FAMILY HANDBOOK

AURARIA CAMPUS

Dear Families,

Welcome to the Auraria Early Learning Center!

We believe success begins early. By working together as partners in education, we can help foster your child's positive attitude towards learning through a successful adjustment to the school environment.

We encourage you to be aware of the goals, objectives, and activities of our program so that your child's school experience can be supported and reinforced at home. In turn, we make an effort to be aware of your expectations for your child's achievement and behavior at the center, your attitudes on education, and your beliefs about child-rearing. In this way, we can work together to provide a program that is responsive to both environments.

The information included in this handbook offers a brief overview of the Auraria Early Learning Center program and policies. Additional information and references on our curriculum, mission, and goals are available from staff members. Please feel free to ask for further information at any time.

We look forward to beginning this special partnership with you and your child.

Sincerely,

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Introduction

The Auraria Early Learning Center (AELC) provides programs for children who are 12 months and walking to 5 years old. The center serves students, faculty, and staff of the Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), and the Auraria Campus. On a space-available basis, the center also serves the Denver community. All the AELC's programs are fully licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services.

What You Will Discover at the AELC:

- Highly qualified teachers, educational consultants, and support staff who are experts in the field of early childhood education
- Healthy meals and snacks included
- Individualized teaching with an emphasis on cultivating children's sense of wonder and discovery
- Small classroom setting with a low child-to-teacher ratio
- Balanced, high-quality curriculum that introduces foundational subjects including reading, math, science, and social studies
- Social-emotional development with opportunities for self-expression through language, art, and dramatic play

Mission

The AELC's mission is to support children as they learn about and discover their own uniqueness in a rich, caring, and loving environment where relationships between children, families, and staff are nurtured.

Philosophy

The AELC believes children learn through play and discovery.

The AELC instills learning by ensuring the environment is rich in developmentally appropriate materials and activities that nurture exploration and growth in physical abilities, language, literacy, cognitive skills, math, science, social studies, the arts, dramatic play, and social-emotional skills.

The AELC Believes in Empowering the Growth of Each Child by:

- Assigning children to primary caregivers and ensuring continuity of care
- Providing warm, attuned interactions between adults and children
- Furnishing well-planned and thought-out daily schedules, transitions, activities, and environments
- Using careful observation and assessment as the basis for communicating and interacting with children, for planning based on the interests and uniqueness of each child, and for fostering communication and connections with families

The AELC Believes in Building Community With Families

Building relationships provides a strong foundation for community, learning, and personal growth. The AELC nurtures relationships by connecting with children, families, and each other on a personal level, and by taking time for reflective practice. Each child, family, and staff member is unique. The AELC respects that uniqueness by listening carefully, communicating clearly, and encouraging partnership.

The AELC Believes in Anti-Bias Education

Families come in different constellations including single parent families, same-sex families, extended families, blended families, two-parent working families, foster families, and adoptive families with a variety of subgroups including racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic. As a core value, the AELC creates a culture where members seek to acknowledge, share, and nurture diversity in the community. The Auraria Early Learning Center is committed to cultivating an anti-bias community. We believe that each family deserves to feel welcomed and included as a member of our center community. We are committed to the inclusion and belonging of different perspectives and establishing a common ground of mutual respect.

Interpreting Services

The Auraria Early Learning Center provides interpreters upon request. Please see the front desk for the list of available languages in house. If the native language is not available in house, we will utilize Bridge Languages Center to provide both written and verbal translations in the family's native language. The AELC will cover the full cost of services.

Curriculum & Assessment

Curriculum and Educational Philosophy

At AELC, we are proud to be recognized as a high-quality early learning center by our educational community. Our program is grounded in a developmentally appropriate curriculum that emphasizes discovery-based learning and active child engagement.

Our teachers and administrators bring years of experience and ongoing study in early childhood development. This deep knowledge base, combined with a commitment to current best practices, allows us to create a dynamic, evolving curriculum tailored to the needs and interests of the children in our care.

We primarily implement The Creative Curriculum in conjunction with the Teaching Strategies GOLD (TS GOLD) assessment system, ensuring that we align instruction with developmental benchmarks while supporting each child's unique learning journey.

To further enrich our program, we integrate key components from other high-quality resources and philosophies, including:

- Heggerty Phonemic Awareness for early literacy development
- Singapore Math for foundational numeracy and problem-solving
- Activity-Based Learning environments that promote exploration and independence
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) endorsed by NAEYC
- ECE Cares and Pyramid Plus to support inclusive practices and positive behavior strategies
- Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC) to foster social-emotional development through relationship-based teaching

Our approach is holistic and responsive—designed not only to meet developmental milestones but to inspire curiosity, empathy, and a lifelong love of learning.

Creative Curriculum & Activity-Based Learning

At AELC, we implement the Creative Curriculum, a research-based, comprehensive program designed for children from infancy through kindergarten. This curriculum blends teacher-guided instruction with child-initiated learning, allowing children to explore and engage at their own developmental level. Rooted in developmentally appropriate practices, Creative Curriculum supports the whole child—socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively—through hands-on, play-based experiences.

Our classrooms reflect an Activity-Based Learning approach, where learning happens through meaningful exploration, discovery, and play. Teachers serve as intentional facilitators, creating rich environments and thoughtful interactions that build on each child's curiosity and strengths. The curriculum integrates all key areas of development—literacy, language, math, science, social studies, the arts, and physical development—within the structure of daily routines. This combined approach nurtures a love of learning, fosters independence, and prepares children with the skills they need for future success.

Teaching Strategies Gold (TS-GOLD)

TS-GOLD is a tool that enables teachers to increase the effectiveness of their assessments. TS-GOLD compiles results generated through a teacher's documentation and offers support with lesson planning and individual goals. In addition, TS-GOLD gives teachers the opportunity to share information more effectively about a child's progress with their family.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children (DAP)

DAP provides a framework for preparing learning environments and planning activities according to what is known about young children's stages of development. Child-initiated, child-directed, and teacher-supported play are essential components of developmentally appropriate practices. DAP considers several key factors:

Age Appropriateness — indicates there are universal, predictable stages of growth and change for children in all domains of development: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. These stages typically occur within specific age ranges.

Individual Appropriateness — recognizes that each child is a unique person with an individual sequence of growth, and an individual personality, learning style, and family background. Activities in the classroom and child/teacher interactions are responsive to individual differences and developmental stages.

Social Emotional Learning

Pyramid Plus

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Young Children (Pyramid Model) provides a tiered framework of evidence-based interventions for promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children.

ECE Cares

The AELC works hard to develop caring classroom communities. The center cultivates an environment where all children are safe to express who they are, talk about their ideas, have their own experiences, practice problem solving, and learn to settle disagreements in a peaceful way. The three essential "Safety Rules" are an important ECE Cares strategy:

1) We keep ourselves safe.
2) We keep each other safe.
3) We keep our things safe.

Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC)

The AELC is dedicated to helping children learn to express their emotions in developmentally and socially appropriate ways. Teachers model behaviors and guide children in developing skills for managing difficult feelings such as frustration, anxiety, and anger. Using LINC as the framework for the social and emotional curriculum, AELC staff help children develop a competent and autonomous sense of self. Children learn positive ways of relating to peers, adults, and themselves.

Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines: Birth Through Third Grade

The AELC curriculum meets and assesses all the domains listed in the Early Childhood Leadership Commission's development guidelines chart.

Guidelines Chart

This graphic illustrates the essential domains of learning within the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. It represents the progression of these domains across ages, rather than the relative importance of each domain within any one age group. The complex connections within and among domains are more fully explored throughout the guidelines.

* are embedded within all content areas of the PK-3 Standards and emphasized within the 21st Century Skills.

Source: [Colorado Early Learning & Development Guidelines (earlylearningco.org)]

Early Childhood Development

The term "early childhood" refers to the years from birth to approximately age eight. While most research on early childhood only focuses on one specific aspect of development, AELC staff have found that it is most beneficial to incorporate a variety of approaches into the curriculum. Using a combination of approaches stimulates the development of young children in the following areas:

- Intellectual/Cognitive Development
- Language/Communication
- Social and Emotional Development
- Self-Help Skills
- Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Intellectual/Cognitive Development

During early childhood, rapid growth occurs in cognitive and intellectual development. Although each child develops at an individual rate, there is a clearly defined sequence of developmental milestones from infancy to adulthood as set forth by Piaget's theory of childhood development. The AELC creates an enriched environment for children based on knowledge of the needs of children at each milestone; as well, the center understands that each child has an individual rate of progress.

Language/Communication

Vocabulary growth and the ability to communicate needs and wants may be two of the most noticeable advancements for children between the ages of two to seven. When adults create a language and literacy rich environment, with specific responses to a child's communication, it can boost that child's emergent language and literacy development, increasing the likelihood of future academic success. Guardians and caregivers have the greatest potential to contribute to a child's language opportunities, and we can work together to consistently cultivate language opportunities at school and at home. This is one of the many reasons the AELC values family connections.

Social and Emotional Development

In the first five years of life, children rapidly develop the social and emotional capacities that prepare them to be self-confident, trusting, empathetic, intellectually inquisitive, competent in using language to communicate, and capable of relating well to others. The AELC uses the Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC) curriculum to teach children developmentally appropriate ways to handle emotions and to offer tools for first interactions in a social school setting.

The AELC recognizes that social and emotional development occurs in all of the children's interactions, including free play, mealtime, and structured group activities. The physical setting of the classroom maximizes possibilities for both small and large group interactions. Teachers utilize anti-bias curriculum activities and materials, and plan lessons that are relevant to the children as members of the AELC's multi-cultural community.

Self-Help Skills

The AELC curriculum guides and encourages young children to become more independent as their skills develop. Staff encourage children to make positive choices and to become more self-directed in their play and interactions. Toddlers learn to take care of themselves by eating with utensils, putting on and taking off their own clothing, and toileting. Preschoolers gain independence in serving food, cleaning up after themselves, and toileting and learn additional self-help skills through increasing educational time and field trips.

