

LITTLE PEAKS PRESCHOOL AND EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER

FAMILY HANDBOOK

**2024 - 2025
School Year**

WELCOME

Dear Families,

Thank you all for choosing to be a part of Little Peaks Preschool & Early Childhood Center. We are thrilled to have you and your child/children as part of our family.

This Family Handbook provides information regarding many different aspects of our program. Please take a moment to become familiar with the information provided and let us know if you have any questions.

Best wishes for an inspiring and enriching school year!

The Little Peaks Staff

TABLE OF CONTENTS

* All information presented herein is subject to change. Notification will be given when revisions are made.

About Us	page #
- Little Peaks Mission	5
- Learning Environment	5
- Communications	5
- Certification	5
- Definition of Family	6
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement	6
- Confidentiality	7
Calendar & Hours of Operation	
- School Calendar 2024-2025	8
- Hours of Operation / Drop off & Pick up	9
- Center Closures	10
- Open Door Policy & Family Visits	10
Curriculum	
- QUALITYstarsNY	11
- Developmental Screening	11
- Conferences	11
- Transition between Learning Programs	11
- Universal Preschool (UPK) Curriculum in the Lupine classroom	11
- Outings & Field Trips	12
- Electronic Media	12
- Spanish and Dance Enrichment Programs	12
- Individual Classroom Daily Schedules	13-14
- Toilet Training	15
- Food Program @ Dahlia's Cafe	15
Enrollment Information	
- Enrollment Guidelines	16
- Attendance & Disenrollment	17
- Transfer of Records	17
- What to Bring	17
- Cubbies	18
- Lost & Found	18
- Toys from Home	18
Financial Information	
- Tuition Structure & Fees	19
- Tuition Assistance Opportunities	19
- Multi-Child Discount	20

- Additional Expenses	20
- Methods of Payment / Late or Rejected Payment Charges	20
- Refunds & Credits	20
Health & Safety Guidelines	
- Allergy Prevention	21
- Medications	21
- Behavioral Guidelines	21
- Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families	21
- Discipline Policy	22
- Respectful Behavior	22
- Injuries	22
- Biting	23
- Extreme Weather & Outdoor Play	23
- Communal Water-Play	23
- Emergency Protocols	24
Child Safety	
- Authorized & Unauthorized Pick up	25
- Child Custody	25
- Right to Refuse Child Release	25
- Smoking	26
- Prohibited Substances	26
- Dangerous Weapons	26
- Suspected Child Abuse	26
Additional Resources	27

ABOUT US

Little Peaks Mission

With reverence for play and wonder, we provide a program for infants, toddlers, and preschool children that is rooted in our natural surroundings. Partnering with families, we provide a rich learning environment where diversity is celebrated, where kindness and sincerity are used to solve everyday problems, and where children's questions drive independent learning.

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment with curricula that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace through play and hands-on opportunities. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision making, problem solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning.

Communications

Communication—

You will receive photos, messages, and newsletters from Little Peaks staff through "Brightwheel."

Bulletin Board—

In the breezeway, opposite the main office, there is a bulletin board that provides news, upcoming events, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.

Email—

Please make sure we have an email on file for you that is checked regularly. This is very important.

Parent Resources—

Parent resources are available for your reference. A small collection of books may be "borrowed".

Certification

We are licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and follow the regulations set forth by this agency:

[New York State Child Day Care Regulations Effective October 13, 2021 Disclaimer](#)

<https://www.ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/regulations/418-1-DCC.pdf>

To contact OCFS: phone: 518-473-7793 or email: info@ocfs.ny.gov

To make a complaint about childcare, call (800)732-5207.

Definition of Family

In this handbook we define “family” as a parent(s), legal guardian(s), or sponsor(s) who is responsible for the child(ren) in our care.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

*adapted, in part, from Columbia College Child Care and Early Education Centre

We are committed to promoting and supporting a learning community where young children, families, and staff can learn and work together in a safe and secure atmosphere free of fear, bias, discrimination, and other negative treatment. We affirm the right to freedom of thought and expression of opinion within the bounds of courtesy, sensitivity, responsibility, and respect to others with different views.

