



VA Kids Center

**Center Handbook**  
**Policy Manual for VAKC Families and Staff**

Handbook revised June 2023  
Covid policy updated Oct. 2023  
Emails & Waitlist Fees updated Nov. 2023  
Inclement Weather updated Jan 2024

# Table of Contents

<b>Center Profile</b> .....	5
• Organizational Structure	
• VA Hospital Sponsorship	
• Licensing	
• Who We Serve	
• Land Acknowledgement	
• Non-Discrimination Statement	
• Hours of Operation	
• Important Numbers	
• Calendar of Events	
<b>Program Information</b> .....	7
• Use of the Term “Parent” and “Families”	
• Program Mission	
• Program Management	
o Delegation of Authority	
o Communication	
• Curriculum	
• Parent-Teacher Conversations	
• Involvement Opportunities	
o Board of Directors	
o Fundraising	
o Volunteering of Skills	
<b>Your First Day</b> .....	10
• Pre-Enrollment Visit	
• Required Forms	
• What to Bring for Your Child	
• Getting Acquainted	
<b>Beyond the First Day</b> .....	11
• Signing In and Out	
• Parental Rights	
• Pick Up of Children by Other Persons	
• Custody Rights of Stepparents	
• Safe Departure Policy	
• Vehicle Safety Seats Policy	
• Absences and Late Arrivals	
• Visiting Your Child During the Day	
• VAKC Privacy Policy	
• Center Closing Due to Severe Weather or Emergency	
<b>Schedules and Routines</b> .....	14
• Daily Schedules	
• Routines and Transitions	
• Meals and Snacks	
• Meals from Home Policy	
o Requirements	

- o Allergens in Meals from Home
- Birthday & Holiday Celebrations
- Rest/Nap Periods
- Outside Play
- Clothing
- Independent Toileting
- Field Trips/Walks

## **Health and Safety .....19**

- Health and Exclusion Policy During the COVID-19 Pandemic
  - o Mask Wearing
  - o Reporting of Positive Cases
- Health and Exclusion Policy
- Communicable Disease
- COVID-19 Vaccination Policy for Children
- Medication
- Accidents and Injuries
- SIDS Policy
- Abusive Head Trauma Prevention
- Building Security
- Additional Safety Precautions
- Child Abuse and Neglect
- Positive Guidance Policy
- Policy for Responding to Challenging Behavior
  - o Purpose
  - o Exclusion due to Behavior
- Supervision of Children

## **Maintaining Your Contract .....30**

- Payment Information
- Fee and Refund Information
- Annual Registration Fee
- Security Deposit
- NSF Fee
- Waitlist Fee
- Holding Fee
- Program Materials Fee
- Late Forms Fee
- Supplies Fee
- Overtime Fee
- After-Hours Fee
- Field Trip Fees
- Individual Staffing Fee
- Financial Sustainability during COVID Quarantine and Isolation
- Suspension of Services
- Termination of Enrollment by Parents
- Withdrawal from Center by Mutual Decision
- Termination of Child Care Contract by Center
- Contract Hours
- Keeping Up Your Child's File
- Policy for Addressing Questions and Feedback

<b>Healthy Lifestyle .....</b>	<b>35</b>
• Healthy Eating	
• Breastfeeding Friendly	
• Physical Activity	
• Screen Time	
<b>Screening, Portfolios, Holidays, Surveys &amp; Resources .....</b>	<b>38</b>
• Ages and Stages Questionnaires	
• Portfolios	
• Surveys	
• Family Resources	
<b>Supplements</b>	
• VAKC Biting Policy	
• VAKC Emergent Curriculum	
• WI Model Early Learning Standards Information	

## Center Profile

### Organizational Structure

The VA Kids Center (VAKC) is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. VAKC is governed by a Board of Directors comprised of VAKC parents, staff, and community members. The Board serves as the corporate leadership for the center. All parents of children enrolled in the center are regular members of the corporation and can be elected to the Board of Directors. The VAKC By-Laws, on file at the center, further detail the organizational structure of the center and the role of the Board of Directors.

### VA Hospital Sponsorship

The VA Kids Center was opened in 1996 by a group of VA Hospital employees to provide quality on-site child care for all VA Hospital and Medical Center employees, other federal employees, and community residents. VAKC maintains a minimum 51% enrollment of families with at least one parent who receives 50% of their income from a federal source. VA Hospital employees enjoy on-site quality child care, enrollment priority, and discounted tuition rates. The VA Hospital provides VAKC with resources that reduce operating costs.

### Licensing

VAKC is licensed as a group child care center by Wisconsin's Department of Children and Families and adheres to the regulations for group child care centers as specified in the *Wisconsin Administrative Code DCF 251* (available at [this link](#) ). VAKC's license and the name and telephone number of our licensing consultant are accessible to parents and staff in the foyer.

### Who We Serve

VAKC has a licensed capacity of 26 children. VAKC accepts full-time enrollments of children ages six

weeks through age five. Because of our small center size and the demand for full-time quality child care, VAKC only offers limited drop-in child care for children aged two and up. Ask the Center Director for details.

Although over 50% of the families enrolled at VAKC are federal employees, VAKC maintains a diverse population of families representative of the local community.

## Land Acknowledgment

**Please understand our oral tradition states “we have always been here” and more than likely, we always be here. Our history is not told in history books, but spans back beyond possibly three ice ages. ([Ho-Chunk Nation, 2023](#))**

The VA Kids Center acknowledges that it occupies sacred ancestral land of the Ho-Chunk Nation, People of the Big Voice. The Ho-Chunk first called this land Teejop (day-JOPE). Despite colonial efforts to ethnically cleanse the Ho-Chunk Nation from 1832-1874, the Ho-Chunk continued to return to this land in strength and inspired the extension of benefits to native peoples nationally in the Indian Homestead Act of 1875. Today, the Ho-Chunk Nation continues to inhabit this land and nurtures the rich language, religious and cultural practices entrusted to them by their ancestors. The VA Kids Center honors and respects the strength, resiliency and inherent sovereignty of the Ho-Chunk Nation and the 11 other First Nations of the land we now call Wisconsin.

## Non-Discrimination Statement

VAKC will not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, sex, gender, sexual orientation, creed, disability, national origin, ancestry or other protected category for any applicant for enrollment or employment or in administration of any policies.

**Any requested deviation from normal program activities or employment duties is considered a special accommodation.** A child’s parent or an employee must submit their request for any special accommodation in writing using the form provided by the center. Special accommodations will be made only after a properly submitted request form has been approved by the Center Director. VAKC will make reasonable accommodations for children or employees with special needs. Special needs may include food or physical activity restrictions, etc. VAKC may request that special needs are verified by an appropriate professional or specialist, including an independent third-party provider of VAKC’s choice. VAKC reserves the right to provide only reasonable accommodations that are consistent with available resources and that maintain sensitivity to the rights and needs of other children or employees at the center.

In accordance with Federal law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (800)7953272 or (202)720-6382 (TTY). The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## Licensed Hours of Operation

**Center Hours: 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday**

## Important Phone Numbers

VAKC Office (608) 280-7224

VAKC Fax (608) 280-7246

VA Hospital (608) 256-1901

To reach classrooms directly, call the VA Hospital and dial the following extensions:

Monkey Room X12452

Train Room X12453

Jungle Room X12458

Dragonfly Room X12457

Sunshine Room X12451

Kitchen X12455

**Website:** [vakidscenter.org](http://vakidscenter.org)

**Facebook Page:** <https://www.facebook.com/vakidscenter>

**Head of School Email:** saharrison@vakidscenter.org

**Program Manager Email:** ejhacker@vakidscenter.org

## Calendar of Events

VA Kids Center will be closed on the following holidays: Labor Day, Indigenous Peoples Day, Veterans Day, Thanksgiving Break November 22-24, Winter Break December 25-January 1, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Spring Break March 25-29, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, Program Turnover August 30, and Labor Day.

## Program Information

### Use of the Term “Parent” and “Families”

Throughout the center handbook and in other written documents, VAKC uses the word “parent” and/or “families” as an inclusive term for custodial and non-custodial parents and legal guardians. This term may also apply to others assuming the parent/guardian role, as identified by a person who has legal responsibility for the child/children.

### Program Mission

The mission of the VA Kids Center is to provide high quality early care and education for the VA Hospital employees and the community. We provide a home-like environment with our small class sizes. At VAKC, we promote each child’s individual social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development while encouraging a lifelong love of learning.

### Program Management

**Delegation of Authority.** The Center Director is responsible for administration of VAKC policies and

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the day to day operation of the center, including staff management. The VAKC Board of Directors provides fiscal oversight and support to the Center Director.

The list of current Board members is posted in the foyer, along with the designation of authority in the center.

In case of emergency, the designated authority will contact VA security or other local responding authorities. If the Center Director is off-site, they will also be contacted in the event of an emergency.

**Communication.** As indicated by signing an Enrollment Contract or Employment Agreement, families and staff have assumed responsibility for knowing, understanding, and agreeing to policies in the Center Handbook. The Center Handbook is a rich resource for questions families and staff may have throughout the year.

Additional locations where families may find important program information include the following:

- family bulletin board in foyer
- dry erase message board in foyer
- postings in foyer
- classroom dry erase board
- your family mailbox
- family memos and newsletters

For questions and concerns, direct contact (or written communication) with the person involved or a child's teacher is most effective and the appropriate first point of contact. When approaching teachers, please be conscious of classroom routines and a teacher's classroom obligations. Scheduling a time to talk will often allow others a better opportunity for discussion that is private and free of distractions.

**In any matter of concern, families and staff should approach the person involved and take the following actions:**

- maintain confidentiality
- state your observation(s)
- ask questions
- gather the facts
- summarize and restate the facts
- express your feelings and concern
- develop and agree on a solution that conforms to policy or is otherwise mutually satisfying
- report the situation or solution to appropriate others if necessary
- appropriately document the situation if necessary
- ask someone for assistance if you are unsure what to do

If for any reason you are unable to resolve an issue or get the information you need, contact the Center Director for further assistance.

In the event you are unable to resolve an issue with the Center Director, you may file a request with the president of the VAKC Board of Directors (see "Policy for Addressing Questions and Feedback").

## Curriculum

VAKC provides an emergent play-based curriculum. The VAKC teacher strikes a balance between observing and directing children in their activities. By observing a child or the group, the teacher

gathers the information necessary to individualize the learning experience for each child. As a child's interests emerge, the teacher makes materials available and structures activities to stimulate and support that interest. In a play-based environment, a balance of child-directed and teacher-directed learning allows children to enjoy activities while acquiring new skills.

The flexible and fluid elements of the curriculum are balanced with structured elements which include consistent daily schedules, curriculum plans, anecdotal observations and records, developmental tracking, child portfolios, and semi-annual parent-teacher conferences.

As children enter the preschool ages (2-5), they are exposed to more formal academically oriented curriculum elements. Opportunities to learn the skills required for kindergarten are presented in an age-appropriate manner. Documentation and teacher-parent interactions track each child's journey through this process. Additional emergent play-based curriculum information is included in this Center Handbook.

