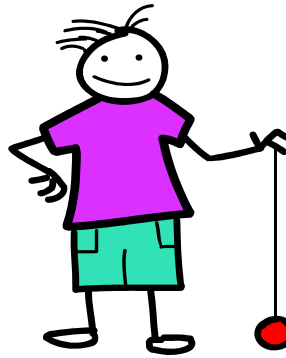


PARENT HANDBOOK FAMILY CHILD CARE SYSTEM



Central Berkshire Office
152 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 443-0676

Northern Berkshire Office
Haskins Community Center
P.O. Box 172
North Adams, MA 01267
(413) 663-6593

Your Family Child Care Educator:

The name of your FCC educator is:

The address is:

The telephone number is:

AN EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE PROGRAM OF
CHILD CARE OF THE BERKSHIRES, INC.

Licensing Agency for Massachusetts Child Care Sites
Dept of Early Education and Care, 95 Liberty St. Suite 1124, 3rd Floor
Springfield MA 01103 413-788-8401 FAX 413-784-1227

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The mission of Child Care of the Berkshires is to strengthen families through the provision of high quality early child hood education and family support, to lessen the negative effects of poverty and child abuse.

It incorporates in all its programs and services the following values:

- ✓ Excellence
- ✓ Respect
- ✓ Integrity
- ✓ Learning
- ✓ Diversity
- ✓ Fiscal Sustainability

LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Dear Parent(s):

On behalf of the staff of the Family Child Care System, I would like to welcome you and your child to our program. Please be assured that we recognize the importance of this time for each of you and we will do all that is possible to help you enjoy your experiences with us.



The F.C.C. System is a network of high quality child care homes licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Care and Education. The FCC educators are carefully chosen for their high standards and caring qualities. They are well trained in the areas of childcare and child development, certified in First Aid and CPR, and are continuously involved in professional development and training. Many have earned college degrees and accreditations in Child Development (C.D.A.)

You are welcome to visit your child at any time during the day when your child is in care. Providers look forward to your opinions, feedback, and suggestions for our program. Your child will have an enriched, happy, learning experience during the time in which you must be away.

Parents are encouraged to become involved while your child attends the child care program, through participation in various planned functions, social events, parent/teacher conferences.

Lastly, I thank you for the privilege of working with and caring for your child. Should you have any questions or concerns at any time, please feel free to let us know.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Adornetto
Program Director

Colleen Cutler
Program Director



The Staff at Family Child Care

Pittsfield Site

Stephanie Adornetto, Program Director

443-0676

Jenna Barschdorf, Family Support Coordinator
Education Specialist

Jackie Dubreuil, Childhood Development Specialist

North Adams Site

Colleen Cutler, Program Director

664-3256

Michelle Eurburn, Family Support Coordinator

Terry Hartman, Education/Nutritional Specialist

Lory Atwell, Billing Specialist, Parent Fees

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

What is Family Child Care?

Family child care homes are licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Education and Care (EEC). Small groups of children are cared for by one or two adults, in the educator's own home.



The size of the group is generally small, the setting is home-like, and the child has only one (or two) adults caring for them. The licensing process insures that the FCC educator meets all of the requirements to operate a family child home, including health and safety issues, educator and child ratios, on-going training requirements, appropriate equipment and materials, programming and policies. FCC educators and other members in the households have satisfactorily completed a criminal background record check. Much of the information found in

the Parent Handbook is required by EEC. The EEC licensors visit the home at least once every three years, usually at the time of license renewal.

What is a Family Child Care System?

The Family Child Care System is a network of independently licensed family child care educators and homes that provide child care services in their own homes. The FCC staff of Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc. coordinate the services to the FCC educators which include referral and enrollment services, training opportunities, billing services, and technical assistance and support. Each FCC educator is interviewed and selected to be part of the CCB FCC system based on their previous experience with children, their professional commitment and their ability to educate and nurture children. The FCC educators affiliated with the System are unique individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Some have a CDA credential; some have college degrees. Likewise, there is a wide range of child care experience, ranging from relatively new educators to women with 20 years of experience. All have participated in a FCC orientation, a pre-service training and have current certification in first aid and CPR. Each FCC educator must complete a minimum of 20 hours of training each year. Child Care of the Berkshires is a not-for profit agency with a variety of program locations throughout Berkshire County. It holds a contract with the Department of Early Care and Education to offer child care services to income-eligible families. There are two separate offices of the FCC System, and each one maintains parallel staffing.

Staffing

The Family Child Care Program Directors are hired by the Executive Director of Child Care of the Berkshires and are responsible for the overall management of the FCC services. There are Educational Specialists who oversee the educational and nutritional program, and assist with the curriculum planning and implementation. There are two Family Support Coordinators who work primarily with the parents of the children enrolled. There are social workers and early childhood specialists who provide additional services and support, as needed. In each office, there are support staff that assist with billing and handle the billing and collection of parent fees.

2. ENROLLMENT

Non-discrimination Statement

Child Care of the Berkshires believes in the value of caring for children in mixed-age groupings and from various socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, as well as typical children mixed with children with disabilities. Research suggests that children learn much from mixed groupings and that it provides them with unique and valuable opportunities for enhanced learning and social interactions. Furthermore, the Family Child Care System of Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc. complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 (PL 88352) to the end that no person will, on the grounds of race, color, sex, religion, marital status, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual preference, or cultural heritage be excluded or subjected to discrimination in the enrolling of children or as adult users of this service.

