

Parent Handbook

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We can do this together.

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Our Neighborhood's Purpose

Our Neighborhood Child Development Center provides the highest quality infant toddler care and education for the children and families of Charlottesville, Virginia. We use our experience and child development research to support children, families, the early childhood profession, and the community.

Value-Based Decision Making

We strive to make decisions and act in ways that are consistent with our values. We work to hold true to value-based decision making across relationships, time, and context. Our Neighborhood values **conscious connection**. Connection is something that happens within and between all actors. We recognize the impact of our connections and choose intentionally to enhance meaningful connections. Our Neighborhood values **authenticity**, **mutual respect**, and **free choice**. Everyone comes into interactions with their own ideas, principles, values, experiences, feelings, and needs. Your unique reality brings sustenance to our process. We care for one another. We value everyone's needs equally. We acknowledge, listen to, and consider other perspectives. All individuals, including children, have the right to free choice. We make space for reflective dialogue to promote thoughtful choice while simultaneously creating a non-judgmental space where it is safe to make mistakes.



Child Development Philosophy

We believe children are the world's most valuable asset. Children are born with astounding potential. We provide a place that respects all children and their right to create, discover, explore, and learn. In a diverse world, we encourage children to explore their similarities and differences in respectful and safe ways. At Our Neighborhood, each child has a right to question, discuss, and disagree.

We believe children learn best in the context of secure, respectful relationships. We make it a priority to support relationships between and among children, teachers, families, and helpers. We hope these relationships will create a close neighborhood of support and learning: Our Neighborhood.

Our classrooms and outdoor environments are designed in a way that maximizes learning and reflects our values. An environment must challenge children to learn in safe and healthy ways. The environment design and material choices emphasize the importance of relationships and connection to the world in which we live.

Our teachers are early childhood experts who have both child development education and experience working with children. Teachers construct learning *with* children using a project approach inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia. Teaching strategies are often reflected upon and adjusted based on the individual child or group, as well as current child development research.

Our children develop critical thinking and problem solving skills from infancy. We believe it is important to encourage children to plan, prepare, and think about their learning and ideas. The project approach to learning allows for in-depth exploration and discovery based on children's expressed interests. Teachers then use the children's projects and interests to incorporate concrete math, science, and literacy skills.

We believe that when given the opportunity, encouragement, and guidance, children will not only meet but surpass our expectations and achieve great things. We can do this TOGETHER.

Curriculum Goals

We believe children learn through play and everyday interactions with the world. Teachers work to design a project based curriculum around children's interests. We have the following goals for children.

Support young children to build essential life skills.

The seven essential life skills we support are defined by Ellen Galinsky in the book "Mind in the Making".

Help children develop their knowledge across content areas through their natural curiosity and desire to learn.

Our teachers observe and support children's natural desire to learn through play and exploration. Teachers then use the children's projects and interests to identify opportunities to explore developmentally appropriate math, science, and literacy skills.

- Focus and Self Control
- Perspective Taking
- Communicating
- Making Connections
- Critical Thinking
- Taking on Challenges
- Self Directed and Engaged Learning

Foster relationships between children, teachers and families.

Relationships are the basis of our society. We help children enter into, build, and maintain relationships within our school family. We are aware of the ways to support relationships through our everyday activities, our language choice, and the social situations we model for children.

Program Goals

In addition to our goals for children, we have the following goals for our program as a whole.

Support families and our community by providing a model for quality, offering our space, and sharing our knowledge.

We create a model for quality by always working to improve our program through reflection and discussion of practices. We demonstrate to prospective families what a quality program looks like so they can demand high quality care for their child in whichever setting they choose. We offer our space to families and the community to gather. Our playground remains open to the neighborhood after our operational hours. We encourage equal opportunity involvement and work to engage the community in our program. We share our knowledge of children and child development with others to encourage reflective, respectful, intentional, and value-based child rearing.

Further the early childhood profession.

We work as teachers to document learning and advocate for the importance of quality care and education for children ages zero to three. Our organization sponsors and participates in events to promote early learning. We use current child development research in our practice and work with others to promote further research to understand and support children. We support the professional development of our teachers and others within the community.

Operate in a fiscally responsible manner generating profits and reinvesting into the program.

Our program operates on a budget that is based on our values and goals. The profits generated by the business are distributed to stakeholders (including teachers) and reinvested into the organization. Our values drive our operation and growth while maintaining fiscal responsibility so we are able to continue to provide for children, families, teachers, and our community.

Is Our Program Right for Your Family?