### ***The VA Kids Center curriculum***

- is designed to support and enhance the development of the whole child.
- prepares children for kindergarten.
- provides safe, fun, and challenging activities.
- balances child-directed choices with consistent classroom structure.
- supports self-expression and allows a forum for appropriate social interactions.
- nurtures social and emotional awareness to promote self regulation.
- encourages creative expression through art, music, movement, and other outlets.
- is individualized and guides children to make their own discoveries about the world.
- offers a mixture of indoor and outdoor play.
- involves parents by providing regular documentation, conferencing, and child portfolios.

## **Family-Teacher Conversations**

Because VAKC is a small center, teachers and families have frequent opportunities for daily communication. Teachers will also schedule formal family-teacher conversations twice during each contract year. Families may otherwise request to schedule a conversation with their child's teacher.

## **Involvement Opportunities**

Family involvement is viewed as essential to providing high quality experiences for all members of the VAKC community. Families are encouraged to share their thoughts and concerns with staff members, to ask questions, to offer suggestions, and to provide information about themselves and their children that will help us meet family needs. Feedback from families plays an invaluable role in our efforts to develop and maintain the center, which supports and strengthens families. **An important goal of VAKC is to be an extension of the family to those it serves.**

**Board of Directors:** All families enrolled at VAKC are members of the corporation, and each family is strongly encouraged to attend open board meetings. Nominations and elections for board members occur annually. Board meetings are held bi-monthly and last for approximately an hour. Getting involved is the best way to help enhance your child's child care experience and a great opportunity for helping your child through the most formative and important learning years of life!

**Fundraising:** Funds raised each year at VAKC may support the annual purchase of equipment and



supplies used in all VAKC classrooms. The quantity and quality of classroom items purchased depends, in part, on the success of each year's fundraising efforts. Fundraising may also support capital campaigns, tuition scholarships, staff and teacher appreciation, emergency and operating reserves, an endowment, or other specifically designated funds necessary to make a great program better. Your involvement in these activities is also the best way to help keep tuition costs down.

**Volunteering of Skills:** If you are able to make a commitment to serve on the Board of Directors, please talk to the Center Director. If you have skills (i.e. sewing, carpentry, computers, certification to teach specialty classes such as CPR, etc.) that you can volunteer, talk to us!

## Your First Day

### Pre-Enrollment Visit

VAKC requires that you and your child schedule at least one visit together prior to their first day of enrollment at the center. This will provide your child the opportunity to meet their classmates and teacher and allow them to explore the classroom environment. Your child's teacher may have a classroom welcome packet and other helpful information for you. You may drop off your child's enrollment paperwork and ask the Center Director any questions you have.

### Required Forms

All forms submitted must be originals with original signatures.

***\*Exception – Child Health Report (signed by physician) and Immunization Record may be faxed. Faxes accepted from clinic only.***

Required on or before your child's first day:

Signed Annual Enrollment Agreement

Signed Federal Employment Verification (if applicable)

Child Care Enrollment Form

Health History & Emergency Care Plan

Intake Form (<2 yrs. - update every 3 mo.)

Preschool Developmental History (2 yrs. or > - update annually)

Foods Served At VAKC

Special Accommodation Request Form (update every 90 days if applicable)

Topical Substance Authorization Form (if applicable)

Information Change Form (as needed)

Child Care Immunization Record (update as applicable)

Physician Signed Child Care Health Report (<2 yrs. update every 6 months & 2 yrs. or > update every 2 years)

Family Intake Form

Media & Social Media Release Form

General Income Survey

COVID-19 Vaccination Confirmation or Request for Exemption

Confidential records are only accessible to families, pertinent staff in relation to assigned duties, regulatory agencies, and as required by law. Information will not be released to outside agencies without written consent.

## What to Bring for Your Child

The following items must be provided and **labeled**:

- \* Diapers and wipes.
- \* If using cloth diapers – fresh diaper covers for each diaper change, and a wet bag. \* Formula or breast milk (a formula is provided by VAKC, but parents may provide formula of their choice).
- \* Two or three complete changes of seasonally appropriate clothing (including extra underwear, socks, boots, raincoat, swimsuit, water shoes, sunglasses, hat, mittens, snow pants, etc.)  
*Please send clothing that can get dirty.*
- \* A small sized sheet for a cot, a blanket, (pillow if desired). Ask a teacher for specifics. \*  
Sleep sack for infants.
- \* Items unique to your child's classroom as specified in the classroom welcome letter.

Please do not send candy, toys, valuables, money, items representing weapons or violence, or any dangerous items/contraband. Most books, security blankets, and stuffed animals for nap times (for children over the age of 1 year) are permitted.

## Getting Acquainted

Please come early on your child's first day. You will need extra time to sign in, drop off items in your child's cubby, and establish/complete your morning routine. Return the enrollment forms required for your child to the office. Your child's teacher or the Center Director can answer any questions you may have.

## Beyond the First Day

### Signing In and Out

State licensing requires that your child be signed into and out of the center each day. This ensures safety by allowing staff to monitor which children are present in the center at any given time.

### Parental Rights

Under the laws of the state of Wisconsin, both parents have the right to pick up their child unless a court document restricts that right. The enrolling parent who chooses not to include the other parent's name on the authorized list for pick up must file an official court document such as the following: current restraining order, sole-custody decree, divorce decree stating sole custody, judgment of adoption, or foster parent documentation. Absent this documentation, the program may release the child to either parent, provided that parent documents biological or adoptive parenthood of that child. The parent must provide the center with updated legal documents when any changes occur.

### Pick Up of Children by Other Persons

If someone other than you will be picking up your child, you must **notify your child's teacher and complete an authorization form**. Specify the dates that the person will be picking up your child from the center. Emergency contacts must also be authorized to pick up your child. **Note:** staff are instructed to request picture identification from any person on center property who they do not recognize on sight. *The person picking up your child may have been at the center before, but if the teacher on duty does not know them they will ask for identification.* Staff will only release children to individuals who are at least 18 years of age.

## **Custody Rights of Stepparents**

A stepparent is not entitled to, and has no legal right to, custody and/or visitation without a court order. The stepparent can only be authorized by his or her spouse, the child's parent of legal and physical custody, to have "custody" of the child at a particular time. (Child Care Law Center 2005, p.24)

## **Safe Departure Policy**

If **any** person arrives to pick up your child and appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or is exhibiting any other unsafe behavior, the staff will contact one of the following: the child's other guardian, the child's emergency contact person, another person on the authorized list, VAH police, Shorewood Police Department, or Dane County Social Services.

## **Vehicle Safety Seats Policy**

Adults who transport children in vehicles must maintain and use safety seats and seat belts in compliance with Wisconsin laws. Failure to follow these standards will result in our calling another person on the authorized list to pick up the child. As mandated reporters, we will also report your failure to use a safety seat to the local police and the Department of Children and Families.

## **Absences and Late Arrivals**

Staff are scheduled based on daily enrollment and the contracted times you provided the center in your annual contract. Please be sure to fill out an Information Change form if your contract hours will permanently change, *at least two weeks in advance.*

You must notify the center in advance if any of the following apply:

- Your child is going to be absent or late.
- Your child is being picked up early.
- Your child is returning to the center after already being picked up.

If you have not notified the center, staff will contact a parent or emergency contact 30 minutes past the scheduled contract time.

## **Visiting Your Child During the Day**

VAKC has an open-door policy for families who wish to visit their children during the day. Visits during children's scheduled time offer families a first-hand opportunity to become familiar with the people, routines, activities, and environment their children experience at VAKC. Children enjoy sharing their school environment with families, and staff members welcome the chance to get to know parents better and to involve parents in the program. You may join your child for an activity or meal that is happening in the room, or just observe. Certain portions of the day (such as nap or mealtimes) do not always lend themselves easily to drop-in visits. It is also desirable to limit the number of adults in the room at any one time. Please schedule visits when possible. Frequent and particularly long visits can confuse your child and at times may cause a disruption to the rest of the group. Thanks for your consideration in this matter. **This open door policy is limited to parents and other people who are authorized to pick up your child as indicated on their enrollment form.** Families should also feel comfortable contacting their child's teacher for a short update on how the day is going. Please leave a message if staff are unable to pick up the phone when you call.

VAKC will host occasional social events for children, families, and staff. These events give parents and staff an opportunity to get to know each other in a casual, relaxed atmosphere. Center-wide socials typically include our annual fall tailgate party and breakfast potluck during Week of the Young Child. Individual classrooms may also host smaller room social events such as potlucks or field trips. Siblings and other children not enrolled at VAKC must be with and closely supervised when attending socials at VAKC. *For the comfort and safety of all during these social events, parents are expected to be responsible for the close supervision and guidance of their child(ren).*

## **VAKC Privacy Policy**

The VA Kids Center will keep all records and information about your family strictly confidential and private. We will abide by our state's privacy laws and will release records or information about your family only when required by law. This includes releasing information to the child care licensing department, child protection agency, police, and health care professionals. Other than these legal requirements, we will release records or information about your family only with your written permission.

The VAKC Center Director determines which staff may have access to confidential information about your child. The following records of your child are available for parents to review: enrollment forms, medical records, assessment records, and accident reports. Contact the office to set up a time to view these records if necessary.

**Photography or videography (in whatever format) by parents (or anyone other than staff) of the children in our program is strictly forbidden.**

Staff may be allowed to take pictures of children to use in the classroom, in portfolios, on the center's website or Facebook page. Parents are asked to fill out a media permission form as well as a social media permission form so that teachers and administration are clear on the limits of pictures or video use for each child and family.

Staff members are prohibited from storing or publishing through any internet source any photos, videos, information, or comments about the current or past children or their families without written permission of the parents and the Center Director. This also includes sharing of information through texting on cell phones. VAKC staff are required to sign a confidentiality policy statement that outlines their responsibility to keep information about children, families, and other staff private and

confidential.

## **VAKC Closures Due to Inclement Weather** (snow, severe temperature, etc.)

update Jan. 2024

VAKC will follow Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD)'s decision to close schools due to inclement weather, i.e. road conditions and extreme temperatures. Closing the center in conjunction with MMSD takes into consideration the decision making process of the MMSD governing board and all of the facts collected to make their decision to close. VAKC's focus is to prioritize the safety of our families and staff, especially staff who drive from out of town and/or use public transportation. VAKC also reserves the right, at the discretion of the Head of School, to close the center due to staffing and safety concerns independent from MMSD during inclement weather.

In the event of severe and/or inclement weather, check local tv station Channel 3000 school closure list, our website ([www.vakidscenter.org](http://www.vakidscenter.org)), social media pages ([Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)), Daily Connect, your email, and/or your text messages to see if VA Kids Center will be closed.

If MMSD has a scheduled closure during inclement weather, VAKC Head of School will take into consideration surrounding school districts and Madison area preschools decision to close to follow the community consensus regarding safety of staff and families, i.e. Middleton, Sun Prairie, Verona, Waunakee, etc.

If MMSD chooses to close early due to a weather related event, VAKC will also do so to ensure that all children, families, and staff can get home safely. Should severe weather occur during the day, we will begin calling parents or a designee to pick up children as soon as possible.

