



Welcome to Ellen Care Kids Parent Handbook

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Mission

The mission of Ellen Care Kids is to provide a safe and nurturing environment for your child to thrive and reach their fullest potential. It is our mission to love your child and to work with you as partners in their care.

As early childhood educators, we believe it is our responsibility to care for every child who enters our program. Each child brings a unique set of abilities. We feel it is our job to help children reach their full potential.

One of the ways children learn best is by peer interactions. As family childcare providers, we care for children of multiple ages and developmental stages. We value the experiences the children learn and teach to one another. We will ensure that children of different developmental stages have the opportunity to interact safely with one another every day. Another way is through interaction with their environment and the outdoors. This is why we utilize educational toys and experiential playground activities and as much fresh air time as weather allows.

Inclusion practices are beneficial to all children. Children gain self-esteem when they know everyone is welcome and valued in their school. At Ellen Care Kids Family Child Care, children will feel acceptance and love that will help them to deal with the big emotions they might feel. Children will learn from their interactions with other children as well as with our trained teachers through developmentally appropriate practices. Each child's developmental needs will be a priority and our curriculum will be worked around inclusion of their individual goals.

We believe in teaching the whole child. Each child and family has their own distinctive needs, and we will strive to meet those needs. The children will work on mastering their small and large gross motor muscles as well as their cognitive and social/emotional skills. These skills will help them to prepare for school ahead.

Hours of Operation

Ellen Care Kids services are provided from 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM Monday through Friday. We are Licensed for 12 children.

Staff Information

Our Director, Helena Nime, has many years of experience working with children. She has worked in private day care instruction and in public school experiential learning and class work. Helena has earned her Ed Tech III and CDA (children's Development Associate) certification.

Our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications.

Caregivers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

All staff are certified in CPR and First Aid and required to undergo Maine State background checks. Staff have a minimum of 12 hours of training every year, and our teachers are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications.

Children and Families Served

We serve children from 6 weeks to 5 years old (infant to pre-K). We offer full-time attendance 5 days per week.

Definition of Family

In this handbook, we refer to a family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor, or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best interest, and responsibility of the child in our care.

Non-Discrimination



Ellen Care Kids believes in making equal education opportunities available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or parent/ provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Inclusion

Ellen Care Kids believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs. Ellen Care Kids will work with families and identify resources of assistance should those with visual, speech, language or hearing impairments seek the services of our program.

If your child has an identified special need, please communicate with us so that every effort can be made to provide any reasonable accommodations you or your child may require.

Allergies

While we will keep our snack program and facility as allergen-free as possible, we will not be able to guarantee that there is a zero chance that your child may encounter a peanut product or other allergen. Other parents may include an allergen in their child's lunch by mistake, and also, new allergies may develop over time. Please inform us if your child has any specific allergies, especially to foods, and discuss medical concerns with us before enrolling your child.

Interpretation for English Language Learners

Ellen Care Kids will help to provide family support in order to help parents develop and support early language skills in young English language learners. Communication with parents, both verbal and written, should be in parents' native language (when possible). Ellen Care Kids will utilize translation services such as Google translate or House of Languages as needed. However, our director, Helena, speaks multiple languages, giving our families easy access to translation services, including: Spanish, French, Portuguese, Lingala, and Swahili.

Admission, Tuition, Enrollment, and Withdrawal

Prospective parents will apply for admission, fill out all forms required, and sign the parent's handbook to acknowledge it has been read. No child will be admitted before this process is complete.

The weekly tuition rate is \$268. If the full month's tuition (\$964.50) is paid before the 5th of each month, you will receive a 10% discount for that month. Upon acceptance at Ellen Care Kids, there is a "Last Week" payment of \$268 in addition to the first week's payment or the first monthly payment. This fee will go towards your last week's balance.

