

# Family Handbook

## Aroostook County Action Program Early Care & Education

Teacher Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Center Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Program Manager: \_\_\_\_\_



Aroostook County Action Program

44 Park St.  
Presque Isle, ME 04769

207-764-3721  
1-800-432-7881

info@acap-me.org  
www.acap-me.org



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

ACAP MISSION, PHILOSOPHY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	1
CAREGIVER CODE OF CONDUCT	2
APPLICATION & ENROLLMENT	3
ORIENTATION	3
ACAP ECE LOCATIONS	4
PROGRAM LICENSING, ACCREDITATION & QUALITY RATING	4
PROGRAM OPTIONS	5
SCHEDULED CLOSURE DATES	6
ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM	7
TRANSPORTATION	8
EDUCATION	9
HEALTH AND WELLNESS	13
FAMILY ENGAGEMENT	19

## **MISSION, PHILOSOPHY, & DIVERSITY**

**ACAP Mission:** Aroostook County Action Program (ACAP) leads or collaborates to provide services that support, empower and improve lives.

ACAP Early Care and Education (ECE) provides comprehensive, affordable, quality Child Care, Early Head Start, Head Start and Early Intervention Services to children and their families in Aroostook County.

**ACAP ECE PHILOSOPHY:** provide a warm and nurturing environment in which children grow and develop, and are designed to build a sense of community among parents, children and staff by ensuring that:

- Each family's cultural, ethnic and economic background is valued.
- Each family is regarded as unique. Their strengths and needs are valued and supported.
- Children actively participate in their own learning. The result is children who are ready for school.
- Through competence and independence, children develop a positive self-image.
- Self-help, caring for others, sharing, good health habits and pleasure in learning are greatly encouraged.
- Developmentally appropriate activities that nurture the mind, body and sense of self are offered.
- Staff model and guide children using a positive approach and a problem-solving method for conflict resolution.

### **ACAP ECE CULTURAL DIVERSITY POLICY STATEMENT**

Our program goal is to provide a balance of activities which reinforce our belief that culture is a part of everyday experiences in our classrooms and in our relationships with children and families. ACAP ECE recognizes that families are unique and therefore our interactions with children and families will be sensitive, respectful and affirming to their values and beliefs. We welcome families by creating environments that are safe, supportive and accepting of all likenesses and differences.

### **ACAP ECE INCLUSION STATEMENT**

In early childhood education; inclusion encompasses the values, policies and practices that support the right of every child and their family to fully participate and access all activities provided in the classroom, program and community. All children and their families have a sense of belonging within the “community of the school” feeling supported and heard by the teaching staff.

## **CAREGIVER CODE OF CONDUCT**

### **Our Philosophy and Practice for the Humane Treatment of Children**

1. We do not allow hitting, biting, or any form of physical punishment as a method of disciplining by anyone, anywhere in any center. We do not restrain a child unless s/he is presenting a danger to her/himself or to others. We will not employ methods of discipline that involve isolation or shaming.
2. Children's safety is our primary goal. We do not allow a child to be hurt or to hurt her/himself or another person, adult or child. We monitor each center continually to remove potentially unsafe conditions.
3. We ensure that children are supervised at all times, knowing that children out of sight are at risk for accidents.
4. We treat each child equally, regardless of race, creed, color, religion, family background, disability or economic status.
5. We maintain appropriate expectations for each child based upon the child's developmental age, needs and abilities.
6. We interact with children at eye level, speaking directly to them and not from a distance.
7. We are aware of our body language, knowing that young children perceive not only what we say, but also how we communicate through our actions.
8. We ensure that conversations are age appropriate and sincere. We do not use vulgarity, sarcasm, teasing, nagging, scolding or judgmental words. We do not embarrass, humiliate, intimidate, or physically/verbally threaten any child.
9. We communicate in a respectful manner with children and parents. A voice may be raised only when there is imminent danger to a child or when directions are being given to a specific group out-of-doors.
10. We recognize that accidents and mistakes are part of a young child's learning process. These events are acknowledged as teachable moments and they are used to help children learn.
11. We understand that touch is an important element of communication and growth. We may initiate and return signs of affection to and from children, such as hugs. We may physically hold and carry children who seek and are comfortable with such attention.
12. We respect children's need for personal space and hug/hold children only if they wish it. We do not tolerate tickling, roughhousing, pulling, yanking, etc.

13. We strive to eliminate unsafe behavior by anticipating it ahead of time through close supervision.

14. We manage children's behavior using redirection, distraction, logical consequences, modeling, limit setting, expectations and choice. We support children's acceptable and appropriate behaviors by positive reinforcement and through appropriate design of the learning environment.

15. We help children establish limits for their physical aggression by helping them develop problem-solving skills which increase their abilities to deal with conflict situations.

16. We do not withhold food as a punishment or discipline. We do not force a child to eat or use food as a reward, bribe, or contingency.

17. We respect parents' knowledge of and concern for their child. We strive to form partnerships with parents for the well-being of their child/ren and to treat each family fairly and equally.

18. Information about children and families is confidential. Staff maintains a professional demeanor while interacting with other professionals and members of our community. Staff respect confidentiality and practice professionalism when discussing children amongst themselves. To protect confidentiality, staff avoids discussion with families in public places.

### **APPLICATION & ENROLLMENT**

Applications for all ACAP ECE programs may be obtained by calling 764-3721 or 1-800-432-7881 or contacting the closest center, see locations below

Online Application is available at: <https://www.acap-me.org/programs/earlycareeducation>

Upon receipt of a completed application and additional documentation, you will be notified by an ACAP ECE staff member when your child is enrolled.

### **ORIENTATION**

Upon acceptance and prior to your child's first day of attendance, an ACAP ECE Staff member will contact you to schedule an Orientation Visit. The Orientation Visit will include completing and signing all required forms, meeting with an ACAP ECE Health Office staff member and a Family Coach. You will have an opportunity to tour the ACAP ECE Center Location and meet your child's teacher. This is also an opportunity to discuss your child's transition into the center and ask any questions you may have.