In other emergencies, parents will be notified when any conditions would force the center to close early. For evacuations, VAKC will alternately operate from the VA Hospital Auditorium, Unitarian Church on University Bay Drive, or Whole Foods, in that order. Parents will be called immediately. The VA Hospital operator number is 608-256-1901. **Parents should plan ahead for alternative childcare arrangements in the event VAKC is closed.**

## **Schedules and Routines**

### **Daily Schedules**

Daily classroom schedules for each room are posted for your convenience. A consistent yet flexible routine addresses the needs of the group and provides children with security and confidence. The daily schedule offers a balance of active and quiet activities, individual and group activities, indoor and outdoor activities, structured and less structured activities, product- and process-oriented activities, and child-initiated and teacher-directed activities. Expectations are geared toward what the children in a particular group are capable of doing and understanding, while also recognizing that young children learn best through play (hands-on, open-ended experiences with materials and people – peers, younger and older children, and adults).

### **Routines and Transitions**

Small group sizes and low staff/child ratios at VAKC ensure that routines such as hand washing, toileting, and eating provide an opportunity for learning. Diapering is done as needed, upon waking, and at intervals of no more than two hours. Likewise, the center environment is child-friendly and facilitates self-help skills. Routines and transitions are planned to minimize waiting and promote advancement in self-help skills. The teacher structures transitions to allow children the time and reminders necessary to move successfully from one activity to another.

## Meals and Snacks

Nutritious breakfasts, lunches, and snacks that meet or exceed state licensing regulations and US Department of Agriculture (USDA) guidelines are provided for all children enrolled in the center. For children *under twelve months of age*, VAKC provides an iron-fortified infant formula, iron-fortified infant cereal, and commercial baby food. Children over 12 months of age are provided cow's milk. Requests for special accommodations must be made in writing with a doctor's signature using the proper form.

Parents may provide a preferred substitute of formula, breast milk, or other USDA-approved beverages instead of milk. *If parents provide homemade infant foods, they must be ready to serve (i.e. not frozen, needing to be heated or cut up/mashed) and be individually labeled with name, date, and content.* Bottles and infant foods can be served cold from the refrigerator and do not have to be warmed.

***The use of microwave ovens to warm bottles or children's food is not permitted at any time.***

*Foods from home are not allowed when your child over one year old does not like what is on the menu.* Meals and snacks are specifically planned to meet USDA guidelines. Children will be encouraged, but not forced, to try all foods. It may take children 10-15 times of being exposed to a new food before they decide if they like it or not. Parent and physician documentation will be requested for any dietary substitutions.

*The following foods will not be served at VAKC: hot dogs (whole or sliced into rounds), whole grapes, nuts, popcorn, raw peas, hard pretzels, and chunks of raw carrots.* Meals are served "family style" (teachers sit with children in small groups) and are valued as learning opportunities. Children are encouraged to try each of the foods offered at meals and snacks. Your teacher will provide you with feedback on your child's eating habits and food choices.

If your child has food-related allergies, it is required that you discuss the allergies with your child's teacher and administration prior to their first day of enrollment. A Special Accommodations form must be submitted, along with an Eating and Feeding Evaluation signed by a physician. Information should be included on the child's Health History and Emergency Care Plan detailing procedures to be followed should the child be exposed to the allergen.

The VAKC menu is posted on the nutrition board in the center hallway. Unfortunately, we cannot allow parents to bring in homemade treats. As more children are being diagnosed with food allergies and health departments are becoming more concerned about homemade items being brought into public places, parents are only allowed to bring in healthy, commercially packaged and factory-sealed items that have all ingredients clearly listed on the label. Speak with your child's teacher about healthy alternatives for treats.

Regulations state that children may not go longer than three hours without food. Breakfast is served

at 8:30 a.m., lunch at 11:30 a.m., and snack at 2:30 p.m. Children under one are fed on demand. **\*If your child is dropped off after or picked up before these times, they may miss that meal or snack.\***

## Meals from Home Policy

The nutrition program at VAKC provides nourishing meals and learning experiences for enrolled children and staff. The program ensures all children receive meals in compliance with Wisconsin Administrative Code DCF 251, Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers. When VAKC experiences staffing challenges, the program may ask families to provide one or more meals each day for their child to consume during their day. If a family forgets their child's meal at home, they may request a replacement meal from VAKC. Requests will be honored when the appropriate components are present in the VAKC kitchen. VAKC is not responsible for lost or broken lunchboxes or food containers.

### Requirements

When families provide meals from home for their child to consume at VAKC, the following requirements must be met to remain compliant with Wisconsin Administrative Code DCF 251, Licensing Rules for Group Child Care Centers.

Meals from home will . . .

- Contain required components for the specified meal and age of child
  - [Infant Requirements](#) (6 weeks to 11 months)
  - [Child Requirements](#) (12 months to 5 years)
- Be stored in an appropriate, family-provided lunchbox/container/bag labeled with your child's full name and date
  - Food that ought to remain hot will be sent in a thermos. VAKC will not reheat food prior to serving.
  - Food that ought to remain cold will be sent with an ice pack. VAKC does not have refrigerator space to store child lunches.
- Be clearly labeled, if food components are not immediately recognizable

### Allergens in Meals from Home

VAKC will maintain confidentiality for all individuals with allergies to food components. Families and staff will do the following to protect individuals with allergies when bringing meals from home.

Staff will:

- Maintain confidentiality of the identity of the individual/s with the allergy
- Ensure all staff who work with the individual/s know their allergy/emergency care plan and location of emergency medications
- Alert the classroom community of the relevant allergen/s (email/Daily Connect message/classroom posting, etc.)
- Handle allergens carefully and avoid cross contamination
- Strategically place children at tables while they eat to protect the individual/s with the allergy
- Notify the family if the child encounters the allergen while in attendance at VAKC

Families will:

- Maintain confidentiality of the identity of the individual/s with the allergy

- Label all relevant allergens in their child's meal brought from home and/or avoid sending the allergen to VAKC

## Birthday & Holiday Celebrations

VAKC is fortunate to be able to provide services to a wide variety of families who come from different cultures. This is truly a treasure and we do not want to impose anyone's culture or traditions on anyone else. Therefore, we will not focus activities or celebrations around holidays. We do encourage children and/or their parents to share their family's traditions and holidays with the class through such things as books, songs, family pictures, etc. We are interested and willing to learn about diverse family traditions.

Birthdays may be an exciting time for children. Children may share treats with their classmates, provided they are commercially prepared and in sealed packages. You may instead choose to purchase a book, puzzle, or other item for the classroom; this will ensure that any children who have food allergies or restrictions can also enjoy the celebration. Families can also come in to share a story, enjoy a meal with their child, or just come and play for part of the day.

## Rest/Nap Periods

For children under one year of age, nap period frequency and duration are determined on an individual basis. For children one and older, rest/nap periods are generally taken as a group and are incorporated into the regular daily schedule. Accommodations can be made for one-year olds to rest outside of regularly scheduled times. We do not purposely wake up sleeping children to remain in compliance with state licensing rules. It has been our experience that waking children from nap is unsettling, and children who sleep until they naturally wake up are much happier and have more successful afternoons than those who have their naps shortened.

Exceptions to this policy will only be made with a written request from a child PCP. Children not sleeping after a rest period of 30 minutes are provided with appropriate, quiet activities. Please talk with your child's teacher regarding your child's individual rest and sleeping needs; we will do our best to follow each child's routine within the group setting.

Teaching staff must supervise all children by sight and sound, including during naps. Teachers must check to make sure each child is breathing by listening for breath sounds and watching the chest/abdomen rise and fall. Teachers will also check to make sure each child is positioned safely, and that the child's face is not covered by a blanket or other object. *See also Safe Sleep Policy for Infants in the back of this handbook.*

Depending on age, children nap in a crib or on a cot. You will need to provide an appropriately sized sheet and blanket or sleeping bag for children age one and up. *Infants will sleep in a sleep sack only.* At the end of each week, teachers will send bedding home to be laundered. Please remember to bring nap bedding back at the beginning of each week.

## Outside Play

All children will go outside twice daily as weather permits and in compliance with state licensing requirements. Be sure that your child's cubby is always well-stocked with seasonally appropriate clothing, including at least two full changes of clothing. When weather conditions do not permit



outside play (according to state licensing guidelines), alternative activities will be scheduled indoors. **Staff-to-child ratios do not allow us to leave individual children inside while the rest of the class and their teacher is outside. Children who are not well enough to go outside must remain home that day.**

## Clothing

Dress your child in comfortable, washable clothing that allows your child to get dirty. That way your child can participate freely in the full range of activities offered by our program. Teachers do not prohibit children from reasonable play in order to preserve clothing. Please provide clothing that is easy to put on and take off to support independence and self-help in toileting and dressing. Wet or soiled clothing will be changed promptly. It is important that you leave a supply of clean clothing in your child's cubby/bin for this purpose in case of accidents, spills, or messy play. Please be sure all clothing is weather appropriate. State licensing rules require a minimum of one additional set of clothing be available; VAKC requests that you bring in 2-3 changes of clothing. All extra clothing should be labeled with your child's name.

## Independent Toileting

It is our policy that toileting should be introduced on an individual basis and only as your child demonstrates readiness. Please keep in mind that a child's motivation to keep their underwear dry naturally occurs, in part due to the child's recognition of their body's functions and the annoyance of wet or soiled clothing. Diapers, due to their absorbency, may inhibit your child's ability to recognize when they are wet. Your child's teacher has very likely helped numerous children gain independent skills for toileting, and can provide you with helpful information as well as work with you to coordinate your child's school routine to be as consistent as possible with the home independent toilet training.

Teachers will request that you have introduced toilet learning, with some success, at home prior to commencing the process at school. Toilet learning requires sensitivity and patience; each child will add this skill to their repertoire at their own pace and in their own way. Good communication between parents and teachers will only help to make this an untroubled process for children. Children using the toilet are free to do so whenever they wish; they will be reminded frequently throughout the day as well. VAKC is equipped with child-sized toilets. For sanitary reasons we do not use potty chairs as part of the regular program. Per state licensing regulations, toilet learning will not begin before 18 months of age.

## Field Trips/Walks

Short walks/buggy rides are incorporated into all of VAKC's classrooms as a great way to develop gross motor skills and broaden our view of the world. Age-appropriate, longer field trips may be planned for some of the classrooms throughout the year, based on the developmental level of the group. Some of the field trips may involve an extra cost for bus or entrance fees, which will be collected from families in advance of the field trip. Families will receive advance information and permission slips for field trips that involve transporting the children on a bus. Appropriate guidelines are used to ensure safety and accountability while we are away from the center. VAKC attempts to send as many adults/staff along for supervision on field trips, so extra adult help (parents and staff) on field trips is always required. Please understand that if you do not grant your child permission to attend a field trip, VAKC will not have sufficient staff available to provide exclusive care for your child at the center while the class is away. In such circumstances, please plan alternate care for your child during field trips that your child will not be attending.

# Health and Safety

## Health and Exclusion Policy During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### Mask Wearing

As of June 12, 2023, staff and visitors are no longer required to wear masks at the VA Kids Center. VAKC supports any staff and visitor who choose to voluntarily wear a mask at any time and for any reason. Staff and visitors must wear a mask under the following circumstances:

- Within 10 days of testing positive for COVID
- When experiencing any respiratory symptoms or symptoms related to COVID

Staff must wear non-cloth, FDA approved masks when masking is required. Masks will be provided by the program. Staff may choose to supply their own masks that meet the above qualifications.

