

# Town of Fort Smith Early Childhood Centre Parent Handbook



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### Section 1 – Welcome!

Welcome to the Fort Smith Early Childhood Centre! We are pleased you are considering joining our family-oriented and affirming community. The Fort Smith Early Childhood Centre opened in July of 2020, with the goal of meeting the need for quality childcare and early childhood programming in Fort Smith. The Early Childhood Centre will continue to grow to meet the needs of Fort Smith families.

Hours of Operation are:

Monday – Friday  
8:00 AM – 5:15 PM

Half day spots are split between:

The morning 8:00 AM-12:00PM or

The afternoon 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Children should be picked up by 12:15 or 5:15.

The early childhood centre will be closed on statutory holidays.

### Fees and Payment

Monthly Rate: \$890 (subsidy included in price, and is subject to change with funding)	Daily rate: \$65.00 Half day rate: \$32.50
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Upon enrollment, the first months' fees are due. At this time the subsidized amount per month is a maximum of \$475 for full day attendance, and \$240 for half day attendance.

Monthly fees are due before the start of each month. If fees are not received, the child cannot attend until fees have been paid. If fees are not paid and no payment plan has been arranged within the first five business days following the payment date, the child's spot will be forfeited and offered to the next child on the waitlist. A fee schedule will be provided in advance.

Please note, fees are based on the childcare spot, not attendance. Payment is required whether or not the child attends including all holidays and vacations.

The early childhood centre strives to be accommodating of families who want to make arrangements to share childcare, such as those working 2 week shift rotations, or extended vacations. Please discuss with early childhood centre staff.



There will be a two week trial period where the child will have a chance to get to know the staff, other children, and the environment. If for any reason the staff are concerned that the child is not the right fit for the program, their registration can be revoked.

In the event that a parent or guardian wishes to remove their child from care for any reason, we ask that at least 30 days of notice are given. Refunds will not be given for partial months if a space has been forfeited without notice.

## **Goals and Objectives**

Our goal is for parents to feel good about their children's care and to provide an early childhood centre setting in which children can feel "at home" even while they are here. We strive for children in our care to feel loved and cared for and to experience themselves as delightful and enjoyable.

Furthermore, our goal is to be recognized as an exceptional early childhood care setting by establishing a community-based early childhood centre that provides holistic, developmentally sensitive and enriching, play-based programming.

## **Section 2: Program Description**

### ***Daily Schedule-***

8:00- 8:30 – Arrivals, table-based centres

8:45 – Morning Greeting – songs, weather, calendar, emotions, etc. Free play/small group activities

9:45 – Tidy up, wash hands.

10:00 – Snack Time, clean up, wash hands.

10:30 – Story/Circle Time

11:00 – Gross Motor Activities – Outdoor, gymnasium, swimming, yoga, games, etc.

11:45 – Tidy up, wash hands.

12:00 – Lunch, clean up, wash hands,

12:45 – Younger children nap. Non napping group focuses on 'quiet time' activities (fine motor, crafts, puzzles, reading, interest-based learning etc.)

14:45 – Tidy both spaces. Wash hands.

15:00 – Snack Time, clean up, wash hands

15:30 – Gross Motor Activities (preferably outdoors weather permitting, gymnasium, or pool)

16:55 – Tidy up, gather items to go home

17:05-17:15 – Pick up and home time

The schedule may be adjusted as needed and schedules will be posted as per licensing requirements.



## Menu

The Fort Smith Early Childhood Centre is committed to providing children with healthy and nutritious snacks and meals and to support healthy eating habits and routines. Every snack and meal will include at least one fruit or vegetable option. Menus will be based on whole grains and unprocessed foods as much as possible. The menu will include opportunities for children to be exposed to a variety of flavours and textures. Caregivers will participate in snack and mealtimes to ensure these are times for social connection and to promote the use of good manners.

Children will be offered a selection of healthy alternatives at each snack/mealtime and are free to choose from the foods offered and to determine how much they would like to eat. Children will be encouraged to try new or non-preferred items but will never be forced to eat or punished for not eating. Parents are encouraged to discuss any special dietary needs with the early childhood centre staff. Parents may be asked to provide snacks/lunch if a child's special dietary needs cannot be reasonably accommodated.