We seek to foster understanding and respect among individuals and groups through education and constructive approaches for resolving conflict. We are committed to treating persons of all ages with dignity and respect in an open, honest, fair, and friendly manner.

Equal educational opportunities are available for children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender and gender identity, ethnicity, religion, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws and in keeping with the capacity of our Center. We will make every reasonable accommodation to support and encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on their individual capabilities and needs. Note that we do not have the capacity to provide 1:1 teacher-to-student care. (Please see the Enrollment section for more details on classroom ratios.) Nor do we have specialized counselors to support all disabilities and special needs. If your child has an identified disability or special need, please let us know so that we can discuss this further.

We foster a work culture led by kindness and respect, and free from discrimination and harassment. We value a diverse workplace and encourage people of color, LGBTQIA individuals, members of ethnic minorities, foreign-born residents, and others from minority groups and diverse backgrounds to apply.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released, except for that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child(ren)'s records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions outlining where and to whom the records should be sent is required.

CALENDAR & HOURS OF OPERATION

Aug 26-30: School Closed

AUGUST 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

Aug 26-28 (Staff Development)

Aug 29: Staff Meeting

FEBRUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

Feb 7: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

Feb 17-21: School Closed
(Winter Break)

Sept 2: School Closed
(Labor Day)

SEPTEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

Sept 5: Parent Night
4:30-5:30pm

Sept 26: Family BBQ
4:00-6:00pm

MARCH 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Mar 4: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

Mar 17: School Closed
(Staff Development Day)

Oct 14: School Closed
(Indigenous Peoples Day)

OCTOBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Oct 17: Lantern Walk
(Time TBD)

Oct 29: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

APRIL 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Apr 8: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

Apr 21-25: School Closed
(Spring Break)

Nov 11: School Closed
(Staff Development Day)

NOVEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

Nov 25: Friendsgiving Meal
(Time TBD)

Nov 27-29: School Closed
(Thanksgiving Break)

MAY 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

May 6: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

May 26: School Closed
(Memorial Day)

Dec 17: Winter Spiral
(Time TBD)

DECEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Dec 18: Staff Holiday Gathering
4:30-5:30pm

Dec 23-31: School Closed
(Holiday Break)

JUNE 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

June 24: Staff Meeting
4:30-5:30pm

June 19: School Closed
(Juneteenth)

June 27: Last Day of School

June 30: Beginning of "Summer"

Jan 1: School Closed
(New Year's Day)

JANUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Jan 7: Staff Meeting
4:40-5:30pm

Jan 20: School Closed
(Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

JULY 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

July 4: School Closed
(Independence Day)

FYI:
Aug 25-29: School Closed
Aug 25-26
(Staff Development Week)

Hours of Operation / Drop off & Pick up

Little Peaks hours of operation are from 7:30am - 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, excepting scheduled and unscheduled closures. **All programs begin promptly at 8:00am.** Staggered drop-offs and pick-ups are determined by child-to-staff ratios.

For a safe and comfortable drop-off please escort your child(ren) to a teacher and sign them in. You will help drop-off run smoothly for your child(ren) and the staff by keeping it timely and consistent. Please do not drop-off your child early. At pick-up please allow enough time to arrive, sign out your child(ren), and depart by the time specified. At the time families pick-up their child(ren) from the teacher, the families regain responsibility for the child(ren)'s supervision.

In the best interest of all the children and to be present in their transitions, please limit adult conversations with each other and/or with staff, be mindful of little ears, and refrain from the use of cell phones during pick-up and drop-off times.

To ensure Continuity of Care for your child(ren), we maintain the following ratios:

Age	Child-to-Staff	Maximum Children Per Age Group
Infants & Toddlers	4 : 1	8
3 year-olds	7 : 1	14
4 year-olds	8 : 1	16

Source: National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education.

It is important to notify us of any changes in your child(ren)'s routine. If your child(ren) will be absent, arrive late, be picked up early or late, or picked up by an individual outside the usual, please notify the school in writing (e.g., via email or Brightwheel) before the start of the school day, when possible.