It is recommended that children 2y/o and older mask under the circumstances mentioned above. To maintain safe and healthy hand hygiene practices, children who choose to wear a mask must be able to put their mask on and remove it by themselves.

Teachers will offer assistance and opportunities for children to wear masks at appropriate times during the school day and will not force children to wear a mask if the child chooses not to wear one. It is the family's responsibility to supply clean masks, dispose of or launder dirty masks and partner with teachers to use mask practice as a learning opportunity.

### Reporting of Positive Cases

In the event that a staff member or child enrolled receives a positive diagnosis of COVID, the staff or family member will inform VAKC of the positive case immediately. Individuals with a positive COVID diagnosis will be excluded from VAKC during their isolation period AND at least 1 day (24 hours) since the person has had a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medication AND improvement in other symptoms. See [VAKC Covid Policy and Procedures- October 2023](#) for up-to-date guidance.

VAKC health and illness policies are based on the most current guidance from Public Health Madison & Dane County, Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and VA Infectious Disease Control.

## Health and Exclusion Policy

The policies and practices at VAKC are designed to promote the health and wellness of all of its community members. Gross motor and outdoor play are prioritized daily. These times of active play are balanced with quiet activities and rest. The physical environment is maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. Policies and procedures are in place to make sure that children and staff will be safe, and the spreading of contagious illness will be kept to a minimum. Careful records are kept documenting regular health checkups and immunizations.

The best method of reducing the spread of illness is frequent handwashing by children, parents, and staff, and keeping at home children and staff who are ill. Parents and children are required to wash hands upon arrival at VAKC each day. Older siblings who accompany parents and young children to VAKC at drop off and pick up times are not permitted to enter classrooms if they are exhibiting any of the symptoms as outlined below.

Parents should plan for alternative childcare arrangements for when their child is ill.

A child being sent home must be picked up immediately (within an hour). If the center is unable to reach a parent, the child's designated emergency contact person will be called, and pick-up arrangements made.

The VAKC Exclusion Policy is based on American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations.

(<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/When-to-Keep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx>).

The Center Director, not a child's family, will make the final determination when a child will be excluded from and returned to care. The Center Director will support teachers' decisions to implement the illness policy consistently without exception.

If your child is sent home, unless otherwise stated, you must keep the child home the remainder of the current day and the next full day and at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved without medication OR the child's PCP has stated that the child is noninfectious and is safe to return to a group care setting.

***VAKC will exclude children from the program if one or more of the following applies:***

- The child's condition prevents the child from participating comfortably in classroom routines and activities
- The child's condition requires more care than the teacher can reasonably provide without compromising the needs and care of other children in the group
- The child's condition poses an increased risk of the spread of harmful disease/illness

VAKC will follow the exclusion table set forth by PHMDC on March 15, 2021 to assist in determining child exclusions as it pertains to COVID.

([https://publichealthmdc.com/documents/exclusion\\_table.pdf](https://publichealthmdc.com/documents/exclusion_table.pdf))

**A child with any of the following symptoms must be kept home and will be sent home if witnessed in the center:**

1. ***Fever:*** A child with a temperature above 100.4°, will be excluded from care for a minimum of 24 hours. The child may return to care when the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
2. ***Respiratory Symptoms:*** A child with a new cough above baseline for that individual and/or one that causes difficulty breathing will be excluded and may return when the cough improves or the child's PCP has stated that the child is noninfectious and is safe to return to a group

care setting. A child with a runny nose, or sore throat with a fever will be excluded from care for a minimum of 24 hours. The child may return to care when the fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medicine.

3. **Diarrhea:** Children presenting with diarrhea (including a child with watery stool that cannot be contained in a snug fitting diaper or watery stool with a toilet trained child who cannot reach the toilet in time) will be excluded for 24 hours after the last incident. Incidents of contained diarrhea exceeding 2 stools in a 4-hour period will also be excluded for 24 hours after the last incident. (This has been adapted from the AAP recommendation due to hygiene and sanitation considerations.)
4. **Vomiting:** Defined as expulsion of stomach contents not due to gag reflex or typical infant spit up. **This includes incidents that happen at home.** Exclusion is required until vomiting has resolved for 24 hours.
5. **Abdominal Pain:** Pain that continues for more than 2 hours or intermittent pain that is associated with fever or other signs/symptoms is cause for exclusion until the pain and fever/other symptoms are no longer present for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducing medication.
6. **Mouth Sores:** Open sores with uncontrolled drooling, unless the child's PCP or the local health department states that the child is noninfectious, is cause for exclusion.
7. **Rash:** Rash of unknown origin is cause for exclusion until the child's PCP has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease.
8. **Skin sores:** Open sores of unknown origin is cause for exclusion until the child's PCP has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease.

**The following specific diagnoses require exclusion:**

- Strep throat (until child has had 2 doses of appropriate antibiotic 12 hours apart)
- Head lice, scabies, ringworm (until after first treatment)
- Chickenpox (until all lesions have dried or crusted and no new lesions have showed for at least 24 hours)
- Rubella (until 7 days after the rash appears)
- Pertussis (until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment)
- Mumps (until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling)
- Measles (until 4 days after onset of rash)
- Hepatitis A virus (until 1 week after onset of illness or jaundice or as directed by the health department)

Children being sent home must be picked up immediately, in **less than 1 hour**. If the center is unable to contact a parent, the child's designated emergency contact person will be called, and pick-up arrangements made.

**In forming this exclusion policy, the focus of the concern is on the needs and behavior of the ill child, the ability of the staff to meet those needs without compromising the care of other children in the group, and hygiene/sanitation concerns.**

**Parents should plan ahead for alternative child care arrangements for when their child is ill.**

## Communicable Disease

When a child has any communicable disease, **it is necessary that parents inform the center immediately**. Staff and families will be alerted to possible exposure. Your child's name will be kept anonymous. Children with communicable diseases will be excluded from participation in our program until they are no longer contagious. VA Kids Center must follow guidelines put forth by local, state, and national agencies regarding outbreaks of illnesses (epidemic/pandemic). Notification is passed on to families when new guidelines go into effect. VAKC will remain open as long as we can maintain staffing levels or until recommendations from outside agencies require or request closure.

The most successful, yet often least utilized, method for greatly reducing the spread of communicable disease is proper and frequent hand washing. **Parents and children must wash their hands upon arrival at the center**. Please reinforce self-help and healthy hand washing skills at home with your child.

## COVID-19 Policy

In accordance with the VA Kids Center's mission to provide a safe and healthy space for our children, families, and staff, and based on guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and local health authorities, this guide will inform our health & safety decisions for enrolled children, staff and visitors of VAKC.

As a group care program licensed through the Department of Children and Families, VAKC is required to follow rules and regulations to limit the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases to protect the health and safety of the children, families and staff in our learning community. These procedures were created under the guidance of public health authorities, including Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Public Health Madison & Dane County, the Department of Children and Families and VA Medical Center Infectious Disease Control. Other considerations include VAKC family perspectives, other area child care program policies and staff feedback. This policy is subject to change as recommendations change.

As we continue to be a small center associated with the VA medical community, VAKC strongly recommends all eligible community members (staff and enrolled children) to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (complete primary series and up-to-date on recommended boosters) within 30 days of eligibility and/or as advised by one's primary care provider. This recommendation is aligned with our values and operational needs, supports a healthy environment for children, families, teachers, staff, and community while maintaining best practices for early care and education in our unique group care setting. Please refer to our [VAKC Covid Policy-October 2023](#) in its entirety for further directions

regarding actions to take if showing signs of Covid symptoms or have been exposed to someone testing positive for Covid.

## General Vaccination Policy for Children

Families will be required to follow the State of Wisconsin Department of Health Services vaccination schedule. Families will be required to provide either proof of vaccination or an approved reasonable accommodation to be exempted from the requirements [using this form](#).

Children in need of an exemption from this policy due to a medical reason, or because of a sincerely held religious belief must submit the above form to the Center Director to begin the interactive accommodation process as soon as possible after vaccination deadlines. Accommodations will be granted where they do not cause VA Kids Center undue hardship or pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others. Please direct any questions regarding this policy to the Center Director.

## Medication

Parents must complete an *Authorization to Administer Medication* in its entirety for all prescription and non-prescription medication to be administered to children while at VAKC. Staff will use these forms to conduct a **safety check** and record information about medications each time they are given. An additional entry will be recorded in the medication log.

### ***The 5 Rights of Medication Administration at VAKC***

- 1. Right Drug:** VAKC staff will verify that the correct drug is being administered.
- 2. Right Dose:** The medication will be administered in the correct dosage.
- 3. Right (Amount of) Time:** The medication will be administered at appropriate intervals.
- 4. Right Way (The Route):** Medication will be dispensed via the appropriate route (orally, topically, inhaled, or injected).
- 5. Right Child:** Medication will be administered to the correct child.

All over the counter (OTC) medications used to treat an injury or condition, including topicals, may only be left at VAKC for the duration of symptoms, consistent with medication labeling or with a parent-initialed *Authorization to Administer Medication* form indicating physician consultation and recommendation, after which the medication will be sent home. Prescription medications will be given and recorded consistent with prescription instructions only. For standing prescription medication authorizations for medications used regularly over longer durations, such as Benadryl or Epi-pen, the *Authorization to Administer Medication* form must be signed by the child's physician. All medication must be in the original container with the child's name and date clearly marked.

### **Prescription Medication:**

- Prescription indications on *Authorization to Administer Medication* forms must match prescription label on original medication container.
- Duration of dates to administer may not to exceed indications on label of original medication container.
- The child's physician must sign standing prescription *Authorization to Administer Medication*.
- Information for incomplete labels or additional instructions for medication must be provided and signed by the child's physician.

### Non-Prescription Medication:

- Medication indications on authorization must match the medication label on the original medication container
- or-
- Duration of dates to administer may not to exceed duration of symptoms or duration as indicated on the original medication container, whichever is less
- or -
- Authorization durations that exceed the duration indicated on the original medication container must be accompanied by a parent initialed *Authorization to Administer Medication* form.
- Information for incomplete labels or additional instructions for medication must be included on *Authorization to Administer Medication* and initialed by the child's parent.
- If an over-the-counter medication label indicates that the physician should be consulted, the *Authorization to Administer Medication* form must be initialed by the child's parent.

**VAKC will not administer any cold medicines.**

### Non-Prescription Topical Substances:

- Non-prescription topical substances, such as insect repellent, lotions, diaper cream etc., used for non-medical or preventative purposes and not to treat an injury or condition, must be listed on the *Topical Substance Authorization* form.
- All fields of the *Topical Substance Authorization* form, including specific brand name, ingredient strength, and instructions of how and when to use the substance, must be completed. For example, parents intending for a product, such as diaper cream, to be used as a preventative moisture barrier on a regular basis, must specify their intentions and application instructions for the substance on the form.
- **If your intention is to use a topical substance to treat an injury or condition, such as diaper rash, you must fill out an *Authorization to Administer Medication* form.**
- Children may only use the product type authorized or provided by their parent.
- Parents are responsible for supplying all topical substances and providing instructions to staff for what to do if the child's supply runs out.