Enrollment Guidelines

The FCC educators make the final decision on enrollment of children into their own homes. In most cases, full-time enrollments are preferred over part-time enrollments as an educator prefers to have the home fully enrolled whenever possible. Occasionally a child may be enrolled on an hourly basis for early mornings or late afternoons, based on enrollment and/or wait list status. The number of children enrolled in the home, the number of educators and the number of infants and toddlers are determined by the Department of Early Education and Care licensing regulations.



Meeting Prior to Admittance

The FCC Family Support Coordinator (or designee) will meet with you prior to admitting your child to the FCC System. At the meeting, the Family Support Coordinator will provide you with the System's written statement of purpose; types of service provided; referral policy; behavior management policy; termination and suspension policy; the policy for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect; the transportation plan; a copy of the health care policy (if you request it); procedures for administration of medication; procedures for providing emergency health care and the illness exclusion policy; and a copy of the fee schedule. All of this information is contained in the Parent Handbook. You will be offered a folder with contact information and several handouts of other pertinent information when enrolling your child in the FCC System.

The Initial Visit and Separation

During the intake process, the Family Support Coordinator will schedule a visit to one or more FCC homes, in order for parents to meet the FCC educators and familiarize you and your child with the surroundings of potential homes. The parent makes the placement choice, in conjunction with the FCC educator. The first day away from home and parents can be very exciting but is sometimes difficult for some children. Parents are encouraged to take time to explain to their children where they will be going and what they will be doing. If you feel that a second and possibly a third visit is necessary, please make arrangements to do so. There is no charge for these orientation visits. On your child's first day, it is suggested that you plan to spend a little extra time in the home, in order to make the transition seem less frightening and to help your child feel more secure. The FCC educators are experienced in dealing with separation anxiety. Tears are normal in the first days. Please feel free to call the FCC educator during the day to check and see how your child is settling into the day. Some children benefit from beginning with shorter days, which become progressively

longer as they get used to the new environment and being away from Mom and/or Dad.

Enrollment of Children with Special Disabilities

In determining whether to admit or serve a child with a disability, the FCC staff will, with parental consent, request information related to the child's participation in the FCC home's program from the local public school, the Early Intervention Program or other health or service providers.

The FCC staff, with the parent's input, and in conjunction with the FCC educator, identify in writing the specific accommodations, if any, required to meet the needs of the child, including any change or modifications in the child's participation in regular FCC activities, the size of the group to which the child may by, the appropriate adult/child ratio and any special equipment, materials, ramps or aids needed. The toileting needs of a child with a disability will not be considered an undue burden.

The FCC staff, with parental permission, participates in the development and review of the child's program plan in cooperation with the local public school, Early Intervention Program and/or other health and service providers. The FCC staff will, with parental permission, inform the appropriate administrator of special education, in writing, that the FCC system is serving a child with a disability.

The FCC Family Support Coordinator (or other designated staff person) will serve as the liaison for each child with a disability and will be responsible for coordinating care in the program and with service providers and communicating with the child's parents, service providers, and the FCC educator and FCC staff.

3. OPERATING SCHEDULE

Hours of Operation



The hours of operation of each FCC home is determined by the individual FCC educator. Children must be picked up at the agreed upon time listed in the enrollment agreement, allowing for enough time to gather their possessions and talk briefly with the FCC educator. There may be a late fee, to be paid directly to the FCC educator, if a parent is late.

Calendar and Holidays

The FCC System will be closed on the following days:

- January New Year's Day and Martin Luther King's Day
- February President's Day
- March Professional Training Day
- May Memorial Day
- July Independence Day
- September Labor Day
- October Columbus Day
- November Thanksgiving Day and the Friday After
- December Christmas Eve and Christmas



Snow Days and Other Emergency Closings



The individual FCC homes are located throughout Berkshire County and weather conditions vary from town to town. The FCC educators do not close their homes due to inclement weather. The FCC System offices rarely close due to inclement weather. To ensure children's safety, transportation services are cancelled in inclement weather. It is a good rule of thumb to assume that if the public schools are closed, transportation is cancelled and an announcement will be made on the local radio stations.

Loss of Power, Heat or Water

In the event of a power outage, the FCC educator will attempt to determine how long the disruption in service will last. If it is determined that there will be a long-term disruption which would impact on loss of heat, refrigeration, ability to warm foods, or other conditions which would affect the health, safety, or comfort levels of children and staff, immediate steps will be taken to contact parents to pick up their children. If the length of disruption in services cannot be determined, the conditions will be carefully monitored and steps will be taken to contact parents to pick up the children when deemed appropriate.

If the heating system in the FCC home fails and the temperatures fall below 65 degrees and it does not appear that the problem will be corrected within two to three hours, parents or emergency contacts will be notified to pick up the children. Should there be advance notice for a short-term loss of water, containers will be used to store water for diapering, the flushing of toilets, and for hand-washing. In the event that there is a sudden, long-term projected loss of water, parents will be contacted to pick up their children immediately.

4. PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

Philosophy

It is our purpose to provide a caring, safe, secure and stimulating environment for your child that promotes his or her physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development, while responding to the various needs of the family. The FCC educators attempt to meet a child's individual needs within a child-centered curriculum that promotes his or her growth and development as an individual and as a member of the group. It is our belief that children learn through hands on experiences and through play. We are committed to the philosophies and practices supported by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the EEC Standards and Guidelines.

