crackers or animal crackers, fig bars, low-fat pudding cups or yogurt, or 100% juice freezer pops.
- Some ideas for non-food treats are stickers, bubbles, and sidewalk chalk.

NUTRITION EDUCATION

- Children learn about food and eating each week through stories and activities.
- Each year all staff and teachers participate in professional development training and education sessions on healthy eating and nutrition topics at least annually. Staff do participate in professional development opportunities at other times throughout the year should they become available.

We are committed to providing healthy foods and beverages and positive mealtimes so that the children in our care can grow up healthy and strong. Because of this, teachers and staff are expected to:

- Serve meals family style and help children learn table skills (scooping, passing, manners, etc.).
- Create a pleasant meal environment by turning off screens and speaking positively about the foods being served.
- Model healthy eating by sitting with children at meals and eating and drinking the same foods that they do.
- Never use food as a reward, a punishment, or force children to try new foods or clean their plates.
- Include nutrition education in weekly lesson plans and use "teachable moments" to talk about healthy eating.
- Attend professional development on child nutrition each year.

INFANT & CHILD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY and OUTDOOR PLAY & LEARNING POLICY

Small Town Hope, Inc. implements the following Infant & Child Physical Activity and Outdoor Play & Learning policy: This policy provides guidance to support Small Town Hope's adoption of Go NAPSACC (www.gonapsacc.org) best practices related to Infant & Child Physical Activity and Outdoor Play & Learning. We at Small Town Hope are committed to providing physical activity and outdoor play and learning so that your child can learn about active play time, strengthening, and exercise to grow up healthy and strong.

The Go NAP SACC Infant & Child Physical Activity best practices recommend and addresses:

- Amount of time provided each day for indoor and outdoor physical activity
- Limiting long periods of seated time for children
- Shoes and clothes that allow children and teachers to actively participate in physical activity
- Classroom/provider practices that encourage physical activity
- Not taking away physical activity time or removing children from long periods of physically active playtime in order to manage challenging behaviors
- Planned and informal physical activity education
- Professional development for our staff on children's physical activity
- Education for families on children's physical activity

The Go NAP SACC Outdoor Play & Learning best practices recommend and addresses:

- Amount of outdoor playtime provided each day
- Ensuring adequate total playtime on inclement weather days
- Shoes and clothes that allow children and teachers to play outdoors in all seasons
- Safe sun exposure for children and providers
- Not taking away outdoor playtime in order to manage challenging behaviors
- Professional development for our staff on outdoor play and learning
- Education for families on outdoor play and learning.

CHILDREN'S INDOOR AND OUTDOOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physically active play is important for the health and development of all children. Our program is committed to providing children with opportunities to move throughout the day.

TIME

- We offer children 2 to 5 years old the opportunity to engage in 120 minutes of indoor and outdoor physical activity every day, and children 1 to 2 years old with at least 90 minutes. As weather allows, we strive to take children outside 3 times per day or more. We see the outdoors as an extension of the classroom, so children not only enjoy the outdoors through physically active play, but also through other learning activities. During heavy rain, icy conditions, poor air quality, or dangerous heat or cold, children will stay indoors. Throughout each day, we look for opportunities to keep children moving and limit the amount of time they are expected to remain seated.
- We offer tummy time to non-crawling infants at least 4 times per day. As weather allows, we strive to take infants outside two times per day or more so that they can enjoy the sights and sounds. To help infants build their strength and coordination, we limit the amount of time that infants spend in seats, swings, and Excer-Saucers.

We ask that families support our efforts by dressing children ready for play. This includes closed-toed shoes and clothing that is appropriate for the weather and allows children to comfortably run, jump, and climb, both indoors and out.