## Accidents and Injuries

Minor Injuries such as bumps, scrapes, small cuts, and bites will be washed with soap and water, and bandages and/or ice will be applied as necessary. Minor injuries will be reported immediately to parents using the Daily Connect app.

Serious Injuries require that the following steps be taken:

1. One teacher will remain with the injured child while another staff member takes responsibility for the rest of the group.
2. If the injury is not life threatening, a staff member will first try to contact the child's parents. If the parents cannot be reached, the child's doctor or one of the emergency contacts listed on the child's enrollment card will be contacted.
3. If the injury is life threatening or severe, one staff member will immediately telephone 911 for emergency personnel, and every attempt will be made to accompany the child to the hospital. A staff member will contact the child's parent or other emergency contact person as soon as possible after the emergency has happened.

## SIDS Policy

All infants will be placed only on their backs to sleep and only on a *tightly-fitting sheet*. No soft objects such as pillows, quilts, stuffed animals, etc. will be allowed in cribs. Blankets will not be used with children under one year of age; a sleep sack may be sent to be used for naps instead. The infant's head will remain uncovered during sleep (this includes hoods). As part of the curriculum, infants spend time each day in a variety of activities and positions, including the prone position (tummy time).

All staff will receive SIDS training during formal orientation before working their first actual shift. Parents requesting that their infant sleep in any manner inconsistent with VAKC's SIDS Policy must formally make the request in writing using the proper form and accompany their request with a physician authorization and signature that specifically details the sleeping accommodations required for medical reasons.

## Abusive Head Trauma (formerly Shaken Baby Syndrome)

Crying is healthy and natural for a baby. No matter how frustrated you are, **never shake a baby**. Shaking a baby can cause death, severe brain damage, and lifelong disabilities. All staff receive Abusive Head Trauma Prevention training during formal orientation prior to working their first actual shift. Call 911 or take a shaken baby to the emergency room right away. Immediate medical attention may prevent future problems or save a baby's life.

## Building Security

VAKC is a locked facility that requires badge access to the front door. Only center staff and parents of enrolled children are provided with these badges. **Never allow a visitor to walk in the door with or behind you. Always ask the visitor to wait outside until center staff can greet them at the door.** VAKC is monitored 24 hours a day by VA Hospital security patrol and a security camera on the front door. Name Tags that include picture identification are worn by VAKC staff as an additional security measure. *Parents should use the front door for all arrivals and departures.*

***Teaching staff may not be available to come open the door for you if you forget your card.***

## Additional Safety Precautions

- Immediately report any suspicious behavior or hazard to the Center Director, teaching staff, or call VA Hospital security.
- Be cautious in making assumptions about safety matters. If you are unsure about anything, ask someone for more information.
- As a precautionary measure, we ask that parents **not** allow their children to open center doors and gates by themselves.
- Always keep gates and doors closed, latched, and/or locked behind you.
- Do not leave children without adult supervision in the building or parking lot. *Children must be accompanied by an adult at all times.*
- Do not allow children to run out into the parking lot.
- Please allow children to only use the student bathrooms located in several classrooms.



## Child Abuse and Neglect

Punishment that is humiliating or frightening to a child is strictly prohibited. Neither parents nor staff shall use these forms of punishment. Staff or parents who exercise the following forms of punishment will be immediately dismissed from employment or enrollment at VAKC:

- Corporal or any type of physical punishment, including but not limited to spanking, beating, shaking, pinching, or other measures which induce physical pain.
- Abusive, profane, or derogatory language, including but not limited to yelling, belittling, berating, and threatening.
- Withholding or forcing (or the threat of withholding or forcing) of food, rest, or bathroom opportunities.
- Restricting movement by binding, tying, or confining (such as in a closet, locked room, box, etc.).
- Any form of public or private humiliation including threats of physical punishment.
- Any form of emotional abuse, including but not limited to rejecting, terrorizing, isolating, or corruption of a child.

Staff are required by state law to report suspected abuse or neglect of a child. VAKC staff members are mandated reporters and are required to fully cooperate with authorities in this matter. **At the time a child reports abuse or signs of abuse are discovered, the VAKC staff will immediately do the following:**

- 1) Request additional information from the child and/or parent for clarification purposes. Use open-ended questions, such as, "Can you tell me more about that?"
- 2) Alert the Center Director or senior staff.

Reports will be made directly to Dane County Human Services (608-261-5437) by the adult who discovered the suspected abuse, in compliance with state child abuse and neglect reporting laws. If you should ever have a concern regarding abuse or neglect by a staff member, bring this concern immediately to the attention of the Center Director.

## Positive Guidance Policy

**Physical harm to oneself, others, or property is not acceptable.**

Teachers and parents will reinforce and help children understand the following three VAKC Rules:

- 1) *Respect Others and Self*
- 2) *Respect Surroundings*
- 3) *Respectful Language*

**If a child is excluded from the program for behavioral reasons, they must:** 1) *meet the criteria to be readmitted to the program* and 2) *be placed on a probationary enrollment status.*

**Parents are responsible for their child's behavior at VAKC.**

*Teaching staff will:*

- Model appropriate behavior for your child.
- Include pro-social skill training in their curriculum.

- Support children in emotion recognition and regulation.
- Provide clear and consistent behavioral expectations.
- Implement VAKC's behavior guidance sequence.
- Assist children in problem solving and peer conflict resolution.
- Provide parents with behavior reports.

*Teaching staff will not:*

- Allow children to hurt other people (includes hitting, biting, pinching, scratching, kicking, hair pulling, use of objects as a weapon, verbal abuse, or bullying, etc.).
- Allow children to seriously disrupt the classroom (includes behavior that significantly interferes with teacher supervision of the group or poses any other safety concern).
- Physically restrain a child, more than once (and only for necessary safety reasons).

The VAKC curriculum encourages self-regulation and helps children learn to interact in safe and appropriate ways. Behavioral expectations are based on the child's developmental level, and positive behaviors are frequently reinforced. The following factors facilitate a positive and pro-social learning environment:

- Positive and respectful interactions.
- Opportunities to introduce, discuss, and rehearse pro-social and friendship skills.
- Clear behavioral limits and expectations.
- Safe and secure environments.
- Strategic room designs.
- Consistent/well-planned daily routines.
- Regular parent-teacher communication.
- Parent involvement and support.

## **Policy for Responding to Challenging Behavior**

### **Purpose**

As young children grow and develop, they may exhibit behaviors their caregivers find challenging. Many behaviors that adults find challenging in children are developmentally appropriate and a normal occurrence in the group care setting. Some behaviors may require extra support from staff, families, administrators, community resources and healthcare teams to keep the classroom community safe, inclusive and equitable.

VAKC is committed to supporting children, families and staff through challenging behaviors by strengthening relationships with children, partnering with families and community support and only considering exclusionary measures as a last resort. Attendance and enrollment decisions are in accordance with local and federal civil rights laws.

### **Exclusion due to Behavior**

Research shows that suspension and expulsion of young children negatively impacts future educational outcomes and children of color (especially boys) are excluded from school settings at a much higher rate than other children (Administration for Children & Families, 2014). As a program

dedicated to inclusive and equitable practices, staff and administrators will exhaust the following list before considering exclusion of a child from the program due to challenging behavior:

1. Review Best Practices, VAKC Guidance Policy and Educational Philosophy
2. Strengthen Relationship with the Child
3. Seek to Understand the Behavior and Make Accommodations
4. Partner and Communicate with Families
5. Advocate for the Needs of the Child
6. Connect with Community Support

VAKC staff will partner with and welcome healthcare teams, therapists and consultants from the community to support individual care and education plans, when approved by the family. If a physician orders a special medical management procedure for a child in care at VAKC, an adult trained in the procedure must be on-site whenever the child is present.

Behavior patterns that may be excluded from the program include: dangerous behaviors that put the child, other children, or staff at risk of injury, behaviors that damage property, behaviors that threaten psychological and emotional safety of children and staff, behaviors that jeopardize VAKC's license and compliance with other regulatory bodies. If, after completing the steps in the list above, the program and family agree that it is in the best interest of the child, the family may choose to withdraw from VAKC or a mutual decision may be made to terminate the enrollment contract. Other circumstances in which a family or the program can terminate their contract is referenced on pg 30-31 of the Center Handbook. VAKC will be supportive of families seeking alternative care and services in the community.

## Supervision of Children

Teaching staff will supervise all infants and toddlers by sight and sound at all times. All infants and toddlers must be easily seen (if not in the direct line of sight, then by looking up or slightly adjusting one's position) by at least one member of the teaching staff. *Sight and sound supervision must be maintained even when children are sleeping.* **Staff must be aware of and positioned so they can hear and see any sleeping children, especially when they are actively engaged with children who are awake.**

Children who are 30 months of age or older may be momentarily out of sight and sound, as long as the child is back in sight and sound within one minute. Children this age may be supervised by sound only for three minutes on occasion before regaining both sight and sound observation.

When on the playground, teachers must spread out and position themselves so that they can supervise children and also see anyone who approaches. When a child or children are using the climber and slide, a teacher must be nearby because it requires extra supervision for safety.

Teaching staff will remind children frequently that only staff or parents are allowed to open any doors or gates at VAKC. This is to prevent children from opening doors on their own and getting away from the group or staff member. Parents are asked to also follow this rule with their child/ren.

Tracking and supervision of children is the most important responsibility of all staff members of VAKC. All staff being aware of where children are and working together ensures that children are supervised, within sight and sound, and safe at all times. Attendance sheets must be up to date and accurate at all times. Teaching staff must check to make sure all children have been signed in/out accurately.

Child tags must go wherever the groups of children are. Staff to child ratios and group sizes must be followed at all times in accordance with state licensing regulations.

## Maintaining Your Contract

### Payment Information

**When to Pay:** Tuition is paid bi-weekly by electronic funds transfer (EFT). Alternate tuition arrangements may be requested; the final decision will be made by the Center Director. Alternate payment arrangements must be submitted *in advance*.

**Third Party Payments:** Families whose tuition or any portion of tuition is paid by a third party individual or agency must submit a signed agreement regarding third party funding. Guidelines and parent responsibilities for coordinating third party payments are outlined on the form (available in the office) and strict adherence to the guidelines is required.

### Fee and Refund Information

*Note: All fees, except for the security deposit, are non-refundable. A current tuition and fee schedule is available with this handbook.*

**Annual Registration Fee:** Due with the signed annual enrollment contract.

**Security Deposit:** A security deposit equal to one bi-weekly tuition payment per child is due with or before the initial signing of the first enrollment contract. The security deposit will be refunded to the family within 10 business days of their child's last day if all of the following apply:

1. A four-week advance written notice has been given to the Center Director.
2. The child has attended VAKC for at least three total months (since enrollment date). *Families that withdraw their child in less than three months will forfeit their security deposit.*
3. Full payments for the duration of the child's care have been made.
4. No part of the family account is in arrears, including payment of late tuition fees, late pick-up fees, field trip fees, registration/materials fees, and other applicable fees.