## Sample Menu

<p><b>AM snack options:</b>            Fruit and yogurt            Apples and cheese            Fruit smoothie and crackers            Muffins and fruit/veggies            Veggies with yogurt dip            Hard boiled eggs and veggie sticks</p>	<p><b>Lunch options:</b>            Pasta with steamed veggies            Homemade pizza and veggie sticks            Stew and salad            Soup and grilled cheese            Sandwiches with veggie sticks</p>	<p><b>PM snack options:</b>            Yogurt with granola            Muffins and fruit            Fruit and yogurt            Fruit smoothies            Cheese and crackers and veggie sticks</p>
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## Programming and Themes

Daily programming will include opportunities for outdoor (weather dependent) and physical play, adult-guided playful activities, and free-play exploration.

Daily centres will include a creative centre, a dramatic and make believe play centre, a block and building centre, a sensory (sand/water/other) centre, a science and nature centre, a fine motor/manipulatives centre, and a reading centre.

The program will explore topics based on children's interests. Some examples may include:

Space  
 Dinosaurs  
 Transportation  
 Water

Sports  
 Rocks and Geology  
 Around the World  
 Weather

Seasons



Culture  
Bodies  
Flowers/plants

Animals  
Insects  
Seasonal holidays

### **Section 3: Important Policies**

#### **Late pick ups**

There will be an additional charge when parents arrive late to pick up a child. Children may be dropped off after 8 and should be picked up by 5:15. For every additional 1 minute beyond 5:15, parents will be charged an additional \$1/minute.

At 5:15, a call will be made to the parent or guardian, and an alternate pick up can be authorized and arranged.

#### **Discipline**

Discipline is meant to teach, not to punish. Childcare workers will model appropriate behaviours and practice self-discipline as they respond to the intense emotions and challenging behaviours of children.

Our first line of approach to discipline is prevention. We establish the conditions that make it easy for a child to behave by establishing a warm and inviting relational connection and by using structure and routine to help children cope with transitions and interactions.

In the case of conflict, we will attempt to defuse situations by providing a supportive adult presence, through verbal mediation, or engaging a child in an alternative activity.

A child may be removed from an activity or a situation if it is necessary to help the child return to a regulated state. A child may be held firmly but kindly if necessary, to ensure safety. If such an incident occurs, parents will be informed.

Children will never be physically or emotionally harmed. Children will not be struck, shamed, humiliated, or belittled. Practices including punitive consequences such as isolation, exclusion, shunning, and threats will not be tolerated in this setting. This applies to staff, parents, volunteers, and others present in the early childhood centre. The early childhood centre has a duty to report concerns about a child's welfare.

The early childhood centre is committed to providing a safe and supportive environment for all children, including those who may come with significant behavioural challenges associated with family life disruptions, and diagnosed or undiagnosed conditions. If a child presents with behaviour that is more extreme than developmentally typical, the early childhood centre will ask that parents be involved in creating a management plan for their child. This may include seeking funding for an additional support person or agreeing to an individualized plan for safely managing behaviour. All reasonable avenues will be explored



in an attempt to support a child's integration; however, the Town of Fort Smith reserves the right to terminate a child's registration if the child cannot be safely accommodated in the setting.

### **Occupational Therapy and Speech Language Pathology**

We have a close working relationship with the Rehabilitation Services Specialists with Health and Social Services. Occupational Therapists and Speech Language Pathologists are vitally beneficial in supporting childhood growth and development. OTs are health professionals who use therapy through everyday activities to treat the physical, mental, developmental, and emotional ailments that impact a person's ability to perform day-to-day tasks. Occupational therapy addresses the physical, cognitive, psychosocial and sensory components of performance. SLPs work to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.

They offer at times to visit to observe children in the childcare program, to provide in service training to staff to best suit the group, and identify potential supports and accommodations. For this process to occur, there is an attached consent form for caregivers to fill out to allow for the observation of their child as part of the group. Please contact us if you would like more information. There is also an attached self referral form if you have any concerns about your child and would like to see a Specialist in Rehabilitation Services.

### **Parental Involvement**

The early childhood centre strives to support parents by providing a safe and nurturing childcare setting. We welcome parental involvement and understand the importance of a friendly and collaborative relationship with parents. We recognize that children are best served by open communication between parents and early childhood centre staff.

