

# children's odyssey

P.O. Box 6038 ☆ Falmouth, Maine 04105

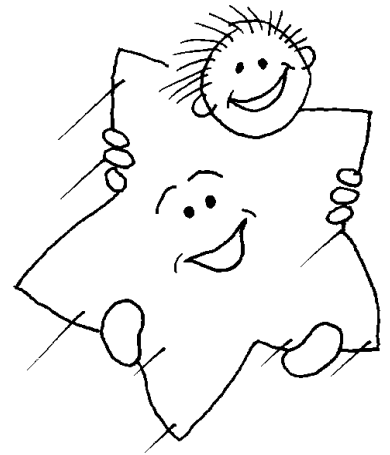
(207) 878-8868

Amended April 2012

## *Family Handbook*

### **Odyssey**

By definition an odyssey is: a long, wandering or voyage usually marked by many changes in fortune. During your child's journey through Children's Odyssey, he / she will find good fortunes in learning new skills, making new friends and gaining confidence in oneself.



### **Our Mission**

In collaboration with parents, staff, therapists, and community, Children's Odyssey strives to provide high quality, structured programming for children of varied developmental levels. Creatively designed activities reflect our responsiveness to children's individual learning styles, needs, and interests while providing an engaging environment for all. Our emphasis on the whole child is consistent with our strong desire to assist a child in reaching his potential. We teach with the understanding that diversity, of culture, background, gender, and physical or cognitive ability is strength to be celebrated and respected.

### **Our Philosophy**

The preschool years are a time of learning, wonder, exploration and discovery. It is a time to create positive experiences, within a child's world, to last a lifetime. We recognize that each child is unique and develops at his / her own pace. Our program is designed to meet your child's individual needs, learning styles and interests while fostering self-esteem, self-respect and self-confidence. We provide structured, developmental programming through creative and inviting individual, small and large groups. Our hands on, multimodal activities promote growth in all areas of development to include: sensory, fine/gross motor, language, pre-readiness/cognitive, adaptive, and social. These activities are planned and implemented for your child to experience the sheer pleasure and excitement in learning.

### **Staff Qualifications**

Our dedicated staff is chosen foremost, for their sensitivity and ability to relate to young children, Educational background, teaching experience, and willingness to work as part of a team add to our well rounded, professional early childhood educator qualifications. Primary staff members are educated in the field of Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Special Education, and/or Child Psychology. Our teachers participate in ongoing professional development opportunities to provide quality experiences for your child. We maintain low child-to-teacher ratios to ensure individualized and supportive programming.

## Admissions

- Registration and enrollment is on a first come, first serve basis.
- We encourage a classroom visit from the parent and child before enrolling.
- Prior to admission please provide an up-to-date immunization record signed by a physician. If your child is under immunized because of medical reasons (documented by a physician) or religious beliefs, please provide documentation of this. If a vaccine-preventable disease occurs in the program, children that are not immunized may be temporarily excluded from the program until it is safe for him/her to return.
- Submission of the registration packet (including a non-refundable registration fee) will secure a slot for your child.

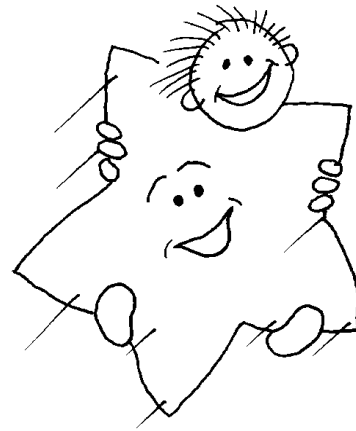
## Children's Odyssey's Absentee Policy

- Regular attendance helps to ensure your child gains the most benefit from a preschool experience. In an effort to maximize programming opportunities for all children absences greater than 2 per month will be reviewed.

## Hours/Programs Offered

*The following is a list of our programs offered along with student: teacher ratios for each.*

- A.M. Inclusive: 8:15 – 11:15
  - Between 3 and 5:1 depending upon the ages of children
- Mountain Room Special Purpose A.M.: 8:30 – 12:30
  - 1:1 or 2:1 Ratio
- Mountain Room Special Purpose P.M.: 11:30 – 2:30
  - 1:1 or 2:1 Ratio
- P.M. Special Purpose: 1:15 – 4:15
  - 2:1 or 3:1 Ratio
- P.M. Inclusive 1:15-4:15
  - 2:1 or 3:1 Ratio
- Extended Child Care: 8:15 – 4:15



## Arrival/Departure

- We want to make drop-off a positive time for everyone. Your child's teacher will make every effort to greet you and your child upon arriving and aid in the transition into school.
- Staff use the before and after school hours to prepare materials for the day so that our *undivided* attention is given to the children when they arrive. We therefore ask that you observe the drop off and pick up times for your child's program. Drop off starts at 8:15, 8:30, 11:30, and 1:15.
  - A late fee of \$1 per minute will be charged for children who are picked up after the time their ends.
- Parent/Guardian Pick-up Policy
- The State of Maine legally presumes that both parents share equal rights and responsibilities for the care of their children. There is an exception to this legal

presumption only if a court order is in place that terminates or otherwise limits a parent's or legal guardian's visitation or decision-making rights.