Gross and Fine Motor Development

Young children move; they clap, jump, swing, stomp, and run. They love to be on the go. The AELC curriculum focuses on helping children learn to balance all areas of development with their gross and fine motor skills.

The "Let's Move! Childcare" initiative launched by former First Lady Michelle Obama recognizes the AELC as a participating site. Teachers use creative movement activities and outdoor play to help children's growing bodies.

Puzzles, writing, drawing, and other small motor activities enhance fine motor skills. Handwriting skills are introduced and developed at appropriate age levels. Each classroom's curriculum is designed to be consistent with its children's stages of motor development.

Toddler Programs

The toddler classrooms utilize all AELC curriculum standards and introduce developmentally appropriate programs as determined by the classroom teacher and AELC administration.

Preschool Programs

Heggerty Phonemic Awareness

We incorporate the Heggerty Phonemic Awareness Curriculum to build a strong foundation in early literacy. This research-based program focuses on the development of critical pre-reading skills such as rhyming, segmenting, blending, and manipulating sounds in spoken language. Daily, short, and engaging lessons are embedded into our classroom routines, ensuring consistency and scaffolding as children grow in their language abilities. By strengthening phonological awareness, the Heggerty program prepares children to become confident readers and communicators, setting the stage for long-term academic success.

Singapore Math

Our approach to early mathematics is guided by the Singapore Math curriculum, which emphasizes problem-solving, number sense, and conceptual understanding. This internationally respected program introduces mathematical concepts using a three-step learning process: concrete (using objects), pictorial (using images), and abstract (using symbols). Through hands-on activities, visual models, and meaningful discussions, children develop a deep understanding of mathematical relationships rather than relying solely on rote memorization. Singapore Math encourages flexible thinking, perseverance, and a positive attitude toward math from an early age.

Preschool programs follow Colorado State Standards and Goals. Visit Office of Standards and Instructional Support | CDE (state.co.us) *for more information.*

Group Size and Ratio Policy

At AELC, we are committed to high-quality care and education that supports each child's safety, well-being, and development. To ensure individualized attention and effective supervision, we follow group size and adult-child ratio guidelines recommended by the **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**.

Classroom Ratios & Group Sizes

- **Young Toddlers (12–24 months)**
  - Max Group Size: 10
  - Ratio: 1 adult for every 4 toddlers
- **Older Toddlers (2–3 years)**
  - Max Group Size: 14
  - Ratio: 1 adult for every 7 toddlers
- **Young Preschool (2.5 years & potty trained to 4 years)**
  - Max Group Size: 20
  - Ratio: 1 adult for every 8 children
- **Preschool (4–5 years)**
  - Max Group Size: 20
  - Ratio: 1 adult for every 9 children

We adjust staffing as needed to maintain these standards, and the center director or a supervisor regularly monitors classrooms for compliance. All staff are trained in child supervision, development, and maintaining positive, age-appropriate interactions.

By following these guidelines, we ensure a **safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate environment** for every child in our care.

AELC Staff

Please visit Contact Us | AHEC (aurariacampus.edu) for staff bios.

Administrative Staff

Our administrative staff includes the **Director** and **Assistant Director**, who oversee all aspects of center operations, staff supervision, family communication, and curriculum planning. The team works closely with families and staff to ensure the highest standards of care and early childhood education.

Senior Lead Supervising Teacher

The Senior Lead Supervising Teachers are Supervising Teachers with their own classroom. In addition to this role, they support other classroom staff, help guide curriculum implementation, and serves as a mentor for new or developing educators.

Teaching Staff

A supervising teacher, an assistant teacher, and teacher aides staff each classroom. They guide the development of social skills, independence, and a positive self-concept by arranging the classroom environment in ways that encourage children to discover, explore, imagine, express feelings, and most of all…enjoy!

Supervising Teachers

Supervising teachers are responsible for classroom management and instruction. All supervising teachers have earned a minimum of a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, or a closely related field, and/or are director qualified through the State of Colorado.

Assistant Teachers

Assistant teachers support the supervising teachers in carrying out the classroom programs. They are Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) or Assistant Early Childhood Teacher (AECT) qualified. The assistant teachers help with instruction, maintaining a positive classroom environment, and guiding children's behavior in a positive manner.

Teacher Aides

Teacher aides assist with classroom operations, supporting the supervising and assistant teachers with instructional activities, administrative duties, and operational tasks.

Most teacher aides and assistant teachers are students on the Auraria Campus. Their schedules may vary from semester-to-semester.

Who To Go To: Staff Support & Communication Guide

Need help or have a question? Here's a quick guide to help you know who to go to for what!

Director

Main Contact For:

- Questions about center-wide policies, operations, or scheduling
- Billing, tuition, or budget-related concerns
- Employment partnerships or community engagement
- Suggestions or ideas for improving the center's visibility or outreach
- Major concerns not resolved at the classroom or assistant director level

Assistant Director

Main Contact For:

- Staff supervision, classroom support, and teacher performance
- Questions about licensing requirements and compliance
- Paperwork collection (e.g., enrollment forms, immunization records)
- Issues or inquiries about hiring or staffing changes
- Support with scheduling or transitions between classrooms
- Major concerns not resolved at the classroom level

Senior Lead Supervising Teacher

Main Contact For:

- Mentorship and guidance for classroom teachers and aides
- Help with curriculum planning or classroom management strategies
- Peer support for professional development and best practices
- Problem-solving or brainstorming around classroom challenges

Not Sure Who to Ask?

Start with your child's Supervising Teacher for classroom-specific questions. For anything outside the classroom, feel free to check in with the Assistant Director, who can point you in the right direction!

Registration & Enrollment

Registration Packets

Families will receive a registration packet after paying a child's registration fee and filling out the pre-registration form. The registration fee will hold a child's spot for a period of two weeks, during which the family will need to fully complete the registration process. All paperwork must be completed and turned in 48 hours prior to the desired start day. Failure to turn in the completed paperwork within the two-week registration period will result in forfeiture of the child's spot.

All Guardians—Required Registration Forms

1) Child Emergency Information and Agreement
2) Statement of Authorization
3) Medical Statement (filled out by the child's physician)
4) Immunization Record (filled out by the child's physician)
5) USDA Income Eligibility Form (participation and the form are required)
6) Child's Current Photo
7) Handbook Acknowledgement (last page of this handbook)
8) Medical Release Form
9) IEP or IFSP Plan, if applicable
10) Allergy Forms, if applicable
11) Getting to Know You Form
12) Sunscreen Form
13) Pre-registration Form
14) Toilet Training Policy, if applicable
15) Copy of Birth Certificate
16) Getting To Know You
17) Ages and Stages Questionnaire

Student Families—Additional Requirements

1) Prior year tax information (determines qualification for category A or B) Categories determined by previous year's family adjusted gross income.
2) Current detailed class schedule showing name, student ID, term, and courses.

Staff and Faculty Families—Additional Requirements

1) Prior year tax information (determines qualification for category A or B) Categories determined by previous year's family adjusted gross income.
2) Copy of your staff/faculty ID or other proof of employment with CCD, MSU Denver, CU Denver, or Auraria Campus

Up-To-Date Information

Complete and accurate information is very important. Information concerning who is authorized to pick up a child is critical. Families must keep guardian contact numbers, emergency contact numbers, and guardian schedules current. Contact change forms are available at the AELC front desk or via email. **Possible disenrollment can occur if the center is unable to reach a guardian or emergency contact while a child is in the center's care**.

All registration information must be updated annually or upon changes, and physicals are required at 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, 2 ½ years, and annually at 3 years old along with current copy of immunizations.

The AELC is required to keep all information in a child's file for three years. This information will be kept locked in storage.

Enrollment Process

The AELC operates on the Auraria Campus calendar. The AELC prioritizes enrollment for Auraria Campus students. After the student enrollment period has passed, enrollment is opened to Auraria Campus faculty and staff. Enrollment is open to the Denver community on a space-available basis.

Student Classification

To be classified as a student, one must be enrolled on the Auraria Campus at CCD, CU Denver, or MSU Denver for at least 6 undergraduate or 3 graduate level credit hours every semester, including the summer semester. Students are required to submit class schedules one month before each semester begins, or the community tuition rate will apply.

Staff Classification

Proof of campus affiliation will be required upon enrollment and will be checked each month with the payroll department of your institution. To be classified as staff, one must be employed on the Auraria Campus by either CCD, MSU Denver, CU Denver or Auraria Campus. Employment at CU Anschutz does not qualify for staff classification. Staff will be required to show a current copy of their staff ID card or a verification letter on letterhead issued by their institution.

If a guardian's position is vacated at an institution, AELC requires immediate notification so necessary tuition adjustments can be made.

Siblings

Siblings of children currently attending the AELC are given first priority for enrollment. When an additional child is enrolled, the currently enrolled child's tuition will be reduced by 10 percent. Please see the assistant director if interested in enrolling a sibling.

Schedules

- The AELC only offers full-time schedules. Children are expected to be dropped off by 9am, and there is an additional drop off time from 9:45am-10am. Should you choose to send your child on a part-time schedule, you will still be billed for the full-time spot. As a reminder all children must be dropped off between 8-9am. If you arrive after 9am you will need to wait until the 9:45-10am drop off window. All children should be in the building by 10am if they are attending for the day.
- Children enrolled in our Older Preschool Program must be dropped off by 9am to ensure that they are receiving the full curriculum. There is not a second drop off window for this age group. This program also requires full-time attendance in order to adequately prepare students for Kindergarten.
- If your child has a scheduled medical or dental appointment in the morning, you must notify administration of the appointment and receive approval for your late drop off. Children with this appointment/approval will be able to drop off until 11am that day. If a child is not here by 11am they will not be able to attend for the day.

Campus Holidays & In-Service Dates

The Auraria Early Learning Center is closed the following days:

- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving, the day before, and the day after
- Christmas Eve through New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Spring Break coinciding with the Auraria Campus Calendar
- Fall Break the week before Auraria Campus Fall Semester Begins
- Teacher in-service days (typically the day before each semester begins)
- Any holiday the Governor's Office grants state employees.

No tuition credit is given for holidays or in-service days.