Prior to your child beginning with us, all admission and enrollment forms must be completed and given to the administrator. (See required list below)

All children and families are required to visit the program prior to their start date. Ellen Care Kids believes in equal education opportunities and making them available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation, special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Forms Required for Admission:

- ◇ Application
- ◇ About Your Child – Community List Information Form



- ◇ Immunization Records
- ◇ Emergency Medical Care Authorization form
- ◇ Emergency Pick Up list
- ◇ Signed Ellen Care Kids Contract
- ◇ Signed Parent Handbook acknowledgment

Withdrawal

A written notice, 2 weeks in advance, is required by the program when a child is being withdrawn. Failure to notify will result in forfeiture of your last week's deposit. Termination notice will not be accepted while the provider is on vacation.

Ellen Care Kids reserves the right to terminate at will.

School Calendar: Vacations, Snow Days, and Holidays

Holidays

We are closed on all holidays as listed below. We will be taking two weeks' paid vacation per year, coinciding with Christmas week and April school vacation (generally the week of Patriot's Day).

We are closed for the following holidays. Our school year Calendar which will include all Vacation weeks and Maintenance weeks will be posted on our website with printed copies available on the first day of the school year and when any time changes are made.

- New Years Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- Presidents Day
- Patriots Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Indigenous Peoples Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day and Friday
- Christmas Week : see dates on calendar

Family Vacations

While we recognize the value of family vacations, Ellen Care Kids does not provide credit for vacation days.



If your family goes on vacation and your child is not present at Ellen Care Kids Family Child Care, full payment is expected for all days and hours your child would normally be scheduled to be here. This policy is in place because there are limited openings for child care and we need to maintain your child's slot while he or she is away. Therefore, parents will need to continue to provide tuition payments for the time your child is on vacation in order to hold their place. Payment is due prior to your vacation.

Weather-Related Delays or Closures

Ellen Care Kids closes or may have a delay in the morning during snowstorms. Parents can find out about closings or delays by watching local news or visiting the local news' internet website, as we follow the Westbrook School Department cancellations. We will also send out a general email to all by 6:00 am to inform parents when Ellen Care Kids is closed.

Daily Schedule Infant and Young Toddler (6 weeks to 30 months)

7:30 AM – 5:30 PM

Our infant care is completely based on the needs and natural behavior displayed by the baby. Throughout each day we practice on reaching, grasping, rolling, sitting, crawling, standing, walking, climbing, throwing, catching, kicking, cooing and talking—whichever developmental stage your child happens to be in at the time. For a younger child still taking three naps a day, a third nap can be incorporated into their late afternoon schedule.

7:30 – 8:00 drop-offs, welcome children

8:00 – 8:30 breakfast, clean-up/wash-up

8:30 – 9:00 free play

9:00 – 10:00 stacking blocks and tactile educational toys

10:00 – 10:30 music, song and dance, games

10:30 -11:15 outside play time or indoor gross motor

11:15 – 11:45 table activities and /or occasional educational video, crafts

11:45 – 12:15 Lunch time, clean-up/wash-up, settle into cribs or cots

12:15 – 2:30 Story time, rest time, and/or quiet time

2:30 – 3:30 free play and/or structured play, books, various learning toys, etc.

3:30 – 4:00 afternoon snack, clean-up/wash-up

4:00 – 5:00 pickups, outside play (depending on season), puzzles, music, instruments, story time, etc.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Learning

Each child's developmental needs will be a priority and our curriculum will be worked around their individual goals. We believe in teaching the whole child. Each child and family has their own distinctive needs and we will strive to meet those needs. The children will work on mastering their small and large gross motor muscles as well as their cognitive and social/emotional skills. These skills will help them to prepare for school ahead.

Attendance and Absence

We will expect your child during the hours indicated on enrollment forms. If your child is going to be absent or arrive late, please call or text us at 207-415-2318. We will be concerned about you and your child if we do not hear from you.