### **ACAP ECE LOCATIONS**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>
Caribou	17 Bowles Rd	496-7681
Dyer Brook: RSU 50 – SACS	922 Dyer Brook Rd	757-8206, ext. 08
Fort Kent	40 Alfalfa Dr	834-5290
Houlton: Military St	91 Military St	532-5300
Houlton: Region 2	5 Bird St	267-0465
Presque Isle: Gouldville	44 Park St	764-0733
Presque Isle: PIRCTC	16 Griffin St	764-1356
Presque Isle: Birch St	37 Birch St	768-3060

\*Hours of operation and daily schedule vary by location

### **PROGRAM LICENSING, ACCREDITATION & QUALITY RATING**

#### **Maine Child Care Licensing**

All ACAP ECE centers are licensed through the Maine Department of Health and Human Services. A copy of the Maine Child Care Licensing rules are available at each center and on line at:

[https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/10-148%20Ch.%2032%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Licensing%20Rule%20Effective%209-27-21\\_jpf%20edits.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/10-148%20Ch.%2032%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Licensing%20Rule%20Effective%209-27-21_jpf%20edits.pdf)

#### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

NAEYC accreditation requires program to meet 10 standards for high quality early childhood education. Accredited programs have demonstrated safety and healthy environments, well trained teachers, access to high quality teaching materials, and provide developmentally appropriate curriculum.

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/value-naeyc-accredited-program#:~:text=NAEYC%20Accreditation%20helps%20parents%20find,child's%20sense%20of%20individual%20worth.>

NAEYC accredited centers are located in Caribou

#### **Quality for ME – Maine’s Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)**

Quality for ME is a voluntary, Four-Step program designed to increase awareness of the basic standards of early care and education. Programs that voluntarily participate in the Quality for ME are recognized for meeting higher standards, above and beyond, child care licensing.

[https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Maine%20Quality%20Rating%20Improvement%20System%20Revised%20Document%201-14-19\\_0.pdf](https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/sites/maine.gov.dhhs/files/inline-files/Maine%20Quality%20Rating%20Improvement%20System%20Revised%20Document%201-14-19_0.pdf)

All ACAP ECE centers are rated a Step 4 on the Quality for ME rating scale, the highest rating NAEYC Accredited and Step 4 QRIS centers are recognized by the State of Maine as providing quality early care and education to children. **Parents accessing care at quality rated centers are eligible for an additional child care tax credit when filing their State of Maine income tax return.**

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/support-for-families/child-care/quality-certificates>

## **PROGRAM OPTIONS**

### **CENTER BASED**

**Early Head Start** provides a comprehensive infant/toddler developmental program for children 6 weeks to 3 years of age for income eligible families. Early Head Start promotes school readiness for infants, toddlers and their families. Early Head Start provides comprehensive screenings to children that include lead, vision, hearing, oral health, developmental and behavioral screenings. BMI risk assessments, nutritional counseling, healthy meals, along with physical and mental health support and referrals are also provided. Hours and days of operation vary by location. Early Head Start services are available in Caribou, Presque Isle & Houlton.

**Head Start** provides a comprehensive preschool developmental program for 3 and 4-year-olds of income-eligible families, including children with disabilities. Head Start promotes child and family school readiness skills. Head Start provides comprehensive screenings to children that include lead, vision, hearing, oral health, developmental and behavioral screenings. BMI risk assessments, nutritional counseling, healthy meals, along with physical and mental health support and referrals are also provided. Hours and days of operation vary by location. Head Start Services are available in Fort Kent, Caribou, Presque Isle, Houlton & Dyer Brook.

**Pre K Partnership Classroom** provides a comprehensive preschool development program to 3 and 4-year-olds in partnership with the RSU 50 Southern Aroostook Community School in Dyer Brook and SAD 1 in Presque Isle, with high school regional technical centers in Houlton and Presque Isle. Hours and days of operation vary by location.

**Early Invention Services** provides opportunities for children ages 3 to 5 years old with developmental delays and/or disabilities to develop skills and strategies necessary to build solid foundations for school readiness in a small, low ratio setting to address goals identified on their Individual Educational Program (IEP). Foundation Classrooms are approved State of Maine Special Education preschool programs and are available in Presque Isle, Caribou and Houlton. Hours and days of operation vary by location.

**Infant/Toddler Child Care** from 6 weeks to 3 years of age to children at State of Maine licensed facilities in Caribou, Presque Isle, Fort Kent & Houlton. ACAP ECE accepts payment through voucher payment, (including State of Maine Child Care Subsidy, ASPIRE, TANF) and private pay.

ACAP ECE provides full-time, part-time or half-time basis. ACAP ECE Centers are open Monday through Friday, 6am to 5:30pm.

**Preschool Child Care** for 3 to 6 years of age to children at State of Maine licensed facilities in Caribou, Presque Isle & Houlton. ACAP ECE accepts payment through voucher payment, (including State of Maine Child Care Subsidy, ASPIRE, TANF) and private pay. Care is available on a full-time, part-time or half-time basis. ACAP ECE Centers are open Monday through Friday, 6am to 5:30pm.

ACAP ECE follows the State of Maine Child Care Market Rates for child care fees:

Child Care Fees			
Age	0-19 Hours*	20-29 Hours*	30-50 Hours
Infant – 6 Weeks to 12 Months	\$92.50	\$138.75	\$185.00
Toddler – 12 Months to 3 Years	\$77.00	\$115.50	\$154.00
Preschool – 3 to 5 Years	\$74.00	\$111.00	\$148.00

\*Half time and Part time must be the same days each week. Half time is two days per week or all morning/afternoons and part time is three days per week. If schedules vary from week to week, it will require a full time slot.

Child Care fees can also be found on the ACAP Website: <https://acap-me.org/mt-content/uploads/2021/12/7-3-3031-private-child-care-rates.pdf>

ACAP ECE offers 42 Infant/Toddler childcare slots and 88 Preschool childcare slots program wide, availability varies by location.

