

Family Handbook

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Welcome to The Family Garden!

A year round non-profit childcare for children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years.

Our History

The Family Garden Inc. opened in Brattleboro, VT on March 22, 2004. The Family Garden is a family-style early care and education center serving the needs of children ranging in age from six weeks through five years. Family Style early care and education programs do not have an “infant room,” a “toddler room,” or even a “preschool.” We believe children grow and learn best with a low teacher to child ratio, within a diverse age group and with the same educator throughout their early childhood lives.

Our Mission

Here at The Family Garden, we believe that children grow and learn best when they feel secure and have a feeling of belonging. Therefore, we at The Family Garden provide a caring, comfortable and safe environment by establishing routines that are predictable and consistent, as well as treating all children equally with gentleness, honesty and respect. We will encourage children to treat their peers in the same manner.

We offer an emergent curriculum and we strive to enhance social, emotional, physical and cognitive growth in our children. The Family Garden fosters curiosity, independence, creativity and self-esteem by taking into account individuals’ abilities and interests. Our child initiated and teacher supported play is an essential component of our program.

We are an all inclusive school and provide equal opportunities for learning and education to all children regardless of race, creed, sex, religion, national origin, or physical condition

Our Philosophy/Curriculum

Family style early care and education can also be said to be attachment-style early care and education. The Family Garden believes that secure attachments are the foundation for healthy development: mixed age groupings and a low teacher to child ratio are ways in which we strive to foster those strong connections.

Multi-aged programming and small group numbers provide a perfect setting for social and emotional development. Children will have many and on-going opportunities to interact with a diverse community, helping to care for younger children and developing negotiating skills with

older children. Teachers are best able to talk through tough social situations when there are fewer numbers of children and they are at different developmental stages.

The Family Garden has a general schedule which may vary based on the program developed by the teachers and the season. The schedules provide a balance of active and quiet play, adult directed and child directed play, indoor and outdoor play while balancing the social, emotional, physical and cognitive needs of each child.

Children learn by trying, doing, being frustrated, observing, and interacting. The teachers at The Family Garden facilitate experiences for the children to learn in the above mentioned ways as well as through role modeling and supervising the interactions among the children.

Finally, we "do not for a child what a child can do for him/herself". We strongly encourage the development of age appropriate self-help skills and appropriate language for social interactions. These important skills are taught through the modeling of both the teachers and the older children.

Our Beliefs

We believe it is important for all teachers to be well educated in the field of child development. Combined, we have many years of higher education and experiences, hundreds of hours of training, and an extensive knowledge of children.

The Family Garden employees are here because we want to be. We are committed to working together as a team, keeping in mind the best interests of our co-workers and our enrolled families.

The Family Garden Believes:

Social/Emotional development is at the center of the early care and education agenda.

- Teachers do validate and label all feelings, even uncomfortable ones like angry, sad, disappointed, frustrated, etc. It is okay to feel how and what one feels.
- Negative behaviors are opportunities to guide positive growth
- Teachers are not the "child police" waiting to catch "bad" behavior. We praise and highlight appropriate behavior, good choices, progress, and success.
- Timeouts are the exception, not the rule
- Teachers use supervision and positive guidance techniques, preferring the term "taking space" rather than "timeout".

Children are easily influenced by labels given and opinions of adults

- Teachers keep their personal negative views about the world and the creatures in it to themselves
- Bodily functions are a normal part of life. Teachers address “messy” and “life-y” situations with calm, loving kindness and acceptance.

All parents want to do well by their children. How Parents do this may differ from our approach

- It is our role to support and educate parents positively without judgement
- Teachers respect parents’ wishes and choices made for their child/ren regarding food choices, potty training and sleeping.
- Comments are never made in front of other parents or over the heads of children.

Teachers are in the early care and education field because they choose to be

- Teachers have a passion and find pleasure in working with children.
- When feeling burned out or exhausted, teachers seek out appropriate avenues for wellness (rest, relaxation, refreshment for all levels of self).

Children need to be given opportunities for experiences their bodies crave

- Children need to run, jump, and climb, testing and challenging their bodies and the world around them.
- It is the job of the teachers to “spot” them and allow for natural consequences.