Drop Off and Pick Up



As listed above, children may be dropped off from 7:30–8:00 AM and picked up from 4:00–5:00 PM. Please see our policy on Late Pick-Up below. Children will be signed in and out using the daycare management app. Parents must ensure that their child is appropriately signed in; simply dropping a child at the door is unacceptable.

If your child will be picked up by someone other than their parents, please fill out a release form with the persons' name and phone number to allow them to pick up your child during the year or on specific days. Authorized persons who are not the child's parents will be required to show a state photo ID such as a driver's license.

Authorized and Unauthorized Pick-Up

Your child will only be released to a parent or to those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release contacts. For safety reasons, however, Ellen Care Kids can *only* allow parents and other authorized individuals to pick up a child from the facility.

By law, Ellen Care Kids cannot refuse to allow a parent or guardian to pick up their child unless there is a court order barring that person from having physical custody of the child. In order to safeguard your child, we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

In emergency situations when no authorized person is available, an alternate person designated by the parent may collect the child. However, 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**. Your child will not be released without prior 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.

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 more than one hour 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.

Right to Refuse Child Release

Per Maine State law, all childcare providers are considered mandated reporters (see the section on [Child Abuse and Neglect](#) below). As mandated reporters, Ellen Care Kids staff are required by law to file a report to state authorities if parents or authorized pick-up persons appear to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol or display behavior unsafe for the welfare of the child or others.

We may refuse to release children 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 suspension of your child from the program.

Late Pick-Up

Unauthorized late pick-up or early drop-off is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. We encourage parents to call and inform staff as soon as possible when they encounter an unavoidable, unexpected delay in picking up their child, especially if another person is going to come pick up the child in their place. Late fees of \$1 per minute after 5:00 will be assessed and will be due by the next day.

While we understand that sometimes problems arise, the fee for late pick-up is in place for a reason: Our staff also has families and home lives. Please respect our time and family responsibilities.

Open Door Policy and Family Engagement

Ellen Care Kids believes family involvement is important and we are open to having families visit. Parents are welcome at Ellen Care Kids and are encouraged to visit/ volunteer.



We hope to incorporate some events throughout the year to bring our small child care community together.

Communication with Parents

Sharing: Daily Communication About Younger Children

We appreciate parental concerns, and are glad to listen and respond. When discussing information, we believe the best arrangement is for teachers and parents to talk privately. We are available for brief chats before and after each school day. We appreciate parents calling or emailing caregivers to arrange a Zoom appointment outside of school hours. This year, two conferences per year will be through Zoom to specifically discuss your child's progress.

Community List

Among the forms you have been provided is a permission form for the Community List. This Community List includes your child's picture, parent(s) names, address, phone, and email address(es). It is *only* for the use of the Ellen Care Kids community of staff and administrators. We gather this information solely for communicating on school matters, including for school closure and emergency purposes.

Parent Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice a year on Zoom this year. A first Parent/Teacher Welcome to Ellen Care Kids prior to the child's entrance into/his new classroom. In the fall and spring, we offer Parent/Teacher Conferences, which are an opportunity for the teacher(s) to share the child's progress and needs. These are optional meetings. Each child will receive a developmental-based observation to be discussed at the scheduled Zoom meeting.

We will keep a notebook with all the work to show your child's progress. As we strive to provide an original bilingual art-venture, your child's work is carefully collected and placed in a book for them to share with you at all vacations. These books need to come back after each vacation as well as the signed evaluation in order to continue working with them for only 2 years and up.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency or unexpected/early school closure due to severe weather or other situations, we will alert parents through our daycare management app and by posting online on our website as time allows, as well as via group text for those parents who opt-in to that communication method.

While Ellen Care Kids' directors try to foresee problems and arrange for substitutes in case a care provider is ill or absent, we encourage all families to arrange for a back-up plan of care for your child(ren) so that they will have alternate options should an unexpected closure or emergency situation arise.