The official school year calendar with dates for the above listed holidays and in-service days is available on the website and distributed to families before the start of fall semester each year.

Break windows including spring break may vary by institution. The ELC will determine its closures based on the academic calendars of the institutions we serve, determination will include how many families from each institution are enrolled.

Tuition, Fees, & Billing Fee Schedule

The AELC current fee schedule can be found at Tuition & Fees | AHEC.

Faculty and staff are charged a bond fee each semester. Please see the director with any questions.

All families are also charged an Annual Registration fee in August.

Monthly Statements

Tuition statements are posted on the first business day of each month. The invoice will be visible in the Procare app and sent to your email through the app also. If a family would like to know the child's tuition in advance of receiving the tuition bill, they may inquire at the front desk.

Payment

Cash, check, or credit card are accepted for payment at the front desk. Payment cannot be made through the Procare app.

Payment is due on the first business day of the month. It is considered late after the 5th of the month and a late fee will be charged. If payment is not received by the 10th, the child will be disenrolled from the center.

For children who start after the 10th of the month, payment is due their first day.

Late Tuition Payment Policy

Tuition payments that are not made on time will incur a late payment fee of $50 that will be added to the next month's bill.

Checks

The child's name and room number must be included in the notes section.

If a check is returned, the family will be responsible for the initial charges and any additional fees incurred.

After two returned checks, the AELC will accept payment by cash or credit card only.

Credit Cards

Credit card payments may be made by calling the front desk from 11am to 3pm. We cannot store credit card information. Payments can occasionally be made in person at the front desk at the discretion of the front desk staff.

If a credit card is charged an incorrect amount or if both guardians pay by mistake, a credit can be left on the account or a family may request a refund check from the accounting department (refund checks may take up to two weeks to process).

Unpaid Bills

By enrolling your child at AELC, each guardian agrees as follows:

1) I authorize AELC and its agents/contractors to contact me at my current/future mailing address, email address, landline phone number, cellular phone number, or other wireless devices, regarding my child's tuition or any other debt I owe to AELC, or to receive general information from AELC. I authorize AELC and its agents/contractors to use automated telephone dialing equipment, artificial or pre-recorded voice or text messages, and personal calls and e-mails in their efforts to contact me.
2) If I fail to pay my child's tuition, pay any monies due to AELC by the scheduled due date, or fail to make acceptable payment arrangements to bring my account current, AELC may refer my delinquent account to a collection agency. I am responsible for paying all collection agency fees (which may be based on a percentage up to a maximum of 5% of my delinquent account), together with all costs, late fees and expenses, including reasonable attorney's fees.
3) I understand that my delinquent account including but not limited to my child's tuition may be reported to one or more national credit bureau by AELC or the collection agency it uses. I authorize AELC to use my Social Security number for internal/external credit reporting and collection purposes for all charges incurred against this account.
4) This Agreement shall be governed in all respects by the laws of the State of Colorado without regard to any conflict of choice of law principles. I hereby submit to personal jurisdiction in the State of Colorado.

Absence and Vacation Credits

The AELC does not give absence credits for any reason including illness or vacation. Families are required to pay for all registered days whether they use them or not.

Other Tuition Credits

The AELC does not give credits for planned center closures due to in-service days, holidays, or winter break. Credits are also not given for unplanned center or classroom closures due to weather, illness, staffing, or other emergencies.

In-Service/Professional Development Days

School closures due to in-service/professional development days are valuable aspects of the AELC program. The center closes for multiple scheduled in-service/professional development days annually. These usually fall on the business day before the beginning of each semester. Professional development builds the foundation for highly qualified and well-trained teaching personnel.

Withdrawals

The AELC must receive written notification of a child's withdrawal from the center. A Total Withdrawal Form is required at least 1 full month before a child's last day at the center; otherwise, the child's account will be charged 1 month's tuition. If a family fails to submit a Total Withdrawal Form, the account will be charged for all unused registered care.

Financial Assistance

If the administration believes your family may qualify for financial assistance, they will contact you via email with the information to apply.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

CCAP is accepted from the following counties: Jefferson, Adams, Weld, Denver, Douglas and Arapahoe. Auraria Campus students registered for at least six credit hours per semester, including summer semester, are eligible to receive CCAP.

The guidelines below must be followed:

- It is the guardian's responsibility to have their caseworker send all contract information to the AELC.
- The AELC must receive a Certificate of Authorization from the County Department of Human Services before a child can attend the center.
- It is the guardian's responsibility to use the ATS (Attendance Tracking System) every day their child attends the center.

As per the CCAP contract, if a child is absent more than the county allotted days in a month the family must contact their caseworker. The family will be charged for any times/days for which CCAP does not pay. All parental fees must be received by the 5th of each month or a late fee applies. Families must pay the parental fee assigned by their caseworker.

Denver Preschool Program (DPP)

Families who live in Denver County and have a preschooler four years of age in their last year before kindergarten may apply to receive funding toward tuition from the DPP.

For more information, visit Denver Preschool Program (DPP) | Denver, Colorado

Colorado Universal Preschool Program (UPK)

Families who live in Colorado and have a preschooler four years of age in their last year before kindergarten may apply to receive funding toward tuition from UPK.

For more information, visit UPK Colorado | For Families

MSU Denver Grant Subsidy

The MSU Denver Student Affairs Board offers a childcare subsidy program. Student guardians enrolled for at least six credit hours at MSU Denver are eligible. Guardians enrolled in online classes are not eligible.

The subsidy is generally 5–30 percent of reimbursed AELC tuition each semester. This amount may be adjusted if funds are not available for this level of subsidy.

Meals/Snacks

A full-service kitchen operates on the premises and provides breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. All meals are homemade, nutritious, and served family style. Daily menus are posted on Procare, in each classroom, on the front desk family board, and on the kitchen window. Vegetarian options are available.

Allergies

If a child has any food allergies or special dietary needs, AELC needs to be made aware of the situation in writing upon enrollment. The additional paperwork required for food allergies or preferences must be completed before your child starts at AELC. **Families must provide the center with medication for use in the event of an allergic reaction. Staff in the center are trained on Medication Administration and authorized to administer medication in the event of an emergency. Failure to provide medication or required documentation will result in withdrawal from the center.**

Substitutions

Outside food brought in by families is generally not allowed. Food substitutions may ontily be made if a child is unable to consume center-provided foods because of a disability, medical reason, or religious reason. Substitutions shall be made only when supported by a "special diet" statement from a recognized medical authority that includes recommended alternate foods. Guardians will be required to provide the recommended food substitute. AELC cannot be held responsible for any injury arising from the use of family-supplied foods.

USDA Food Program—Mandatory Participation

The AELC participates in the USDA Food Program, which enables the center to serve nutritious meals while keeping fees as low as possible.

Families are required to fill out an Income Eligibility Form annually regardless of income. This form is confidential and is necessary so the center may receive reimbursement for the meals it serves. Administrators can answer any questions about this form.

In the operation of food service programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, color, sex, age, disability, or national origin. If a family believes their child has been the subject of discrimination, they may write to the Secretary of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Center Policies

Center Anti-Discrimination Policy

The AELC is committed to ensuring equality and prohibits discrimination in all its activities and operations, ensuring explicit protection for staff, vendors, beneficiaries, and clients. Discrimination based on race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, gender, gender expression, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, pregnancy, or military status is prohibited.

Conduct of Adult Community Members Policy

As members of a community, adults at the center should strive to provide children with a model of civil and respectful behavior. Interactions between adults should support a caring and safe environment for everyone. Given that differences in opinions can arise, it is important that adults are aware of the behavior children observe when there is a conflict. Regardless of the problem, we expect community members to approach differences in opinion with an open mind and with respect for the other person and program policies. Language and behavior that is disrespectful, discriminatory, or abusive to others, including the children, is never acceptable and will subject the child to disenrollment.

Late Pick-up Policy

The Auraria Early Learning Center (AELC) is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Care is not available before 8:00 a.m. or after 5:00 p.m. under any circumstances. To ensure the safety of all children and respect the time of our staff, we have established the following late pick-up procedures and fee structure:

- If a child is not picked up by 5:00 p.m., and we have not been notified by a guardian:
    1. We will attempt to call, text, and email each guardian.
    2. If no contact is made, we will reach out to emergency contacts listed on the child's file.
- If a child is still at the Center by 6:00 p.m., and no guardian or emergency contact has been reached:
    - We will contact the Auraria Campus Police Department (ACPD).
    - If ACPD cannot locate a guardian, Denver Human Services may be notified.

Late Pick-Up Fees

Late fees begin **promptly at 5:00 p.m.**, or the Center's posted closing time.

- **1st – 3rd Offense**
    - Base Fee: $10
    - Additional Fee: $2 per minute after 5:00 p.m.
- **4th – 5th Offense**
    - Base Fee: $25
    - Additional Fee: $5 per minute after 5:00 p.m.
- **6th Offense and Beyond**
    - Continued enrollment is at the discretion of the Director.
    - Families with more than 5 late pick-ups in one calendar year may be withdrawn from the program.

Late pick-up records reset each August with the start of a new school year.

Fee Payment & Expectations

- Late pick-up fees will be added to the following month's bill and must be paid by the 5th.
- Families must call ahead in case of emergencies.
- If pick-up will be more than five minutes late, alternate arrangements should be made in advance.

We kindly ask families to be mindful of our staff's time and personal responsibilities. Your cooperation helps us provide a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all children and staff.

Early Release/Delayed Open Schedule Policy

In the event there is an early release from the Center or we are following a delayed open schedule, communication regarding the situation and process will be sent in several ways:

- Guardians will receive a Procare message from an administrator.
- Guardians will also receive a text and email from the Auraria Campus' Rave System, if they have previously opted in to receive those notifications.
- The Auraria Campus' closures are listed on local news agencies' websites.
- The snow line for Auraria Campus is 1-877-556- EMER (3637)
- Guardians can also check the Auraria Campus website for the latest information.

On a day that we are following a delayed open schedule, drop off windows will be communicated with the delayed open time. Children MUST be dropped off within the communicated drop-off window if guardians plan to have their children attend that day.