Board of Directors

The Family Garden is governed by a Board of Directors, which is composed of parents and community members. The Board is responsible for the hiring of the Director to oversee and implement these policies as well as assisting the Director as needed. Board members meet once every 3 months. Parents who are interested in becoming a part of our Board of Directors are encouraged to contact the Director for more information.

Admission & Tuition Policies

The Family Garden is open to the public on a first come, first serve basis. We accept children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years until our classrooms reach their capacity. The remainder of applicants will be placed on our wait list.

Prior to the child's start date, The Family Garden requires all paperwork to be completed, as well as a \$100.00 registration fee. This money is strictly used for program development, and is not applicable to tuition. Any family that qualifies for financial assistance will be

exempt from this fee. The Family Garden also suggests at least one family visit prior to start date, as we believe that visiting and meeting the teachers is an important first step in your child’s adjustment to a new situation.

The Family Garden accepts students of any race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin in administration of its policies.

The Family Garden is an inclusive child care, enrolling children of all developmental abilities, disabilities, and special needs. The Family Garden collaborates closely with community resources to provide children with the individual instruction they may need to grow in all areas of their development; social, emotional, physical, and cognitive. The Family Garden uses the Ages and Stages questionnaire at least every six months to gauge student’s development throughout the program.

Scheduling

The Family Garden believes that consistency is very important for young children. For that reason, we require a minimum enrollment of two full-time days for each child to fully benefit from our program. The Program provides three different time slots for families, 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM, 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, or 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM. The Family Garden also has the option for extended hours if needed (tuition will be adjusted). Rates will be adjusted for the week following the child’s birthday.

Tuition Rates (based on 8.5 hours/day, \$20/day fee for extended)

Age	Infant (6 weeks to 2 years)	2-3 Years	3-5 Years
Daily	\$94.20	\$88.60	\$87.80
Daily Extended Hours	\$114.20	\$108.60	\$107.80
Weekly	\$471	\$443	\$439
Weekly Extended Hours	\$571	\$543	\$539

There will be no deductions or make up days for holidays, in-service days, snow days, family vacations, children’s sick

days, and any other day the center is closed or a child is out but scheduled to be here.

If you receive VT State Child Care Financial Assistance/Subsidy, it is your responsibility to keep your certificate current and to make any co-payments owed to the school. If your VT State Child Care Financial Assistance/Subsidy ends you are responsible for any back payment not covered.

Each family must sign a financial agreement before their child may attend.

* Please note that every child is different and a large group setting may not meet the individual needs of your child. As we build a relationship with your child we will work closely with you to support your child's success within our group setting. We are dedicated to working with you to create a transition plan that will be individualized for your child, should one be needed. It is important to remember that your child's ability to transition within the schedule and with the group is vital to our program's success. Guidance is designed to meet the individual needs of children, yet this does not mean that your child is given a staff member to support them in a 1:1 capacity for the majority of the day. Staff are needed to support the whole group.

Late Payments

As a non-profit program, we rely heavily on tuition to keep our program operating. Your weekly tuition payments are needed to purchase supplies, pay staff and to pay for various expenses such as insurance, taxes, telephone, photocopies, etc. It is vital that your tuition is paid promptly at the beginning of each week to keep our school running smoothly. If tuition is not paid for two consecutive weeks, a written notice will be sent to you and the Board of Directors. If tuition is not paid, your child will not be able to attend until the balance due is paid in full, you will also be responsible for any tuition accrued while your child is out.

Withdrawal/Schedule Changes

Once you have signed your financial agreement and your child is attending, your contract is in effect. Withdrawals and changes in schedules directly affect the revenue of our school. **TWO WEEKS' WRITTEN NOTIFICATION IS REQUIRED BEFORE WITHDRAWAL.** If your payments are not current any remaining tuition is subject to small claims.

While we understand some changes are unforeseeable, we cannot guarantee that changes can be made in schedules after enrollment begins. Requests for adding or dropping days must be submitted in writing to the Director who will then decide based on time of year, availability of openings and whether there is a waiting list.