For late drop-offs, the following procedure will occur upon arrival:

1. A staff member (e.g., the Center Director, teacher, or other staff) will greet you and your child(ren) at the door and sign you in.
2. This same staff member will escort your child(ren) to their classroom(s). We strongly discourage parents/guardians entering the classroom at this time. This helps to preserve the Continuity of Care and will further support a smooth transition for your child(ren).

Late pick-ups are considered an exceptional occurrence and will incur additional fees beginning 15 minutes after your scheduled pick-up time, at \$1.00/minute billed as needed. If you know you are going to be late, please notify the Center in writing as soon as possible.

Consistent late pick-ups (defined by more than two) will result in a conversation between the family and the Center Director to find resolution.

Center Closures

Little Peaks has scheduled closures, which are identified with advance notice on the School Calendar. Closures are defined by and can encompass a full day to several full days of operations, late opening(s), or early dismissal(s).

Unscheduled or unanticipated closures of the Center can and will occur as a result of extreme weather, acute sickness and contagion in children and/or staff, loss of power and/or loss of water at our facility, staffing shortages, and more. We recognize that such closures can place a burden on families. Any such decisions to close are therefore done by prioritizing the health and safety of our children and staff. **Notification will be sent via Brightwheel** with as much advance notice as possible.

Note that the aforementioned list is a good-faith effort to identify the most common contingencies that can result in unanticipated closures of the Center; other contingencies may arise and Little Peaks will make the appropriate determination to close or not.

Open Door Policy & Family Visits

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/guardians and other caregivers are encouraged to notify the Center Director and classroom teacher in advance if they intend to visit during the day. Drop-ins can be disruptive to the program and can create an inequitable situation for all the children at the Center. Having advance notice allows the classroom teacher to proactively prepare for your visit.

A private space will be provided for families to breastfeed or bottle feed their infants. To avoid unnecessary disruptions we ask for advance notice through communication and scheduling with the Center Director and the child(ren)'s teacher.

Note that our "open door policy" does not mean the doors are unlocked. For the safety and protection of children and staff, external doors are kept locked at all times. There is a doorbell by the front door and all families are given an access code to the front door for entrance during operating hours. Sharing of this access code with friends and children is prohibited.

Staff welcome direct conversation with families. However, because the children are our primary responsibility, long and focused discussions are not feasible during regular program hours. We encourage families to set up an appointment with the Center Director and/or teacher(s) if a longer conversation is desired.

CURRICULUM

Quality Stars NY

Little Peaks has initiated the certification process for Quality Stars NY as of September 1, 2024. This section will be updated when available to include the addition of the “learning environment,” “family engagement,” “management and leadership” standards per this program’s guidelines.

Developmental Screening

We monitor each child’s achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with family, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving family and teachers and should be done in conjunction with the child’s primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child’s family.

Conferences

Family and teacher conferences occur once a year. During these conferences, we will discuss your child’s strengths, likes and dislikes, and styles of learning. We will work together to set goals for your child(ren)’s growth and development. You may request additional conferences regarding your child(ren)’s progress at any time. We encourage you to communicate any concerns.

Transition between Learning Programs

Children are transitioned to the next program based on age, developmental readiness, state licensing requirements, and space availability. During the transition, current and future teachers will meet with you to propose a plan to introduce your child into the new program.

Universal Preschool (UPK) Curriculum

The UPK/Preschool Curriculum is designed to build foundational skills for kindergarten readiness while honoring and supporting every student’s current stage along the path. The Lupine Classroom teaches early literacy concepts, including phonemic awareness, appreciation for text, pre-handwriting skills, and name and alphabet recognition. Early math concepts include, but are not limited to, concrete counting, pattern recognition, 2D and 3D shapes, spatial awareness, and measuring. In our science curriculum there will be a year-long study in life cycles, weather patterns and the changing of the seasons, as well as many opportunities for

play-based exploration of STEM topics. In all areas we will use a multi-modal, hands-on approach with fine and gross motor activities, process art, musical, outdoor, and problem-solving activities. Each unit of study will be supported with both fiction and nonfiction texts. Perhaps the most important role of preschool is to foster classroom citizenship. Classroom citizenship encompasses the social and emotional skills needed to be safe and successful in a classroom environment, which are used and built on for a student's whole academic career. The Lupine classroom SEL program stems from building strong relationships between teachers, students, and parents and is supported by positive discipline and gentle teaching approaches, as well as with a variety of literary storytelling approaches, which all empower the students to apply what they've learned.