If there is an early release from the Center, families are expected to pick up their child by the stated closing time. If families do not pick-up their child by the early release time, the late pick-up policy will take effect.

In the case of an emergency where the center is closed immediately, families are expected to pick up their child within 30 minutes of the closure notification. If families do not pick up their child within 30 minutes of the notification, the late pick-up policy will take effect.

Two-Week Trial Period

All children will be enrolled on a trial basis for the first two weeks. At the end of this period (or anytime thereafter) if there are any concerns about whether or not the program can meet the needs of the child, the child's family will be asked to meet with the teacher and the classroom team leader. Staff will make every effort to ensure continued enrollment for a child who is having difficulties. However, the center has to take into consideration the best interests of the child, current staffing patterns, and all enrolled children. If the AELC is unable to meet the needs of a child, staff will attempt to help the family find a program that is more suitable for the child's needs.

Center Expectations

- Children must stay with their guardians at all times during drop off and pickup.
- Walking and quiet voices are required in the hallways.
- Guardians must supervise their children when they are in their presence.
- Guardians must watch children carefully in the parking circle, taking care to prevent children from walking in the street.
- Parking is not allowed on the inside of the parking circle.
- Guardians and staff must make contact with each other during drop off and pickup daily.
- Cell phones are not allowed in classrooms. All calls must be completed outside before entering classrooms.
- If you are posting to social media any photos we have shared with you or that you have taken in the center, you must only post pictures of your child. If there are other children in the photo you must blur or cover their faces for their privacy.
- The AELC respects a guardian's right to discipline in the fashion they feel is appropriate, but AELC policies must be followed in the center: no physical punishment, no shaming, and no restriction of food at mealtimes.

Disruptive Behavior

It is not unusual for a child who is having difficulty controlling their emotions to also be highly disruptive. When this occurs, teachers often spend considerable time with individual children, while others receive only minimal attention. If a child's behavior management issues reach such a point, the guardian will be called to pick up the child for the rest of the day (when practicable, guardians will be forewarned via Procare message).

If children are not ready to accept the limits that are necessary to protect themselves and others, an informal Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) may be completed to determine the nature of the challenging behavior. The assessment may include observations by an administrator as well as developmental checklists and/or a functional behavior assessment. Once the function of the behavior has been determined, an informal Behavior Support Plan will be developed.

An administrator will be consulted to provide the classroom with new strategies.

Chronic aggression against other children will not be tolerated. If a child is chronically aggressive, a family conference will be scheduled to discuss possible triggers for the aggression, and to develop techniques to eliminate the behavior. If a behavior problem continues after the implementation of corrective measures, guardians will need to obtain outside intervention. If outside intervention is refused or does not result in a positive change in the child, the AELC may determine that its resources cannot support the child with being successful at the center. At that time, staff will help the family find other care.

Disenrollment Policy

The AELC reserves the right to cancel enrollment of a child for any of the following reasons:

- Tuition is more than two weeks late.
- A family does not observe the policies, procedures, financial agreement, or payment policies described in this handbook.
- Failure to provide or renew child's medical statement and immunization record or any other necessary paperwork.
- Physical, verbal, or written abuse by a guardian directed at AELC employees, other guardians, or children. (If a guardian has a complaint about the AELC's staff or administration, all parties must conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner.)
- Behavior by a guardian that is disruptive in the classroom or within the grounds of the AELC.
- Outside intervention for a behavior problem is refused or does not result in a positive change in a child.
- A child is a danger to them self.
- A child is a danger to classmates.
- A child is a danger to teachers.
- A child is disruptive to the learning of others in the classroom.
- A child is requiring too much one-on-one attention.
- A child is three years old and not toilet trained.
- The AELC cannot meet the needs of a child with current staff and/or staffing patterns.
- The family has been late five times for pickup.
- The family repeatedly does not complete the check in/out process.
- The family cannot be contacted in case of illness, injury, closure, or emergency.

Inclusion Policy

The Auraria Early Learning Center (AELC) is committed to providing an inclusive learning environment in which all children and families feel welcomed, valued, and supported. Inclusion is defined as the practice of ensuring equitable access to opportunities and resources for all children, including those who may have physical, developmental, cognitive, behavioral, or emotional needs.

Inclusion is a core value at AELC and reflects our belief that every child has the right to participate fully in early childhood experiences. We strive to create a safe, respectful, and developmentally appropriate environment where diversity is celebrated, and individual strengths and needs are acknowledged and supported.

1. Family Communication and Disclosure
    - Families are expected to share any relevant developmental, behavioral, medical, or educational documentation, including but not limited to Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), or 504 Plans, at the time of enrollment or as soon as such documentation becomes available.
    - Disclosure allows for informed planning and supports the development of individualized strategies that facilitate a successful experience for the child.
2. Formal Inclusion Process Upon receiving information regarding a child's unique needs, AELC will initiate the following formalized process:
    - Initial Meeting: A meeting will be scheduled with the family, supervising teacher, senior lead supervising teacher, and a member of the administrative team (Director or Assistant Director) to review the child's individual needs, goals, and available support services.
    - Team Collaboration: The teaching team and administration will evaluate the information provided, identify available supports, and determine if additional staffing, environmental adjustments, or resources are necessary.
    - Individualized Support Plan (ISP): An ISP will be developed outlining specific accommodations, strategies, and goals for the child. This plan will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed.
    - Coordination with External Professionals: With family consent, AELC staff will coordinate with external professionals when feasible such as therapists, early interventionists, or school district support staff to align strategies and ensure continuity of care and support.
    - Ongoing Review: Staff will document observations, monitor the child's progress, and communicate regularly with the family to evaluate the effectiveness of the support plan.
3. Staff Involvement
    - Classroom staff are active participants in the inclusion process, contributing to planning, implementation, and reflection.
    - The Senior Lead Supervising Teacher mentors staff and assists with curriculum and environment adaptations.
    - AELC staff receive ongoing professional development in inclusive practices, disability awareness, and culturally responsive care.

4. Communication and Documentation
    - Families will receive regular updates regarding their child's participation and progress.
    - Families can request an update if they feel it is needed.
    - Communication will be documented and stored in accordance with confidentiality guidelines.
    - Any changes to the support plan or new concerns will prompt a review and meeting with the family and relevant team members.
5. Determination of Appropriate Placement
    - AELC is committed to making reasonable accommodations to support the full participation of children with disabilities. However, if the child's needs exceed the capacity of our program (e.g., require intensive therapeutic intervention), AELC will:
        - Discuss concerns openly with the family
        - Provide referrals to public school systems or third-party providers
        - Support the family in transitioning to a more appropriate program setting
    - Placement decisions will be made with the child's best interests in mind and in accordance with professional and ethical standards.
6. Review of Inclusion Practices
    - All inclusion policies and practices will be reviewed annually by AELC leadership to ensure alignment with licensing requirements, special education law, best practices, and the evolving needs of the children and families we served.

This policy is designed to promote equity, foster collaboration, and ensure that every child receives the support they need to thrive in our program. The success of inclusive education at AELC depends on strong partnerships among families, staff, and community professionals.

Reasonable Accommodations Policy

The Auraria Early Learning Center (AELC) is committed to providing an inclusive environment that ensures all children and families are welcomed, respected, and supported. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act (CADA), and Colorado State Child Care Licensing Rules, the AELC provides equal access and reasonable accommodations to all children, including those with disabilities or developmental differences.

AELC ensures that children with disabilities are integrated into regular group activities to the greatest extent possible, consistent with the child's needs and the nature of our program.

Legal & Licensing Framework

This policy is guided by the following:

- ADA & CADA: Require that no child with a disability be excluded due to a disability-related need, unless reasonable accommodations would fundamentally alter the nature of the program or pose an undue burden.
  Americans with Disabilities Act | Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (colorado.gov)
  The Americans with Disabilities Act | ADA.gov
- IDEA: Children attending private child care programs such as AELC are not legally entitled to publicly funded special education services in the same manner as children enrolled in public school programs.
  Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) | U.S. Department of Education
- Colorado Child Care Licensing (Section 7.702.61): Requires that programs assess their capacity to meet a child's needs with or without accommodations before determining enrollment or continuation.
- Rules And Regulations | Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- ECERS/ITERS Guidelines: (ECERS p.24, ITERS p.23) Emphasize individualized care, family involvement, accessibility of materials and environments, and collaboration with specialists to support full inclusion. Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale®, Third Edition | Environment Rating Scales® (unc.edu)

Formalized Inclusion Process

The following process will be implemented when a child has a disability or documented need:

1. Family Disclosure and Initial Communication
   - Families are asked to provide any documentation such as an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), Individualized Education Plan (IEP), or medical/developmental diagnosis at the time of enrollment or as soon as it is received.
   - A confidential intake meeting will be scheduled with the Assistant Director, Supervising Teacher, and Senior Lead Supervising Teacher to review the child's profile and discuss potential supports.
2. Team Assessment and Accommodation Planning
   - The teaching team, in collaboration with the administrative staff, will assess whether the AELC can meet the child's needs without fundamentally altering the nature of the program or placing undue hardship on staff or the center.

- If determined feasible, reasonable accommodations will be planned and documented in an Individualized Support Plan (ISP). Accommodations may include, but are not limited to:
    - Modifying materials or schedules
    - Environmental adjustments
    - Differentiated instruction or sensory supports

3. Ongoing Collaboration with Families and Professionals

- AELC encourages families to actively participate in planning and review meetings.
- With guardian consent, external professionals (e.g., therapists, early interventionists) are welcome to visit, observe, and provide input to align strategies between settings.
- Communication will be ongoing and documented through:
    - Scheduled family-teacher check-ins
    - Semesterly ISP review meetings
    - Emails, calls, or written updates as appropriate

4. Program Evaluation and Continued Fit

- If the child's needs exceed the reasonable capacity of AELC (e.g., requiring consistent therapeutic care not available on site), the Director will meet with the family to discuss:
    - Referrals to public school systems or outside agencies
    - Coordination for a supportive transition plan
- Enrollment decisions will be made based on an individualized assessment of the child's needs and AELC's ability to meet them while maintaining program integrity and staff capacity.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- All classroom staff participate in planning, implementing, and reviewing accommodations and inclusion strategies.
- The Senior Lead Supervising Teacher mentors and guides staff in adjusting classroom environments and curriculum.
- Staff receive ongoing professional development on inclusive practices, disability awareness, and cultural responsiveness to ensure high-quality care and education for every child.