Hours of Operation

The Family Garden is a year round program. Our hours of operation are 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday and we base our tuition off of an 8.5 hour day. We offer extended hours for an additional \$20 a day. It is vital that you follow your scheduled time slot as we staff accordingly. If you arrive before your scheduled time, without speaking to the Director prior, you

may be asked to wait with your child until their contracted time. The Family Garden also charges a late pick-up fee of \$20.00 for up to 15 minutes late and an additional \$1/per minute after will be charged to those picking up after their child's contracted time. We are a non-discriminatory program that respects each child's family culture. The Family Garden will send home a questionnaire with enrollment paperwork to learn more about your family's culture.

Attendance

Our Program is currently using the Brightwheel App. Staff will sign your children in upon arrival. It is important to let us know as soon as possible when your child will be absent, arrive late, leave early or when someone else is picking your child up.

If a child does not attend for 5 consecutive days and we have not received notice that they would be absent, we reserve the right to give the space away to another family. Families are expected to continue paying tuition for the time their child does not attend, and as long as tuition is paid in advance, your spot will not be given away. However, if tuition is not paid in advance and the child is not in attendance, your space will be considered vacated.

Drop Off & Pick Up Procedure

Each child must be walked into school by a parent or guardian and brought to their classroom to meet their teachers. They should inform the teachers of who will be picking up. Parents should guide their child to their cubbies and assist with hand washing (VT State Regulation- 5.2.1). We would appreciate it if you would allow a few extra minutes in the morning to update the staff with any significant information about your child's schedule, routine, physical or emotional well-being so that we can best meet the needs of your child.

Children must be dropped off by 9:30 AM, unless previously discussed and approved by the Director. Arriving after 9:30 AM without previous approval may result in being turned away until the following day.

Drop off time can often be difficult for families. This is normal! Transitions can be difficult for children, especially when it means their beloved family member is going to leave. Teachers at The Family Garden are prepared for a range of emotions when a child is dropped off for the day. Do not feel bad for us– it is our job to help children through transitions. Children generally recover quickly after their parent/guardian has left. It is ALWAYS okay for parents/guardians to call or message through Brightwheel to check in after a rough drop off. The following are some drop off guidelines that have worked for families in the past.

- **Never sneak out!** Your relationship with your child is very important. Sneaking out can build distrust and excessive worry in a child
- **Check your own feelings about the separation.** Children can easily read the underlying feelings of adults. If you are worried or anxious about the separation, your body language is telling your child as well, therefore, be as up-beat/positive as possible.

- **From the start, develop a drop off routine.** The routine can be as short or as long as you wish, so long as you are consistent. An example may be putting your child's things away with your child, reading a book and saying the same goodbye, "I will be back, I love you and goodbye".
- **Leave confidently, do not hesitate.**

If someone besides a parent will be picking up your child, you must list their name on the Admission Form. Individuals picking up should bring a photo ID. We will NOT release a child to an adult who is not on the Admission Form without your written and dated consent. You may update your Admission Form whenever needed. If both parents are included in the enrollment paperwork, regardless of any change in marital/relationship status, a parent cannot be deleted from a pick-up list or denied access to a child without documented court authorization. A copy of any court authorized documents regarding custodial changes or restrictions must be submitted to the Director before staff will be allowed to enforce changes.

Late Fees

It is important that families stick to their pick-up contract time. Not only because we schedule our staff according to children's attendance, but a consistent pick-up time can be very helpful/important to many children.

Call the school if you are running late so the teachers can let your child know.

Please know that the teachers will focus on making any late pick-up experience relaxed and positive for your child.

The Process The Family Garden follows is as follows:

*"LATE" will be written in Brightwheel so that those picking up will know that they are late.

*There will be a **\$20.00 fee charged** to the parents/guardians of the child for pick-up after 15 minutes.

*A fee will be added to the initial \$20.00: \$1/per minute after the first 15 minutes until the child is picked up.

Payment

*When someone picks up a child 5 minutes after contract time they will be handed a Late Slip that the teachers will ask them to sign. It will indicate the pick-up time and how much the late fee will be.