Different families manage their child's care in the early years differently. There is no right or wrong choice, just what works best for you and your family. Sometimes a parent will stay home or parents will juggle schedules to allow for both to stay home some of the time. Even when both parents return to work, there are many options available. We recommend taking a look at the choosing childcare section of our website for a full discussion of each option including nannies, home based child care, child care centers, and more. Separating from your little one is challenging for parents regardless of timing, program choice, or familiarity. Our Neighborhood will work to support families through that separation, but we know that group care is not always the best choice for every family. You are welcome to stay on our mailing list and join our community events even if you decide not to enroll your child in our full-time program.

Envisioning Your Child in Childcare

Many families begin looking at child care before their child is born. This is a great time to discuss with your partner your theories on parenting and begin developing your own parenting philosophy. We recommend parents try to envision what they want their child doing during their days away from home at each age. As you think about your child in care, what do you hope for them? Each family is going to have different priorities when it comes to their child's care. We hope that this handbook will help you begin to understand our philosophy and what your child's days will be like if you decide to join the Our Neighborhood community.

How do you want
your child spending
their days?

Our Neighborhood Principles

We have a few basic principles that along with our values (above) shape the culture of our program. **True learning is life-long and judgment free.** Learning is more than simply acquiring bits of information. True learning is deep. It reflects understanding of context, impact, and connection. True learning doesn't stop as formal schooling stops. It continues in our everyday interactions and our reflection on our experiences. A space that is self driven, non-competitive, and judgment free is ideal for learning. With curiosity and true learning driving us, we leave no space for judgment, shame, or exclusion. **Children construct knowledge through play.** Play is our driver. It is play that moves our learning forward. A safe space to practice, make mistakes, and explore is where learning happens. Knowledge is not passed down from teacher to child, but constructed by the child. Through their everyday care, play, exploration, problem solving, and reflection, children build their knowledge. Information is not knowledge until it is played with. There is value in messing about. **We all learn best in the context of secure relationships.** Humans are social beings. We need one another. It's our relationships with others that give us meaning and purpose. Through that context, true learning thrives. The reflective dialogue with others deepens our knowledge, expands our play, and gives purpose to our work. Together we are stronger than each of us individually. Secure relationships based in our value for authenticity, respect, and free choice provide an opportunity for true learning. **Risk taking is a part of play and learning.** We promote children and adults to take calculated

Children are competent.

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risks in the drive to explore, learn, and understand. It is through risk taking we explore and find our limits, strengths, joys, and challenges.

Learning More

Hopefully, as you read about our philosophy and through this handbook you are excited to join our community and interested in learning more about the Our Neighborhood way. We have a large lending library for families to borrow books and DVDs. The following list is an idea of where to start as you begin developing your own philosophy and seek deeper understanding of the Our Neighborhood way.

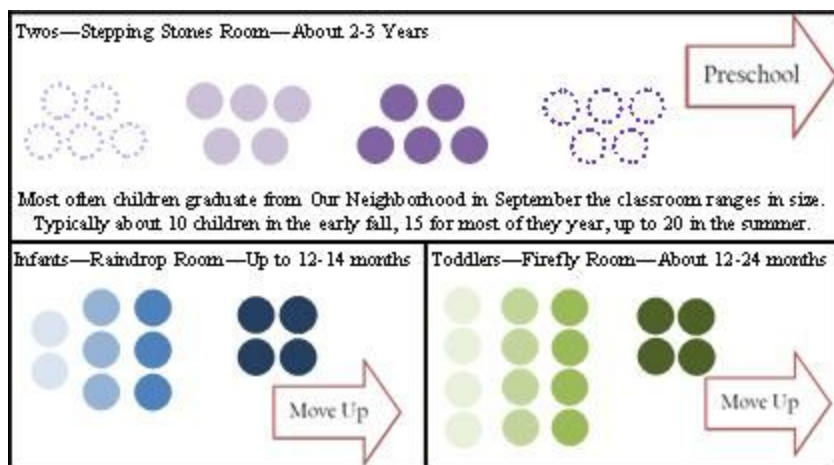
- Our Neighborhood Facebook Page: <https://facebook.com/oncdc>
- Our Neighborhood Community Resources: <https://ourneighborhood.community/community-resources/>
- “Baby Knows Best” by Deborah Soloman OR “No Bad Kids” by Janet Lansbury

More Recommendations: <https://ourneighborhood.community/book-reviews/>

Waitlist

Typically, our center is full and we have a waitlist for families seeking care. After families tour, they fill out the top portion of the registration form to get on the waitlist. Once you have filled out the registration form, you can leave it with your tour guide, mail, or email it. We will file waiting families based on tour date and expected date of enrollment. Feel free to update us. You can call or email to check on your waitlist status or share information about family changes.