Program and Curriculum



Programming for each group is based on the developmental needs of the children enrolled in each FCC home. The FCC educators are responsible for developing lesson plans that include activities across all developmental areas - self-help skills, art, science, language development, music, large and small muscle coordination, self-esteem, thinking and problem solving. The FCC educators plan for a balance between quiet and active time and between child-initiated and educator-directed activities. The daily schedule encompasses plenty of free choice time in order

to enhance independent investigation and experimentation as well as socialization. These plans are posted in the home and copies are made available for parents to take home. The curriculum is based on the interests of the children; their individual and group needs, and the goals for the group developed by the FCC educators. The children are provided with activities and care giving practices that promote sensory development, large and small muscle skills, positive self-esteem, development of trust with the caregiver, self-help skills (eating, dressing, and toileting), socialization and language skills.

Themes and topics that may be covered in the FCC home are:

- Animals: Farm, Zoo, Pets and Wild
- Body Awareness
- Colors
- Community Helpers
- Dinosaurs
- Holidays
- Families:
 - Brothers, Sisters, Grandparents, Moms, and Dads
- Five Senses
- Foods Fruits, Vegetables
- Health - Tooth Brushing
- How Things Work
- Learning about Myself
- Nature
- Machines
- Math Concepts and Counting
- Musical Instruments
- Science Concepts: Water, Gravity and Sand
- Seasons: Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer
- Transportation: Cars, Trucks, Boats
- Weather: Rain, Snow, Wind



The FCC educators structure their home environment in order to maximize the learning of young children. Most of the homes will have materials for dramatic play, reading and writing activities, block building, water or sand play, table toys, and art and creative activities.

Should you have any ideas or suggestions for further topics, themes, or field trips, your input is welcome. In addition, should you have any special talents, interests or hobbies (or know someone who does) that might be of interest to the children, please tell us.

Attendance, Arrival and Separation

Consistent attendance is necessary for your child to benefit fully from the child care experience; however, we also recognize and appreciate the need for parents and children to spend quality time together when possible. If your child is going to be absent or late to the FCC home, please call and inform the FCC educator. It is helpful to know how many children to expect on any given day.



When bringing children to the FCC home, parents are asked to talk briefly with FCC educator and exchange valuable information. After drop off, we suggest that you tell your child when you are leaving, when you will return, that you say goodbye, and then leave quickly. The FCC educators are very experienced in dealing with separation problems and have found that honesty is the best

approach. In most instances, a child will stop crying by the time the parent reaches the front steps or shortly thereafter. Please feel free to call during the day and see how your child is doing if you have concerns.

Late Pick-up and Fees

If you are unable to pick up your child at the prearranged time, please call the FCC educator as soon as possible. If no one comes to pick up your child (or no one takes your child off the bus) and the FCC educator has not received a phone call, the person listed on your enrollment sheet as your authorized emergency contact will be called and asked to pick up your child immediately. There may be a late fee for children picked up after the pre-arranged time, even if the parent notified the FCC educator of her/his lateness. If none of the emergency designees are available and after an extended waiting period (6:00 PM), the Department of Children and Families Hotline will be called with a report filed and/or the FCC staff will contact the local police department.

Release of Child

If there is a change in the regular pick up plans, the FCC educator must be notified on or before that day. Please do not ask other people to pick up your child without first informing the FCC educator. Children will not be released to anyone who is not listed as an authorized person in the child's file. There are authorization forms, for your convenience, at the FCC educator's home. If your plans change, please complete a form and give it to your FCC educator. People who are unknown to the FCC educator will be asked to show picture identification.

Outdoor Play

The FCC take the children out every day, weather permitting. Please provide your child with the appropriate clothing for the season and sunscreen for the summer season. Be sure there are mittens, hats, snow pants and boots during the winter.



Rest Times

The FCC educator must plan for a time for the children to rest (or sleep) as part of the daily schedule. It is important that parents communicate their nap and rest expectations for their children to the FCC educators, in order that the FCC educators can establish expectations concerning a child's quiet time, based on the individual needs of the child and the wishes of the parents. The FCC educator may play soft music, dim the lights, and provide back rubs. Older children are not expected to lie down on mats, close their eyes or sleep. These children will be offered quiet activities such as coloring, table games, reading, etc. Parents may bring in pillows, sheets, blankets, pacifiers and stuffed animals to make rest time more comfortable.



Each FCC educator is trained in safe sleep practices and the SIDS risk factors for infants. Parents are given a copy of CCB's sleep safe practices and a fact sheet with recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS. Infants will be placed on their backs to sleep, unless there are specific written orders from a health care professional. During the first six weeks of caring for an infant under the age of 12 months, the sleeping infant will be under the direct supervision of the FCC educator at all times. The FCC educator will not allow a child to have a bottle while in a crib or on rest mat, to ensure good oral hygiene and safe sleep.

Communicating Pertinent Information and Telephone Contact

Please inform the FCC educator of events that have happened that may excite or worry your child during the day, such as a bad morning, difficulty in sleeping, an absent parent, a new pet, loss of a loved one, etc. Communicating pertinent information enables the FCC educator to have a better understanding of your child's behavior and will be better equipped, if necessary, to help your child cope with the problem.



If you expect to be away from your regular phone number on specific days, please let the FCC educator know where you will be or give a back up number.