Families with children enrolled in Infant/Toddler and/or Preschool childcare will be provided an Early Education Services Fee Agreement for Services and a Child Care Fee Payment and Billing Process form that outlines the terms of service and fee payment process to review and sign.

## **HOME BASED**

**Home Based Early Head Start** provides a comprehensive home visiting program to income eligible pregnant mothers and families with children under the age of 3. In Home weekly visits focus on the parents as their child's first teacher. Home Based Early Head Start is available county wide.

## **SCHEDULED CLOSURE DAYS**

All ACAP ECE Centers are closed the week of the Fourth of July. In Services training dates will be announced in advance on the annual program calendar. Prior notification will be given so that parents may make alternative care arrangements.

All ACAP ECE Centers are also closed on the following holidays:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King's Birthday
- Presidents Day



- Patriot's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples' Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day following
- Christmas

**Child Care parent fees are charged for all ACAP closures including the week of closure in July and preservice training week.**

### **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM**

#### **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM IN HEAD START, EARLY HEAD START, COLLABORATION CLASSROOMS & EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES**

Children enrolled in Head Start, Early Head Start, Collaboration, Early Intervention Services in Foundation Classrooms are expected to attend daily. Acceptable reasons for absences include the following: child or family illness, inclement weather, medical or dental appointment, transportation problems or vacation. Parents are expected to call the center within one hour of the session's start time if a child is absent. If no call is received, staff will check in with families of absent children and will conduct a home visit if a child is absent for four days. After two weeks of unexcused or unexplained absence, or an extended period of irregular attendance, ACAP reserves the right to terminate services in Head Start and Early Head Start.

#### **ATTENDANCE AND ABSENTEEISM IN CHILD CARE**

Attendance in Child Care is expected according to the schedule established for each child. Parents should call one hour before the reserved time if child/ren will be late or absent. An absence excuse form must be filled out for each absence. Please inform ACAP ECE Staff about any extended absences.

If a child is absent for more than four days due to illness, staff may request a note from the child's doctor prior to his/her return to the classroom.

Acceptable reasons for absences from Child Care include, but are not limited to, the following: child or family illness, medical or dental appointment, inclement weather, transportation problems or vacation.

If a child is going to be absent for an extended period, it will be necessary to pay for the slot at the regular full-time rate to hold the slot. State child care subsidy may allow up to 2 days of unexcused absences in a one-month period and an annual number of hours to be determined by the state of excused absences. Absences in excess of this are to be payable by the parent and are calculated at the private care rate.

Child Care payment is required for the full week if a child is absent on their scheduled days. After two weeks of unexcused or unexplained absences, ACAP reserves the right to terminate services in both Child Care and Head Start.

If a child leaves Child Care for the summer there is no guarantee that there will be an available slot in the fall. If you have questions regarding your child care slot, please contact ACAP in Presque Isle at 764-3721 or 1-800-432-7881. If you have questions regarding your child care voucher, contact DHHS Augusta at 1-877-680-5866 or 624-7999.

Parents whose children will have irregular attendance schedules or will attend kindergarten and need care during school vacations will need a full time slot.

### **CHILD CARE ARRIVALS and DEPARTURES**

The parent/guardian bringing or picking up a child for Child Care must accompany the child to and from the classroom and sign the attendance sheet. Only a parent or someone designated by the parent may take a child out of the center.

If parents find that their schedules have changed, they must rearrange their reserved slot time. Parents are required to notify the center of any changes in schedule as early as possible (prior day or early morning notification is preferred).

### **LATE PICK UP**

**If a parent does not pick their child up prior to the scheduled closing time of 5:30 p.m., a \$10.00 late fee will be charged for each 15-minute period beyond 5:30 p.m. This fee is due at the time the child is picked up.**

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN ENROLLED IN CHILD CARE**

All transportation of children in Child Care classrooms will be provided by families, public transportation or public school transportation. ACAP does not assume responsibility for the child in transit. Parents are to make all arrangements with the public transportation system or public school and notify the school and the center of any changes in schedules.

Under certain circumstance, ACAP will contract with Child Development Services to provide transportation for children enrolled in an ACAP classroom receiving special education services as defined by the child's Individual Educational Program (IEP).

Children will ride the ACAP bus occasionally to attend class field trips. Signed permission forms must be in place for this to occur.

### **TRANSPORTATION FOR EARLY HEAD START and HEAD START CHILDREN**

ACAP operates its own fleet of buses to transport children enrolled in Traditional and Early Head Start programs in most locations. Transportation is provided within an annually determined bus route.

A bus monitor rides on the bus each day to help with the children. Children are released off the bus to the child's parent/guardian or an authorized person designated on the Emergency Information Release form. The Emergency Information Release form must be updated every six months or as necessary.

Occasionally children will ride the bus while participating in field trips. A signed permission form must be in place for each field trip.

If there is no one home to receive the child off the bus, the child will remain on the bus and be returned to the center. The parents will be called and if they are not reached, the emergency contacts will be called. If no one is reached to pick up the child, authorities will be called.

Parents who choose to transport their children enrolled in Early or Traditional Head Start are expected to pick up children at the scheduled end of the Program Day.

#### **RELEASE OF CHILDREN TO PARENT/TRANSPORTATION PROVIDER**

For the protection of children, no child shall be released to a parent/person whom we feel may be unable to drive a child home safely. ACAP ECE staff will follow ACAP ECE's RELEASE OF CHILDREN TO PARENTS/PERSONS WHO ARE VISIBLY IMPAIRED AS A RESULT OF POSSIBLE DRUG AND/OR ALCOHOL USE Procedure. This procedure is reviewed during orientation and a copy is offered to families.

### **EDUCATION**

ACAP ECE Centers are places where the child's needs and interests determine the experiences of the day. Learning takes place constantly in a safe and secure environment. Children are nurtured and challenged to become independent thinkers and problem-solvers. Staff observe children, document developmental achievements and help children explore their individual interests.