Our waitlist is complicated by the practice of continuity of care. To understand the waitlist and a big part of Our Neighborhood’s unique practices, we have created the diagram pictured to the right. Children move through the classrooms in small groups with their family link. Because our program is typically full, spaces become available as the children age. Three to four times a year, the oldest group of toddlers moves to the two year old classroom and the oldest group of infants moves to the toddler classroom. Then we will enroll new infants. Most children enroll into our program as infants. Occasionally, toddler or two-year-old spaces will come available. If a child withdraws from the program, we may fill the space between move up periods.



Our waitlist is generally organized by tour date, but current families are given first priority. Because of continuity-of-care, we are also mindful of group placement, age, and timing when considering who will be offered an available space.

If Our Neighborhood
is your first choice,
reach out and keep in
touch via email!

enrollment@oncdc.com

We typically begin to contact families about possible start dates **two months in advance**. When a space becomes available, parents on the waitlist will be notified and given start dates. We work to stagger start dates so teachers have time to get to know new children. Depending on classroom numbers, we sometimes can accommodate alternate dates. If not, families **can defer their**

space and stay on the waitlist or pay tuition based on the start date offered.

Enrollment

Enrollment Paperwork

Your child's enrollment into the program is finalized when you have a completed the registration form, provided a record of immunization or exemption paperwork, and paid the first and last month's tuition. Before the first date of attendance, children and parents should meet the child's family link teacher, spend at least two hours together in the classroom, and have all the required cubby items. Within seven days of enrollment, we need a copy of your child's birth certificate or birth letter. Within 30 days we will need a completed school health entrance physical.

Planning Your Transition

Once you have chosen a start date you can begin thinking about how you will organize your transition. We require families spend at least two hours in the classroom with their child before leaving for the first time, but you should take whatever time you need to adjust. The earliest day your child can stay at school without you is their start date, selected during the enrollment process. Before that date, you're welcome to schedule visit time to come in and begin adjusting to the classroom environment.

You can email your child's teacher to set up a time to come in and visit. Try to choose a time that your little one will be well rested and likely to engage. On the visit day, your child's teacher will spend some time getting you ready for your first day at Our Neighborhood. Take the time to help your child feel safe and comfortable with their teacher and in their new classroom. In the infant room, allow your child's teacher to hold, feed, and interact with your baby. In the toddler room, try to pick a space and sit down in one place to act as a secure base for your child, then allow them to explore freely. Ask questions and share any thoughts or concerns you have. It is completely normal to feel nervous and emotional about the thought of leaving your child for the first time. We want both you and your child to feel comfortable the first time you say goodbye.

It is helpful to think about what will be the hardest part of the transition for you and your child. Young infants, commonly transition into the Raindrop Room with little adjustment time. Typically, growing accustomed to sleeping at school is the most challenging transition for young infants. Teachers will work with you to try to develop a routine that will support your child's adjustment. Commonly, parents need more time to adjust than their child. Consider what might work well for your family. Some families drop off their child for only an hour or a half day at first. For older children, it will take time for the child to adjust to the new people, the classroom, and new routines. You can help your older child settle in by being consistent, creating a goodbye routine, and empathizing with their emotions.

Saying Goodbye is Hard

Separating from your child can be hard for both you and your child. This is a great opportunity to parent with your long term goals in mind. Resist the urge to sneak away or dismiss your child's sadness. Offer empathy to your child's fear and disappointment. Set up a simple routine to help your child understand when you are leaving and that you will return. Lean on teachers for support. We are all here to help you.

It can be sad for parents and children when they say goodbye. When a child cries when his parents leave, he is trying to say he wishes he could play with them and they would never leave. Often, that is exactly how parents feel, too. Teachers work to label the child's emotions by saying, "You're sad your mom is leaving for work. You're going to miss

her while she is gone. She is going to miss you, too. She will be back this afternoon.” We do not tell children, “You’re okay.” Our goal is to communicate to children that their emotion is typical and unpleasant. All their caregivers are available for empathy, and are strong leaders who assure them they are safe and this emotion will pass.