Outings & Field Trips

The safety of children and staff will be guarded in all activities of child care programs. Proper restraint systems (seat belts) and the correct use of them are critically important during travel to/from the child care program as well as during field trips. Field trips that require transportation will only be for the preschool-aged children, and only if bussing is available from Keene Central.

Electronic Media

Our daily routine does not include electronic media viewing or computer use by children.

Spanish and Dance Enrichment Programs

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, visitors, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life within it. We are fortunate to have both a Spanish language and culture teacher on staff and a professional dance and movement instructor as a special teacher to enrich our preschool curriculum.

Individual Classroom Daily Schedules

*may vary depending on staffing, children's moods, transitions, etc.

Fern Classroom

7:30 - 8:00	Before Care - Free Play
8:00 - 8:30	Clean up/Breakfast
8:30 - 8:45	Care/Diapering/Toileting
8:45 - 9:00	Tidy Classroom with Children
9:00 - 10:00	Circle and Project/Clean-up
10:00 - 11:00	Outdoor Play
11:00 - 11:30	Lunch
11:30 - 12:15	Care/Diapering/Toileting
12:15 - 12:30	Story Time
12:30 - 2:00	Rest Time with Preschool
2:00 - 2:45	Indoor / Outdoor Free Play & Continued Rest for Sleepers
2:45 - 3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:00 - 4:00	Outdoor Free Play
4:00 - 4:30	After Care - Indoor Free Play

Snacks are available to Children throughout the day.

Lilac Classroom

7:30 - 8:00	Before Care - Free Play
8:00 - 8:45	Clean Up/Breakfast
8:45 - 9:30	Care/Diapering/Toileting
9:30 - 10:30	Clean Up/Outdoor Play
10:30 - 11:00	Project Time/Music & Movement/Stories
11:00 - 11:30	Lunch
11:30 - 11:45	Care/Diapering/Toileting
11:45 - 2:00	Story & Rest Time
2:00 - 2:30	Snack/Care/Diapering/Toileting
2:30 - 4:00	Indoor/Outdoor Play
4:00 - 4:30	After Care - Indoor/Outdoor Activities

Snacks are available to Children throughout the day.

Lupine Classroom

7:30 - 8:00	Before Care - Free Play
8:00 - 9:00	Free Play/Clean up/Breakfast
9:00 - 9:15	Morning Transition
9:15 - 9:30	Morning Circle
9:30 - 11:00	Outdoor Free Play
11:00 - 11:15	Morning Snack
11:15 - 11:45	Book Time & Second Circle
11:45 - 12:15	Projects & Centers
12:15 - 1:00	Lunch
1:00 - 2:00	Rest & Read-Aloud
2:00 - 2:45	Indoor / Outdoor Free Play & Continued Rest for Sleepers
2:45 - 3:00	Afternoon Snack
3:00 - 4:00	Outdoor Free Play
4:00 - 4:30	After Care - Indoor Free Play

Snacks are available to Children throughout the day.

Sunflower Classroom

7:30 - 8:00	Before Care - Free Play
8:00 - 8:45	Clean Up/Breakfast
8:45 - 9:30	Care/Diapering/Toileting
9:30 - 10:30	Clean Up/Outdoor Play
10:30 - 11:00	Project Time/Music & Movement/Stories
11:00 - 11:30	Lunch
11:30 - 11:45	Care/Diapering/Toileting
11:45 - 2:00	Story & Rest Time
2:00 - 2:30	Snack/Care/Diapering/Toileting
2:30 - 4:00	Indoor/Outdoor Play
4:00 - 4:30	After Care - Indoor/Outdoor Activities

Snacks are available to Children throughout the day.