*The late fee can be paid immediately by putting the payment along with the "late-slip" in the tuition box, located by the front entrance.

*Parents can also pay the fee within one week by putting the payment in the tuition box.

Communication (VT State Regulation- 4.4.1)

*Any messages from school to home are placed on the child's cubby as needed or sent through Brightwheel. Parents/guardians are responsible for collecting these messages. Staff greet parents/guardians during arrival and departure; brief exchanges of information that are non-confidential may be exchanged at this time. Confidential or lengthier conversations may be arranged for a later date with the Director.

*Infant Information will be kept on individual Brightwheel profiles that the family can view each day and will record such information as a child's daily intake of bottles/food, diapering details, any sleep that occurred, disposition and daily events.

*Teachers post weekly updates of what they worked on and activities they did on their Private *Facebook* Pages.

*Conferences are available at any time at the request of the parent/guardian. However, the Staff will offer scheduled conferences when we do our ASQ Assessments. These may be held by telephone or ZOOM. Every effort is made to hold a conference at the school with all parents/guardians attending. Special arrangements will be made, as necessary.

We have a main Resource Board with yearly schedules, school events, community events and community resource information. Please check it regularly. We will also post information on our classroom Facebook group pages. Please request to join your child's class and we will add you to our page

Off-Site Activities

The Family Garden will go on frequent walks during the year. Written permission is required from the parent or guardian for your child to participate in these walks. A minimum ratio of 1 adult to 4 children will be maintained during the walks and we require at least 2 adults at all times.

Personal Belongings

Each child's personal space is limited. Please refrain from allowing your child to bring toys or personal items from home. Items from home create jealousy and tension between children at times. Please speak with the Director with any questions regarding this policy.

Weapons, toys with weapons or toys that are violent in nature are not allowed at The Family Garden.

At least one complete extra change of clothing for your child must always remain at school. Appropriate outerwear for outdoor play (snow pants or snowsuits, waterproof mittens/gloves, hats, and boots for winter months) are necessary. During the fall/spring months please dress your children in sneakers and rubber boots, but not sandals. Sandals are not safe for running and playing on the playground.

Daily Item Checklist (Items May Also Be Left At School)

- Morning Snack (Two Options)
- Afternoon Snack (Two Options)
- Lunch
- Water Bottle
- Breast Milk or Formula (For Infants)
- Comfort Items (Blanket or Lovey If Needed)
- Clothes That Can Get Dirty
- Diapers, Wipes, Creams, Other Diapering Necessities
- Extra Clothes (For various weather conditions and other changes that may occur)
- Sunscreen/Bug Spray

PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHING!

Daily Routine

Our day will generally follow the outlined schedule, but may vary depending on children and the age of the group.

7:30 to 9:00 - Arrival/Free Play

9:00 to 9:30 - Snack

9:30 to 10:00 - Art

10:00 to 11:15 - Outside

11:15 to 11:30 - Quiet Time

11:30 to 12:00 - Lunch

12:00 to 2:30 - Nap/Rest Time

2:30 to 3:00 - Snack

3:00 to 5:00 - Outside/Activities/Free Play/Departure

Underlying Themes and Basic Skills

Physical:

1. Body Health, Nutrition and Hygiene
2. Movement; fine and gross motor
3. Body awareness
4. Eye /hand coordination
5. Spatial awareness and visual discrimination
6. Self Control

Emotional:

1. Feelings
2. Expression of Feelings
3. Self Esteem
4. Self Concept- Who am I in the world?
5. Self Control
6. Effective Expression
7. Same and Different

Social:

1. Sharing
2. Group participation
3. Resolution of conflicts
4. Problem Solving
5. Cooperation
6. Turn taking

Intellectual (As developmentally appropriate):

1. Naming basic colors
2. Naming basic shapes

3. Recognition of basic colors
4. Recognition of basic shapes
5. Number concepts 1-20
6. Communication skills
7. Recognizing written name
8. Writing of name
9. Letters and letter recognition

* The Family Garden uses an emergent curriculum, which is curriculum planning based on the student's and teacher's interest and passions. We set themes that are developmentally appropriate and exciting for both children and teachers; however, we may not follow through on a theme if the children lose interest in it. We may also cut themes short or extend themes based on current interests and passions.