- Accordingly, it is Children's Odyssey's policy to permit either birth parent or any legal guardian to pick up their child from Children's Odyssey. Children's Odyssey will make an exception to this policy only if a parent or legal guardian with primary custody provides us with a court order that terminates or limits the other parent's or guardian's visitation rights in some way.
- We will continue to allow persons other than parents or legal guardians to pick up a child from Children's Odyssey if we are provided with a written permission form identifying such persons who may pick up a child in the parent's or guardian's absence.
- This pick-up policy is subject to our school care providers' best judgment given other compelling circumstances or conditions. For example, we may not allow a child to be picked up by persons who display behaviors (i.e. inebriation, violence, etc.) that may jeopardize a child's safety or well being.

### **Parking**

Parking is available both in front and behind the school. For safety reason please refrain from parking on the street

### **Tuition/Withdrawal**

- Once your child is enrolled in the program you have secured a slot. Payment is required in the event of illness, personal vacations, or school closures excluding five days of the December vacation (no tuition is required that week).
- Tuition is due on Fridays for the upcoming week.
  - Enrollment will be reviewed for multiple absences or late payment.
- Please provide a two-week notice prior to the withdrawal of your child from the program. In extenuating circumstances when this is not possible, Children's Odyssey reserves the right to collect tuition for those two weeks.

### **Parent Involvement**

- We invite daily communication between parents and teachers. Please let us know your preferred method of contact: telephone, email, or notebook. We are also available to meet with parents upon request
- We will provide an opportunity twice a year to schedule a parent-teacher conference to discuss your child.
- We have an open door policy at Children's Odyssey. Parents are welcome to observe or visit their child anytime.
- Parent participation is an important component of our program. If you have a special talent or hobby that you would like to share with us, please let us know. Volunteering in the classroom is always appreciated and a fun way to get involved.
- If you are interested in joining our parent advisory board, please see Laura or Susan.
- Please let us know if you need information in a different language or need help reading/interpreting materials.

### **Parent / Guardian Support**

- Children's Odyssey has a parent resource library; books and materials may be checked out at any time. Please see staff for the sign out form.
- Home visits are available for those families looking for support within the home. Times will be set up based on the needs of the family as well as the availability of the staff.
- Children's Odyssey hosts a parent support group in accordance with parent interest and participation. Topics covered are based on the-interests and needs of the families attending.

### **Open House**

An open house will be held at the start of the new school year. This gives parents / guardians an opportunity to visit their child's classrooms well as become familiar with the program and staff. This is a child-free event to allow parents to ask questions and experience the program first hand.

### **Staff-Child Ratio's/Classroom Groupings**

Children's Odyssey maintains staff-child ratios that exceed the rules and regulations outlined in childcare licensing for the state of Maine (see childcare licensing rules and regulations in the office for further details). We also maintain (if applicable), individually the ratio outlined in a child's IEP from the Department of Education (see individual child's file). The low staff-child ratio affords the opportunity for teachers to facilitate and maximize children's interactions socially and during group activities.

These staff-child ratios are maintained at all times in the day including field trips.

At Children's Odyssey we group (assigned to a classroom) children developmentally as opposed to their chronological age. This enables us to meet the child's needs while providing them with an environment that they can feel successful and confident in.

### **Child Screening**

Early Intervention was created to improve, reduce, or prevent the development or impact of a disability on children between the ages of birth through 5 years. Child Screenings are used to identify children who may benefit from additional evaluation and early intervention services.

All children are screened, with parent permission, by the end of the first month of enrollment. Teachers work in partnership with parents to compile, share, and compare information regarding children's strengths, challenges, learning styles, and interests. Teachers use the Ages and Stages screening tool and The State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines to provide parents with an overview of important developmental milestones and developmental guidelines. The Ages and Stages tool is also used to identify children who may benefit from more comprehensive evaluation. Referrals for early intervention may include speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, or educational services (specialized instruction).

### **Child Assessment**

In collaboration with parents, classroom teachers engage in an ongoing assessment process of children's development and learning referencing The State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines, or for children receiving specialized instruction, the Brigance Inventory of Early

Development. Information is gathered throughout the year using parent interview, observation, anecdotal notes, audio/video recordings, photographs, checklists, rating scales, and/or work samples. Quarterly (Nov. Feb. May, and Aug) review of assessment data will inform decisions regarding curriculum, (e.g., the selection, pace, and implementation of classroom content), teaching, and program improvement. In addition to home-school communication practices, parent-teacher conferences will be scheduled twice per year during which assessment information will be reviewed.