- **It is imperative that the FCC educator knows the whereabouts of parents at all times in case of emergencies, so that the parent can pick up the child.**
- If your schedule or need for care changes, please notify the FCC educator at once.
- If your home number, place of employment or address changes, or the emergency numbers change, please update this information immediately in your child's file with the FCC staff.

What To Wear and What to Bring Every Day



Please keep in mind the comfort of clothing and shoes as you send your child to participate fully in the program. Children paint, glue, and work with many messy materials so clothing should be washable. Children are scheduled to go out every day unless prohibited by the weather so plan accordingly for appropriate clothing. All children must have shoes or sneakers for indoor and outdoor play. Slippers are helpful especially in winter weather when feet get wet. Parents are asked not send their children to school in jackets with drawstrings as they are dangerous.

Every child should have a complete change of clothes in the FCC home. Accidents and spills happen easily and it is important that a change of clothes be on hand. Each item must be labeled with your child's name. The FCC educator cannot assume responsibility for unlabeled items.

For all children who are not toilet trained, parents are required to provide diapers, wipes and creams.

Toys from Home

The FCC educators strongly discourage bringing toys from home, as it is often difficult for children to share with others. In the event that your child brings a toy or something from home, please make sure it is labeled. It is possible for things to get lost and/or broken. Unfortunately, the FCC educators cannot be responsible for the safety of items brought from home. Toy guns, weapons, war toys, or similar toys are not allowed and parents are asked to assist in following this policy.

Guidance and Discipline

It is our belief that guidance and good discipline involve compassion, caring, and sensitivity while helping the child understand that mistakes are a natural part of growing up. A child builds trust through consistency, a calm and reassuring manner and voice, close body and eye contact,

respect, and realistic expectations. FCC educators create nurturing and caring environments in which children are emotionally comfortable and are supported to develop at their own pace.



The FCC educators establish developmentally appropriate routines and rules. Rules are communicated as positive behavior whenever possible:

“Chairs are for sitting.” and “We walk down the steps.”

It is understood that at various times children may not follow the established rules and may, in fact, choose not to conform to acceptable patterns of behavior. In such cases, the FCC educators will handle behavior problems in a consistent manner and with an approach that is cognizant both of the individual child's needs, age and development. For instance, the FCC educators recognize that toddlers do not share well, and do not require it.

The FCC educators will help children learn positive social behavior. They are patient, understanding and speak in kind, firm voices when redirecting children. Good behavior is encouraged and praised. Appropriate behavior is modeled for the children, especially toddlers; i.e., “Pat her head.” as an alternative to pulling hair. FCC educators will try to redirect a child's behavior before using the method of separation and/or a “cool-down time.”

A cool-down time is defined as a time for the child to come under self-control, not a time of humiliation and punishment. When this method is used, the length of the time will depend on the child's ability to sit and will be used only after some discussion between the FCC educator and the child has taken place concerning the problem. Nevertheless, the maximum time permitted is equal to one minute for each year of the child's age, and the child must be within the educator's view.

Children will not be confined to a swing, high chair, crib or playpen as punishment or in lieu of supervision.

Physical punishment of any kind is not used or tolerated. No child will be subjected to cruel or severe punishment, humiliation or verbal abuse. The FCC educator will consult with the FCC staff if a child's behavior is sexually explicit, inappropriate, disruptive, or harmful to other children in order to affect an individualized discipline plan. The FCC educators document all such incidents and report them to the FCC staff who will assume responsibility for further action, as appropriate.

Toilet Training

When the parent decides that the child is ready to begin toilet training, the FCC educator will work with the parent to implement a method that is in the best interests of the child. A child who is not ready should not be pushed as problems may result then or in the future.

To help your child accomplish toilet training, it is important that there is consistency and frequent communication between the home and the FCC home. Parents and the FCC educators must be following the same approach. Please provide the FCC home with several sets of extra clothing during this time. Pants/shorts should be easily slipped on and off; belts and suspenders are difficult for children to manipulate during toileting. Finally, accidents are bound to happen and the FCC educators expect them, without any undue concern. No child will be punished for wetting or soiling his/ herself, or for not using the toilet.

Special Events and Celebrations

The FCC System is a diverse, multi-cultural program and does not practice customs of any specific group or religion. Children are exposed to different celebrations especially associated with their families currently enrolled. For example, the FCC educators may plan activities around Hanukkah, Thanksgiving and Ground Hog's Day. If you would like to participate in a special event or celebration, please discuss such plans with the FCC educator so that your visit can be incorporated into the daily schedule.

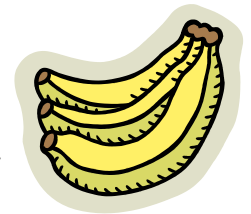


Field Trips

Field trips provide an opportunity for the children to experience the community in which they live. Some FCC educators take the children for regular walks in the neighborhood or to a local park to play. Some FCC educators take the children on occasional excursions, like the fire station or the grocery store, using their private vans. At enrollment time, parents are asked to sign a permission slip for general field trips which the FCC educator frequently plans. For special occasion trips, you will be asked to sign a separate permission slip. You may be asked to bring in your child's car seat for these special trips on which your child will be transported. The FCC educators take a first aid kit on all field trips including emergency information on all of the children. The children must also have the name, address and telephone number of the FCC educator on their person, when off-site. There is no extra charge for field trips, but the FCC educator may ask for a donation to offset the cost of the excursion.

Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks

FCC educators prepare and serve breakfast, lunch and an afternoon snack to the children in the FCC home, or a variation of the above. There is no extra charge for the meals. The meal and snack times are designed to be a relaxed and enjoyable time of the day and are an integral part of the children's daily learning experiences. Children often participate in some of the food preparation and help with clean-up. They are often exposed to new food items and their vocabulary is expanded. The meals are nutritionally balanced and conform to the established Guidelines of Nutrition Services for the Child Care Food Program. You should communicate if your child has a food allergy or dietary restrictions at the time of enrollment, especially a nut allergy that requires special precautions.



In order to promote positive oral health, the FCC educators will assist with tooth brushing during the daily schedule after meals and snacks.

Soda, candy, gum, lollipops or cough drops are not allowed.

5. TRANSPORTATION

On a limited basis, the FCC System provides transportation to some children, to and from the FCC home. If your child is receiving transportation, the following guidelines are important:



- a. Your child must be ready for the morning pick-up. The driver will not wait more than 2 minutes, as it will upset the schedule.

- b. In the afternoon, you must be waiting to take your child off the bus. If you are not at home, your child will be returned to the FCC office or the FCC home, and you will have to pick your child up.
- c. You must call the FCC office if your child does not need to be picked up.
- d. You must let the FCC office know if someone else is taking your child off the bus.
- e. Please do not send your child with candy, food, money, etc. on the bus.

6. FINANCIAL MATTERS

Fees are established based on a parent's requests for child care and according to our published sliding fee scale, which is updated annually. The daily fee is based on the family's gross income and the number of individuals in the family. Each family must sign a fee agreement that details the payment schedule and the fee.

Fees must be paid one week in advance or if parents prefer, they may pay one month in advance. At the time of enrollment, there is a one-week charge used as a security deposit which will be credited to your account when the child terminates. Fees are charged to each account on a monthly basis at the beginning of each month and the Main Office sends out a statement. Payments may be made by check, money order or credit card. FCC does not accept cash payments except at the Main Office. Parents who have questions regarding their fees should call the Main Office at 663-6593 for clarification. Failure to adhere to the payment schedule will result in a termination notice. Problems with adhering to the weekly payment schedule should be discussed with the FCC Program Director or Family Support Coordinator.



Subsidies and Scholarships

It is understood that child care is expensive. Child Care of the Berkshires is fortunate to have some private monies to subsidize child care fees for income eligible families. If you feel that you might be eligible for any of these subsidies, please talk with the FCC Family Support Coordinator concerning your financial situation and possible reduction of child care fees.

Fees for Absences, Holidays and Vacations

Fees will be charged for absences, the child's vacation, holidays, and snow or other weather related emergencies. EEC policies allow for only two weeks of vacation time. In addition, parents who reserve a space for their school-age children during school closings will be charged whether or not the child attends, per the fee agreement.

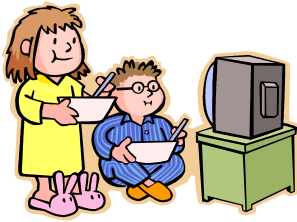
Transitions and Notice of Withdrawal

Parents are required to give the FCC educator and/or FCC staff two weeks advance notification of withdrawal of a child from the program. It is important that the FCC educator and child have an opportunity to say good-bye and to effect a positive transition. The FCC staff and the educator will collaborate and share information with the other FCC educator or program, with the parent's permission, if the child is moving to another FCC home or to another program.

If the FCC educators not given proper notice, fees will be charged for two weeks after termination.

7. PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

Parent Visits and Communication



The FCC staff and educators provide a wide range of support services and means of communication to parents, with the goal of establishing a partnership between the FCC educators and parents. CCB staff publish an educational Parent Activity Page on a monthly basis with helpful information and activity ideas a parent can do at home. Our open door policy for the FCC home encourages parents to visit the home and spend as much time with their child as needed to reduce anxiety and foster positive parent/educator relations. The FCC educator is sensitive to the issues of parent and child separation. Parents are encouraged to phone the educator or FCC staff with questions or concerns regarding their children.

The FCC System also believes in the importance of ongoing communication between staff, educators and parents. FCC staff and educators are willing to meet and talk with parents and value their input regarding any suggestions or ideas. In order to allow the FCC educator to give parents undivided attention, you may want to arrange a specific time during the day when there are fewer distractions. Since the children's safety is one of our primary concerns, it is often difficult and distracting to discuss issues while the FCC educator is supervising the other children. In some instances, the FCC staff will make a visit to the home so that the educator can be free for a discussion. Any important information that would help us to better serve your child's needs should be put into writing in order for appropriate staff to be informed.

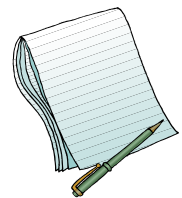
Parents are encouraged and afforded opportunities to participate in the home and assist on field trips and with special events, including gym days, whenever possible. To promote further communication and allow input, other opportunities for involvement are offered such as parent meetings, social events, fundraising activities, representation on subcommittees to work on specific tasks or issues. In addition, we provide and ask parents to complete a program evaluation on annual basis.

Parent Concerns and Complaints

Parents with a concern or a complaint are encouraged to speak directly to the FCC educator, depending on the nature of the complaint. If the concern is something that happened in the home (for example, a child hit another child, missing or dirty clothes, minor complaints of the child), it is best for the parent to talk directly with the FCC educator.