Teachers are always available by phone during the day and you are always welcome to stop in. If you are having an emotional day, it is ok to tell teachers and we may be able to send out a picture or make a special note on your child’s board. With time the emotional days will get easier, but they don’t ever disappear. Sometimes it is helpful to reach out to a buddy family or another Our Neighborhood parent to know you’re not alone. We are all here to help.

We Can Do This Together

We work to create a community where families feel like partners. Being partners requires that we share our authentic experiences. We cannot create an amazing place for children without you. The rest of this handbook outlines each of our roles in the partnership to create the best possible experience for the Our Neighborhood friends. We can’t wait for you to join our community. We can do this together. In fact, we can *only* do this together.

We are grateful you are sharing this special time of growth with us.

Mutual Community Agreements

Our Neighborhood Community commits to:

- Open, authentic, and honest communication and feedback
- Respect each child’s uniqueness and competencies
- Abide by school policies
- Engage in the school community
- Learn through practicing ONCDC values and philosophies

Duties of Parents

Our Neighborhood Parents commit to:

- ★ Ensuring the child is emotionally and physically prepared to be at school, with materials necessary for each day
- ★ Acknowledging and communicating circumstances outside of school that might affect the child, and actively working together to meet the child’s needs
- ★ Respecting and being mindful of expectations and philosophies that occur at school

Duties to Parents

Our Neighborhood Team Members commit to:

- ★ Providing an enriching environment for children to learn and explore their world
- ★ Providing Continuity of care and supporting the development of secure attachments
- ★ Sharing documentation and learnings of children
- ★ Making resources available surrounding our philosophies.
- ★ Offering support to parents around children’s growth, development, and parenting

Our Roles: Duties to Parents

This section of our handbook outlines what you can expect from us. Our Neighborhood is somewhat unique in the way we work and structure our work together. We hope to invite you into understanding a bit about our organizational structure and what you can expect from our school.

An Alternative Organizational Structure: Holacracy

Our Neighborhood is not a traditional hierarchical company, in 2016 we adopted the Holacracy constitution as the rules through which the organization is governed. We have distributed autonomy through an integrated governance

process and use that process to regularly evolve the organizational structure as our work grows. Explore appendix A to learn more.

Building a Team of Early Childhood Educators

You can expect that we are working diligently to build a team of early childhood educators dedicated to joining families on this early childhood journey. The majority of our teachers work a typical 40 hour work week; some work five eight-hour days and others work four ten-hour days. Nearly all of our team members spend the majority of their time working with young children in the classroom, but teachers also commonly hold other roles.

Hiring Our Neighborhood Teachers

Our Neighborhood teachers come from many different backgrounds. We look first for teachers who love children and view them as competent and able. We can inspire and support teachers to learn about child development, our curriculum, classroom design, and working with families. The most important quality we look for in teachers is a love for working with young children each day.

If you know someone who might be a good fit, invite them to send a resume to hiring@oncdc.com

Learning and Growing Together

Teachers are expected to continue to learn and grow throughout their employment with Our Neighborhood. Our teachers have opportunities to learn about child development, assessing children's learning, working with a teaching team, building a community, each aspect of our philosophy, atypical development, child abuse and neglect, health and safety, emergency procedures, and partnering with families. All teachers are required by the State of Virginia to complete at least 16 hours of state-approved professional development training annually. To provide this opportunity for teachers to continue to learn and grow, we read together, attend conferences or local trainings, and have professional development days.

Each teacher has an individual professional development plan to learn in depth about their interests. Ongoing learning is a crucial part of being a reflective teacher. We seek varied professional development opportunities that offer deep reflection and exposure to diverse early childhood practices.

Minimizing Turnover

Sadly, early childhood educators are underpaid and underappreciated in our society. Though we are working to change this reality, turnover is a huge challenge in the early childhood industry. This turnover erodes our attempts to create quality group environments for children. While we cannot eliminate this problem entirely, we work to minimize this problem by making Our Neighborhood a great place for teachers. Research tells us the primary reasons for controllable turnover are low pay, lack of support, and lack of growth opportunities.

Teachers' Rights

We strongly believe that teachers, too, have rights as a part of our community. Teachers have a right to be included and informed through open and honest communication. Teachers have the right to a work environment that is physically and emotionally comfortable and safe. Our Neighborhood teachers have a right to be treated as professionals, a source of insight into the children and families in their care. Teachers have the right to become knowledgeable professionals through continued study. Our Neighborhood teachers have a right to honest feedback to improve their teaching. We vow to honor these rights and appreciate families supporting us to fulfill these rights.