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Food Program @ Dahlia's Cafe

Little Peaks offers a unique food program that provides two snacks, breakfast, and lunch each day using a full range of colorful, nutritious homemade meals. Our food program also offers opportunities for children to participate in the food preparation process, from garden harvests to chopping, food combination, and plate design to composting scraps, as well as opportunities to practice color and number and object recognition, etc. Students also share their meals with staff, who serve as excellent role models to experiment with new tastes and textures!

Food prepared at Little Peaks is properly planned, prepared and portioned according to the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) (<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>) and the state requirements for food service. We use locally sourced food when possible.

Due to our healthy food program and the services of our excellent kitchen staff, please do not send food from home with your child.

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

Enrollment Guidelines

Based upon the availability of staff and student slots, Little Peaks admits up to 30 children from six months of age until a child enters kindergarten. We offer both daycare and preschool programs, including Universal Preschool (UPK) with limited slots.

All families will receive an enrollment packet upon acceptance into Little Peaks, with additional information and forms that all need to be completed and returned prior to the first day of the child(ren)'s attendance. The enrollment packet will include:

- Plan for Behavior Management
- Discipline Policy
- Child Abuse and Maltreatment Safety Plan
- Summary Guide for Mandated Reporters
- Transportation Plan (Preschool only)
- Transportation Consent (Preschool only)
- Child Care Medical Statement (Immunization Form)
- Recommended Immunization Schedule
- COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Programs
- COVID-19 Health Screening Attestation
- Consent for Photograph/Video Usage
- Food Service Arrangement
- Infant/Toddler Feeding Schedule and Agreement
- Napping and Sleeping Arrangement
- Medication Consent (if needed for prescribed medications)
- Non-Medication Consent (if needed for diaper cream, sunscreen, bug spray)
- Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (if needed)
- Individual Health Care Plan for a Child with Special Health Care Needs (if needed)
- Individual Allergy and Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Card – Yellow Card (if needed)
- Emergency Evacuation Procedures
- Health Care Plan
- Sample Incident Report – Notification of accidents, serious incidents and injuries
- Acknowledgement Sheet for Emergency Evacuation, Health Care Plan & Sample Incident Report
- Babysitting Waiver
- Family Handbook Acknowledgement Form

We strongly recommend that each family schedule a time to meet with the Center Director to discuss the materials in the packet and field any questions, as well as have a meet-and-greet with the teacher. Please try to schedule such meetings prior to the first day of the attendance.

As part of the enrollment process, each family will receive an invitation to participate in Brightwheel, our childcare management and software app. All families are expected to set up a free account and check this app regularly. Brightwheel is used for communication purposes between staff and families and as a platform for tuition payments.

We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with staff (e.g., babysitting outside of the Center's operating hours). Any arrangement between families and our staff of caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected to or sanctioned by Little Peaks Preschool and Early Childhood Center. If such an arrangement is created, a Babysitting Waiver must be signed by all parties.

Attendance & Disenrollment

We expect your child(ren) to attend full time, year-round, per Little Peaks' program structure, unless other arrangements are made in advance directly with the Center Director and the child(ren)'s teacher. (Note that less than full-time, year-round attendance will not decrease the amount of tuition. All tuition is charged at the full-time, year-round rate.)

If you wish to disenroll your child(ren) from the program, then a written notice, one week in advance, is required.

Our priority is to provide a safe and supportive learning environment for all children. If your child(ren)'s behavior is determined to be disruptive beyond the capacity of our Center, Little Peaks reserves the right to disenroll your child(ren) after careful consideration and discussion with our team and your family.

Transfer of Records

When transitioning to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

What to Bring

- **Infants:** enough clean bottles for a day's use, at least six (6) diapers per day, and at least two (2) changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated. Appropriate outdoor clothing.
- **Toddlers:** enough clean bottles for a day's use (if applicable), six (6) diapers and at least two (2) changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated. Appropriate outdoor clothes and shoes.
- **Older Toddlers:** at least two (2) changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program. Appropriate outdoor clothes and shoes.

- **Preschoolers:** at least one (1) change of clothes, socks and shoes. Appropriate outdoor clothes and shoes.