Ongoing Communication

Open, respectful, and timely communication is essential for successful inclusion:

- Families will receive regular updates on progress, goals, and classroom participation.
- AELC staff will schedule semesterly meetings and remain available for additional discussions as needed.
- Families are encouraged to reach out with concerns, updates, or requests for changes to their child's ISP or accommodations.

Summary of AELC's Inclusion Commitments:

- We comply with state and federal anti-discrimination laws
- We provide individualized, developmentally appropriate support to children with and without formal plans. DAP: Defining Developmentally Appropriate Practice | NAEYC
- We maintain an open-door policy for collaboration with families and external professionals

- We assess all accommodation requests case-by-case, using a team-based approach
- We commit to ongoing review, communication, and professional development to support inclusion

Classroom Closing Procedures

The closing procedures list is available at the front desk. Each staff member assigned to close a classroom will make sure all children are picked up when the center closes. This will be verified by an administrator.

Disaster Emergency Evacuation Plan

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building, occupants of the AELC will meet at the Confluence Building and wait for direction from the Auraria Campus Police Department. Supervising teachers (or their delegates) will account for all children by taking role using the Procare app. **It is important that families sign-in/sign-out their child using the Procare app every day**.

The center uses Procare, emergency cards, and/or the RAVE system to contact guardians. These emergency contact numbers must be kept updated with the front desk to ensure families receive announcements and are able to be contacted in case of an emergency.

Emergency and Security Procedures

Fire, tornado, and lockdown drills are performed monthly at unexpected times and under varying conditions to simulate conditions of an actual emergency event.. Each classroom has a map posted by the door showing the proper exits and emergency destinations. There are emergency buttons located in each classroom and at each end of the building. These buttons immediately alert the Auraria Campus Police Department. Each classroom and playground have an emergency box that directly communicates with the Auraria Campus Police Department. The front desk is staffed during hours of operation with someone who monitors the doors. The front doors are locked between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. All other doors are locked at all times. The intercom outside the double doors will be used to communicate with people we do not recognize. Front doors will be locked at any time we deem necessary for center security.

Licensing Rules and Regulations

All licensing rules and regulations are followed by the center. A copy of the rules can be found at Home | Colorado Department of Early Childhood

Parking

Parking areas in front of the AELC and along 9th Street are 20-minute loading zones only, meant for dropping off and picking up children. **Parking is not permitted along the island directly in front of the AELC. Children are frequently in this area, so extra caution and slow speeds are required**. Guardians and children need to be mindful and careful when leaving vehicles. Families should be patient and courteous with other children and families who are parking and entering the building.

Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care

Research supports primary caregiving and continuity of care as a strong foundation for optimal development and learning. Primary caregiving assigns a child and family to one supervising teacher who gets acquainted with the child, the child's family, family culture, temperament, cues, and personality to enable the teacher to be responsive to the child's developmental needs.

Primary caregiving, combined with continuity of care, creates strong home-school partnerships, fosters communication between teachers and families, helps develop strong friendships, and paves the way for a responsive, child-centered curriculum. The AELC fosters these relationships by assigning children to one classroom with a supervising teacher for at least one year and longer, when feasible (contingent on enrollment date/age). When children move to a new classroom, guardians and children are notified in advance. Introductions to the new teacher are made, and a transition period takes place with frequent visits to the next room. Information regarding the transition is emailed to guardians and a transition meeting is scheduled if deemed necessary.

Transition into Classroom

At the AELC, we understand that transitioning into a new classroom can be both exciting and challenging for children and families. We aim to make this process as smooth as possible by providing ample support and information. Prior to a child transitioning into a new classroom, guardians will be notified. The transitioning process includes introductions to the new teacher and frequent visits to the new classroom to familiarize the child with the environment. Detailed information about the transition will be communicated via email and, if necessary, a transition meeting will be scheduled to address any concerns or questions guardians may have. For children that are new to our center, tours are offered to guardians to answer any questions and show them the classroom. Once enrollment is confirmed and enrollment paperwork is returned, guardians are then invited to visit their child's classroom with their child for about 30 minutes in the morning. This allows the child and family to meet the teachers and for the child to be familiar with the staff. Guardians are allowed to set up a time to visit several times before the child's first day.

Transition within the Program

Transitions within our program, such as moving to the next age group, are carefully planned and communicated to families. We make every attempt to make the transitions as smooth as possible for both the child and guardian by working in partnership with the family on the timeline and process of the transition. Our teachers and administrative team are familiar with each specific child and involve the family voice by encouraging open dialogue about room preference or specific needs for the child. Factors considered for these transitions include space availability, individual readiness of the child, classroom dynamics, child interactions and birth dates. Once a path forward is determined by the team, AELC will provide guardians with advanced notice of their child's transition to a new age group, along with information about the transition process. The schedule for transition is as follows:

1 hour visit in the morning after breakfast	2 hour visit in the morning after breakfast	Visit all morning-after breakfast through lunch	Visit most of day-after breakfast through nap	Dropped off in new classroom and picked up in new classroom

We encourage guardians to engage in open communication with our staff to ensure a smooth transition for their child. The current teacher will provide a detailed transition report to the new teacher that shares information about the child's likes and dislikes.

Parents are consulted on the timing of the transition and invited to visit the new classroom with their child at pick up. Each room asks for a "getting to know you" form along with an updated family picture to use in the classroom. Providing this prior to the start of enrollment in the new classroom is preferred so we can better meet the needs of your child.

Transition out of the Program

When it is time for a child to transition out of our program, whether due to reaching the age limit or other reasons, we understand the significance of this transition for both the child and the family. Guardians will be provided with guidance and support to facilitate this transition. Our staff will work closely with families to ensure that necessary steps are taken to prepare the child for their next educational journey.

To support a child's transition to a new program, we work with the family on the timing and process of that transition. We offer an exit packet provided to the family unit to share the most recent assessment data, this information can assist the new school setting and teachers. Information and best practice resources about transitioning out of the program will be shared with families well in advance and we are committed to providing any assistance needed during this process.

Transition to Kindergarten

Transitioning to kindergarten is a major milestone in a child's life and we recognize the importance of preparing both the child and the family for this transition. As part of our commitment to family partnership, we actively involve families in decision-making related to transitioning to kindergarten. We provide families with resources and information about local kindergarten programs and assist them in navigating the enrollment process. Our staff will work closely with families to ensure a smooth transition to kindergarten, including facilitating communication between our program and the receiving schools. We encourage open dialogue and collaboration between our staff and families to address any concerns or questions regarding this transition.

Involvement of Families

At the AELC, we believe that families play a crucial role in their child's educational journey, including during times of transition. We actively involve families in decision-making processes related to transitions by soliciting their input and feedback. Families are encouraged to share their preferences, concerns, and any additional information that may assist us in planning for and supporting their child's transition. We value the insights and perspectives of our families and strive to collaborate with them every step of the way.

Connecting Families with Schools

We understand the importance of continuity and collaboration between our program and the receiving schools when children transition to another school or kindergarten. Our staff facilitates connections between families and schools by providing information about local schools, assisting with enrollment procedures, and establishing communication channels between our program and the receiving schools. The AELC provides workshops with local school districts to navigate the school choice process once in house and via zoom. We work closely with families to ensure a seamless transition process and provide ongoing support as needed.

At the AELC, we are committed to fostering strong partnerships with families and ensuring that transitions are handled with care and consideration for the well-being of the child and family. We welcome feedback from families and are dedicated to continuously improving our transition policies and practices to best meet the needs of our community.

Release of Children

The center will release children only to adults who have written authorization. In an emergency, the child may also be released to an adult for whom the child's guardian has given verbal authorization. If a staff member who releases the child does not know the adult, identification is required, and the child may not be released until the adult has provided identification to confirm they are a person on the child's authorized pick-up list.

Unauthorized individuals will not be allowed to pick up a child. If an attempt is made, the individual will be asked to leave the premises. If the individual refuses, the police will be called. The custodial guardian will also be notified.

Auraria Early Learning Center respects the rights of guardians to access their child. However, if AELC staff feels a guardian is in an unsafe condition to drive or leave with their child (such as under the influence of drugs or alcohol), the AELC staff may suggest that the guardian call the other guardian, a friend or relative, or a cab. Your child's safety is of the utmost importance to us, so if you refuse assistance the AELC staff may also call campus police for assistance or to report the incident.

Divorced/Separated Guardians

Until legal custody has been established by a court action, one guardian may not limit the other from picking the child up from the Early Learning Center. It is not within the AELC's legal right to withhold a child from a guardian unless there has been court action that limits one guardian's right to the child. The AELC requests that a complete copy of the judge's order establishing custody is on file to prevent a non-custodial guardian from accessing the child. AELC will work with guardians sharing custody to follow court ordered custody agreements but cannot be held responsible for unofficial agreements between guardians.

Recognizing that each family has its own unique dynamics, we value our role as partners in your family and refrain from involvement in disputes between guardians. We kindly request that guardians establish a communication plan with each other, as we will not intervene in these dynamics.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

At all times, the safety and well-being of the children at the AELC is paramount. Communication is very important. Guardians will be kept informed as the situation allows.

It is required by law that any and all incidences of suspected child abuse and/or neglect of a child be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services for investigation. It is the responsibility of the Department of Human Services/Police to determine what abuse/neglect (if any) has occurred in such a case. These laws apply to both staff and guardians, and any staff member under investigation for suspected child abuse or neglect will immediately be put on leave.