Family Link Roles

Many of our teachers hold a Family Link role, meaning they are assigned specific families to support through their time at Our Neighborhood. Family Links make a three year commitment to execute our practice of continuity-of-care, staying with children and building secure relationships to support their learning. Family Links transition with their group through the center and participate in different teams as the children in their group grow. The teachers loop from the infant room, to the toddler room, then upstairs to the two year old classroom, before returning back downstairs to get a new group of infants.

Teachers as Parenting Support

Our Neighborhood is a great resource for parenting support. The Our Neighborhood teachers know your child well, and we spend each day with children similar to your child. We have many resources available at Our Neighborhood to support you to become the parent you want to be. Teachers are able to help you narrow down the vast resources based on your family. Explore our website to learn more, <https://ourneighborhood.community/support-for-my-family/>.

We would be honored to reflect with you as you work to develop your own parenting values. You are not alone in these challenges; we are all in this together. Our Neighborhood frequently has parenting classes and discussions available to talk about parenting. Send us an email, post your question in the #question Slack channel, or stop by the office. There is no question too crazy or too small. Many parents go to pediatricians with questions about their child's growth, development, behavior challenges, and other parenting struggles. The pediatricians are a great resource for many things, but they see many children in very short windows. Pediatricians do not spend much, if any, time studying typical development or parenting. Our Neighborhood is passionate about parenting in a way that supports children to learn respectfully.

- Recommended Reading
- Parent Classes
- One-on-One Support
- Resources
- Parent Meetings
- Reflective Practice

Regular Communication

You can expect regular authentic communication. We want to delight with you about our work with children. Our Neighborhood believes that critical learning happens between birth and age three. We work diligently to document and communicate the development we observe at the center with parents in a variety of informal and formal ways.

Public Platforms

Our Neighborhood maintains a resources rich public online presence, which can be helpful even as families join our full-time program. Explore our [website](#) to read about parent classes, community initiatives, book reviews, and common parenting challenges. We use our [facebook](#) page to regularly share news and articles on child development, parent resources, and early childhood research. We also maintain an Our Neighborhood [Pinterest](#) and [YouTube](#) channel with more resources for families and teachers. We maintain a [public google calendar](#) of public events like parent classes.

Special Platforms for Our Neighborhood Families

To enhance parent engagement we have a [Slack workspace](#) where families and teachers can share photos, stories, resources, questions, and local events. There are channels for a variety of common topics. The #paperwork channel has forms and documents. Each classroom has a channel to share stories, updates, and a link to access the classroom photos. On enrollment the enrollment coordinator will send you a link to access the slack website. If you need help with the software reach out to anyone on the team and we can give you a quick tutorial.

We also maintain a google calendar under the parents@ourneighborhoodcdc.com email address that families can add to their calendar to have reminders of closures, classes, and meetings. [Add the school calendar to your calendar.](#)

Sharing Our Daily Experiences

Teachers work to keep up-to-date information on your child's board, which is a simple record of when they slept, were changed, and ate. Teachers and parents also use this little white board to write notes back and forth about fun things that are going on, things children need, or schedule changes. While a great resource, the little white board does little to capture the play and learning that fills our days.

Please Ask!
We want to share
about your child's day
so please ask!

Pick-up and drop-off are great times to engage in informal conversations, check in, and keep in touch with the happenings of the classroom. Those daily informal moments are where relationships are built, so we invite you to feel at home in the classroom, sit down and chat with us or engage with other families and children.

Documentation

Observation and documentation give us insight into the inner workings of the child and their relationships with their environment, with peers, and with teachers, families, and communities. As teachers, we use documentation as a reflective process to not only better understand the children, but to also enhance learning. We also use documentation to celebrate learning by making it visible to the children, our co-teachers, our families and our community. We believe children learn through their play, have a unique and valuable perspective, and that we can share their view through documentation. Documentation helps us grow as caregivers. You will see displays around school, posts to slack, and homemade books in the classroom to reflect this practice of documentation.

Portfolios and Conferences

Teachers are supported to create individual portfolios to document each child's development. These portfolios allow for the most comprehensive and meaningful picture of children's growth and serve as our means for assessing children's development. The goal of our assessment through the individual portfolios is to identify children's needs and interests, document their development and learning, and provide a view of the whole child. We do not use norm-referenced and standardized tests or published instruments. We offer semi-annual parent teacher conferences for families to sit down with their child(ren)'s family link to discuss the child's portfolio, development, and growth.