EQUIPMENT & ENVIRONMENT

We seek to provide a fun and challenging play space that encourages movement and learning. We provide a variety of play equipment (balls, jump ropes, tricycles, etc.), in good condition, both indoors and outdoors. Additionally, books and posters in our classrooms help to teach children about the importance of physical activity. Outdoors, shade is provided and children are given regular opportunities to drink water. Sunscreen is applied by staff members to the children's exposed face and skin areas prior to going outside for physical play. In addition, staff keep infants younger than six months out of direct sunlight or shade under a tree, umbrella, or the stroller canopy; and kids wear a hat or cap with a brim that faces forward to shield the face when outside.

SUPPORTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND OUTDOOR LEARNING

Teachers and staff actively encourage children’s physical activity during daily free play time, daily adult-led games and activities, and weekly lessons on gross motor skills like throwing, catching, and kicking.

We provide/participate in professional development education sessions on early childhood physical activity and outdoor play & learning twice a year. Additionally, we share information and tips in our parent newsletters to support children’s physical activity and enjoyment of the outdoors at home.

- Staff will participate in professional development opportunities at other times throughout the year should they become available.

ENCOURAGING CHILDREN’S ACTIVE PLAY INDOORS AND OUTDOORS

Physically active play is important for the health and development of all children. Our program is committed to providing children with opportunities to move throughout the day. Teachers and staff members are role models and leaders when it comes to getting children active.

Our teachers and staff members are expected to:

- wear shoes and clothing that allow for active participation in indoor and outdoor play with children;
- incorporate physical activity into classroom routines, transitions, and planned activities throughout the day, and use “teachable moments” to talk with children about the importance of physical activity;
- use the outdoors as an extension of the classroom by planning outdoor lessons, activities, and field trips;
- plan weekly lessons, indoors or outdoors, that help preschool children learn and practice gross motor skills (such as skipping, jumping, throwing, catching, kicking, balancing, stretching, etc.);
- take an active role to help children stay active during indoor and outdoor free play time, including verbally encouraging children’s activities, and when appropriate, joining in with children’s activities to encourage more movement;
- never manage challenging behavior by taking away scheduled or promised physical activity time or removing children from physically active playtime for more than a couple of minutes to “cool off”;
- talk with families about the ways our center is supporting children’s physical activity and gross motor skill development each time there is a good opportunity to do so.

To support our teachers and staff members, our program will provide:

- opportunities for professional development related to children’s physical activity and outdoor play and learning quarterly;
- a variety of toys, in good condition, both indoors and outdoors, to help encourage children’s physical activity.

FARM TO EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE) POLICY

Small Town Hope, Inc. implements the following FARM TO ECE policy:

This policy provides guidance to support Small Town Hope's adoption of Go NAPSACC (www.gonapsacc.org) best practices related to Farm to Early Care and Education. (ECE)

We at Small Town Hope are committed to providing healthy foods and beverages and positive mealtimes so that your child can learn good eating habits and grow up strong.

In order to meet the Go NAP SACC best practices, this policy is written and covers a variety of topics.

The Go NAPSACC Farm to ECE best practices help us to ensure that our policies, menus, and activities address:

- Importance of using local foods
- Types of local foods that are served and how often
- Our program's garden and expectations related to gardening
- Planned and informal gardening and nutrition education for children
- Professional development for our staff on Farm to ECE topics
- Education for families on Farm to ECE
- Activities that help connect families to local foods

COMMITMENT TO CHILD HEALTH AND NUTRITION

We are committed to child health and nutrition by providing healthy food grown nearby. Buying and teaching about local, healthy food can help children form healthy eating habits and support local farmers. Through our Farm to ECE program, we will:

- Offer a variety of local fruits, vegetables, herbs, grains, dairy products, and/or protein foods throughout the year.
- Offer local fruits and vegetables 3 times per week or more during the growing season of June through September.
- Offer children education about food and where it comes from. This includes tasting and cooking activities.
- Share information with families about local foods on the menu, children's learning activities, and ways to purchase and prepare local foods at home.
- Keep a garden that supports children's learning and grows fruits and/or vegetables for meals or snacks. Families are invited to help us plan and maintain the garden during weekend work days and other opportunities.
- Provide gardening time to preschool children 2 times per week or more. Children will help plan, plant, care for, harvest, and learn from the garden.
- Children may get dirty when gardening. We will let families know which days are gardening days for children. On these days, please send children to school in closed-toe shoes and clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.