Examples of incidents the AELC is required to report include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Marks or bruises on a child that are unexplained or seem unlikely to have occurred as a result of the explanation given.
- Marks or bruises on a child caused by disciplining a child.
- Reports by the child of abusive/neglectful treatment, or observations by staff members of harsh, abusive, or neglectful treatment of a child.
- Failure of the guardian to obtain appropriate medical care for a child.
- Observations by staff of inappropriate sexual behavior by a child.
- Observations by staff of possible neglect of appropriate hygiene and/or provision of appropriate clothing, food, and shelter.

Child Abuse Hotline: 720-944-3000

To make a complaint: 303-866-5958

Visitors/Volunteers

Students, early childhood professionals, family members, and others may visit the AELC. A log of visitors/volunteers is kept at the front desk. No visitors/volunteers are admitted without an approved purpose.

All regular attending volunteers, including Foster Grandparent Program, are required to complete the same staff licensing requirements as permanent staff members.

Foster Grandparent Program

The Volunteers of America Foster Grandparent Program is a fun, cross-generational program where seniors volunteer at the AELC to help care for the children. The program offers seniors the opportunity to use their experience to improve the lives of children. Because many children do not live close to their biological grandparents, foster grandparents serve as a proxy for the traditional child-grandparent relationship, benefiting all involved.

Auraria Campus Student Use of the Center

The AELC welcomes students on the Auraria Campus to utilize the AELC for course-required observation, research, documentation, internships, and activities. Students in early childhood education courses can complete their lab/field experiences at the AELC. All Auraria Campus students will be supervised by the classroom teacher or an administrator.

Classroom Policies

Identifying Children's Whereabouts

The AELC uses the Procare app for sign-in/sign-out at all times to identify the location of children in the center and classrooms. **It is extremely important that families use the Procare app to sign-in/sign-out.** Full names are required for signatures. Do not allow your child to "sign" for you. These records affect children's safety, emergency situations, attendance records, and reimbursement for the food program. Sign-in/sign-out information will be with the class at all times through their Procare devices. **Families that repeatedly neglect to sign children in or out are subject to disenrollment**.

Birthdays

In-class birthday celebrations are encouraged. Please give the child's supervising teacher a few days' notice for a birthday celebration. The teacher will inform guardians about the number of children in the class and the best time to visit the class for a celebration. If guardians plan on bringing treats, they should check with the classroom teacher regarding allergies. Food with peanuts must be avoided. Homemade food is not allowed due to Human Services and Public Health regulations. All food items must be prepackaged.

Blankets and Cuddlies

Children may bring a special blanket or cuddly from home if it fits in the nap box. If it is left at school, it will be washed regularly with the nap bedding. If you would like to take it home nightly, it is up to you to remember to take it with you and wash it regularly.

Clothing

Children should be dressed in sturdy, comfortable clothing that is suitable for play. It is best if the clothing is child manageable. Please mark all clothing and outerwear with the child's name using a permanent marker or a clothing label. Although teachers work hard to keep track of children's clothing, sometimes items are misplaced. The AELC will not be responsible for misplaced items.

Children spend time outdoors each day and should have appropriate outdoor wear. It's important to understand the normal wear and tear that occurs to kids' clothes in an activity-based program. Children may return home with sand, dirt, and occasionally paint on their clothes. The AELC is not responsible for replacing or reimbursing the cost of any ruined clothing. Smocks are used, but active children sometimes get dirty!

Outdoor Play/Extreme Weather

All children in care for more than five hours at the AELC must be provided with at least 60 minutes of daily gross motor activity. This will take place outdoors when the weather permits. When the weather is above 20 degrees and below 90 degrees, children will go outside unless the weather is determined to be too inclement or there is poor air quality. Therefore, it is important that all children dress appropriately for the predicted weather each day. If children are too ill to participate in outdoor play, they are considered too ill to come to school. The AELC requires sunscreen unless a doctor's note is provided. ALEC staff apply sunscreen before each period of outdoor play. If the child has a special preference for sunscreen their family is required to provide this.

Children's Belongings

Children's personal belongings, including extra clothes, coats, shoes, etc. are kept in cubbies. Guardians must check their child's cubby each day and take home any clothes that need to be washed. All children must have a change of clothes at the center that includes a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. No choking hazards, "keep out of reach of children" items, backpacks or bags with straps, plastic bags, money, medicine, or valuables should not be left in cubbies.

Remember that all items that are brought to school must fit in a small cubby. This is a requirement to meet Health Department regulations.

Discipline and Guidance

The AELC uses several guidance techniques to help children internalize rules and become self-directed in their behavior. These include the following:

- Giving choices
- Problem solving
- Natural and logical consequences
- Ignoring
- Redirecting
- "Cooling off" periods

Guardians may not physically discipline their children in the center. AELC staff work with children to help them find alternatives to responding physically in stressful situations and strive to make the center an environment where hitting is not acceptable. It would be confusing to the children to see that there are exceptions to the rules in school. The staff will not impose restrictions on a child's behavior that are inconsistent with AELC rules.

Additional information on discipline is available from classroom teachers.

Positive Guidance

Positive guidance at the AELC includes:

- Cultivating positive child, staff, and family relationships
- Creating and maintaining a socially and emotionally respectful early learning and care environment
- Implementing teaching strategies supporting positive behavior, pro-social peer interaction, and overall social and emotional competence in young children
- Providing individualized social and emotional intervention support
- Providing access to an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialists as needed

The AELC maintains the above ideals in the following ways:

Staff keep children actively engaged in order to decrease the frequency of behavior problems in the classroom. Transition activities help children move smoothly from one activity to another. Teachers use only positive guidance and redirection. Setting consistent, clear, understandable limits and fostering the child's ability to become self–disciplined is

the ultimate goal. Staff try to ignore negative behavior as much as possible (since much of it is an effort for attention) and reinforce appropriate behavior.

Tactics for positive guidance may include the following:

- Preparing the environment to avoid unnecessary conflicts for children.
- Creating psychological safety through predictable routines, expectations, and schedules.
- Helping children to know and understand the classroom rules.
- Giving children positive verbal redirection, if necessary.
- Helping children express their wants, needs, and feelings.
- Helping children to understand the wants, needs, and feelings of others.
- Supporting children in learning to resolve conflicts with others and giving opportunities for children to solve problems.
- Protecting the safety of others by removing a child from a group, if necessary.
- Keeping guardians informed of their child's behavior and collaborating on strategies with guardians.

AELC staff are careful to model peaceful conflict resolution with each other and to teach children negotiating skills, when appropriate. The staff's role is to help children modulate their extreme emotions and learn alternative ways of expressing emotion without harming others. This process takes time and looks slightly different among age groups.

Field Trips and Transportation of Children

AELC staff often take children on walks around the Auraria Campus. All field trips will require additional signed permission from the family. Guardians will be informed of any field trips via Procare. If a family arrives after the child's class has left the center for a field trip or does not provide permission, the child will not be able to attend that day. Guardians are invited to participate in outings if feasible. AELC will notify guardians if chaperones are needed. The AELC does not use vans or guardian's vehicles as means of transportation; only walking field trips or public transportation methods are used. In the event of an accident, emergency health care procedures will be followed.

Naps

All children enrolled will have a nap or rest period. The length of the rest time is dependent on the age and needs of a child. At least 30 minutes of nap time must be offered.

Donations

The AELC welcomes donations of almost any kind! The child's classroom teacher can provide guardians with a list of needed materials. Financial donations can be made via check. Fundraising opportunities happen throughout the year and a list of ongoing fundraisers is on the Family Resource board at the front desk.

Toddler Requirements

Toddlers are required to walk without assistance unless they have an IFSP or Doctor's note for physical development.

Guardians must supply children's disposable diapers. Cloth diapers are not allowed unless an allergy exists, and a doctor's note will be required. If a child runs out of diapers, a message will be sent on Procare and there will be a reminder when the guardian picks up the child. Guardians are expected to bring diapers the next day. Guardians who forget diapers will be asked to bring diapers to the center immediately or will be expected to pick up the child.

If a child is in the process of toilet training, enough changes of underwear and clothing will need to be available in the cubby. A washable bag for soiled clothes is also required. The AELC approach to toilet learning includes positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children are not pushed or shamed into using the toilet. Most children no longer require diapers and are using the toilet regularly by the age of two and a half to three years old.

To move up to young preschool, toddlers must fully potty trained and not in diapers or pull-ups, including nap time. Children must independently recognize when they need to use the restroom and be able to dress themselves. Toddlers are required to move up when they turn three years old.

Absences

If a child is going to be absent, guardians must call the AELC front desk or send a Procare message. If the absence is due to illness, guardians should tell the AELC staff about the child's symptoms and if the illness is contagious. Absence credit is not given.

Supervision of Children

Children are under the direct supervision of AELC staff at all times. Guardians must sign their child in and make sure that staff is aware of their arrival. When guardians pick up their child, they must sign the child out and be sure the teacher is aware that the child is leaving for the day. Guardians are responsible for supervising their child in the center after the child has been signed out of the classroom. It is extremely important that guardians are careful about accompanying children out of the center and into the car, bus, etc.

Television and Video Viewing

The AELC program does not include regular television viewing. Occasionally, short videos or programs specifically designed for educational purposes and aligned with developmental goals may be shown. These may include movement-based games, phonics development tools, or other age-appropriate digital learning content. Media is only used as a supplement to curriculum-based instruction and never as a substitute for active learning or engagement.

Movies will not be shown at the center due to copyright restrictions.

The ELC's media and internet usage is guided by a structured media plan that outlines screen and digital content use in alignment with our curriculum. For children over the age of five (5), staff will engage in ongoing conversations about safe online practices to support

digital literacy and responsible media use. Parents will be informed about media activities and any changes to the media plan as they arise.

Toys, Candy, Money, or Food from Home

Guardians need to check with a child's supervising teacher before bringing toys to school. Sharing personal toys is difficult for young children. The AELC is not responsible if a toy is lost or broken. There is a designated space for children to leave their small toy from home at the front in our toy parking lot. Items must fit inside the space provided.

Children are prohibited from bringing candy, money, and food from home. Exceptions may be made when a child has special dietary requirements with guardians providing all meals, or when a guardian provides birthday or holiday treats for a group.

Cellphone Policy

In the interest of increasing teacher and guardian communication, we ask families to refrain from using your cellphone at drop off and pick up time.