Guidance and Discipline Policy

Behavior Guidance Policy

Many children are experiencing school for the first time upon entering The Family Garden. As children begin to interact in a group setting challenging behaviors, such as yelling, grabbing, hitting, etc. are likely to occur. To maximize a positive environment for all our children, and to minimize the possibility of inappropriate behavior, The Family Garden has developed a progressive guidance plan. Our staff is prepared to use the following discipline techniques:

Individual Management

The foundation of this plan is based on a developmental program that reduces the possibility of inappropriate behaviors:

- **Reasonable Expectations**
- **Developmentally Appropriate Practice** - Teachers will not expect children to do things they are not cognitively, socially, or emotionally ready to do.
- **Special Needs** - Our teachers are familiar with an individual child's special needs and the appropriate techniques needed to work with that child.
- **Activity** - Children will have interesting, challenging, appropriate things to do and adequate materials to do them.
- **Modeling** - Our teachers will model appropriate behavior.

- **Supervision** - Ratios are maintained and each child's health and safety are protected.
- **Reinforcement** - Teachers reinforce appropriate behavior.
- **Redirection** - Teachers will offer alternatives to children engaged in undesirable behavior.

Verbal Intervention

- Anticipation of behavior and intercession BEFORE the problem occurs.
- Encouragement and assistance in using words to solve the problem
- Explain expectations of acceptable behavior
- Use of phrases such as:
 - "I need you to..."
 - "In this school you may..."
 - "Hitting your friend is not OK. You can tell him that you don't like what he's doing."
- Use techniques that encourage the Child to be the problem solver:
 - "Use your words..."
 - "I see you're working it out... let me know if I can help."
 - "I wonder how you'll solve this problem?"
- Redirection Approach again

Logical Consequences

- Use of adult proximity to help child find his/her own self-control
- The teacher helps the child understand the logical consequences of his/her actions by removing an object, activity, etc. that is causing the problem.

On rare occasions, if a child becomes physically, emotionally, or verbally abusive to the other children or teachers and is not responsive to the efforts of the staff, as mentioned above, to stop the behavior they will be given one warning. If the behavior continues, the parent will be called, and the child will need to be picked up immediately and removed for the remainder of the day. If this procedure does not resolve the behavior, other action may need to be considered; this would be discussed and determined by the Director and parent. If parents and director are unable to

resolve a disciplinary issue, it will be brought to the Board of Directors for discussion to determine the appropriate course of action. Following a significant incident involving the health and safety of any child, a child may be unable to attend school until the board is able to meet, create and offer an action plan.

In response to any unacceptable behavior, staff members WILL NOT use the following discipline measures:

- Corporal punishment (hitting, striking)
- Restraint -unless necessary to protect the child or others
- Sarcasm
- Ridicule
- Humiliation
- Isolation
- Any method that may damage the child's self-esteem

Expulsion Policy

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know that we will do everything possible to work with the family of the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may expel or suspend a child from this center.

Immediate Causes for Expulsion:

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children, staff or themselves.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions towards staff members.
- Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff or others in front of enrolled children.

Parental Actions for Child's Expulsion:

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments.
- Failure to complete required forms including child immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child(ren).
- Verbal abuse to staff or others in The Family Garden community.

Child's Actions for Expulsion:

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
- Ongoing verbal or physical abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.

Prior to expulsion, a parent will be called and correspondence will be sent home indicating what the situation is, and every effort will be made by both the center and the parent to correct the situation. If, after one or two weeks, depending on the risk to the other children's welfare or safety, behavior does not improve, and the center finds that they can no longer accommodate the child, the parent will be asked to remove them. The parent will be given a minimum of one week's notice to find another center to provide care for this child.

Emergencies

Locked Doors

The doors at The Family Garden will be locked at 9:30 AM and will remain locked while the students are inside. You may gain entrance by ringing the doorbell at the main entrance and having a staff member open the door.