HEALTHY FOODS GROWN NEARBY

We are committed to providing healthy food grown nearby to connect with local farmers and teach children more about food and how it grows. Eating and learning about local, healthy food can help children form healthy eating habits and support local farmers. Teachers and staff members are role models and leaders when it comes to children's healthy eating.

The Teachers and Staff of STH will:

- Offer planned education on food and where it comes from one time per week or more.
- During the growing season of June through September, we will offer cooking or taste test activities with fresh fruits or vegetables one time per week or more along with other planned food education.
- Lead children in structured gardening time two times per week or more; activities include planning, planting, weeding, watering, observing, harvesting, and others.
- Integrating farmer visits into annual experiences. This includes reviewing expectations with children ahead of time ahead of time, supervising children during the visit, and modeling how to be a respectful and interested learner.
- Use a variety of posters, pictures, books, and props that reflect the diversity of the program's children, families, and staff; expose children to people, foods, and cultures different from their own; and tell the stories of farmers and farmworkers of color.

All Teachers and Staff are expected to:

- Talk with children about food and where it comes from each time an opportunity is present.
- Participate in professional development education sessions on Farm to ECE topics one time per year or more. These can include: the benefits of local agriculture; local foods available in our area; preparing fresh, local foods; gardening with children; and classroom cooking, taste testing, or other food education.
- Talk with families about local foods on the menu, or children's food education or gardening activities at drop-off/pick up or other opportunities.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Volunteering

We welcome parent and family member involvement within our center at any time. Any parents or family member that wishes to participate or volunteer in any of our childcare or educational program settings on a regular (more than once) basis, must have all required clearances to have regular contact with the children in our center, including: FBI Criminal History Background Check (fingerprints), PA State Police Criminal Record Check, Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, National Sex Offender Registry Verification, and a valid health report with TB test results. We appreciate arrangements for visits/participation be made in advance with the director/teacher before the visit.

Pre-K Program Parent Participation Information

Parent-Child projects will be sent home occasionally to encourage parent participation in their child's preschool experience. Please take advantage of these fun opportunities to spend time together. Your child will be very proud to share what he/she made with you. Parents can look forward to monthly calendars sent home in their child's folder. These calendars highlight upcoming special days such as class parties, days off, fun themed days and they also communicate any special notes the teacher needs to share. Other important documents are posted on the bulletin board in the hallway and within the classroom near the sign-in area.

Parents are welcome to communicate via phone call, text, written note or email if they have any concerns or thoughts to share, but our preferred method of communication is our Class Dojo web application for which you will receive an invitation to join. Open communication is always encouraged and welcomed at Small Town Hope.

Parent Conferences

Parent Conferences for all services offered by Small Town Hope will be offered twice per year (in March and September) but may be requested at any time. At the end of the month prior to conferences, there will be a survey sent to parents via ClassDojo to schedule. Please sign up as soon as possible so we can accommodate all schedules. These conferences will also be announced via the Class Dojo web application.

CHILD ASSESSMENTS

Ages & Stages Questionnaire

Within 45 days of enrollment in any aspect of our center, an evidence-based child development screening tool will be sent home to be completed by the parent(s) of each child (and also completed by the center). We currently use the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) to provide accurate, reliable developmental and social-emotional screening results. While we complete these assessments in our classroom, we do request parents complete them at home to help provide the most accurate results and compare what our families are seeing at home vs. what our caregivers see in the classroom.

Results of these screening tools will be shared with parents after scoring to determine if any resources for follow-up, monitoring, or further assessment is needed to encourage your child's development and pinpoint any developmental delays as soon as possible.