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Soiled clothing will be sent home for laundering.

Cubbies

Each child will have a "cubby." Cubbies are labeled with your child's name. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home.

Lost & Found

You can look for lost items and bring found items to the Lost-and-found Box located near the office. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property.

Toys from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the Center, unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Tuition Structure & Fees

- Children enroll in full day slots at \$1,650/month
- Core operating hours for the Center are 8:00am to 4:00pm.
- Before Care is available for limited slots for \$100/month, from 7:30am to 8:00am
- After Care is available for limited slots for \$100/month, from 4:00pm to 4:30pm
 - Families wishing Before or After Care can only select *either* one Before *or* one After slot. If there are more families wanting Before or After Care than there are slots, a lottery will determine which families get which slots. Slots are based on the availability of staff.
- Consideration for less than full-time enrollment will only be discussed at such time that it may be needed to fill open enrollments or extenuating circumstances occur (to be determined at the discretion of Little Peaks).
 - The only announced exception is for in-district UPK children. They may enroll for the UPK schedule only, from 8:00am to 1:00pm.
 - A select number of UPK students are fully funded each year by KCS. This covers the 8:00am to 1:00pm program in full at \$1,000/month in tuition. No out-of-pocket expense accompanies UPK tuition for those students funded. (If the number of eligible UPK students exceeds the number of slots funded by KCS, then a lottery will be held for *all* UPK-eligible students wanting to attend Little Peaks).
 - KCS-funded UPK students wishing to extend their day in Preschool are required to pay the additional \$650/month tuition, for 1:00 - 4:00pm.
 - Full-time Preschool children (8:00am - 4:00pm) will have priority on selecting Before or After Care slots. UPK-only children will be considered for Before Care slots if there are any remaining.

Tuition Assistance Opportunities

Little Peaks requires all families seeking tuition assistance to first apply through the Essex County Department of Social Services Subsidy Program: Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), and/or the Workforce Development Institute (WDI) of NY Subsidy Program.

To ameliorate (but not necessarily fill) the gap created for those families that apply and receive (or do not receive) CCAP or WDI subsidies, Little Peaks offers its own tuition assistance opportunity through our internal Little Peaks Tuition Assistance Fund (LPTAF).

Thanks to a generous donor, Little Peaks also has a Fund for Keene Working Families, available to all residents of Keene and Keene Valley.

Please contact the Center Director for more information.

Multi-Child Discount

Little Peaks offers a multi-child/sibling discount. 10% off for each additional child after the first, taken off the gross tuition amount.

Additional Expenses

Families should anticipate occasional small expenses throughout the year, including field trips and special projects. Financial assistance is available for any of these expenses.

Methods of Payment / Late or Rejected Payment Charges

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience: cash, check, money order, automatic electronic funds transfer, or credit card. To set up automatic, recurring payments, contact the Center Director. A notification for recurring payments is sent through Brightwheel.

If a tuition payment is not received on or before its due date, a late fee of \$20 will be added to the next tuition payment for each day that it is overdue. Repeated late payments will require automatic payment or credit card payment to be set up. Families cannot accrue a billing balance equal to more than one week of tuition.

Any payments made will be applied to the oldest charges first and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

Failure to pay child care payments will result in child care services being terminated.

If payment is more than 30 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a third-party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions, including court and attorney fees.

All returned checks or rejected automatic payments or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$35.00. Two or more returned checks or rejected transactions will result in your account being placed in a "cash only" status.

Refunds & Credits

We do not give refunds or credits for unanticipated closures, holidays, family vacations, or individual illnesses. Please see "Center Closures" in the Calendar & Closures section of this Handbook for additional information. If you feel you have a unique situation, please contact the Center Director.

HEALTH & SAFETY GUIDELINES

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding their child's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us with a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in their classroom, the office and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications

Prescription medications require written permission and instructions on the Medication Consent Form signed by the child's primary care physician. The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container.

Non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream, teething gel, sunscreen and insect repellent) require a Non-Medication Form signed by the parent/guardian, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid which cannot exceed 12 months.