Health & Safety

Illness

AELC is unable to provide care for sick children. If a child develops signs of illness during the school day, AELC staff will contact the family immediately by Procare message and phone call. If they are unable to reach a guardian, they will notify the emergency contact. Sick children must be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

- Children need to remain out of the center until they recover from their symptoms. **Children must be able to participate in all aspects of the program, and teachers will use their discretion to determine if a child is well enough to be at the center even if a physician states that the child is well enough to attend.** AELC policies overrule a physician's recommendations. Children may not return to school until they have been symptom free (without medication) for 24 to 48 hours depending on illness and amount of illness within the center or community.

Illness Policy

It is the family's responsibility to notify the center that their child has a communicable disease, such as measles; mumps; meningitis; T.B.; hepatitis; lice; ring worm; chicken pox; salmonella; hand, foot and mouth disease; flu; Covid-19; etc. Children may be readmitted without a statement from a health practitioner only if they have been absent for a period of time equal to the longest incubation period of the disease as specified by the Children's Hospital School Health Program guidelines.

Deciding whether to keep a child at home or whether AELC staff should send a child home can be difficult. It is important for guardians and caregivers to discuss what symptoms they have observed and agree on a plan of action based on consensus about what symptoms require that children stay home.

There are four reasons to keep a child home due to illness:

1) The child is at risk of infecting others with COVID-19 or another contagious illness, either because of symptoms or recent close contact.
2) The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in usual activities.
3) The child requires more care than the staff is able to provide without affecting the health and safety of the other children.
4) The illness is on the following chart of symptoms, for which exclusion is recommended.

Source: School and Child Care Guidelines School and Child Care Guidelines - Google Docs

The Exclusion Guidelines were developed by CDPHE and are used as a guide, AELC policies overrule a physician's recommendations.

Symptom	Exclusion guidelines
Cough	Exclusion is recommended if the child is experiencing severe, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, having difficulty breathing, becoming red or blue in the face, making high-pitched whooping sounds after coughing, or vomiting after coughing.
Diarrhea (defined as stools that are more frequent and looser than usual)	Exclusion is recommended (for at least 24 hours after the last episode of diarrhea) if any of the following conditions apply: the child has other symptoms along with the diarrhea (such as vomiting, fever, abdominal pain, jaundice, etc.), the diarrhea cannot be contained in a toilet, there is blood or mucous in the stool, or the child is in diapers.
Earache	No exclusion is necessary.
Fever (defined as a body temperature from any site over 100.4˚F)	No exclusion is necessary, unless the child has symptoms in addition to the fever, such as a rash, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, etc.
Headache	No exclusion is necessary, unless the headache is severe and accompanied by additional symptoms like vision problems, stiff neck, or behavior change.
Jaundice or unusual color of the skin, eyes, stool, or urine	Exclusion is recommended until a medical exam indicates the child does not have hepatitis A.
Mouth sores	Exclusion is recommended if the child is drooling uncontrollably.
Rash	Exclusion is recommended if the child has symptoms in addition to the rash, such as behavior change, fever, joint pain, or bruising not associated with injury, or if the rash is oozing or causes open wounds. Find additional information on rashes later in this document.
Stomach ache/abdominal pain	Exclusion is recommended if the pain is severe, if the pain appears after an injury, or if the child had symptoms in addition to the stomach ache (such as vomiting, fever, diarrhea, jaundice, etc.).
Swollen glands (properly called swollen lymph nodes)	Exclusion is recommended if the child has symptoms in addition to the swollen glands, such as difficulty breathing or swallowing, fever, etc.
Vomiting	Exclusion is recommended (for at least 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting) if the child has vomited more than two times in 24 hours, if the vomit appears bloody, if the child has a recent head injury, or if the child has symptoms in addition to the vomiting (such as fever, diarrhea, etc.).

Medical Insurance

The AELC strongly encourages all families to maintain medical insurance and a physician for their child. The AELC collects child medical insurance information and medical home information. When a family does not have access to a medical home or coverage, a comprehensive list of resources is provided to the family to ensure that the child obtains medical coverage.

Health Check

Upon daily arrival, children will be observed for signs of illness or other evidence of being contagious. Any child with the following symptoms will not be admitted:

- A temperature over 100 degrees
- Discharge from ears
- Discharge from eyes or red eyes
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any rash or skin lesion
- Signs of cold: tiredness, sore throat, runny nose, sneezes, or coughing

Contagious Diseases

Guardians are required to notify the center if their child has contracted a contagious illness. The AELC is required to give notice to DDPHE or CDPHE of all contagious diseases. Children may not return to school until they have been symptom free for 24 to 48 hours based on current health guidelines from state licensing and the Centers for Disease Control. Ultimately, the decision to allow a child to return is up to the discretion of administrative staff.

Accidents/Injuries

An accident report will be filled out and sent to guardians through the Procare app for all accidents or injuries that occur at the AELC. Guardians will be called immediately if an accident or injury is severe enough to require medical attention. Emergency procedures will be implemented, if needed.

Emergency Procedures

Guardians will be contacted as soon as practicable in the event of an emergency.

Families must keep emergency numbers up-to-date. In case of a serious emergency, 911 will be called and the paramedics will decide where to transport a child. The costs of emergency medical services are the family's responsibility.

All supervising and assisting teachers are required to be certified in CPR and First Aid.

Allergies

Children with various allergies attend the AELC. **It is extremely important that all staff members are made aware of the allergies of any child under their care**. A list of all children who have allergies, along with photos of those children, will be posted in the eating area of the child's classroom and on the classroom's lunch cart.

A child's allergies must be disclosed on the enrollment paperwork. If the allergy involves a substance that the child could come into contact with at the AELC, guardians must fill out a Severe Allergy Information Form. The Severe Allergy Information Form outlines the procedures for a child who has an allergic reaction at the center. This form must be signed by a doctor and updated yearly or if allergy status changes. **Families must provide the center with medication for use in the event of an allergic reaction. Failure to provide medication or required documentation will result in withdrawal from the center.**

Cloth Diapers

If children need cloth diapers for a medical reason, the diaper needs to have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering should be able to be changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing and avoidable handling) and sent home the same day for laundering.

Handwashing

Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of disease. Children and adults must wash their hands in these scenarios:

- Upon entering the classroom
- After using the toilet or diapering
- After blowing their noses or having contact with any bodily fluids
- Before and after meals and snacks
- Before preparing food, serving food, or eating
- After outside time
- After handling pets
- When hands are noticeably soiled

Health and Immunization Requirements

The AELC maintains updated health information for every child enrolled at the center. Colorado childcare regulations require that a health care form and immunization record, signed by a licensed doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician's assistant, must be submitted at the time of admission to the center.

Updated health care and immunization forms must be submitted according to the guidelines. For toddlers and preschoolers, updates are required at 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, 2 ½ years, and annually at 3 years old along with current copy of immunizations.

Additional immunization forms may be required to show Covid-19 immunization or if a child is on an alternative vaccination schedule.

Failure to provide updated health and immunization information will result in suspension and possible disenrollment until the forms are submitted.

Immunizations

The AELC enrolls children who are not immunized due to personal, medical, or religious beliefs. Any child not immunized per Colorado law faces exclusion from the AELC in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease.

Masking Policy

The AELC supports any children, guardians, or staff that choose to wear a mask due to the high-risk environment of the classroom setting. If at any time the CDC Community Level for Denver County reaches High or the Denver Department of Public Health recommends it, masks will be required indoors for all individuals 2 years old and older regardless of vaccination status.

Medication

Due to regulations by the Colorado Department of Human Services, AELC staff are unable to administer any medications, except in the event of an emergency. However, guardians may give children any needed medication at the center. Guardians should NEVER leave medications in children's bags or in the classroom.

In the case of life-threatening allergies or medical conditions, emergency medication will be given by an administrator or supervising teacher. These medications should be given to the supervising teacher to be kept in a locked cabinet. The center and its staff are not responsible for injuries or damages sustained as a result of giving emergency medication.

Additional paperwork will be required for allergies or medical conditions that require emergency medication. This paperwork is due before enrolling. Individualized Health Care Plans must be updated annually or as changes occur. Medication that has expired must be collected and a new set of medication that matches the Emergency Medication Plan must be provided. If the AELC does not have proper medication and documentation, the child will not be permitted to attend until it is provided.

Missing/Lost Children

Staff members will notify the administrator in charge immediately when they suspect that a child is missing. Staff will look for the child for five minutes. If the child is not located in that time, 911 will be called. After the police have been notified, the guardians will be notified.

Preschool Toileting Policy

Requirements for children to be independently potty trained in AELC preschool classrooms:

- Has two or less accidents per week
- Initiates using the toilet with little or no reminders
- Can pull own clothes up and down
- Can change themselves when they have an accident, including socks and shoes
- Stays dry at naptime without the use of pull ups or diapers
- Has the ability to reach around and wipe themselves after a BM

While it's understood that children may have occasional accidents, there is a possibility of disenrollment if a child is not independently potty trained.

Please note that children enrolled in the young preschool program who are not yet three years of age still need to meet the above requirements.

Staff Screening Process

The AELC does an extensive screening for new employees and volunteers:

- The application has a self-disclosure statement.
- The employment interview includes questions recommended by Feather Berkower of "Parenting Safe Children" (a sexual abuse workshop)
- References are called and verified.
- A pre-employment background check is completed by Auraria Campus.
- Central Registry checks if the applicant has ever been investigated for any crime against children.
- Fingerprints are submitted to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to check if the applicant has committed any crimes in Colorado or any other state.
- The AELC receives ongoing updates from all the above agencies during a person's employment in case any new crimes are committed.
- All staff must complete training on recognition and reporting of abuse or neglect upon hiring and yearly thereafter.
- Stewards of Children trainings are provided yearly to both staff and families

Children's Bodies

The AELC staff uses the anatomically correct names for children's body parts. Children are in charge of their own bodies. They will be asked if it's OK before affection is given. Appropriate discussions regarding children's bodies are part of the curriculum.