If a child's score in any area of development is close to the cut off, we will work with your child and give you some tips for ways to help him or her develop at home. If your child's score in any area of development is below the cutoff, we will recommend connection to appropriate Early Intervention Services in our area. We will work with you and support you through the process and your child will have the opportunity to receive therapeutic services through selected Early Intervention Program if deemed necessary.

IFSP OR IEP IN THE CLASSROOM

As stated in our Mission / Inclusion Statement, Small Town Hope supports children of all abilities being enrolled alongside peers in the same classrooms, including any child with an IFSP or IEP. An IFSP or IEP is protected health information and is not required to be shared with Small Town Hope, however, to fully support care for the child, we suggest that the IFSP or IEP paperwork be shared with the program in order to help develop lesson plans that support that child's individual development.

Small Town Hope currently works hand-in-hand with the Appalachia Intermediate Unit 8 and other developmental programs to provide a place where services may be offered to any child of our center (i.e. speech therapy, therapeutic staff support, or behavioral health consultations).

TRANSITION BETWEEN SERVICES

Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope (Childcare)

When your child is at a transitional age to move to another group/classroom within our facility or becomes eligible to participate in one of our educational programs, you will receive a letter outlining options available (or if just transitioning within a different classroom, any changes in your child's daily schedule).

At this time you will have the option to visit with us and ask any questions regarding any changes your child may experience. Specific transitional changes within Small Town Hope are as follows:

Small Town Hope Tod Pod Educational Program

Older Toddler – Preschool Child: Once your child turns 3, they will become eligible to participate in our Tod-Pod (“Pre - Preschool”) Educational Program. At this time, you will receive information on the program and have the option to enroll your child in the following school year and be provided with information on policies and tuition (paid separately from our childcare services). All families enrolled in our childcare center receive first available spots in our Tod-Pod program before any spots are open to the public.

Depending on your child's level of interest and dependent upon available spots, your child may be placed in the program mid-school year. Availability of this option will be discussed with you during your child's transition and any pre-requisites for the program (i.e. toileting status) will be reviewed.

Small Town Hope Pre-K Educational Program

Preschool Child age 3 – age 4: Once your child becomes eligible to participate in our Pre-K program, you will receive information regarding the program, its policies, and tuition (paid separately than our childcare services) and receive first available spot to enroll your child in the following school year if desired. **Since all of our spots fill up quickly for the school year, please keep a look out for a handout in late winter/early spring of the previous school year for a form requesting your interest level for enrolling your child in one of our programs the following academic year; we do not offer the option to enroll mid-school year for our Pre-K Program.**

Small Town Hope School Age Childcare Services

Preschool age 4 – Young School age (Kindergartener): At the beginning of the school year, the teacher will assess each student's knowledge of basic content such as colors, numbers, letters, etc. and record her findings. The teacher will assess students at least two additional times and share the results with the child's parents so that they may see their child's progress (class work and projects are not graded).

Students who complete the entire school year will receive a certificate of completion and be honored in a graduation ceremony. If after completing the end-of-year assessment (and the child is 5 years old and eligible to enter Kindergarten the following school year) the teacher feels he/she is NOT ready academically, the teacher will request a meeting with to discuss options and thoughts on transition.

Once your child completes our Pre-K program and has completed the end-of-year assessment proving readiness to transition to Kindergarten, we will provide information to you regarding how to arrange for before/after school (“Wrap Around Care”) within Small Town Hope and how we can continue to meet your childcare needs.

Young School age – Self Care: One of our goals at Small Town Hope is to help transition each child during major milestones in their childhood – even when that means transitioning out of the need for our childcare services. One of the activities we strive to work on during allotted time with our after school kids is to complete activities and worksheets from Kids in Control: A Kid's Guide to Being Responsible. Our goal is that by the time your child has outgrown the need for after-school (or daily summer) care (typically around 3rd – 4th grade), they have gained sufficient knowledge through our services to be confident to care for themselves safely and responsibly.