ACAP ECE Centers provide a child-centered curriculum. Individualized plans support each child's interests and needs through play. Play fosters the child's sense of personal worth and dignity while he or she is developing self-control, academic and social skills and responsibility for his or her actions.

#### **INFANTS AND TODDLERS**

Infants and toddlers are assigned a primary caregiver -- one staff person responsible for that child's individualized program of care. The Infant/Toddler HighScope curriculum is used in all Infant/Toddler and Early Head Start classrooms. Children in this age group eat and sleep on demand. They have opportunities to play, explore and interact in an age-appropriate setting.

Caregivers track the health and development of infants and toddlers and work with parents on setting goals and providing activities to promote each child's learning and development through their interests.

## **PRESCHOOL**

The HighScope curriculum is used in all preschool classrooms. HighScope is a child centered curriculum that fosters the child's sense of self-esteem and dignity while developing self-control, social skills and responsibility for his/her actions. HighScope balances child-initiated activities with adult-initiated activities and focuses on individual children's strengths, needs and interests.

Staff plans developmentally appropriate activities for each child to promote development in eight domains of learning. Lesson plans are posted daily in each classroom.

## **HOME BASE**

Home Base Early Head Start use the Parents as Teachers curriculum approach which provides families with weekly home visits by a home visitor. During weekly visits, home visitors share child development information with parents, support parents as they learn to observe their child's development, address parenting concerns and engage the family in activities that provide meaningful parent child interaction and support child development. Parents as Teachers curriculum provides developmentally appropriate activity suggestions and materials for parents to implement with their children ages 0 -3.

Home Base programs also include twice monthly parent-child group meetings, during which families and staff gather to help children learn to play with others, practice observations, meet other parents for education around parenting and child development and networking.

## **POSITIVE DISCIPLINE**

All ACAP ECE centers use positive discipline. Staff redirect children to another area or activity when a child has difficulty interacting with his/her peers or other challenging behaviors occur. Staff use positive language and offer the child choices. If a situation escalates further, staff may remove the child to another area and sit with the child to help the child calm.

ACAP ECE has adopted and implements the Pyramid model created by the Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) to support the social and emotional development of children in the program. CSEFEL's principles include supporting young children's social and emotional development to prevent challenging behaviors, individualizing interventions to meet children's needs and families' unique interests, strengths and needs, promoting skill building in order to affect change and implementing strategies within the naturally occurring routines and environments.

Continual challenging behavior is addressed by the classroom team with support from the child's parents, program manager and mental health consultant. A plan is created using social-emotional techniques to adjust teaching strategies, environment and routines to attempt to better meet the child's needs and reduce occurrences and intensity of challenging behaviors.

Children with sustained challenging behaviors may, in consultation with parents and staff, be referred for further evaluation and/or services.

## **ACAP SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION PREVENTION**

ACAP ECE limits the use of suspension due to a child's behavior. If suspensions are used, they are considered temporary in nature. Temporary suspension is used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances when there is a serious safety threat that cannot be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications.

Before a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, ACAP ECE will follow the challenging behavior procedure. This procedure includes engaging a mental health consultant, collaborating with the parents, utilizing appropriate community resources – such as behavior coaches, psychologists, other appropriate specialists, or other resources – as needed, to determine that no other reasonable option is appropriate.

If a temporary suspension is deemed necessary, ACAP ECE will help the child return to full participation in all program activities as quickly as possible while ensuring child safety by: Continuing to engage with the parents and a mental health consultant, and continuing to utilize appropriate community resources; Developing a written plan to document the action and supports needed; Providing services that include home visits; and, determining whether a referral to a local agency responsible for implementing IDEA is appropriate.

ACAP ECE does not expel or unenroll a child from programming because of a child's behavior.

When a child exhibits persistent and serious challenging behaviors, ACAP ECE will explore all possible steps and document all steps taken to address such problems, and facilitate the child's safe participation in the program. These steps include engaging a mental health consultant, considering the appropriateness of providing appropriate services and supports under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the child who satisfies the definition of disability in 29 U.S.C. §705(9)(b) of the Rehabilitation Act is not excluded from the program on the basis of disability, and consulting with the parents and the child's teacher, and: if the child has an individualized family service plan (IFSP) or individualized education program (IEP), ACAP ECE will consult with the agency responsible for the IFSP or IEP to ensure the child receives the needed support services; or, If the child does not have an IFSP or IEP, ACAP ECE will collaborate, with parental consent, with the local agency responsible for implementing IDEA to determine the child's eligibility for services.

If, after ACAP ECE has explored all possible steps and documented all steps taken as described above, ACAP ECE, in consultation with the parents, the child's teacher, the agency responsible for implementing IDEA (if applicable), and the mental health consultant, determines that the child's continued enrollment presents a continued serious safety threat to the child or other enrolled children and determines the program is not the most appropriate placement for the child, ACAP ECE will work with such entities to directly facilitate the transition of the child to a more appropriate placement.

## **SCREENING**

At the time of application, all families are asked to sign a release of information for Child Development Services. The release allows families to be contacted to initiate a developmental and behavioral screening on all children.

If these screenings do not happen prior to enrollment, ACAP ECE provides developmental screenings for all children within the first 45 days of enrollment. Children from birth to three years of age are assessed using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire – Social Emotional (ASQ-SE). Children ages three to five years of age are screened using the ESI (Early Screening Inventory) and the PKBS 2 (Preschool Kindergarten Behavior Scale). Home Base program uses ASQ and ASQ SE for all ages of children.

ACAP ECE ensures that Head Start and Early Head Start children receive an annual vision and hearing screenings. ACAP conducts vision screenings using a Spot Vision Screeners and hearing screening are conducted with a Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) Hearing Screener. For children under the age of three, vision and hearing screening results may also be obtained from the child's doctor as a result of the Well Child visit.

## **ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN'S LEARNING**

Developmental assessments are completed for each child throughout the program year. This information is used by parents and teachers in partnership to plan activities for individual children to support their continued learning. ACAP ECE Services uses the Child Observation Record, developed by the HighScope Educational Research Foundation, to assess child development.