Emergency Plan

Ellen Care Kids has a comprehensive emergency plan. Our plan addresses shelter-in-place and off-site evacuations. We have both a memorandum of agreement with a nearby neighbor and a church in the next city over. Each family will receive a more detailed description of our plan upon enrollment.

Celebrations and Holidays

We view holidays as a valuable part of our multicultural curriculum. They provide an opportunity to encourage positive values about other cultures. They give our children the knowledge of how other children celebrate special events. We hope to give all holidays equal importance.

Birthday parties are a wonderful experience for a child. We celebrate around the snack table in the morning with a candle passing song: On your child's birthday, or close to it if it falls on a day when your child is not at Ellen Care Kids, you will be requested to bring a special healthy treat to be shared with your child's class. Please be aware of special food restrictions, thank you so much.

Confidentiality



Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except for that required by our regulatory and law. All records concerning children at our program are confidential. All records will be kept for a minimum of three years.

Classroom Management and Discipline

Teachers facilitate the development of social skills for children by using positive guidance such as modeling, encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to more acceptable activity if necessary, and setting clear limits called ‘messages’ for the benefits and safety of all children. We value and work towards lovable, peaceful, mindfulness, compassionate, gentle behavior, which is humane and responsive to the child’s needs.

Behavioral expectations are clear and consistent, with prompt and honest feedback. All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. We facilitate direct communication between the children as a means of developing sound problem-solving and conflict resolution. Children are guided to treat each other and adults with self-control and kindness.

Each student at Ellen Care Kids 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, it is clear, consistent, and understandable to the child. We maintain a zero tolerance to bullying. If you have any concerns about this at any time, please report to us directly.

We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior from our staff toward the children or family members, and sarcasm and corporal punishment are not used. In return, we expect the same from all our families. If disrespectful, hostile, or aggressive behavior occurs, we reserve the right to ask you to control your behavior or remove your children from our care.

Disciplinary Philosophy

Time Outs

We do not believe time outs are helpful for very young children/infants, but for older toddlers/preschoolers, we may occasionally need to assign time outs in a designated calming area, which will have soothing toys. Time outs will be used sparingly and last for no longer than 1 minute per year of age of child. No child in time out will be left unsupervised.

Physical Restraint

Physical restraint is not used or permitted for discipline. There are rare instances when we need to ensure a child's safety or that of others and we may restrain a child by gently holding him or her only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation.

Notification of Behavioral Issues to Families

If a child’s behavior/ circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step of understanding the child’s individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

Classroom policies are established as a result of years of experience in working with young children. Helena will be happy to address questions regarding classroom policies and procedures. For both reasons of confidentiality



and staffing, when concerns arise, we request you make an appointment for a Zoom conference if you wish to speak directly to Helena, who is the provider of Ellen Care Kids. This ensures the teacher may give full attention to your questions and concerns without compromising the supervision of the children.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers and sometimes even 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.

Repeated behavioral problems

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- ◇ A child appears to be a danger to others.
- ◇ Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- ◇ Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

In the event that an unacceptable behavior is not resolved, the teacher will call the child's parent(s). Should the unacceptable behavior continue despite redirection or parental contact, a Zoom conference among the parent(s), teacher, and director will be arranged immediately, and enrollment may be terminated at the director's discretion.

Health & Safety

The Americans with Disabilities Act

Ellen Care Kids is required to comply with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Ellen Care Kids will provide reasonable accommodations to a qualified individual with a disability, as defined by the ADA, who has made Ellen Care Kids aware of his or her disability in writing, provided that such accommodation does not constitute an undue hardship on Ellen Care Kids.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children'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 the kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing to substances to which they have known allergies.

If a child with a known allergy is exposed to that substance, we will alert parents and treat in accordance with the parent's instructions provided in their letter. If the allergy is severe (anaphylaxis), staff will call 9-1-1 for emergency transport to the nearest emergency medical facility in addition to following the parent's protocols (e.g., administering EpiPen). This is for your child's safety and is consistent with standard emergency medicine protocols for managing anaphylaxis.