Behavioral Guidelines

Little Peaks is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our Center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem solving helps children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people and of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

Little Peaks operates on a three-strike policy. If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the family as the first step to understanding the child(ren)'s individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program. If needed, the second step will provide families with resources external to the

Center for guidance and support through which to implement positive behavioral adjustments. At this time, a follow-up evaluation will be recommended and/or required and a timeline of implementation will be provided. If a child's behavior/circumstance remains a concern, the third step results in the disenrollment of the child. Examples of this could include, but are not limited to: a child appears to be a danger to others, beyond what is developmentally appropriate; continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by medical, psychological, or social service personnel; undue burden on our resources for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

Discipline Policy

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of positive guidance with children. Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self control and kindness. Each student at Little Peaks has a right to:

- Learn in a safe and friendly place
- Be treated with respect
- Receive the help and support of caring adults

When a child becomes verbally or physically aggressive, we intervene immediately to protect all of the children. Our usual approach to helping children with challenging behaviors is to show them how to solve problems using appropriate interactions. When discipline is necessary, staff will enact the content shared in the Plan for Behavior Management and Discipline Policy handouts included in the enrollment packet. We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please reach out to the Center Director.

Respectful Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or to remove your child(ren) from our care.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the Center in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a first aid kit meeting state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact on file.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers—and sometimes among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Extreme Weather & Outdoor Play

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature is greater than 95°F or less than 10°F. Additionally, outdoor play will be canceled if there is an air quality alert.

We greatly value outside play and learning, and aim to spend big chunks of time outside every day. Children learn to appreciate nature in all weather and we embrace rain, snow, mud, and cold (down to 20°F). Children will need to be prepared with appropriate outdoor clothing and a change of clothes.

For outdoor play and field trips, please dress your child appropriately for the season. Walking shoes are a must. Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for walking or playing and make it difficult for your child.

Communal Water-Play

Communal, unsupervised water play is prohibited. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease.

Emergency Protocols

Lost or Missing Child—

In the unlikely event that a child becomes lost or separated from a group, all available staff will search for the child. If the child is not located within five (5) minutes, the family and the police will be notified.

Fire Safety—

Our center is fully equipped with fire extinguishers and fire alarms.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis. A “Shelter in Place” drill is conducted twice each calendar year.

The primary evacuation site is located on the lawn to the south of the parking lot. The secondary evacuation site is located by the large White Pine tree on the preschool playground. In the event that we need to evacuate to an off-site location, the primary site will be the Keene Town Hall, and the secondary site will be the Keene Fire Department.

Shelter in Place—

There may be an occasion where the staff and children need to shelter in place, due to weather or other emergencies. There are supplies at Little Peaks to sustain everyone for 24 hours if necessary and each classroom has a designated location to shelter in place. As long as communication is possible, families will receive a notice via Brightwheel if we need to Shelter in Place. Families and children will be notified ahead of time when we do our Shelter in Place drill twice each year.

Emergency Transportation—

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

CHILD SAFETY

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child we need copies of any court-ordered custody agreements. Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody and we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent/guardian. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept responsibility for deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. Provisions will be made for someone to stay with your child as long as possible, but if after two hours we have not been able to reach you or a person listed as an Emergency and Release Contact, we will call the local child protective services agency.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release a child(ren) if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Recurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor environments at Little Peaks are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the Center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the Center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our Center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Adirondack Community Action Programs (ACAP)

<https://www.acapinc.org/>

Birth to Three Alliance

<https://www.adirondackbt3.org/>

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/assets/docs/ccap/CCAP-Apply.pdf>

Child Care Coordinating Council of the North Country

<https://www.cccnc.org/>

Essex County Department of Social Services

<https://essexcountyny.gov/department-of-social-services/>

Families First in Essex County

<https://familiesfirstessex.org/>

Guidelines for New York State Family Resource Centers

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/publications/Pub5071.pdf>

Special Supplemental Nutrition for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic>

<https://essexcountyny.gov/Health/wic/>

Workforce Development Institute (WDI)

<https://wdiny.org/Explore-Our-Work/Child-Care-Subsidy-Program>