Emergency Situations - General

In the event of an emergency, such as a natural disaster, fire, evacuation, etc., staff will begin calling the first parent on their classroom list with a set of instructions such as a pick-up location. If this parent cannot be contacted, then they should proceed to the next family and circle back.

See our Emergency Response Plan Handbook which is a detailed plan as to what will take place in different emergency situations.

Evacuation Drills (VT State Regulation 3.7.2.2)

Evacuation drills are an exercise developed to help children learn what to do in case of an emergency. We practice evacuation drills monthly. When the alarm goes off, the children leave the building out the nearest door of their classroom. We teach the children to walk, not run, to the nearest exit and continue to walk to a predetermined area for the roll call and a head count. The predetermined areas are the front sidewalk, the back gate of our playground, the West Brattleboro Fire Station, shelter-in-place/safe room- bathroom or basement. The children and staff return to the building only after receiving the "all clear" from the teacher in charge. Children can wear hard-soled slippers to school, but please refrain from soft-soled slippers; they will not keep your child's feet dry during a drill in January.

The Family Garden Evacuation Procedure:

- Remove all children to predetermined area in an orderly fashion.

- Teachers take their classroom emergency backpack with red emergency contact folder and first aid kit.
- Take attendance.
- Remain in this place until instructed to return to school by proper authority.
- If the front sidewalk or back gate are not a safe evacuation spot, children will be taken to the congregation church, located across the street. The Director will determine this.
- Lead Teachers will begin to notify parents.

Access to The Family Garden and Records (VT State Regulation 3.4.4.6)

Parents/guardians have free access to The Family Garden during regular school hours without prior notice, we call this an OPEN-DOOR policy. Parents/guardians may review written records concerning their children at any time as long as it does not interfere with the class in session. Copies will be made available upon request. Written records will be kept on the premises of the school during school hours and are inaccessible to anyone other than staff members. Written permission from the parent/guardian is required for anyone else to review these files.

Confidentiality

The Family Garden and its employees have both an ethical and legal obligation to respect the privacy of our families. All written records are held in strictest confidence. All verbal exchanges between parents/guardians and staff members are held in strict confidence. Written permission is required for any sharing of confidential information. Written permission is required for the release of addresses, telephone numbers and/or e-mail addresses.

Grievance Procedure

If you have a concern or problem, please speak to the teacher directly involved. If you are not satisfied, please speak to the Director. If you are still not satisfied, please speak to the President of the Board of Directors. If you are still not satisfied, you can call the State Licensing Division at 1-800-649-2642 ext 3.

Relationships Outside The Family Garden

In order to avoid any conflict among The Family Garden Community, the following policies are in place, unless a waiver is signed stating that The Family Garden is not liable for any issues that may occur.

- Employees may not babysit or nanny for families of The Family Garden, nor can they take them home for “play-dates”.
- Employees may not transport any family’s children in a personal vehicle.

- Families and staff children may only have “play-dates” when both parents and staff are present. (Children cannot be left alone with one or the other).
- No other personal or working relationship may exist between employees and families. (ie lawyer, mechanic, etc...)

If a friendship, romantic relationship or business relationship existed PRIOR to a parent becoming a Family Garden client, the relationship may continue even though both parties are involved with the company.

Illness Policy (VT State Regulation 5.3.3, 5.3.3.1, 5.3.3.3)

To keep everyone as healthy as possible, children may not attend when they show one or more of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100 or more within 24 hours of arrival
- Vomiting within 24 hours of arrival
- Two or more loose bowel movements
- Excessively thick and runny nose
- Discharge from ears
- Unidentifiable skin rashes with fever
- Severe cough or cold
- Too ill to participate in usual daily activities.
- Any contagious illness, including but not limited to Hand, Foot, and Mouth, chicken pox, impetigo, conjunctivitis, head lice (no nit), pinworms, and strep throat.

Infectious diseases, such as Hand, Foot, and Mouth, or Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) are highly contagious. We do our best to keep children at school as much as possible.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): Due to how contagious pinkeye is, we will need to exclude children with red, goopy eyes. Once children are on medicated drops for 24 hours or eyes clear up, they will be allowed to return as long as they don't have any other symptoms, such as a fever.