A security deposit submitted in advance of the enrollment date will secure the child's enrollment on the agreed upon start date. This is an agreement for both VAKC and the family, and therefore security deposits will not be refunded if the child does not start on the agreed upon date. Deposits will only be refunded if the security deposit refund criteria above are met.

Security deposits will be applied toward a family's outstanding account balance at termination of enrollment and the remaining amount will be refunded. *Note: Security deposits may not be applied to the last two weeks' tuition.*

**NSF Fees:** A \$30 charge is made for any check written to VAKC that is returned for non-sufficient funds.

**Wait List Fees:** Wait list fees are \$100 and are non-refundable. If you qualify for Wisconsin Shares,

waitlist fees are \$50 non-refundable. (check only-no cash).

*Should a wait list applicant decline an available opening offered two-weeks before or anytime after the desired start date specified on the application, the applicant may lose their position on the wait list. An applicant will not lose their position on the list if an opportunity to hold the spot for more than two weeks is declined. Regardless of position, applications will remain active on the wait list until the child turns six or the parent instructs the Center Director to remove the application from the list.*

**Holding Fees:** A parent may secure their child's spot by paying holding fees when 1) a vacancy is open, but the applicant is not ready to enroll right away or 2) a currently enrolled child takes an extended leave from the center. The following conditions and fees apply:

### New Enrollment Applicants Children Under 2

Hold for 2 weeks or less = 50% of normal tuition

Hold 3 - 8 weeks = 75% of normal tuition for remaining time spot is held

Hold for 9+ weeks = 100% of normal tuition for remaining time spot is held

### New Enrollment Applicants Children 2 or Over

Hold for 2 weeks or less = 75% of normal tuition

Hold for 2 - 8 weeks = 50% of normal tuition for remaining time spot is held

### Currently Enrolled Families Children Under 2

Hold for 4 weeks or less = 100% of normal tuition

Hold for 5 - 8 weeks = 75% of normal tuition for total time spot is held.

### Currently Enrolled Families Children 2 or Older

Hold for 4 weeks or less = 100% of normal tuition

Hold for 5 - 8 weeks = 50% of normal tuition for total time spot is held

The total amount of time a spot may be held and the total number of spots available to be held at any one time will be at the discretion of the Center Director.

**Late Forms Fees:** Many of your child's enrollment forms are required by law for your child to attend VAKC. \$3.00 per form, per day late for State and Center required forms alleviates the administrative cost in tracking down delinquent child-file forms. Excessively late forms may result in suspension of services. If services are suspended due to missing forms, families remain responsible for tuition payments and accounts will continue to generate late forms fees while services are suspended.

**Supplies Fees:** \$3.00 per occurrence will be charged when the center must provide a parent-supplied item (i.e. bedding, diapers, wipes, etc.) for a child.

**Overtime Fees:** A fee is assessed at \$5 per day that your child is dropped off at or picked up from the center outside of contracted hours without prior notice to the center and approval from the Center Director.

**After-Hours Fee:** VAKC is not licensed to care for your child after 5:30 p.m.; therefore, families will be charged an After-Hours Fee of \$1 per minute if any family member remains in the building after

5:30, with a \$5 minimum fee assessed. Parents and emergency contacts will be called after 5:35 pm.

**Field Trip Fees:** Varying fees assessed for field trips and other special events on a per event basis.

**Individual Staffing Fee:** Families will be billed \$10.00 per hour if their child requires emergency use of a staff member on a one to one basis. Examples include:

- o A child meets exclusion criteria for illness or behavior and must be isolated from the group and supervised by an extra staff member.
- o A child is picked-up or dropped-off outside of normal times and an extra staff member must supervise that child because of ratios.
- o A parent or emergency contact response time requires an extra staff to care for a child until that child is picked up.

## **Financial Sustainability During COVID Quarantine and Isolation**

Full tuition payments will be collected during quarantine periods due to exposure/close contact and isolation of positive cases of COVID-19. These payments will ensure continuity of care and operations during and after the exposure and support staff wages. When VAKC asks families to adhere to a quarantine period after exposure that happens in our program, VAKC will continue to collect full tuition payments for up to 20 quarantine days in the contract year.

If VAKC asks families to adhere to a quarantine period after exposure in the program that exceeds a cumulative of 20 days in the contract year, tuition payments will be collected at a rate of 75%. VAKC will collect full tuition payments for quarantine periods after exposure that happens away from our program and during isolation periods.

## **Suspension of Services**

Service suspension constitutes a period of time, as determined by the Center Director, during which 1) a child is not allowed to attend the center, 2) the family's contract and payment obligations remain in force, 3) the child's spot is not secured and 4) a re-registration fee may be assessed. Services may be suspended for the following reasons (not an exhaustive list):

- Non-payment of tuition or other applicable fees and lack of adherence to VAKC payment policies.
- Failure to submit any required forms.
- Exhibition of dangerous or significantly disruptive behavior by an enrolled child.
- Violation of policies and procedures.

## **Termination of Enrollment by Parents**

You may withdraw your child from VAKC at any time by providing a written notice to the Center Director at least four weeks in advance of your child's last day. If a child is withdrawn without a full four-week written notice, the security deposit is forfeited in its entirety.

## Withdrawal from Center by Mutual Decision

We recognize that not every center is a good match for the needs of every child. If for any reason, it does not appear that VAKC's environment is a good match for your child, you and the Center Director reserve the right to mutually terminate the contract. Often, if an enrollment contract is mutually terminated, a security deposit refund and the termination date may be negotiated to allow parents time to make alternate care arrangements. The terms of the mutual decision to terminate a contract must be documented and signed by each party using the appropriate form.

## Termination of Child Care Contract by Center

Because a suitable match between a family's needs or expectations and the services VAKC provides may not always exist, a child's enrollment at VAKC is provisional. VAKC reserves the right to terminate a contract at any time for any reason. Parents who disagree with the center's decision to terminate their enrollment may file a Non-Violent Communication to VAKC Board of Directors (see *VAKC Policy for Questions & Feedback*). In certain cases, termination may be immediate, including:

- Significantly past due tuition balances.
- Violation of law or policies and procedures.
- Failure to comply with enrollment contract.
- Failure to submit required forms.
- Causing harm to business operations or public image of VAKC.
- Failure to cooperate or successfully address behavior problems exhibited by your child.
- Disciplining children other than your own, in any way, while at the center.
- Abusive or disruptive behaviors and verbal threats.
- Permanent closing, dissolution of or significant changes to the corporation, and/or elimination of certain services.

## Contract Hours

Contract hours only include the child care services specified in your enrollment contract within the hours of VAKC's license. The Center Director will work with families to accommodate care needs up to 10 hours per day. Contract hours will be determined by the Center Director and modified throughout staffing changes. VAKC is allowed by law to operate only within the hours specified on our license. If children are not picked up within their contracted time, we will begin calling parents, emergency contacts, and ultimately social services or local authorities for an alternate pick-up. After hours fees will be charged.

Please adhere to the scheduled hours indicated in your contract. Inform your teacher or the Center Director *immediately* of permanent or temporary changes to the hours of care that you will need. This includes late/early drop-off and early/late pick-ups within 30 minutes of scheduled contract hours. Teachers will call parents if children have not arrived or departed 30 minutes before or after scheduled hours. If you need care outside your specified hours, you *must* notify the Center Director *in advance* to avoid an Overtime Fee. Due to staffing restrictions, your request may be approved or denied.

## Keeping Up Your Child's File

You are required by state licensing regulations to keep your child's file updated (see Required Forms). Leave all completed forms with your child's teacher or the Center Director.

It is necessary to maintain current emergency information for your child. Be sure that you notify the center of any changes to your emergency contact numbers, current work and home telephone numbers, and current address. If you will not be available at your usual contact number at any time that your child is in attendance, let your teacher know in advance and provide an alternate number.

## Policy for Addressing Questions and Feedback

Board members may not act autonomously in hearing questions and feedback and will direct anyone contacting them with a complaint or concern to follow the established procedures for having complaints heard and issues resolved.

Every attempt should be made to resolve a problem with the others involved before moving to the next level of authority.

### **Exhaust the following steps:**

1. Consult the Center Handbook and Enrollment Agreement.
2. Discuss the problem verbally or in writing directly with the individual(s) involved (see Communication).
3. Contact the Center Director.

If staff or parents are still unable to satisfactorily resolve an issue, they may request Non-Violent Communication using the following procedure:

- Within five days of the incident or knowledge of the facts, compose a [Non-Violent Communication](#):
  - Describe an observation of the situation
  - Describe your feelings from the Feelings Inventory
  - Describe your needs from the Needs Inventory
  - Make Requests

### **The board president or designee may:**

- Talk to others involved.
- Gather the facts.
- Meet with the Center Director.
- Meet with executive members of the Board, if necessary.
- Respond as soon as possible, within five working days of receipt of the Non-Violent Communication
- Direct the individual back to the appropriate step, if appropriate.

In the case of enrollment termination, the process may be expedited at the request of the individual.

To preserve confidentiality, program quality, and an appropriate working environment, it is critical that the chain of command, communication policy, and Non-Violent Communication procedure is



adhered to at all times. ***Parents or staff involved in circumventing the chain of command, communication policy, or Nonviolent Communication procedure may have their enrollment or employment terminated.***

## Healthy Lifestyle

### Healthy Eating

VAKC provides a well-balanced diet. Menus rotate highlighting a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables year-round. Portion sizes and servings meet the Child and Adult Care Food Program requirements. These serving guidelines are designed with lifelong healthy eating in mind. Teachers also support nutrition in daily activities by suggesting healthy alternatives for birthday snacks, doing developmentally appropriate cooking projects, and ensuring children participate in physical activity multiple times each day.

#### *6 weeks-6 months:*

Infants will always be held when being fed a bottle. *Infants will eat when they are hungry and stop when they are full, regardless if the bottle or food bowl is empty.* Signs of hunger include rooting; sucking on fists/fingers; moving, licking, or smacking of lips; fussing or crying; excited arm and leg movements. Signs of fullness include sealing lips together, decrease in sucking, spitting out or refusing nipple, pushing or turning away from bottle; milk begins to run out of infant's mouth; leaning back, turning away; pushing food out of mouth; playing with food or bottle; pushing the bottle or spoon away.

#### *6-12 months:*

Children starting table foods will be fed infant solids at each meal in accordance with Child and Adult Care Food Program guidelines. Foods will only be offered after parents have introduced them first without any problems. Approved table foods will then be served to supplement the meal. Foods served will follow the USDA infant meal patterns. Children should show signs of readiness such as good head and neck control, not using tongue to push solid objects out of the mouth, drawing in the lower lip when spoon is removed, and/or signs of hunger after breast milk or formula. ***Infants will be fed with peers as often as possible.***

Children will be allowed to touch, feel, smell, and taste the table foods offered. Teachers are encouraged to sit near the children with their own meal and use this time to discuss what is being eaten and how it tastes. This is the beginning of the VAKC Nutritional Curriculum.

#### *One-year olds:*

Meals are served "family style." This means the teacher sits at the table with the children and eats with them (or pretends to eat). One-year olds will be given heavy-duty plastic plates and spoons to use. Although the plates may get dumped, and the spoons may not be used, this is a developmentally appropriate time to introduce these utensils. Foods will be cut small.