The AELC's Body Safety Rules

The curriculum regarding keeping one's body safe is implemented in age-appropriate ways using books, puppets, and hands-on activities. Below are the "Body Safety Rules" for the AELC:

1) No one is allowed to touch your private body parts (including siblings), except to help you clean them or to examine them in a medical office.
2) You are not allowed to touch someone else's private body parts.
3) It is okay to touch your own private body parts as long as you do it in private.
4) No one (adult or teenager) is allowed to take pictures of your private parts or show you pictures of naked people.
5) Play with your clothes on when playing with friends.
6) You and all your family members are allowed to have privacy when bathing, dressing, and using the toilet.
7) You are allowed to choose who you kiss and touch, and when you kiss and touch people.
8) You have permission to say NO and get away if anyone tries to touch your private body parts or breaks any of your body safety rules.
9) If someone tries to or does touch your private body parts, try to get away and go tell an adult.
10) If someone tells you to keep a secret about touching private body parts, tell a trusted adult. Children will be taught that we do not keep secrets.

Preventing Sexual Abuse

The AELC is proactive in preventing sexual abuse of children. All staff at AELC are mandated reporters and must report any suspicions of abuse. Training workshops for guardians and staff are provided.

Guardian Involvement

It benefits children when guardians and staff communicate regularly. By working together, AELC staff and families can effectively respond to the individual needs of a child. Guardians are welcome to observe and participate in classroom activities. Teachers send regular Procare updates and weekly newsletters to keep guardians up-to-date. The AELC also has a Facebook page and Instagram account with pictures and posts about activities and events.

Back-to-School Night

Back-to-School Night is held at the beginning of the fall semester. It includes activities to help guardians become familiar with AELC staff, curriculum, and daily routines. Teachers also address guardians' questions or concerns. Back-to-School Night is also a great opportunity to get to know other families at the AELC.

Conferences

Although teachers are available to talk with guardians informally, time is set aside during fall and spring semesters for formal conferences. During these conferences, teachers will update guardians on the child's progress and development in school.

Additional conference times may also be arranged at a family's request or if the staff deems it necessary. Conferences may be mandatory if deemed necessary by the supervising teacher or administrators.

Family Nights

The AELC makes it a goal to host family nights at least once each semester. Guardians, children, and staff have the opportunity to enjoy activities, social time, and refreshments during family nights.

Adult Education

The AELC designs workshops to meet families' interests. Topics are presented by a specialist, and may include child development, discipline, communication, sibling rivalry, etc.

Family Resources

At the AELC, we understand the importance of supporting families beyond the classroom environment. We aim to foster strong connections with our families and provide comprehensive support by identifying their needs and referring them to relevant community resources. Our policy outlines our proactive approach to identifying needs and facilitating access to resources:

Needs Assessment and Identification:

- Upon enrollment, our staff conducts a thorough review of the information provided by families to assess if additional support may be beneficial.
- We prioritize building trusting relationships with families to create an open environment where they feel comfortable discussing their needs and concerns.
- Staff members continuously observe and engage with families to identify any emerging needs or challenges they may be facing.

Referral Process:

- When needs are identified, staff members proactively initiate discussions with families to discuss potential support options.
- We maintain a comprehensive list of community resources and services available to assist families in various areas, such as parenting support, counseling, financial assistance, and educational resources.
- Staff members guide families through the process of accessing these resources, providing necessary information, contacts, and support throughout.

Available Resources:

- The AELC offers a range of resources and support mechanisms for guardians, including but not limited to:
    - Take-home packets: Available for checkout at the front desk, containing educational materials, parenting tips, and community resource information.
    - Parenting library: Materials available for checkout, including books, DVDs, and pamphlets covering various parenting and child development topics.
    - Family boards: Information boards located in classrooms and the main lobby, featuring upcoming events, workshops, and useful tips.
    - Guardian articles: Accessible at the resource area by the front desk and within classrooms, offering insights into parenting strategies, child development milestones, and community resources.
    - Calendar of events: Posted at the front desk, providing details on upcoming workshops, seminars, and family-friendly activities.
    - AELC social media presence: Engaging with families through platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, sharing updates, resources, and tips.
    - Community resource book: Maintained by the AELC, containing contact information and descriptions of local organizations, agencies, and services available to support families.

Ongoing Support and Follow-Up:

- We recognize that the needs of families may evolve over time, and therefore, we offer ongoing support and follow-up to ensure families receive the assistance they need.
- Staff members remain accessible to families for further discussions, guidance, and assistance in navigating community resources.

By proactively identifying needs and facilitating access to community resources, we aim to empower our families and contribute to their overall well-being and success.

Supporting Families Experiencing Trauma or Adversity

At our Early Learning Center, we recognize that families may encounter various forms of trauma or adversity that can impact their well-being and the overall dynamics of the family unit. In line with our commitment to holistic child development and family-centered care, this policy outlines how our program supports families facing such challenges.

The AELC encourages a supportive approach that includes compassionate understanding, resource accessibility, and open communication. We approach each family with empathy and understanding, recognizing that every situation is unique.

Our staff members are trained to provide non-judgmental support and create a safe space for families to share their concerns.

We maintain a network of resources, including counseling services, support groups, community organizations, and mental health professionals, to assist families in accessing the support they need. Information about available resources is regularly communicated to families through newsletters, informational sessions, and resource boards within the center.

While this topic can be challenging and hard to navigate, we encourage open communication between families and staff members regarding any challenges or concerns they may be facing. Families are invited to schedule meetings with our family support coordinators or designated staff members to discuss their specific needs confidentially.

We respect and value the cultural backgrounds and beliefs of all families, recognizing that cultural factors may influence their perceptions of trauma and help-seeking behaviors. Our support services are culturally responsive and delivered in a manner that honors diversity and promotes inclusivity. All information shared by families regarding trauma or adversity is treated with the utmost confidentiality. Staff members are trained to adhere to professional standards of confidentiality and privacy in accordance with relevant laws and regulations.

Colorado Shines Quality Rating & Improvement System

In an effort to strengthen and improve early childhood education programs, the Colorado Office of Early Childhood administers a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). The QRIS is a method to assess, enhance, and communicate the level of quality of all licensed providers in Colorado. **QRIS standards** are used to assign ratings to programs that participate in the QRIS, providing guardians and the public with information about each program's quality. **Accountability and monitoring processes** are used to determine how well programs meet the QRIS standards, assign ratings, and verify ongoing compliance. To promote participation and help programs achieve higher levels of quality, QRIS includes **support for providers**, such as training, mentoring, and technical assistance. **Financial incentives** and awards help early care and education programs improve learning environments, attain higher ratings, and sustain long-term quality.

QRIS provides a framework for **educating guardians** about the importance of quality in early care and education.

Program Evaluations

The AELC welcomes input, ideas, questions, or concerns at all times. The AELC asks families to evaluate how well the program has met their needs at least once a year through a family survey. AELC staff are interested in hearing families' perspectives on the effectiveness of the program for both children and guardians. The results of the family survey are shared at the APTG meetings, in the monthly family newsletter, and are used to set center goals.

Quality Improvement Plan

The AELC compiles feedback from family surveys, informal conversations, Colorado Shines Ratings, and staff meetings to create, and then annually update, the Quality Improvement Plan for the center.

Continuous quality improvement is a process that ensures that our organization and partners are systematic and intentional about improving services and practices. We are dedicated to increasing positive outcomes for families and their children. This process is valued and used at the AELC. To support the process of continuous Quality Improvement, we have created Quality Improvement Plans (QIP that are reviewed annually by the Senior Leadership Team and our Administrative Team. It is updated periodically throughout the year.

To support the identification of areas for quality improvement, we annually send out family and staff surveys to obtain feedback on how well we are doing. Families, staff and stakeholders will receive notification of the results and our plan for addressing any issues raised after the family survey has been received, reviewed, and a QIP has been fully developed.

If you wish to view the complete QIP, a hard copy is available at the front desk. Upon request, we can also provide a printed or PDF copy of the plan.

COVID-19 Exposure, Quarantine, and Illness Policy

At the AELC, we prioritize the safety and well-being of our children, families, and staff. In accordance with recommendations from the Denver Department of Public Health and Environment, we have implemented the following guidelines:

Unvaccinated Individuals

- Positive individuals (children and staff) must isolate for 10 days from symptom onset date or test date if asymptomatic.
- Unvaccinated individuals exposed to a positive case must quarantine for 10 days and provide negative COVID test results before returning.

Vaccinated Individuals

- Fully vaccinated individuals who test positive must quarantine for 5 days, with return permitted if symptom-free and fever-free for 24 hours and able to properly wear a mask for 5 additional days.
- Vaccinated individuals exposed to a positive case are exempt from quarantine but must provide negative test results before returning.

Classroom Exposures

- Classroom closure for 10-day exposure quarantine may occur if less than 50% of children are vaccinated.

Policy Updates

Our policies are subject to change based on evolving recommendations. Guardians will be promptly informed of any updates.

AELC Covid Waiver and Release Of Liability By Guardians:

In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the safety of our children is paramount. By enrolling your child at AELC, you acknowledge and agree to the following:

- Adherence to safety guidelines issued by health authorities.
- Understanding of inherent risks associated with COVID-19 exposure.
- Agreement to keep your child home if they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms.
- Waiver of claims against AELC and its representatives for COVID-19-related illnesses, injuries, or damages.

Your signature confirms and acknowledges your understanding and acceptance of these terms.

HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received, reviewed, and will abide by the policies in the AELC Family Handbook including the COVID-19 Guidelines.

_____

PRINT GUARDIAN NAME

_____

GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

_____

PRINT NAME OF CHILD/CHILDREN

_____

DATE

The Auraria Early Learning Center Family Handbook provides a general overview of the center's policies and procedures. The AELC and its families must comply with health, licensing, accreditation, and other external agencies' rules and regulations that may not be included in the handbook. Administrative staff can provide more extensive information regarding these rules, policies, procedures, etc. At times, or in particular circumstances, it may be necessary to revise and/or add certain policies and/or procedures to the handbook. Families will be notified of any changes.

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