Data on child outcomes is collected by the program. This information is used by classroom teachers and parents to meet children's individualized needs. Program leadership also reviews the data and uses it to plan for program improvements and professional development of staff.

## **CLOTHING**

Children should wear clothes that are "okay" to get dirty. Many activities of interest to children are messy. Please provide a change of clothes and a pair of shoes or sneakers to wear inside. Each child will be assigned a cubby for personal belongings.

## **HOLIDAY CELEBRATION GUIDANCE**

ACAP ECE Services does not focus on holidays. Our philosophy is that it is the role of the parent to develop holiday traditions which they choose. Our role through holidays is to continue to provide a nurturing, stimulating learning environment for children to explore and learn. Holidays can be stressful for families. Our centers provide a constant, calm and safe environment for children.

Holidays are part of our societal culture. Staff plan programming to be appropriate for these times. Here are some ways we accomplish this within the confines of our curriculum:

- Focus on seasonal themes such as harvest, winter, spring, etc.

- Follow through on interests and ideas expressed by the children themselves
- Put out colored paints that correlate to the season/holiday.
- Cut easel paper in shapes appropriate for season; add these shapes to the art area.
- Add seasonal/holiday items to the dramatic play area (i.e. variety of costumes in October or ribbon and wrapping paper in December) and block areas.
- Place seasonal themed books around the classroom.
- Give children opportunities to play with a variety of materials like pine cones, glitter, corn husks, paper chains, eggs and heart shapes through the year, not only at holidays seasons.

Our curriculum is child-centered. The interests and needs of children guide our teaching themes and activities. When it comes to holiday celebrations, it is important to remember that not all families celebrate, not all families celebrate the same things and not all families that celebrate, celebrate in the same way. We know that children play what they see and bring to the classroom what they have experienced and learned at home. It is to be expected that our children will bring to the classroom holiday traditions they have learned. Observation and open-ended questions are powerful tools to find out information from children. Staff asks, “What did you do this week-end?” rather than “Did you go get a Christmas tree?” ***It is our role to support children in their experiences. It is not our role to lead children into holiday activities.***

Staff keep in mind family circumstances around holidays such as Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. A special visitor day may be planned and all children invited to participate.

## **HEALTH & WELLNESS**

### **HEALTH**

Children’s health and school readiness are closely connected. Your child’s growth, language, social & emotional development will be closely monitored. To assure your child is in optimum health and protected against disease and/or illness, the following should be completed prior to entry:

- A record of your child’s current immunizations

Maine Child Care Licensing requires that all enrolled children must be immunized as appropriate for their age. A certificate of immunization is required to be on file with ACAP ECE within 30 days of your child’s enrollment in any ACAP ECE program option. The following list of immunizations are required to be on the certificate with dates and vaccine types:

- Measles
- Mumps
- Rubella
- Diphtheria
- Pertussis
- Polio
- Tetanus

- Haemophilus Influenza Type B
- Varicella
- Hepatitis B
- Pneumococcal Conjugate
- Hepatitis A
- Rotavirus

On September 1, 2021, State of Maine law no longer allows for philosophical and religious exemptions from immunization requirements. This law applies to all licensed childcare facilities and public schools

If your child is behind on the required immunization schedule, they are not in compliance with this new state law. Our program is here to support and assist you with getting your child up to date with the required immunizations.

If a child does not receive immunization(s) for medical reasons, their provider must fill out an exclusion form.

In addition to immunizations, Head Start requires

- A complete physical examination as outlined in the Well Child Check
- An annual dental examination, cleaning, fluoride treatment when indicated. Restoration of decayed teeth must be planned within 90 days of enrollment
- Lead and Hemoglobin screening reports. If not available, they must be completed as soon as required after entry into the program
- Vision, hearing and growth screenings, which will be completed within the first 90 days of enrollment

For children who do not have the health documentation, ACAP has the capacity to conduct some health screenings and assessments:

- Child's height and weight and calculations of the child's Body Mass Index (BMI)
- Hemoglobin (Iron) screening
- Blood Pressure Screening

Parents must make sure that their child has a current physical exam (Well Child Exam) and a current dental exam.

### **SHORT TERM ILLNESS OR INJURY**

Children who attend any ACAP ECE programs should be healthy enough to participate in the day's activities, including outdoor play, in order to attend. A child who is ill enough to be temporarily excluded from a public school is also excluded from ACAP centers.

Minor illnesses, such as a common cold or minor injury, does not mean that a child may not attend. Children with long term medical conditions or disabilities who have positive supports and a written plan in place may attend the program.



Children who have been hospitalized for illness, surgery or injury need to be cleared by their medical provider, in writing, in order to return to the center.

Children exhibiting any of the following symptoms may not safely attend or remain at a center. A staff person will stay with the child and will contact parents or guardian to ask that the child be picked up. If a parent or guardian cannot be reached, the alternate responsible adults on the child's Emergency Information form will be contacted. Children may not return to their center until free of symptoms and/or cleared in writing by a medical provider.