#### *18 months-24 months:*

Meals are still served "family style." This means the teacher sits at the table with the children and eats with them (or pretends to eat). 1 ½ -2 ½ year olds should be comfortable with plates and spoons. Cups without lids will be introduced at this age. Use discretion with how food needs to be cut.

**2-3-year olds:**

2-3-year olds can start serving themselves with a teacher's guidance. Meals are served "family style." This means the teacher sits at the table with the children and eats with them (or pretends to eat). Children scrape their plates after the meal and place them in the dirty dish bucket.

**Preschool:**

3 ½ year olds should know how to serve themselves with minimal help from the teachers. Meals will be served "family style." Children will scrape their plates and place them in the dirty dish bucket.

## **Breastfeeding Friendly**

In recognition of the well documented health advantages of breastfeeding for infants and mothers, VAKC fully supports our nursing mothers. Fresh/frozen milk to be used for the day may be put in the classroom's refrigerator.

We have a Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer in the kitchen that may be used for longer term storage of frozen milk. **ALL** containers of breast milk must be labeled with the child's name, date expressed, and amount of breast milk. We are committed to providing ongoing support to breastfeeding mothers, including providing an opportunity to breastfeed their baby during the day, and holding off giving a bottle, if possible, when mom is due to arrive. Formula and solid foods (until at least 6 months old) will not be provided unless the mother has requested. Babies will be held closely when feeding and bottles will never be propped. Staff will communicate the infant's changing schedule (i.e., feeding, napping, etc.) so a mother can adjust her schedule for pumping and/or visiting to feed her infant. Staff will coordinate with parents about the quantity of milk remaining in containers to avoid waste. Staff will fill bottles with less breast milk than necessary for a feeding and will have additional breast milk available to add to the bottle as needed. We develop a sustainable feeding plan with each family including feeding infants on demand as we observe hunger cues and coordinating the last feeding of the day to meet the mother's feeding needs (either to feed or await mother's feeding.) All childcare center staff will be trained in the proper storage and handling of human milk. The center will follow guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control in ensuring that breast milk is properly treated to avoid waste. Special precautions are *not* required in handling human milk.

## **Physical Activity**

All children shall play outdoors twice daily when weather and air quality conditions do not pose a significant health risk. Time planned for outdoor play and physical activity depends on the age group and weather conditions. Activities shall include structured play (led by a teacher) and free play (not led by a teacher).

*Infants (6 weeks to 12 months)* will be allowed freedom of movement and will not be confined in a stroller or other device for more than 20-30 minutes. *Toddlers (12 months to 3 years old)* shall participate in 60 to 90 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. *Preschoolers (3-6 years old)* shall participate in 90-120 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity. Children shall be dressed appropriately for the weather, including wearing appropriate seasonal clothing and footwear, so they can participate fully, move freely, and play safely. Appropriate clothing examples are listed below.

***Snow: heavy coat, waterproof boots, hats, mittens, and snow pants. Rain: raincoat and***

***waterproof boots. Hot sunny days: sunhat, swimsuit and/or swim diaper, water shoes, and a towel. Different temperatures during the day: layers.***

Footwear should provide support for running and climbing. Examples of appropriate footwear include sneakers, gym shoes, and other shoes with rubber soles that **enclose** (closed toe, strap around the heel) the feet and will not come off easily.

***Inappropriate clothing and footwear includes*** footwear that comes off while running or that does not provide support for climbing (***flip-flops, beach sandals, and crocs/clogs***); clothing with drawstrings or loops that can catch on playground equipment; clothing that does not protect children from current weather conditions.

## Screen Time

Young children who spend a lot of time watching TV and/or playing video, computer, tablet, and/or smart phone games are less likely to be physically active later in childhood. They are also likely to eat foods that are less healthy, eat more unhealthy snacks, and may be more likely to become overweight.

**Children will have no screen time while at the center.** This includes TV/DVD viewing, video games, computer usage, and smartphones.

## Screening, Portfolios, Surveys, & Resources

### Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3 & ASQ-SE)

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (ASQ-3) is a screening and monitoring tool we use at VAKC. Because a child's first five years of life are so important, we want to help families provide the best start for their child. As part of this service, we provide the ASQ-3 and the ASQ-SE (Social-Emotional) to help parents keep track of their child's development. This tool has been widely researched and is considered valid and reliable. Many families will also see this tool being used during their well checkups for their child. The questionnaire is completed at classroom transition times. The questionnaire covers communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, and personal-social skills. If the questionnaire shows some possible concerns, teachers will work with families to discuss what the next steps should be.

## Portfolios

Teachers create or add to portfolios for each child in the center. VAKC uses the Focused Portfolio program for these. These document the children's growth in the five developmental domain areas. The documentation includes written summaries of the children's accomplishments accompanied by photos, anecdotes, and samples of the child's work. These portfolios are shared with families at the spring and fall conferences. At the conferences, parents will have the opportunity to ask questions, set goals, and simply celebrate the accomplishments of their child!

## Surveys

At least once annually, families are asked to fill out an evaluation of VAKC lead teachers. Any concerns or areas noted for improvement are shared with the staff during their annual performance review. If there are any pressing concerns with any teaching staff at any time, please direct those to the Center Director.

Family surveys will also be done yearly to seek feedback on policies, procedures, programming, etc. Surveys can be completed anonymously and are kept confidential. These surveys are compiled and are shared with staff to review and for development planning purposes.

While it is acknowledged that completing surveys can be time consuming, VAKC encourages each family to complete and return the surveys. We find the feedback very important and helpful in the future development of the center. Occasionally, we need a certain percentage of these surveys returned in order to meet NAEYC accreditation purposes.

## **Family Resources**

There are many resources available to parents at VAKC. Community events and other information of interest to all families may be posted in the foyer or through VAKC's Facebook page. Classroom newsletters are emailed monthly. There are also other resources in the foyer on the bulletin boards or on the wooden shelf. Your child's teacher or the Center Director may also be able to locate or suggest other resources. A list of commonly sought-after resources in our area is included here.

*WI DCF Bureau of Regulation & Licensing, So. Regional Office*  
 125 S. Webster St, Room P10 P.O. Box 8947 Madison, WI 53708-8947  
 VAKC is licensed by this agency. Our license # is 120712.  
 (608) 266-2900 main number  
<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/licensed/Index.HTM>

*NAEYC (National Association for the Education of Young Children)*  
 1509 16th Street, NW  
 Washington, DC 20036-1426  
 WHCC is NAEYC Accredited since 1996.  
 202-232-8777  
 800-424-2460  
[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)  
[www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org)

*YoungStar*  
 Wisconsin's Childcare quality and improvement system  
<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/>

*Wisconsin Shares*  
 Wisconsin's Childcare subsidies program  
<http://dcf.wi.gov/childcare/wishares/default.htm>

*USDA CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program)*

VAKC participates in this food program.

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>

*4-C (Community Coordinated Child Care)*

5 Odana Court

Madison, WI 53719

A resource & referral agency for families and child care providers.

608-271-9181

[www.4-c.org](http://www.4-c.org)

[info@4-c.org](mailto:info@4-c.org)

*American Academy of Pediatrics*

Resource for health & safety issues

[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org)

*Breast Feeding Madison*

Support for nursing mothers

608-221-2141

[www.Madisonbreastfeedinghelp.com](http://www.Madisonbreastfeedinghelp.com)

*Child Find (Madison School District)*

Child Care Screening & Services for children 3-5 yrs

608-663-8471

[www.childfindwi.org](http://www.childfindwi.org)

*Children's Therapy Network*

Child Care Screening & Services for young children

608-234-5990

[www.ctn-madison.com](http://www.ctn-madison.com)

*Community Partnerships*

Resources for families with young or school age children

<http://www.community-partnerships.org>

*Consumer Product Safety Commission*

Toy safety & recalls

1-800-638-2172

*Dane Co. Family Court Commissioner*

File family court actions and restraining orders

608-266-4166

*Dane Co. Human Services*

Crisis intervention, child protective services

608-242-6200

*Dane Co. Job Center*

Resource for job searching and child care help

608-242-4900

*Department of Public Health*  
608-266-4821

*Domestic Abuse Intervention*  
24 hr. Help line  
608-251-4445

*Family Enhancement*  
Classes and resources for parents and caregivers  
608-241-5150

*Food Allergy Association of Wisconsin*  
Food Allergy Support Group  
(608) 575-9535  
[sheree@foodallergywis.org](mailto:sheree@foodallergywis.org)

*Food Allergy Network*  
Support for families with children with food allergies  
1-800-929-4040  
[faan@foodallergy.org](mailto:faan@foodallergy.org)

*Gio's Garden*  
Respite and therapeutic care for children with special needs from birth to six years. (608)833-GIOS  
[www.giosgarden.org](http://www.giosgarden.org)

*ICC - Imagine a Child's Capacity (includes Birth - Three services)*  
Child Care Screening & Services for children under 3  
608-204-6242  
[www.icc-wi.org](http://www.icc-wi.org)

*La Leche League*  
Support for nursing mothers  
608-827-5530

*Parental Stress Line*  
24-hour hotline for parents  
608-241-2221

*Poison Control Center*  
Hotline for accidental poisonings  
800-222-1222

*Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin*  
Child Abuse Education  
608-256-3374  
[www.preventchildabusewi.org](http://www.preventchildabusewi.org)

*Rainbow Project, Inc.*  
Counseling for children (B-7yrs) and families

608-255-7356

*Red Cross*

Help in disasters

608-233-9300

*Respite Center of Madison*

Caregiver relief

608-273-3318

*Tenant Resource Center*

Resource for tenants in Madison

608-257-0006

*United Cerebral Palsy of Dane County*

Resource for families with children with developmental disabilities or delays

608-273-4434

[www.ucpdane.org](http://www.ucpdane.org)

*United Way of Dane County*

608-246-4350

[www.unitedwaydanecounty.org](http://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org)

*UW-Madison Child Care Tuition Assistance Program (CCTAP)*

Rm. 18 Human Ecology Bldg.

1300 Linden Drive

Madison, WI 53706-1575

Help for UW Students with child care costs.

608-265-9662

<http://occf.wisc.edu/cctapinfo.htm>

*Waisman Center*

Help for children with special needs

608-263-5890

[www.waisman.wisc.edu/wecp](http://www.waisman.wisc.edu/wecp)

*WIC (Women, Infant, Children) Program*

202 S. Park Street

Supplemental nutritious foods, nutrition educ., health care referrals for pregnant & breastfeeding women, new mothers, infants and children thru age 5 years.

608-276-1111

*Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health*

Resources for families with children age 5 and under

608-442-0360

[admin@wiaimh.org](mailto:admin@wiaimh.org)

*Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners*

Online community for parents and staff

[www.collaboratingpartners.com](http://www.collaboratingpartners.com)

*Wisconsin Maternal Child Health Hotline*

Free and confidential hotline available 24 hrs/7 days/wk  
1-800-722-2295

*Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards*

A guide for providers & parents in understanding developmental expectations for young children.  
888-713-KIDS

[www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php](http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php)

YWCA

Shelter

608-257-1436

## VAKC Biting Policy

Biting is a behavior that is both age and stage appropriate for children under the age of 3 years. Even in high quality settings, where staff is vigilant, a variety of activities are available, and all preventative strategies are used, biting may still occur. Understanding the reasons for biting, taking the necessary preventative measures and communicating with families will hopefully bring an end to the problem. We understand the frustration from both sides of a biting incident and our staff works very hard to ensure that the biting incident is handled in a way that respects both families involved in the incident. As children mature, gain self-control, and develop problem-solving skills, they usually outgrow this behavior.