### **Curriculum**

Children's Odyssey references the Carolina Curriculum, The Assessment, Evaluation, and Programming, System, (AEPS), Transdisciplinary Play Based Approach, (TPBA) and The State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines to design and implement a developmentally appropriate program. Each curriculum is supported by research on how children learn and grow. The essence of our curriculum philosophy and practices are reflected in the physical layout of each classroom as well as the manner in which teachers select, implement, and modify activities. A combination of incidental and intentional teaching within individual, small and large group opportunities incorporates children's interests, learning styles, abilities, goals, and objectives. Multi-modal activities are created to address all developmental domains including social/emotional, cognitive, physical, language and adaptive. Classroom areas, arrangement, and selection of materials facilitate creative expression, problem solving, individual, and group participation. Fire stations and veterinarian offices ... encourage socialization and language development in the dramatic play area. Opportunities to build with a variety of blocks, invites fine motor and geometric comparisons (size and shape). Movement and music promote socialization, body kinesthetic, rhythm/pitch awareness, and appreciation of cultures. Painting and play-doh sculpting facilitate fine motor development, aesthetics, and color, shape, and form awareness. Teacher monitoring and flexibility allows curriculum expansion and modification in response to children's growing interests, needs, and progress.

### **Holidays**

*In addition to holidays, we close a total of 24 staff professional development hours. Parents will be notified in advance of these dates. We are also closed for the following holidays:*

- Martin Luther King Day
- Washington's Birthday
- One week in February for Vacation
- Patriot's Day
- One week in April for Vacation
- Memorial Day
- Fourth of July
- One week in August for Vacation
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving (and the day after)
- Christmas week through New Year's Day



- There is no charge for Christmas week.

### **Smoking and Substance Abuse**

- In compliance with Maine State Law, we have established a no smoking policy intended to help protect employees and children from the detrimental effects of smoking. Smoking of tobacco or any other substance or object giving off smoke is strictly prohibited at all times at Children's Odyssey, the outdoor play areas, and the parking lot.

A reminder that our pick-up policy is subject to staff's best judgment given other compelling circumstances or conditions. For example, we may not allow a child to be picked up by persons who display behaviors (i.e. inebriation, violence, etc.) that may jeopardize a child's safety or well-being.

### **Abuse and Neglect**

Pursuant to Title 22, MRSA 1071 Children's Odyssey and its staff are mandated reporters of all suspected abuse and neglect. The judgment of the validity of a report is not the responsibility of the schools but that of the Department of Human Services.

### **Fire Arms and Weapons**

Under no circumstances are firearms and weapons allowed at school.

### **Storm Policy**

*Decision to cancel will be based on the severity of the weather conditions and will be at the discretion of Children's Odyssey.*

- Cancellations will be announced on WCSH 6 by 7am.
- Sign up to receive a text message for storm cancellations at [www.wcsh6.com](http://www.wcsh6.com).

### **Illness Policy**

*For all children and staff's wellbeing, we ask that you keep your child at home if she shows any of the following symptoms:*

- Elevated temperature
  - Above 100.1°
- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Unexplained rash
- Discharging from eyes or ears
  - Please call if your child is unable to attend due to illness.
  - If your child becomes ill, with any of these symptoms you will be notified and responsible for arranging pick up within one hour.
  - Children in attendance must be symptom free for 24 hours and be able to fully participate in school activities, both indoor and outdoor.
  - Children's Odyssey reserves the right to change these policies per recommendation of the Center for Disease Control requests. Please refer to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) for information regarding widespread illness.
  - Children who are awaiting pickup will kept comfortable and separate from other children.

Notice will be posted on the entry door disclosing confirmed cases of illness such as but not limited to strep throat, chicken pox, fifth's disease.

## **Medication**

*Prescription medication policies:*

- Prescription medications must be in the original container and labeled with:
  - 1.) Child's name 2.) Medication name 3.) Dosage 4.) Administration time
- Parents must fill out, sign and date a Children's Odyssey medication form. For ongoing medications, parents will be asked to periodically update this form.

*Over the counter medication policy:*

- We will not administer cough or cold medications due to the recent controversies over potential adverse side effects.
- Any other non-prescribed medications will need to be in their original containers and a medication form completed.

## **Injuries**

- If your child is injured at school appropriate care will be administered.
  - A CPR/First Aid certified staff member is present at all times.
- Parents will be notified of any injury through an accident report to be signed by the teacher and parent. Copies of accident reports are available upon request.
- Parent's will be notified by phone concerning ~~of~~ any sign of serious injury.
- If an injury has occurred at home, please notify your child's teachers.