Hand, Foot and Mouth: This is also a very contagious virus. Children will be sent home as soon as possible, at first sign of fever or spots on hands, feet, diaper area and/or mouths. Children mouth toys and touch multiple surfaces a day, which causes the virus to spread very fast. Children need to stay out until fever free for 24 hours without the use of medication, or signs of spots. In order to return all spots must be healed/scabbed over. Any child with oozing or

blistering anywhere on their body will be asked to stay home, or will be sent home if noticed while here.

If your child becomes ill, while at school you will be called and asked to pick your child up. Your child may not return to school until the symptoms or signs are treated and the child is symptom-free for 24 hours.

Written permission from your child's physician is required before we can give any prescription medicine. Medicine must be in its original container with the child's name on it. We need written permission to administer over-the-counter medication at any time.

If you are not sure if you should bring your child to school, please call, and talk to a staff member about your child's symptoms and they will discuss what is best for your child and the other children at the school.

In some circumstances, a child may experience a particular symptom more often than what is typical (ex: has diarrhea several times per week). If a parent/guardian feels that this is not related to a true illness and is just something that their child experiences more often than most children, the parent/guardian should obtain a note written and signed by their child's doctor. The note must clearly state that the symptom is not related to an illness of any kind and is not contagious in any way. The note should also state if there are specific symptoms to watch out for that would then indicate that the child *might* be ill, ie, that the symptom (along with others) may indicate an illness.

The staff at The Family Garden recognizes that it can be a burden for a parent/guardian when their child is sick. This means that the parent/guardian must miss work or other scheduled plans in their day, which may result in some loss of pay. We, at The Family Garden, try to look at it from a community-wide perspective as well as from the center as a whole. When children come into our center with an illness, the risk of the other children and/or staff catching the illness grows the longer they are here interacting with everyone. When staff become affected by the illness they are having to stay home, which may cause us to not be in ratio and need to close down rooms/our center per our licensing policy. This leaves families without childcare and employees without staff. This is a situation that we have encountered, and want to do all we can to keep it from happening, which is why we try to keep exposure time to a minimum by asking you to keep your child home for illnesses.

Immunization Requirements

Each child is required to have an immunization record on file at The Family Garden as mandated by the State of Vermont. We need these updated as changes are made. The immunization form must attest that the child has been immunized in accordance with the schedule of immunization determined by the Vermont Department of Health, or a statement that attests that the child has not been immunized because to do so would interfere with the child's or family's moral or religious beliefs.

Inclement Weather Closings

The Family Garden will follow the snow days or cancellations of the WSESU public school system. When public schools are delayed 2 hours, our school will open at 10:00am. Public school cancellations/delays are announced over local radio stations; WTSA 96.7 FM/WKVT 92.7 FM/WKNE 103.7 FM. The Family Garden's name may not be said, however if the WSESU is closed then so is The Family Garden. We make every effort to announce school closings by 6:30am.

Child Abuse and Neglect Policy (VT State Regulation 3.3)

In accordance with State Law and Regulation, as well as responsible Early Childhood Practices, it is the policy of The Family Garden to report all instances of child abuse and/or neglect as soon as there is reasonable cause to believe that abuse or neglect has occurred.

Once a staff person believes that abuse or neglect may have occurred, they are to communicate this to the Director. Once the Director has been notified, the staff person must contact the Department for Children and Families, Division of Family Services, 1 800-649-5285 and make a report of the suspected abuse/neglect.

It is also the policy of The Family Garden to:

- Ensure that all staff are informed of this policy and of their duty, as mandated reporters; to report abuse or neglect, as well as the fact that failure to report can result in a fine of up to \$500.
- Conduct a background check including fingerprinting- all staff at the time of initial employment as to whether the person has ever been convicted of abuse or neglect.
- Provide staff with training as to the prevention and identification of abuse or neglect.
- Annually review with staff methods and practices that the facility can implement to reduce the potential for abuse or neglect within the program.
- Cooperate with the Department for Children and Families (DCF) in any investigation involving the facility or its personnel.
- Take immediate action to safeguard children, up to and including suspension from duty, should an allegation of abuse or neglect be made against a staff person.
- Take immediate action to safeguard children, up to and including dismissal

from duty, should a staff person be found to have perpetrated abuse or neglect.