List of required labelled items to send with your child:

- Supplies such as diapers, wipes, bottles, formula, creams, sunscreen, insect repellent, or other products
- Water bottle
- Blanket and stuffie if desired for nap time
- Appropriate seasonal clothing (i.e. sun hat, splash pants, raincoat, rubber boots, toque, mitts (x2), neck warmer, balaclava, snow pants, winter coat, snowsuit, winter boots, etc.). We will be outside even in cold weather down to -25°C.
- Spare clothing. You may leave a change of clothes in the child's cubby or send a daily backpack with a change of clothes.
- Indoor shoes

Parents who are interested in contributing to the ongoing development of the early childhood centre are encouraged to join the volunteer advisory board upon its formation.



## **Communication**

The early childhood centre staff is committed to providing parents with information concerning their child's participation in the early childhood centre programming and to celebrate their child's achievements and successes at the centre. We are happy to provide you with a brief report about the child's day at pick up time. Should you wish to discuss your child's care or any issues that arise in more depth, we would be happy to arrange a meeting time with you.

We request that parents keep the early childhood centre staff informed of any significant developments in the child's life as these can manifest in different ways in the early childhood centre setting. Open communication helps parents and early childhood centre staff to support children and help them be successful.

## **Diapering and Toileting**

Parents must provide supplies for toileting such as diapers, wipes, creams, etc. We will use cloth diapers if a sufficient amount are provided for each day, they are clean, ready to use, a clean wet bag is provided for each day, and the soiled diapers are taken home each evening.

Toilet training is an important developmental task which allows children to develop self-care skills and provides a developmentally appropriate opportunity for mastery. The early childhood centre aims to work with parents to support toilet training as much as is possible in a group care setting. We encourage parents to discuss this with early childhood centre staff.

The early childhood centre's policy will be to follow the level of interest demonstrated by the child. A toileting routine will be incorporated into the daily schedule for those children who are demonstrating an emergent readiness to engage in toilet training. This may include sitting on the potty at regular intervals throughout the day and the use of stories and songs.

## **Technology**

The early childhood centre is a screen-free zone for children. We ask that parents limit their use of cell phones or other devices while in the early childhood centre space. Staff may use phones in the case of an emergency, or to take photos of activities.

## **Transportation**

The early childhood centre will not be regularly transporting children, but the application package includes a consent form for community outings. Outings within the community may be arranged, such as: to the museum, the library, the JBT park, or other community events. Children will walk, accompanied by early childhood centre staff.



## **Toys**

Please discourage children from bringing toys from home to the early childhood centre. It is too easy for these to become lost or mixed up in early childhood centre toys. If a child needs to bring something from home, we will encourage the child to keep it in a pocket, in their cubby, or in their backpack.

## **Part-time Spots**

Spots can be shared between two families with alternating work schedules, but this must be arranged between the families. Please speak to an early childhood centre staff for more information about this option.

## **Registration and waitlist policy**

All enrolled children must have a completed registration form, parent handbook, and have submitted an immunization record. This is the registration package. A registration package must be completed and received by the early childhood centre in order to secure a child's spot on the waitlist. Children will be accepted into the early childhood centre on a first-come, first-served basis. When the early childhood centre is full, a waitlist will be maintained. A child's spot on the waitlist will depend on when that child's completed registration form is received. Children of staff will be given priority on the waitlist.

Should a child change age groups while waiting for a spot, the child will be added to the waitlist for the appropriate age group according to the date the original application form is received. It is the parents' responsibility to notify the early childhood centre when a child changes age group (turns 2) while on the waitlist. For instance, if an application form is received when a child is 18 months old and the child is placed on the waitlist, but turns 2 before an infant spot is available, the child will be inserted into the 2-year-old waitlist according to the date the original application form was received.



## **Section 4 – Health and Safety**

### **General**

The early childhood centre embraces a philosophy of balancing safety against the developmental benefits of risky play.