1. Fever: A child younger than eight weeks of age will be excluded with fever of 100.4 degrees F or over. If a child over eight weeks of age has a fever that reaches 101 degrees F, the child must be picked up and should see a medical provider.
2. Vomiting: If a child has vomited 2 or more times within the past 24 hours, the child will be excluded unless the vomiting is determined to be due to a non-communicable condition and the child is not in danger of dehydration.
3. Severe coughing: A child with a cough that turns a child's face red or blue or has a high-pitched sound or a cough that persists until vomiting will be excluded.
4. Difficult or rapid breathing: A child with difficult or rapid breathing will be excluded and should see a medical provider.
5. Pinkeye: A child showing redness of the eyelid lining, irritation, swelling and discharge of yellow or green tinged pus will be excluded and should be seen by a medical provider. If a child is diagnosed with pinkeye, s/he will be excluded from the center for 24 hours after treatment has started.
6. Conjunctivitis without a fever, eye pain, eyelid redness or discharge does not necessitate exclusion.
7. Head Lice: If a child has head lice, parents/guardian will be notified with instructions for them to treat the child. The child will be able to finish out their day. Children will not be permitted to return to the center until he or she has been treated.
8. Infected skin patches: A child with crusty, moist or gummy areas of skin will be excluded if the area is not able to be covered with a bandage.
9. The following symptoms may or may not be medically significant but are serious enough to be brought to the attention of parents on the day they are noticed. These symptoms do not warrant exclusion from the center unless they are combined with one of the eight previous symptoms, however parents are encouraged to contact their medical provider to seek guidance when one of the following symptoms occurs.
10. Unusual spots or rashes.
11. Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
12. Unusually dark or tea colored urine
13. Yellowish skin or eyes
14. Gray or white stool
15. Headache or stiff neck
16. Severe itching.

## **MEDICATION AND ILLNESS**

Any prescription medication given to a child requires a Medication Permission form completed and signed by a physician and parent. Any over the counter medication needs a Health Intervention Plan form signed by the parent only and must follow the dosage chart for that product. For prescription medicines, parents are encouraged to request a medication schedule that can be administered at home rather than at school.

When medication is left at the center to be administered by staff, only the maximum amount of medicine needed for a one-week period is accepted. The parent/guardian is to deliver the medication to the center and pick up the medication at the center at the end of the week.

The medicine will be:

- Stored properly in a locked medicine box in the classroom.
- Administered only by a staff member who has received medication administration training.
- Administered only from the original container.
- Given at prescribed times.
- Date, time and dosage will be recorded on the medication administration form each time the medication is given. Staff will initial the form.

Any difficulties in administering the medicine will be reported to parents.

## **INJURY/SERIOUS INJURY/CHILD DEATH**

ACAP ECE will notify a child's parent or guardian immediately about any injury.

In the case of a serious Injury or child death, 911 will be called along with the parent or guardian of the child. A report will be made to Child Care Licensing office as soon as possible or within 24 hours.

## **NUTRITION**

ACAP follows the State of Maine Child Care Food Program and Head Start Performance Standards. ACAP ECE centers serve breakfast, lunch and snacks. A variety of nutritious foods are offered. Parents are asked not to bring other food from home for meals and snacks, but are encouraged to provide recipes and menu ideas that include family favorites.

## **FAMILY STYLE DINING**

Meals are served family style. Through family style dining, adults' model positive behavior and help children develop skills such as eating with utensils, serving themselves and interacting politely with peers. Conversation is encouraged and good eating habits are modeled by staff. Mealtime is pleasant and relaxed.

Children learn to pour their own milk, serve themselves and clean up their spills. They take turns setting and cleaning the tables. Children are encouraged to try many new foods, but are never forced to eat. Food is never used as punishment or reward.

If your child has food allergies, a signed statement from the parent/guardian is required listing foods to be avoided. This will be posted in the classroom to assure instructions are followed. Special diets are arranged only by a signed physician's request/order. A dietitian is available to parents for consultation upon request.

## **REST TIME**

State of Maine Rules for the Licensing of Child Care Facilities states:

*Children in attendance for more than four (4) hours must have an opportunity for rest or relaxation of one (1) hour or longer according to the age and needs of the child. Children in attendance for four or fewer hours must have an opportunity for rest or relaxation for one hour or longer according to the age and needs of the child.*

In full-day programs, a rest time is part of each day for toddlers and preschoolers. Infants sleep on demand. Every child is asked to rest quietly; many sleep. Each child is provided a crib, cot or mat for rest time. A small blanket from home and a favorite stuffed animal can make rest time more relaxing. Staff play soothing music and distribute books to "read." Staff hold, rock or soothe children who have trouble relaxing.

If a child has not fallen asleep within 15 minutes of the start of rest time, staff provide quiet activities for the child. When children awake from rest, they are allowed to move to quiet tabletop activities. In special circumstances, a child may not be able to settle on his or her mat/cot. In these circumstances a plan will be developed with the staff and parents to accommodate the child's needs.

## **OUTDOOR PLAY**

Outdoor play is an important part of each classroom's daily schedule. It provides opportunities for physical activity, sensory experiences, natural science and cooperative play. Weather permitting, children and staff go out to play daily. State licensing regulations require children in full time slots to be outdoors at least (1) hour per day, and part time slots 1/2 hour per day.

Children must be dressed properly for the weather. In the summer, children should wear footwear to allow for running and climbing. Swimsuits are necessary for water play (sprinklers, no pools). Sun hats are recommended. In the winter, snowsuits, boots, mittens, hats and scarves are essential. *If a child is too ill to go outside, s/he should not attend the program that day.*

Children will not go outside if the temperature is over 90 degrees Fahrenheit or below zero, including the wind chill factor. The amount of time outside is determined by the weather conditions.

NOTE: Sunscreen and insect repellent spray are recommended. Written parental permission is required. Parents must supply the products for their child.

## NO CANDY POLICY

ACAP ECE has a no candy policy. Due to our nutrition, dental health and “choke-food” guidelines we do not distribute candy to children. Parents and volunteers are educated on this policy. In the event candy is sent in, it will be sent back. It is not to be distributed.

ACAP ECE does not allow sugary desserts. Again, this is due to our nutritional guidelines. However, we do allow a cake of the month. This is to allow parents to bring in a cake to celebrate their child’s birthday, if they wish to. This is only one cake per month, **not** one cake per child every month. If a parent wishes to provide a cake, they should call the center to let staff know of their intent. We encourage cakes low in sugar. Muffins and breads also make a nice snack to celebrate a birthday. It is NOT appropriate for staff to provide the cake of the month.