## **Nutrition Policy/Allergies**

- Please send a nutritional snack with your child each day.
- Extended Day children will also need to bring a lunch and an afternoon snack (in addition to the morning snack).
  - We have a microwave available for re-heating lunches. Please refrain from sending items that require microwaves times longer than 1 minute.
  - If you send in canned soup or pasta, please remove it from the can prior to sending it in and place it in a container. Foods are not heated in plastic containers, to prevent contamination by toxins. It is helpful if you send food in a microwaveable glass storage container, whenever possible.
  - Snack time and lunchtime provide opportunities to learn about healthy eating, try new foods, and to develop fine motor, oral motor, social, and adaptive skills.
  - When children are exposed to new, healthy foods they may be more likely to try them, particularly in the preschool setting where they see their peers eat similar snacks. Thus if your child does not eat certain foods at home, you may still send some in for them to try at school.
  - We reserve the right to prohibit allergen foods (tree nuts, peanuts) that present potential health risk.
- In an effort to safeguard children with severe peanut allergies, foods containing peanuts or tree nuts are currently not allowed in school. If your child likes peanut butter, soy nut butter and sunflower butter are safe alternatives. Your child may not even notice the difference!



- Please be sure to notify us of any allergies that your child may have as soon as you learn of these. If your child has an allergy action plan' or 'asthma action plan', please provide us with a copy.
- Please refrain from sending in toys for 'show & share' that contain latex ('Show & Share' is on Mondays and Thursdays for the AM and PM Inclusive programs. Children bring in a small toy to share with friends during free play time.).
  - Please be aware that some brands of bandages contain latex.

### **Additional Clothing, Diapers/Wipes/Pull-Ups**

- Your child should have an extra set of labeled clothes-to be kept in their backpack or cubby. We recommend placing the extra clothing in a gallon-size Ziploc bag so items are easily accessible.
- Please keep a supply of labeled diapers at school. Diapers will be stored in the bathroom so they are easily accessible to your child's teacher.
- We ask that parents send in a refillable wipe pack periodically. If you child has sensitive skin, please send in a labeled wipe dispenser to store here.

### **Outdoor Play**

We recognize the importance of outdoor play and make every effort to go outside when weather permits. Children's safety is paramount therefore the decision to go outside is based on the following information:

Summer: Heat Index: takes into consideration the humidity in the air which effects air quality and the body's ability to cool off.

Winter: The Real Feel Temperature: a composite of the effects of temperature, wind, humidity, sunshine intensity, cloudiness, and precipitation. We are able to play outside when the real feel is at 28 degrees or above or by the discretion of the director.

### **Rest**

- Children's Odyssey allots a rest time for children who participate in our full day program.
  - Please send in a blanket and a crib sheet to cover your child's cot. These will be sent home regularly to be laundered and should be sent back the next school day.
  - Children who do not sleep during rest time are provided with quiet choices.

### **Lockdown Policy**

In the unlikely event that the school needs to lockdown for safety reasons, the following procedure will be implemented

- Blinds will be closed.
- Children will be moved to the back hallway, which will then be gated-
- No one will be permitted to enter or leave the building.
- If possible, an emergency email will be sent out explaining the circumstance.

Lockdown will continue until the school receives an "all clear" signal from Emergency personnel. We ask that you refrain from calling the school so the phone will be available to emergency personnel. Parents will not be permitted to pick up children until we have been cleared by emergency personal.

**Security**

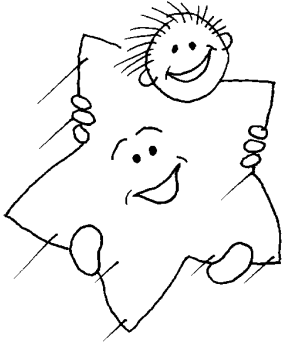
For the safety of both children and staff, Children's Odyssey is equipped with a security system. If you arrive at the school and find that the doors are locked please ring the doorbell and a staff member will let you in.

**Notice of Non-Discriminatory Policy**

Children's Odyssey admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to its students. Children's Odyssey does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies and all other school administered programs.

**PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS FORM**

Please initial next to each heading that you have read and understood these policies.



Admissions	
Arrival/Departure	
Tuition/Withdrawal	
Parent Involvement	
Screening, Curriculum, Assessment	
Holidays	
Smoking/Substance Abuse	
Storm Policy	
Illness Policy	
Medication	
Injuries	
Nutrition Policy/Allergies	
Additional Clothing, Diapers/Wipes/Pull-Ups	
Rest	

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read and understood the  
(PLEASE PRINT)

Family Handbook and understand my responsibilities regarding the policies.

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNATURE OF DIRECTOR