To ensure your child's safety, the early childhood centre commits to the following:

- All staff have criminal record checks on file
- All staff have current first aid and CPR certification
- The early childhood centre has a well stocked first aid kit on premises
- Meeting ECE licensing requirements includes annual fire and public health inspections in addition to ECE's inspection
- Fire drills practiced monthly
- There is a regular cleaning and disinfecting schedule, increased if highly contagious illnesses are present
- Potentially dangerous materials such as cleaning supplies are held securely

Children will always be supervised. Children may be momentarily out of sight, such as, if a worker accompanies a child to the bathroom the door will be closed for privacy.

### **Illness policy**

Parents are encouraged to assess their children's state of health and to keep sick children at home to allow them to rest and recover and to avoid spreading illness to others. Consider whether your child will be able to participate in the daily program as one measure of whether they are well enough to attend.

If children should become ill while at the early childhood centre, they will be kept separate from the other children, made comfortable, and parents will be contacted to pick up their child.

Children may not attend/will be sent home:

- if they have a fever of 38°C or higher
- if they have diarrhea or vomiting
- if they have head lice or scabies
- if they have another infectious disease

Children may return when they are fever free for 24 hours, 48 hours after vomiting or diarrhea, and 24 hours after a first dose of antibiotics



If your child needs medication administered while attending the early childhood centre, we will need written documentation of your consent to administer the medication and the administration instructions. (Form provided by us on request)

If an infectious disease outbreak occurs, recommendations made by the Public Health Official will be adopted.

If the infectious disease outbreak occurs in Fort Smith for a vaccine preventable disease (ie: measles, mumps, rubella, pertussis, etc.) any unimmunized children will be required to stay home.

## **Emergency Procedures**

### ***Fire Evacuation***

Fire drills will be practiced monthly.

In case of fire the following steps will be taken:

- One staff member will collect the daily attendance record and child information binder
- One staff member will gather children at the door and take a head count
- Staff will accompany children to the muster station in the Community and Recreation Centre parking lot. In case of cold weather, they will proceed to the Fields Store
- Direction will be taken from fire crews about returning to the building or contacting parents to arrange for children to be picked up.

### ***Lockdown Procedure***

If a violent threat ever becomes apparent at the Community and Recreation Centre, a lockdown can be called to keep everyone safe. In the event of a lockdown, staff will lock the doors and any windows that can be opened. Window coverings will be drawn, and the lights will be turned off, if possible. They will move all the children away from the doors and windows and occupy them in a quiet activity to keep everyone calm. Parents will be contacted as soon as it is safe to do so. Doors will only be unlocked when the Police identify that it is safe to do so.

### ***Power Outages***

In the event of a power outage that lasts longer than 20 minutes, parents will be called to pick up their children.

### ***Serious injury***



In case of serious injury, staff will administer first aid and arrange for transportation to the health centre. Parents will be contacted as soon as it is safely possible. Information regarding the injury will be documented.

Special thanks to Janine Rommel, Amanda Spooner, Amy Ryan, Leslie-Ann Tourangeau, Kristie Vyse for generously sharing their experience, resources, advice, and expertise.

I/ We, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
have read and understand the policies and procedures laid out in the Fort Smith Early Childhood Centre Parent Handbook.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **General Information:**

### **This is helpful for us to get to know you and your child**

Please list other members of the household (siblings, extended family, pets, etc.)

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Who has cared for your child to the present time?

Parent  Relative  Licensed Dayhome  Babysitter  Other

What languages are spoken at home?

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How does your child like to be comforted?



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What is your child interested in?

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Does your child have any sensitivity or allergies to food? Yes  No

If yes, please explain.

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What is your child's general temperament?

Friendly  Outgoing  Active  Very active   
Shy  Aggressive  Cooperative  Quiet

Comments:

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Does your child have any specific fears? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Speech Development:**

Pre-language  Signs  Words Only   
Speaks in sentences  Speaks in phrases

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



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**Self-help skills:**

Dresses self       Toilets self       Feeds self

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Sleep patterns:**

Usually naps       Does not nap

What times \_\_\_\_\_      How long \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Social Skills:**

Likes to play alone       Likes to play with others

Follows routines       Accepts change easily

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Health**

Please provide a copy of the child's immunization record. This will be needed in the child's file before they can attend the early childhood centre.

Does your child have any medical, physical, developmental, or emotional conditions relevant to his or her care that we should know about?

If yes, please provide more information:



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