Volunteers and Student Interns (VT State Regulation- 7.7)

Our program serves as a site for student internships and community volunteers. All volunteers and students will complete an orientation with the Director and will receive direct guidance and supervision while in our school. They will maintain confidentiality, follow our illness policies and are mandated reporters. Volunteers and interns will not be counted in our staff/child ratio.

Area Agencies

We collaborate with several local agencies as part of our goal to provide complete services to our children and families. If you have concerns about your child's development, we encourage you to speak with the Director. We will be able to assist you in networking with area resources and can provide advocacy and support on behalf of you and your child.

Visitors

The Family Garden has an OPEN-DOOR POLICY, and we encourage parent and family participation. All persons unrelated to The Family Garden will be asked to leave the property immediately and staff will note the incident. If the person returns, staff will call the authorities. Photo ID's will be requested for people picking-up students, which are unfamiliar to staff. These people must be listed on the students Admissions Form for the student to be released to them, unless the parent/guardian gives verbal permission to the director.

Food Allergies

If your child has special restrictions regarding food allergies, please provide the Director with documentation from your child's physician. A list of children's food allergies will be posted in our classroom and will be checked by staff prior to preparing and offering food to the children.

Nutrition & Meal Preparation

It is our role as parents and teachers to teach children about the importance of healthy eating and nutrition. When you are purchasing items for your children's lunches, keep in mind the food groups. Pack vegetables, fruits, and proteins. Refer to serving sizes when packing grains and limit foods high in sugar and fat. Please be mindful of serving sizes; Grapes, hotdogs and cherry tomatoes pose a choking hazard. Be sure these items are cut into sections when sending them to school.

Juice will not be served at breakfast, but can be an afternoon snack. Breakfast is our fuel to begin the day, no one can learn or play when they are hungry. Breakfast is an option during arrival time starting at 7:30 am for early arrival children and again at 9:00 am.

Children should be exposed to new food and encouraged to explore with their senses. Children will NEVER be forced to eat something or to eat all the food in front of them. Snack is served at 9:00 am and 2:30pm.

Lunch

We need families to provide their child with lunch, we encourage lunch components to meet each of the food groups. We encourage a variety of healthy options for children. Lunches will be stored in the refrigerator upon entering the classroom. If a child has food allergies, religious dietary requirements, or other special needs about food please speak with the Director and fill out the required form. The director will inform ALL staff and an allergy/dietary requirements list will be posted in the food prep area of the classroom.

Water

Each child will need to bring a water bottle that stays at school. Fresh water will be put into water bottles each day and teachers will empty and wash water bottles at the end of the day. Children may drink from their water bottles at their leisure. Water bottles will be taken outside daily. Our drinking water has been tested for lead by the State of Vermont and is deemed safe as drinking water.

Birthdays & Celebrations

We encourage families to send in special snacks to celebrate, however we ask that you keep in mind the sugar and food dye content. Please feel free to speak with a teacher about fun snack ideas to share.

Gifts and Tips

Employees will only accept gifts from families under the following guidelines:

- Gifts will only be accepted during the December holidays, for the employee's birthday, during "Teacher Appreciation Week" or as a "goodbye/thank you" gift.
- The gift must be worth less than \$50 total value.
- ABSOLUTELY NO CASH will be accepted. (Gift cards are okay)

Smoking Policy

Smoking is not permitted on The Family Garden grounds at any time. Smoking is not permitted on walks. It is against the law to smoke with a child present in your car. The Family Garden staff will report any driver/vehicle we see smoking with children present.

Any issues not covered in this Handbook will be brought directly to the Board of Directors to be discussed and or added. This is a working document, which means it is updated, changed, and added to on an on-going basis. Parents will be informed and given an updated copy when available



Family Handbook Agreement

On, _____, I, _____ read The Family Garden Family Handbook in its entirety. I understand and agree to the above policies, regulations and procedures.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date