Immunizations

Ellen Care Kids requires that children have immunizations in accordance with the Maine Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Daycare Immunization Standards, which may be found at the Maine Department of Health and Human Services [website](#). If your child has a medical condition that does not allow him or her to receive a specific vaccine or any vaccines, [documentation of this condition](#) must be provided by a physician or nurse practitioner licensed to practice in the state of Maine. Ellen Care Kids reserves the right to decline admission to a child who lacks age-appropriate immunizations due to his or her parents' philosophical or religious beliefs.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the program has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illness are the following:

- Bacterial meningitis
- Botulism
- Chickenpox (Varicella)
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Haemophilus influenzae (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella, congenital and non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 influenza virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis

Illness During the Day

Should your child become ill while at Ellen Care Kids, you are required to pick up your child within 30 minutes of notification of illness. Please keep your child home if he or she shows any of the signs of illness detailed in the following list to protect our staff and other children from communicable diseases.

We define an illness as the child demonstrating any of the following signs or symptoms:

- ◇ Fever (defined as a temperature of 99.9°F or higher)
- ◇ Cough
- ◇ Runny nose or congestion
- ◇ Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- ◇ Chills
- ◇ Repeated shaking and chills
- ◇ Muscle or body aches
- ◇ Headache
- ◇ Diarrhea (significant increase in bowel movements to more than 3 in one day or loose, watery stool)
- ◇ Vomiting
- ◇ An unexplained rash
- ◇ Severe itching of body or scalp
- ◇ Pink eye (communicable conjunctivitis)
- ◇ Lethargy, extreme fatigue, or similar unusual behavior

Child Abuse and Neglect

All teachers in Maine, including early childhood teachers and childcare workers, are mandated by the State of Maine to report any incidences of suspected child abuse or neglect. Our commitment to all young children's rights to be safe and cared for is a responsibility that we take seriously. We will be following the State's mandated reporter laws. Helena Nime, the school director, has mandated reporting certification.

Maine's [mandated reporter regulations](#) require Ellen Care Kids staff 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 services 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. Ellen Care Kids will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report or child abuse or neglect.

Fire Drills

The state of Maine requires that we perform fire drills every month. Students and staff must be able to quickly exit the building during a drill and remain at the designated areas until an "All Clear" signal is given. We ask that you do not enter the building while we are conducting a fire drill. You may join your child's class at its designated spot.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in children, so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the program in order to prevent serious injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (scraped knee). The program is equipped with a first aid kit meeting state regulations.

If a child is injured during the day while at Ellen Care Kids, the child's parent(s) will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken.

Guardians and state licensing staff know children are active and no amount of child proofing and supervision can prevent all injuries. However, reporting injuries can help prevent them in the future by identifying injury patterns specific to the program's environment, and/or with a child who may need help with difficulties associated with balance, vision or foot positioning.

If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, the parent or guardian will be contacted immediately. For other injuries, including but not limited to, minor scrapes, cuts, and bites, we will discuss the incident at pick-up.

Serious Medical Incidents

In the event of a serious medical emergency, your child will be checked for life-threatening situations. If a child is seriously hurt or endangered by the incident, staff will call 9-1-1 and/or police as needed. If injuries are severe or the child is in cardiac or respiratory arrest, appropriate first aid and/or CPR will be given by trained personnel, emergency services summoned, and parents will be contacted. The child will be kept calm and comfortable until medical services arrive.

If a child's death occurs, police and 9-1-1 will be called as well as parents/guardians. Other children will be kept calm. Serious injuries and death will be reported to the Child Care Licensing Unit at (207) 287-9300 within 24 hours.

Medications

All medications should be handed to a staff member with original specific instructions for administration. Medications should **never** be left in the child's cubby or given to the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

Medication Administration

Prescription medications require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time (s) to be administered for each medication.