## WIC

ACAP ECE encourages families to enroll in Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program. The WIC Program is available for pregnant, post – partum and breast-feeding women and children from birth to 5 years of age whose families meet the eligibility guidelines. WIC provides nutrition EBT cards for the purchase of health foods. ACAP Staff are available with ideas for feeding children and easy, healthy recipes. WIC holds clinics in 6 locations across Aroostook County to enable WIC customers access to services. To apply for WIC, you can call 207-764-3721

## WIC CLINIC SITES

Location	Address	Phone Number
Caribou: Pines Women’s & Children Health	163 Van Buren Rd Caribou, Me 04736	207-492-3451
ACAP Fort Kent	40 Alfalfa Ave Fort Kent, Me 04743	207-834-5290
ACAP Houlton	91 Military St Houlton, Me 04730	207-532-5310
ACAP Madawaska	88 Fox St Madawaska, Me 04756	207-728-6345
ACAP Presque Isle	771 Main St Presque Isle, Me 04769	207-768-3026
Van Buren: Van Buren Health Center	16 Champlain St. Van Buren, Me 04785	207-868-3382

## ORAL HEALTH

**KIDS** (Kids Integrated Dental Service) program is available at WIC Clinic to provide preventative oral health services to all children as soon as their first tooth arrives. These services included

oral health screenings, cleanings, education and fluoride treatment. The program also provides oral health services for Pre-K through grade 12 in five public schools: Van Buren, Woodland, Mars Hill, Washburn & Ashland. To inquire about this service or become a contracted school, you can contact ACAP Oral Health Services at 207-764-3721 or email [info@acap-me.org](mailto:info@acap-me.org)

In conjunction with the Maine School Oral Health Program, ACAP Oral Health provides support to participating public schools during the school year. With written parent or guardian permission, dental screening and fluoride varnish application is completed for participating students two times per school year by a Dental Hygienist. The dental sealant application is available for children in grade 2 for their 6-year molars and rechecked up to grade 4. Dental Sealants are a thin layer of plastic material applied to the parts of the chewing surfaces of the back teeth. Sealants act as a physical barrier in preventing decay where 90% of all dental decay in school aged children occur.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

### **PARENT ENGAGEMENT**

ACAP ECE believes in building strong and engaging relationships between families and staff, to support family well-being, build strong parent-child relationships, and nurture lifelong learning and development for the whole family.

### **FAMILY COACHING**

ACAP's Family Coaching services are available to support all enrolled families to assist and support in meeting their family's hopes and dreams. Family Coaches provide Family Partnership Services to support family's hopes, goals and dreams.

### **FAMILY PARTNERSHIP SERVICES**

ACAP ECE believes each family has unique strengths, hopes, dreams and needs. These services are designed to be a partnership between families and staff to work together to identify resources and information to support your family's hopes and dreams and linking your family with community resources and partners. It is an ongoing process during a child's enrollment in the program. Family Partnership Services are designed for caregivers to take the lead in identifying strengths, needs, hope and dreams for their family.

### **HOME/CENTER VISITS**

Home Visits and Center Visits occur throughout the program year with Teaching staff and Family Coaches. This is an opportunity for parents to connect with ACAP ECE staff on their child's school readiness skills and their family's well-being.

### **CENTER PARENT COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The parents/guardians of all children who attend each center comprise that center's parent committee. Parent meetings are held monthly and offer a variety of informational/trainings based on parent/guardian interest, input on center activities, projects to benefit the community

and to conduct center parent committee business. Center Parent Committee Meetings offer the opportunity to connect with other parents/guardians to build strong relationships. The parents/guardians of children in Home Base programs have the option of joining a center's parent committee or having a separate committee.

## **POLICY COUNCIL**

Policy Council serves as the governing body of the ACAP ECE program. Policy Council meets monthly and reviews and approves program decisions related to budgets, personnel and program decisions throughout the program year. Policy Council is comprised of parent representatives from each center, elected by the Center Parent Committee and Community Representatives that have a vested interest in Early Childhood education and services. Meetings may be held virtually or at the Presque Isle ACAP office. Mileage and child care allowances are available to eligible policy council representatives on request.

## **PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN CLASSROOMS**

Parents are encouraged to take part in classroom activities and this can be done in a variety of ways:

- Visiting your child's classroom
- Read a favorite book, sing a song or play a favorite game with children.
- Join the class at mealtimes
- Provide information on favorite family foods or cultural practices
- Share a favorite hobby or interest with the class
- Offer to prepare materials for classroom activities
- Talk with your child's teacher or the center supervisor for more information or to share ideas.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

ACAP ECE confidentiality policy states that no personally identifiable information about a child or family may be released without informed parental consent. Personally identifiable information is defined as information about a child or family which would make it possible to identify the child or family with reasonable certainty. This includes any information that has on it: the child's name, parents' names, address, telephone number, medical information or any other data that can readily identify the child or family.

All ACAP ECE employees and volunteers agree to and sign off on this confidentiality policy.

## **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

All ACAP staff are required by law to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect. Reports of suspected abuse or neglect are completed in accordance with Department of Health & Human Services and ACAP Policy.

ACAP requires the reporting of suspected institutional incidents of child abuse and neglect to assure the safety and welfare of children within ACAP's programs.

## **PARENT RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Parents and guardians are welcome to visit their child(ren) at the center at any time, unless a court prevents such visitation.

Parents may request to meet with program staff and expect a meeting to be scheduled within a reasonable period of time.

Parents may see their child's file at any time and may request photocopies of materials within it.

Parents may expect the program to be sensitive to and accommodate their child(ren)s special needs.

Parents may request a report of their child(ren)'s day, activities, and well-being at any time. Parents of infants and toddlers receive daily reports of food intake, toileting and activities.

Parents are encouraged to join in their child's educational experiences by participating in classroom activities and field trips.

Parents will be treated with dignity and respect by the staff.

Parents can be assured that

- no service will be provided without their written and signed consent.
- all information regarding their child(ren) and family is strictly confidential.
- no material is shared with others without parental written release. (except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect.)

If parents have complaints regarding the services rendered by the center, they should follow this procedure.