Should the concern be of a more serious nature where the parent feels uncomfortable or that it is inappropriate to speak with the FCC educator directly, the parent should please voice his/her concern to the FCC Program Director or Family Support Coordinator.

Parents' concerns are taken seriously. The FCC Program Director (or other FCC staff) will listen to the concern, may schedule a time to talk over the situation, gather information and, if necessary, will implement corrective action as appropriate. The FCC Program Director will take follow-up action and meet again with the parent to discuss the resolution of the complaint. The FCC Program Director may also document the resolution of the complaint in writing to the parent, dependent on the seriousness of the situation.



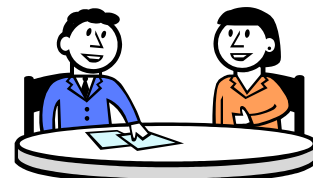
Parents may contact EEC directly for information regarding the licensing regulations for FCC. The number is on the front of the Handbook.

All complaints will be recorded and a copy will be sent to the Program Manager of Child Care Services (or Executive Director) for review. If the complaint is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, the parent may contact the Program Manager or Executive Director or designee for further resolution.

Parents should make complaints of a most serious nature (physical or verbal abuse of a child, over enrollment, serious safety issues) directly to the Program Manager or the Executive Director. The Executive Director or designee will follow the above process (i.e., listen, gather information, meet with FCC educator, the parents and Program Director and other staff) and will try to resolve the situation. If indicated, a report will be made to the Department of Children and Families and/or the Department of Early Education and Care. The Executive Director will communicate complaints of a most serious nature with the Board of Directors.

You have the right to contact the licensing agency yourself to voice a concern or complaint. The Department of Early Education and Care @ 413-788-8401. Ask to speak to the Family Child Care licenser in charge of your area. You will find them most helpful. There website also offers a wealth of information.

Progress Reports, Conferences and Referrals



Parents are informed of their child's progress and developmental issues through daily contact with FCC educator, progress reports, and at parent conferences. The FCC educator completes progress reports every three months for infants and every six months for toddlers and preschoolers. As requested, the FCC educator will schedule parent conferences at mutually convenient times for the parent or when the FCC educator or FCC staff feel it necessary to meet to discuss a child's development. The FCC System uses a nationally recognized tool, the Creative Curriculum Assessment, to track your child's development. These reports will be given to you at a parent conference or sent to you in the mail.

In an attempt to better serve children and families, the FCC educator or FCC staff may identify a child or parent in need of additional services, be it social, mental health, educational, or medical. A list of local referral resources and telephone numbers are provided during the intake and enrollment process. Referrals are based on the observations of the child's behavior by the FCC educator or staff. Other CCB staff may also be consulted when appropriate, to help formulate written service plans and assist parents and staff with their implementation. Staff will meet with the parents and discuss the observations and the referral; no referral will be made without written parental consent.

If it is determined that the child is not in need of services, staff will review the child's progress every three months thereafter. A written record of referrals for the child is maintained in the child's folder. The staff are familiar with the people to contact at the local schools and we will assist with the referrals.

Parents' Rights	Parents' Responsibilities
It is a parent's right to:	It is the parent's responsibility to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Be informed about your child care options ◦ Choose a program that meets your needs and your child's needs ◦ Be confident that your child is in a safe and nurturing home ◦ Know where your child is at all times ◦ Visit your child in the FCC home at any time and without an appointment ◦ Receive a verbal or written report of how your child did during the day ◦ Know that your child has had nutritious meals ◦ Understand our guidance plan ◦ Feel comfortable talking with the FCC educator and the FCC staff ◦ Meet with the FCC educator or FCC staff to address questions and concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Adhere to the agreed upon time for drop-off and pick up times ◦ Call the FCC educator if your child will be absent ◦ Tell the FCC educator important information that may affect your child during the day ◦ Send in appropriate clothing! ◦ Check with the FCC educator before sending in toys from home ◦ Inform the FCC educator and the FCC staff of changes in addresses, jobs, telephone number, work situation, emergency contact people ◦ Discuss any concerns about your child or his/her experience in the FCC home ◦ Always use your child's car seat when you are transporting your child in a car

8. HEALTH POLICIES

It is one of our goals to provide a healthy and safe environment for your child. The following policies attempt to ensure procedures to obtain that goal.



Medical Evaluations and Immunizations

Upon acceptance for enrollment and within 30 days, all children must have a physical examination to ensure that the child is fit and able to participate in the program's activities. Additionally, the child must be in compliance with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health requirements:

- for immunization against polio, tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough, measles, mumps, HIB, German measles and chicken pox, and .
- for lead poisoning screening.

No child is required to be immunized if the parents object on religious grounds or the physician documents that such a procedure is contraindicated. Parents are responsible for updating their child's files for immunizations annually.

When Your Child Becomes Sick

The FCC educator will take precautions when children become ill while at child care. We ask that parents be considerate of the comfort level of their child when he or she is not feeling well and to be respectful of the health and safety of other children and **not** bring children to childcare if s/he is symptomatic of a contagious condition. If your child has a mild cold and can fully participate in the program and participate in outdoor play, your child may attend.

If your child has a fever (101 degrees or over), complains of feeling sick, acts lethargic, vomits, has thick colored mucus running from his/her nose, a discharge from the eyes, has diarrhea or a rash, the FCC educator will notify you to pick up your child immediately. In most situations, a child must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before returning to child care.