Non-prescription oral medications (e.g., liquid pain relievers) require written permission and instructions 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.

With permission from the parent/guardian, non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream or teething gel), sunscreen, and insect repellent may be used by staff as needed. These require a note 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.

Food and Nutrition

Nutrition is a very important factor for the growth and development of a child. We believe healthy nutrition is one of the most important components in your child's life.

All the parents will provide lunch for the child; Ellen Care Kids will provide 2 snacks every day for children. Because of the potential for allergic reactions, we ask that parents avoid providing peanut and other nut products,

including peanut butter and almond butter, in their child's lunch (SunButter, made with sunflower seeds, and hummus, made with chickpeas, are acceptable, as allergies to these ingredients are rare).

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.

We will assist in toilet training with the understanding that it will only work if we work together. Your child will not learn if they do not do it while in my care and at home. Clothing should be easy to manage to encourage self-help skills. Extra changes of clothing are also necessary, including socks. Buckles, belts, overalls, and suspenders may create a problem when the child is in a hurry to use the bathroom.

We prohibit the use of food as a reward. We will not use food (traditionally m&m's) for toilet training purposes.

Playtime and Outdoor Activity

We at Ellen Care Kids understand that active play is important for healthy growth and development of young children.

If weather permits, all children will receive at least 60 minutes of outdoor play. When weather does not allow for outdoor activity (e.g., extreme cold or heat, heavy rain, high wind, etc.) children will receive at least 60 minutes of indoor gross motor activity (active play). Indoor activities will include (but not limited to): Dancing, tunnel, balance beam, yoga, hula hoops, beach balls, ring around the rosy, etc.

We will never withhold active play time as a punishment.

We will have at least one provider join the children in active play daily.

Walking trips around the neighborhood occur several times a week for all children. Children are accounted for at all times.

Seasonally Appropriate Clothing

Children enjoy their outdoor time better when appropriately dressed. Please make sure your child comes to school with appropriate clothes depending on the season, as we will be conducting school outside as much and as long as we can.

Fall season outerwear: In the fall in Maine, temperatures can swing widely from cold to warm, so we advise that children wear two layers. Please provide your child with an under layer and a sweater/windbreaker. Please include a hat and mittens in your child's clothes for the fall, as well as labeled rain gear that will stay at school.

Your child can arrive with rain boots and an extra pair of shoes.

Winter season outerwear: Winter in Maine generally means snow and ice. We will spend time outdoors if weather permits, but children *must* have appropriate outerwear or they cannot participate in outdoor activities. Appropriate outerwear includes waterproof boots or shoes, snow pants or coveralls, mittens or gloves, a hat, and a warm, preferably waterproof jacket. Scarves and earmuffs are optional. Ideally, the boots, mittens, hat, and snow pants will remain at school to allow for changes of weather during school hours.



Spring season outerwear: Springtime in Maine means mud! As well as temperatures that can swing widely from cold to warm, just as in the fall. We advise that children wear two layers, just as in the fall, and *strongly* advise boots, a pair of “indoor shoes”, and extra socks.

Toys and Objects from Home

We request that you do not allow your child to bring toys from home into the program unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity. Anything brought to the program will be put safely until the child is picked up. This policy is for the concern of all children in our care. Oftentimes, children have a hard time sharing toys they bring from home, and to avoid conflicts and misplaced treasures, we prefer to keep such items out of the childcare facility. The only exceptions to this policy will be a special blanket OR stuffed animal/doll to be used during nap time. This will be put aside and used ONLY for the appropriate time. Please limit your child to one item.

Licensing

A copy of the State of Maine licensing regulations is available for parents’ review. Parents have the right to view the facility’s most recent licensing inspection, which will be provided upon request. also provide them with the website to view licensing rules and contact information for your licensing worker.

Ellen Care Kids staff are also required to report any violation of the Licensing Rules that they witness to the Maine Department of Health and Human Services.