RECOGNIZING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

In accordance with Caring for our Children Health and Safety Basics: 3.4.4.1 Recognizing and Reporting Suspected Child Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation, because all caregivers/teachers/administrators of Small Town Hope are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect, in any instance where there is reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred, the individual who suspects child abuse or neglect will report directly to the child abuse reporting hotline, child protective services, or the police, as required by state and local laws.

DISCIPLINE / SUSPENSION / EXPULSION POLICY

The staff at Hope's Villa Children's Center of Small Town Hope strive to use positive reinforcement as a primary source of discipline (sticker charts, rewards, prizes, etc.), though we recognize that children often struggle with frustrating emotions as the use of a Quiet Time to recollect thoughts and emotions is also employed as needed when excessive disruptive behavior is being demonstrated. During this Quiet Time, staff will sit with the child and help them reflect on their emotions and try coping behaviors to calm.

Examples of positive reinforcement are sticker charts, prize box, and bonus fun activities for good behavior. A periodic behavior report will be sent home in each child's folder beginning with Preschool to notify parents of their child's behavior. In the case that many consecutive behavior reports show that the child is struggling to follow rules, the teacher may contact the parent to discuss the matter. Small Town Hope staff members desire to work as a team with parents to help every child succeed. Each day is seen as a clean slate and a chance to try again.

Please see below for information on chronic disruptive behaviors and our I Can Stay Safe Policy.

I Can Stay Safe Policy:

At Small Town Hope, Inc., safety is most important and although we cannot prevent all boo boos we can limit them!

If the safety of your child or another child is at risk due to the behaviors of your child, you will be notified through a Class Dojo message. Behaviors that may place children at risk are aggression that leads to harming another child or one of our teachers.

If the number of notifications for behavioral events in one day reaches 3, your child will need to be picked up. We work very hard to provide an awesome day for each child under our roof. If we aren't kind to our friends, we can't be awesome. If your child has been sent home due to behavioral incidents 3 times, Small Town Hope, Inc. will proceed with the steps outlined below regarding children displaying chronic disruptive behavior.

We want to keep your child safe and value your partnership on this matter.

Children displaying chronic disruptive behavior which is upsetting to the physical or emotional wellbeing of another child or staff member will complete following actions:

1. Parents of the child will be called in for a conference. We will discuss the issues and identify some possible solutions. A plan of action will be developed and agreed upon by the parents, staff, and if applicable, a health/behavioral specialist.
2. After 1 month or sooner if disruptive behaviors are excessive or at risk of harming a child or staff, the parents will be called in for another meeting.
 - a. If progress is being made, plans will remain in place and revisited in two weeks.
 - b. If no progress has been made towards solving the problematic behavior, Small Town Hope, Inc. will refer the child for service through the Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Program (IECMH) or Early Intervention services through the Appalachia Intermediate Unity 8. The family will have one week to sign the Parent/Facility Agreement for Small Town Hope, Inc. to submit the Request for Services. Once assigned to a consultant, a member of Small Town Hope and the child's family will meet with the consultant to develop a behavior plan and/or IEP as appropriate. If the child's behaviors are putting other children or staff at risk of injury, a Safety Plan will be developed with support from the IECMH and/or Early Intervention Consultant.
3. If the behavior plan developed has not produced progress within one month, the family will be referred to outside behavioral health services. Before the child would be suspended or expelled from care, the family will be given one week to seek behavioral support. A list of outside services can be found on our website at www.smalltownhope.org/communityresources.

It is a belief of Small Town Hope to support OCDEL's ideology that suspension and expulsion does nothing to teach appropriate behavior and denies children the opportunity to access the benefits of an early childhood program, so before any child in our program would be suspended or expelled, we will contact OCDEL at 1-800-360-7282 to report any child at high-risk for suspension or expulsion to receive individualized support.

For more information, please request to see a copy of OCDEL's Announcement: Reduction of Expulsion and Suspension in Early Childhood Programs in Pennsylvania