We handle biting incidents as follows: The child who is bitten is attended to immediately. The child is taken to a quiet area and the bite is examined and the child comforted. The bite is cleaned and a cold teether is applied/offered to prevent swelling. If the skin is broken and depending upon the severity of the bite, the child's parents may be contacted to let them decide if they wish to seek medical consultation.

After the child that is bitten is taken care of, we focus on the child who bit, removing the child from the area of play to another area and communicating that biting hurts and we need to be gentle. Explaining and demonstrating what gentle and acceptable behavior means. If the incident happens repeatedly with the child who bit, attention given to the child will vary to avoid establishing a predictable and routine pattern, which may become positive reinforcement for the child who bit.

The parent (s) of the bitten child will be informed of the incident which is documented at the child care center. With respect to confidentiality we do not share the name of the child who bit with the parent(s) of the child who was bitten. The parent(s) of the child who bit will be informed of the biting incident and due to confidentiality will not be told the name of the child that was bitten.

The Core Teacher and/or Center Director will consult with the family of a habitual child who bites to develop strategies that can be used at the center and in the home, so that we are working together. The Teacher and/or Center Director will continue communicating on the status of the biting.

After all steps have been taken to address the biting behavior, and it is deemed in the best interest of



the child and other children attending the child care center, then the child will be removed from the center. The Center Director will work with the families to help develop a contingency/transitional plan and assist with referrals to appropriate child care services.

Some of the strategies that the staff may use to help prevent biting incidents from happening are the following:

- We give children wet wash cloths or biting rings for biting on. This reduces the sensitivity to their teeth and gums, satisfies their biting needs and reduces the likelihood that they will bite other children.
- We encourage children to use simple words to communicate their wants and needs. Each time there is a conflict, we remind the child to use their words.
- We stay close to children who are in a “biting phase” and try to be ready to intervene quickly before a biting incident occurs.
- We provide a generous variety of toys and materials that encourage children to stay involved. Since a large majority of incidents occur when children want the same toy or object. We try to provide duplicates of favorite toys so children will not be tempted to have a tug of war with the toys.
- We offer activities that include movement and offer sensory experiences (sand, water, etc.).
- We are aware of times throughout the day when a child is tired or hungry or may be overstimulated. Also being aware of transitional times; moving to other rooms, indoor to outdoor play and vice versa, preparing for meals and preparing for nap time.
- We use lots of positive reinforcement and redirection, praising children when they are playing cooperatively, sharing and being kind to each other.

## **VAKC Emergent Curriculum**

Early childhood education is an important and critical period of development in a child’s life. Learning that takes place during this time comprises much of what will become the child’s total wealth of knowledge as an adult. Additionally, a child’s personal characteristics and views about the world around him/her develop during these formative years. Teachers at VAKC use a play-based emergent curriculum to guide the learning process for children in their classroom. A play-based emergent curriculum does not incorporate a “traditional” pre-planned written education curriculum into the daily routine of the classroom. In contrast to the traditional pre-planned and distributable yearly curriculum, a play-based emergent curriculum is individualized and based on the interests of the child.

VAKC teachers chose an emergent curriculum because it is well suited to young children and provides the best opportunities for developmentally appropriate activities among a range of varied ages and developmental abilities. By focusing on interests of a particular child, as well as the group, teachers have the flexibility to individualize the child’s educational experience and take advantage of naturally occurring teachable moments.

Although a play-based emergent curriculum allows for open-ended possibilities and flexibility, it also contains traditionally structured elements. Curriculum plans are posted each week for each classroom and reviewed regularly. Anecdotal notes are provided daily for parents and/or kept in a collective for teacher planning purposes. Child portfolios are assembled for each child. Formal parent teacher conferences are held twice each year and conference summary reports added to each child’s record.

Children will experience a mixture of structured and less structured activities, child directed and teacher directed activities, active and quiet activities, indoor and outdoor activities, process and product driven activities, gross and fine motor opportunities, independent and cooperative play opportunities, individualized and group instruction, self-expression and appropriate social interactions, and play. The VAKC curriculum has been unified throughout the various age groups to provide a consistent, high-quality continuum of services for families. Each classroom prepares a child for his or her next learning environment. In addition to guiding children through developmental milestones, VAKC introduces children to a skills inventory designed to prepare them for Kindergarten. At VAKC, the educational environment occurs in small groups, with low child to staff ratios and in accordance with hundreds of nationally recognized early childhood quality standards.

Your child's teacher is available to discuss how a play-based emergent curriculum is specifically implemented in their classroom. VAKC uses an eclectic curriculum within an emergent framework. Many of the documents used to assess, plan, record and report curriculum and the developmental progress of your child, are based on elements of High Scope Educational Research Foundation, Madison Metropolitan School District, Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale, Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Model Work Standards For Teaching Staff in Center Based Child Care Centers, and Wisconsin Early Learning Model Standards. Teachers also draw on other curriculum sources from their own early childhood education and experience backgrounds and provide their own stylistic flavor to each individual room. To find out more about how the VAKC curriculum might benefit your child, ask your child's teacher or feel free to talk to a Center Director.

## Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards

### EARLY LEARNING STANDARDS

As children grow, they are able to demonstrate skills in increasingly complex and advanced ways. The teacher's job is to be aware of the developmental continuums for children in the early years (birth-age 5), and the age at which certain skills are expected to be noticeable for typically developing children. Only then can teachers have appropriate expectations for what individuals will be capable of and create activity plans that are "developmentally appropriate."

Curriculum is posted in each room and parents can see what is being done each day and how it ties to the learning standards. Teachers plan activities: around the interests and events in the children's lives; around materials of interest and emerging play themes; to support developing skills; to encourage exploration with nature and science content and concepts; to encourage the development of inquiry skills; to meet goals and objectives of the learning standards (WMELS).

The State of Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has developed a set of early learning standards that identify broad expectations for the critical knowledge and skills that children should learn between the ages of birth to first grade. Learning standards provide teachers guidance when developing a curriculum. An overview of the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards (WMELS), fourth edition, is provided below. The complete document can be seen at <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/wmels-about.php>

### Health & Physical Development

## PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT

- A.EL. 1a Demonstrates behaviors to meet self-help and physical needs. *Sleep*
- A.EL. 1b Demonstrates behaviors to meet self-help and physical needs. *Dressing*
- A.EL. 1c Demonstrates behaviors to meet self-help and physical needs. *Toileting*
- A.EL. 1d Demonstrates behaviors to meet self-help and physical needs. *Eating*
- A.EL. 2 Demonstrates behaviors to meet safety needs.
- A.EL. 3 Demonstrates a healthy lifestyle.

## MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

- B.EL. 1a Moves with strength, control, balance, coordination, locomotion, and endurance. *Purpose and Coordination*
- B.EL. 1b Moves with strength, control, balance, coordination, locomotion, and endurance. *Balance and Strength*
- B.EL. 2 Exhibits eye-hand coordination, strength, control, and object manipulation.

## SENSORY ORGANIZATION

- C.EL. 1 Uses senses to take in, experience, integrate, and regulate responses to the environment.

## Social & Emotional Development

### EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- A.EL. 1 Expresses a wide range of emotions.
- A.EL. 2 Understands and responds to others' emotions

### SELF CONCEPT

- B.EL. 1 Develops positive self-esteem.
- B.EL. 2 Demonstrates self-awareness.

### SOCIAL COMPETENCE

- C.EL. 1 Demonstrates attachment, trust, and autonomy.
- C.EL. 2 Engages in social interaction and plays with others.
- C.EL. 3 Demonstrates understanding of rules and social expectations.
- C.EL. 4 Engages in social problem solving behavior and learns to resolve conflict.

## Language Development & Communication

### LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

A.EL. 1 Derives meaning through listening to communications of others and sounds in the environment.

A.EL. 2 Listens and responds to communications with others.

A.EL. 3 Follows directions of increasing complexity

## **SPEAKING AND COMMUNICATING**

B.EL. 1 Uses gestures and movements (non-verbal) to communicate

B.EL. 2a Uses vocalizations and spoken language to communicate. Language Form (Syntax: rule system for combining words, phrases, and sentences, includes parts of speech, word order, and sentence structure)

B.EL. 2b Uses vocalizations and spoken language to communicate. Language Content (Semantics: rules system for establishing meaning of words, individually and in combination)

B.EL. 2c Uses vocalizations and spoken language to communicate. Language Function (Pragmatics: rules governing the use of language in context)

## **EARLY LITERACY**

C. EL. 1 Develops ability to detect, manipulate, or analyze the auditory parts of spoken language.

C. EL. 2 Understands the concept that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language and the letters of written language.

C. EL. 3 Shows appreciation of books and understands how print works.

C. EL. 4 Uses writing to represent thoughts or ideas.

## **Approaches to Learning**

### **CURIOSITY, ENGAGEMENT, AND PERSISTENCE**

A. EL. 1 Displays curiosity, risk-taking and willingness to engage in new experiences

A. EL. 2 Engages in meaningful learning through attempting, repeating, experimenting, refining and elaborating on experiences and activities

A. EL. 3 Exhibits persistence and flexibility

### **CREATIVITY AND IMAGINATION**

B. EL. 1 Engages in imaginative play and inventive thinking through interactions with people, materials and the environment.

B. EL. 2 Expresses self creatively through music, movement and art.

### **DIVERSITY IN LEARNING**

C. EL. 1 Experiences a variety of routines, practices and languages.

C. EL. 2 Learns within the context of his/her family and culture.

C. EL. 3 Uses various styles of learning including verbal/linguistic, bodily/kinesthetic, visual/spatial, interpersonal,

and intrapersonal.

## **Cognition & General Knowledge**

### **EXPLORATION, DISCOVERY, AND PROBLEM SOLVING**

- A. EL. 1 Uses multi-sensory abilities to process information.
- A. EL. 2 Understands new meanings as memory increases.
- A. EL. 3 Applies problem solving skills.

### **MATHEMATICAL THINKING**

- B. EL. 1 Demonstrates an understanding of numbers and counting.
- B. EL. 2 Understands number operations and relationships.
- B. EL. 3 Explores, recognizes and describes, shapes and spatial relationships.
- B. EL. 4 Uses the attributes of objects for comparison and patterning.
- B. EL. 5 Understands the concept of measurement.
- B. EL. 6 Collects, describes and records information using all senses.

### **SCIENTIFIC THINKING**

- C. EL. 1 Uses observation to gather information.
- C. EL. 2 Use tools to gather information, compare observed objects, and seek answers to questions through active investigation.
- C. EL. 3 Hypothesizes and makes predictions.
- C. EL. 4 Forms explanations based on trial and error, observations, and explorations.