It is also recommended that arrangements be made for someone to serve as a back-up person to care for your child should s/he have to be kept home or be excluded from childcare due to illness.

FCC staff may request that a child who has been excluded from child care may return after being evaluated by a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner, and can provide a note that states that the child is considered to pose no health risk to the other children.

Nevertheless, the FCC staff will make the final decision concerning the inclusion or exclusion of the child.

The FCC educator will notify parents immediately in writing when a communicable disease has been introduced into the FCC home, using information from the Day Care Health Manual.

Administering Prescription and Non-Prescription Medication

The FCC educator can only administer medication, prescription or non-prescription **FCC educators are required by EEC to have been trained in the administration of medications prior to administering.**

after having approved training to do so. Prescription medication must be accompanied by written order of a physician. For prescription medication, the written order of the physician may be the label on the medication that includes the child's name, the dosage, the name of the physician. Parents may ask the pharmacy to have the medicine in two bottles, so that they may leave one at the FCC home. The FCC educator will not administer any such medication contrary to the directions on the original container unless so authorized by a written order of the child's physician. The FCC educator will keep a written record of when the medication was given and place it in the child's file. Prescription medication must be kept in its original container with the child's name, name of drug, directions for administering, proper storage procedure, and expiration date recorded on it. All medications will be stored in a safe and secure location, and the unused portion will be returned to the parent.

For non-prescription medications (such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen or antihistamines), a written parental consent is required. This needs to be renewed weekly and must include the dosage, times, days, and purpose. Upon enrollment parents may sign approval for use of these non-prescription medications in the event of an emergency or unanticipated illness when a parent cannot be immediately be contacted or able to pick up an ill child, such as the event of a fever. This statement will be valid for one year from the date on which it was signed. Any non-prescription medication needed on a regular basis would require a written order from the child's physician.

Parents will be notified each time a non-prescription medication is administered to a child.

Topical non-prescription medications such as sunscreen, petroleum jelly or other ointments can be administered to a child with written parental authorization. A signed statement listing the specific topical non-prescription medication(s) and the criteria for administration is valid for one year from the date of signature. Parents will be informed daily whenever a topical is applied to their child.

Allergies and Smoking



If your child has an allergy, please let us know. Also please inform us should there be a history of allergies in the family (e.g., parent allergic to insect stings). To safeguard the health of all children, notices concerning children's allergies are posted for in the FCC home.

No smoking is allowed in a FCC home when children are present.

Notification of Injury/Accident Report

The FCC educator will notify you in writing, within 24 hours, if any first aid is administered to your child.



Procedures for Emergencies and Illness and Transportation to the Hospital

In the case of an emergency or illness (such as a seizure, a serious fall or serious cut), the FCC educator will begin administration of emergency first aid and will call for an ambulance. The FCC educator will notify the parent to meet the child at the emergency room of the local hospital. When parents cannot be reached, those individuals listed as emergency contacts will be contacted. The child's whole file will be taken, including permission forms.

In case of an accident on field trips, the parents will be contacted as soon as possible and informed of the nature and extent of the injury and the proposed plan of action. If necessary, an ambulance will be called to transport the child to the hospital.

Suspected Abuse and Neglect

All FCC staff and educators are mandated reporters. This means that if they suspect a child has been abused or neglected, as defined by Massachusetts General Laws, they are mandated to report it to the Department of Children and Families. FCC educators must document a child's injuries upon arriving at the FCC home, on an incident form. It is a general policy of Child Care of the Berkshires to inform parents of their suspicions and the pending report, dependent on the safety of the child. A complete copy of our Child Abuse and Neglect Policy is available to parents in the Program Director's office, upon request.

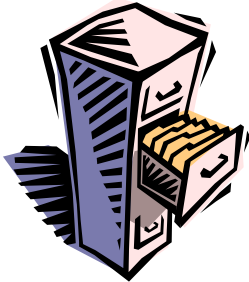
Health Consultant

A healthcare professional has reviewed our Health Policies and is available for consultation. Please note that our Health Policies reflect certain State-mandated standards.

9. CHILDREN'S RECORDS

Records

The FCC System maintains a written record for each child that includes:



- an application form
- copies of periodic medical records
- updated immunization records
- prescribed medications administered to child
- all necessary authorizations and consents
- all pertinent correspondence
- referrals for social services and
- progress reports.

The Department of Early Education and Care requires that these records be legible, dated at least yearly and signed by the individual making the entry. Records are maintained for at least five years after the child has left the program, unless transferred to the parents. Periodically you will be asked to update various forms as required by the Department of Early Education and Care. It is imperative that all forms be filled out completely and that the information is accurate. (Please do not refer us back to the old forms indicating that nothing has changed since you last filled them out.) In addition, please note that on some forms, there may be more than one location for your signature.

Confidentiality

Information in the child's record is privileged and confidential. This information will not be distributed or released to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plans for a child without written consent of the child's parents, unless there is a court order. Parents will be notified if a child's record is subpoenaed.

The child's parents have, upon request, access to his/her child's records at reasonable times. Access will not be delayed more than two business days after which the initial request was made and the child's entire record, regardless of the physical location of its parts, will be made available.