- complaint/challenge is made first to the person the complaint is with.
- if satisfaction is not achieved, complaint/challenge follows this order:
  - Classroom Teacher;
  - Program Manager;
  - ACAP Early Care and Education Director;
  - ACAP Executive Director;
  - ACAP Policy Council.

Parents are responsible for updating all information with staff when any change occurs. Especially important are:

- change in child's name
- change in child's attendance schedule
- persons authorized for pick-up
- phone numbers for emergency contacts
- addresses and email addresses

- new stresses/conditions in the child's life which may impact her/his behavior and needs at the center

Parents are responsible for providing required health records, including immunizations for enrolled children within 30 days of enrollment. Documentation of current physical and annual dental exam are required within 90 days of enrollment.

Parents are responsible for ensuring their children are appropriately dressed for the weather (e.g., snow suits, mittens, hats, boots in winter and sun hats, water clothes/shoes for summer).

Parents are responsible for providing at least one extra complete set of clothing each day.

Parents are responsible to return extra clothing and classroom materials which may be loaned or mistakenly taken from the center.

Parents or a dependable alternate must be able to be reached by phone when their child is present at the center.

Parents are responsible for keeping sick children home and for calling the center to notify staff.

Parents are responsible for notification of absence from the program for any reason.

#### **PARENTAL ACCESS TO RECORDS**

Parents have full access and rights to information kept by the program regarding their children and themselves.

ACAP Early Care and Education Services has the obligation to explain to parents any information in any record pertaining to their child or family.

Parents have the right, after reviewing their child's record, to have it amended or corrected. The request must be in writing and will be approved by the ACAP Early Care and Education Services Director. If the parents and the program cannot agree about the corrections/amendments, then all explanations and requests for changes must be kept with and become part of the child's record.

Parents may obtain, by written request, a list of locations of all personally identifiable information kept by ACAP Early Care and Education Services.

#### **PARENT/STAFF/COMMUNITY COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Our goal is to meet the needs of the community through our service delivery. We believe that direct communication is the best way to address concerns or issues before they become problems, however understand that sometimes a more formal approach is needed to resolve a more serious complaint. This is the process established for the community and parents to address problems/issues/concerns within ACAP ECE Services.

If a problem arises with an ACAP ECE Services staff person, please discuss the concern directly with the staff person first. This allows for a clear understanding of the problem. If you feel



dissatisfied with the outcome, contact this person's supervisor. The Program Manager is also available to discuss the concerns at any time.

If there are concerns with ACAP ECE Services program delivery that does not directly involve an ACAP staff person, please contact the Program Manager to discuss the concern.

After you have communicated to the parties listed above and you feel your complaint has not been addressed, please contact the Director of Programs of ECE Services. The Director of Programs can be reached at 1-800-432-7881 or 768-3045. The ACAP Executive Director may be contacted if you are not satisfied with this process.

Unresolved complaints will be accepted in writing by the Policy Council. The Policy Council Chairperson will respond in writing and will copy the correspondence to the Board Chairperson, Executive Director and Director of Programs of ECE Services.

## **CUSTODY**

1. Children must be enrolled by a parent or guardian. Documentation of guardianship must be confirmed prior to services being provided.

2. For non-married parents, every attempt will be made to have both parents sign all permission and releases if the child lives with both parents.

3. Children will be released to parent, guardian, or other persons listed on the emergency information form or when written permission from the parent is received. Emergency verbal authorization by the parent or guardian must be followed with a signed authorization. Staff will ask the person attempting to remove the child from the center for proof of their identity and their relationship to the child.

Although the parent listed on the birth certificate has the legal right to remove their child from the program, staff will be cautious if the enrolling parent has requested that the estranged parent not be allowed access to the child. If this situation arises staff will contact the parent who enrolled the child.

Parents who are subject to a court order regarding custody must provide a copy of the court order(s) outlining the current custody arrangements. If there is a court ordered change in the custody arrangements a copy of the new court order must be provided to staff.

A child may be released to either parent if they are married but separated with no court order.

A child may be released to either parent if they are divorced with joint custody when there is no primary physical residence of the child. When parents are not married, documented "Primary Physical Residency" determines custody.

MAINE COURT ORDERS TAKE PRIORITY OVER ANY OTHER STATE ORDERS. If a family has a court order from another state, staff will recommend that the family contact a Maine court to get the paperwork changed for the State of Maine.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSURE PROCEDURE**

This procedure has been established in consideration of the ever changing and sometimes extreme weather conditions we experience in Aroostook County. It is our intent to always have the safety of children, parents and staff at the forefront of our decision making. Listen for cancellations on WAGM, or see the ACAP Facebook Page.

### *Traditional Head Start and Collaboration Classrooms*

Due to the safety issues associated with bussing children to Head Start it will be up to the individual bus drivers and Program Manager to decide if the traditional Head Start/ Early Head Start classroom will be delayed or cancelled for the day. This decision is often based on closure of the local public school. The bus driver, Program manager or designated staff will be responsible for contacting the radio and WAGM television with the cancellation information. Parents will hear these cancellations by 6:30 am.

ACAP classrooms located in public schools are always closed when the public school is closed.

### *Full Day/Full Year, Infant/Toddler and Preschool Classrooms*

When ACAP offices close due to poor weather conditions this will include Child Care and Head Start classrooms. Efforts will be made to have cancellations announced on local radio stations and WAGM Channel 8 news by 6:00 am. The ACAP switchboard's message will also indicate any agency closures. The switchboard can be reached by calling 1-800-432-7881 or 764-3721.

When the Center Supervisor and opening staff member feel conditions warrant a delay in opening the center, the opening staff member will contact all parents scheduled to arrive at the center between 6 and 7 a.m.

Parents will be advised to listen to the morning cancellations to determine if ACAP centers will be open for the day.

### *Early Closure*

When ACAP facilities open but close early due to deteriorating weather conditions, parents will be called to pick their children up. When this happens, we will ask that parents pick children up at a designated time or as soon as possible. An ACAP staff member will remain at the center until all children have been picked up.