The FCC System will have records duplicated, and will maintain in each child's record a written log indicating any persons to whom information has been released. Each person releasing information contained in a child's record, in whole or in part, upon each instance of release, will enter into the log the following: his/her name, signature, position, the date, the portions of the record which were released, the purpose of such dissemination or release, and the signature of the person to whom the information is released. Such log will be available only to the child's parents and FCC System personnel responsible for record maintenance. There is no charge for copies of information in the child's records

Amending the Child's Records

A child's parents shall have the right to add information, comments, data, or any other relevant material to the child's record. The child's parents may also request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record. Such request shall be made in accordance with the procedures described below:

- 1) If such parents are of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record, s/he shall have the right to have a conference with the FCC staff to make his objection known.
- 2) The FCC staff will, within one week after the conference, render to such parent a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the parent, steps will be taken immediately to put the decision into effect.



Transfer of Records

Upon written request of the parents, the FCC staff will transfer a copy of the child's records to the parents or any other person the parent identifies, when the child is no longer in care.

Providing Information to the Department of Early Education and Care

The FCC staff will make available to the Department of Early Education and Care any information required to be kept and maintained under its regulations, and any other information reasonably related to the requirements of these regulations. This includes any information in the child's records. Authorized employees of the ECC are not to remove identifying materials from the FCC System's premises and are required to maintain the confidentiality of individual records.

10. TERMINATION/SUSPENSION POLICY



On occasion, it may be necessary to terminate or temporarily suspend child care services if such situations were to arise that were not in the best interests of the child, family and/or program. As these situations occur, attempts will be made to work together with parents and supportive agencies, as appropriate, toward a resolution. Examples of possible situations (inclusive of but not limited to) are as follows:

- 1) Failure to adhere to the payment schedule.
- 2) Behavior that jeopardizes or threatens the health, safety and/or welfare of staff, the individual child or other children within the program.
- 3) Noncompliance with CCB/FCC policies or procedures.
- 4) Noncompliance with Department of Early Education and Care policies or procedures, including a lack of service need.
- 5) Consistent underutilization of a slot: CCB reserve the right to give that slot to a family with a greater service need.
- 6) Inability of a child to adjust to the program after a reasonable amount of time.

When the Program Director (or designee) determines that a problematic situation exists that might warrant termination/suspension of childcare services, the Program Director will notify the Program Manager and will apprise her/him of the situation. The Director will notify the parent/guardian of the problem as soon as possible and will schedule a meeting to determine

what options exist, if any, which might rectify the problem. Supportive agencies/persons may be involved, as appropriate, to assist in the process of developing a corrective plan of action.

Prior to termination, families who are enrolled on a State subsidized slot will be apprised of their right to a review process. A record of this meeting and the resolution of the meeting, including reasons for termination, will be made and placed in the child's file. Child Care of the Berkshires is a large agency, which offers a number of child care options; if appropriate, the family may be referred to another child care program or to the Resources for Child Care Program for information and referral.

When a child is leaving the program, the FCC educator will make an attempt to prepare the child and the other children for the departure of the child. Suggested activities include a special farewell snack or a group art project for the child.

11. SOCIAL SERVICE SUPPORT



In a situation where the FCC educator or CCB staff has a concern for a child's social, emotional, cognitive or physical well-being, the FCC educator discusses the concern with the Program Director or Program Manager. If it is determined by the Program Director (possibly in consultation with other available resource people, i.e. – the local early childhood specialist, the resource teacher, the social worker, etc.) that a child or a family is in need of additional educational, medical or other family support services, the Program Director (or his/her designee) will contact the parent and discuss the situation. CCB offers the services of a multi-disciplinary team of early childhood specialists and social workers to assist a parent or child with a variety of issues, working on site in the FCC home or in the child's home. When appropriate, with the parent's permission, the Program Director (or his/her designee) will make a referral to an appropriate agency. All concerns are documented in writing and whether or not a referral is made, and placed in the child's file, by the Program Director or his/her designee.

When appropriate, parents of children under three years old will be referred to the local agency that is responsible for special education services:

Central Berkshire County	The Pediatric Development Center
South County	The Children's Health Program
North County	The Brien Center/Early Intervention

Parents of children three years old and over will be informed of their rights under Chapter 766 and the name of the appropriate special education administrator will be given to them. All concerns and follow-up action will be documented in the child's file, including referrals to other agencies.

Additionally, the Placement Coordinator assisting you in finding child care will offer you a folder with many valuable community resources and family assistance agencies. Their addresses and phone numbers are included in this guide. Information on lead and its effect on children is also included.

11. PARENT INFORMATION, RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chapter 28, Section 10 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates the Department of Early Education and Care the legal responsibility of promulgating rules and regulations governing the operation of day care centers (including nursery schools).

Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc. is required to inform all parents of specific information about their rights and responsibilities at the time of admission of their child to the center. Section 7.04 of 102 CMR 7.00, the regulations that govern day care centers, contains more information.



Much of the required information concerning rights and responsibilities is found within the pertinent sections of this handbook.

12. CHILD CARE OF THE BERKSHIRES, INC.



Child Care of the Berkshires, Inc. is a non-profit organization that was established in 1969 and operates a number of child care and family support services programs throughout Berkshire County. The Main Office is located in the Sarah Haskins Community Center at 210 State Street in North Adams. Inquiries may be made by calling (413) 663-6593. A Board of Directors, made up of parent representatives and members from the community at large, oversees the operation of the agency, reviews policies and procedures, monitors the finances of the agency and supervises the Executive Director. Please check with your child's FCC educator or stop by the office at the Center for an updated list of the additional programs that are offered by CCB.