*Conference
meetings each
April and
October.*

Teachers will provide a written report of children's growth to families during parent conferences. Families are encouraged to be involved in the documentation and assessment process, to set goals for their child, and help teachers plan for further growth. After reviewing individual portfolios, teachers sometimes recommend that parents seek a developmental screening or diagnostic assessment to be sure their child is receiving the most appropriate and beneficial care and education. Portfolios are not kept confidential unless specifically requested.

Creating a Climate for Learning

As you look closely at our philosophy, you will see it shapes everything we do. We believe in respecting children. We believe in helping them learn to plan and reflect on their experiences. We believe in letting children explore. We are inspired by the schools of Reggio Emilia which shapes our environment and curriculum. Teachers work to learn alongside children and engage deeply in their projects as children seek understanding of our world. Through our

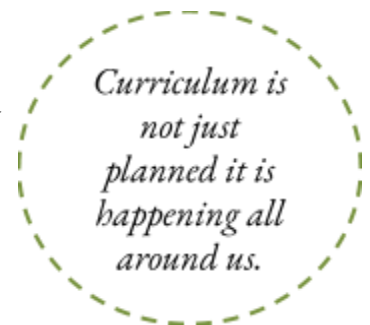
Reggio inspiration we have created beautiful classrooms inspired by nature and set up to invite children's deep exploration.

We are also inspired by Magda Gerber and the RIE Associates (Resources for Infant Educators). Our study of RIE has shaped our classrooms to be calm, materials to be simple and open ended, and development to be natural and unrushed. Teachers have learned through their study of Magda Gerber's work to slow down, consider the child's perspective, and talk children through everything we do with them.

We are inspired by the work of Dr. Becky Bailey and "Conscious Discipline". Dr. Bailey proposes a community based model that rejects rewards and punishments, focusing teachers and children on emotional well being, connectedness, and problem solving together. Our teachers have learned through Conscious Discipline to talk to children clearly and respectfully without judgment. We believe children are naturally good. At birth, a child is a whole person with their own independent perspective and ideas about the world. Our role is to design a space for children, to give them the uninterrupted time to explore, and to build relationships through which we learn with the children.

Our Curriculum

Our curriculum and practices are inspired and informed by the work of child development researchers, inspiring early childhood programs, classroom experiences, and our strong image of children. We believe the curriculum is more than a teacher-directed activity or circle time, but rather the whole experience a child has in our program. The environment and teacher interactions are equally, if not more important to us, than the content of the daily activities.



When planning experiences for the children, teachers collaborate with one another to discuss the interests of the children as well as the development and growth they have observed in the classroom. Teachers use the group's interest to design provocations or invitations to explore in the classroom. Teachers bring in additional books or resources for children to explore their interests. Teachers may plan art experiences to deeper explore the children's interests. Sometimes, teachers will plan expert visitors or field experiences to further the exploration or drive the project deeper. Throughout each project, teachers are reflecting on what the children are interested in, what they are learning, and how we can challenge the children further. Most often, multiple projects in different stages are occurring in the classroom simultaneously.

Our curriculum is emergent, it does not come from a curriculum store. Each group of children shapes the classroom and the projects that classroom undertakes. Our goals are for children to learn about learning, reflect, seek information, collaborate, and plan, rather than to teach a specific piece of information. For example, a classroom studying bugs isn't trying to learn the life cycle of a butterfly and the parts of a bug. We are trying to deeply explore that interest. Through that exploration, children will learn how books can be a resource for learning, how to ask friends for help, how living creatures need food and water, the self-control to stop oneself from squishing or screaming immediately, to look closely at the parts of things, to ask questions, and many more lifelong lessons. Our curriculum is about big picture, true learning, and we will work to help you see how that learning is occurring through our projects and children's play.

Our Learning Environment

The environment we design for children affects their experiences in those environments. The environment is designed in a way that supports the values and ideas of the center, the teachers, the families, and most importantly the children. Materials are chosen to support children's independence, discovery, wonder, and learning. Throughout the center,

there are displays and clear evidence of ongoing learning and growing. The classroom is designed to engage and challenge children, but also to feel like home and allow for quiet spaces in which children can relax and de-stress. We work to bring nature into our indoor and outdoor environments. We use the environment as a way to connect children to their world.

We work diligently to create a learning environment that supports constructive risk taking. We know that children who are given opportunities to take calculated risks as they move, climb, and explore are better decision-makers. This means that scratches, bumps, cuts, and bruises may occur as we play. It is through this play children learn their strengths and limitations in a safe environment. If you have more questions about how we support children to take calculated risks, don't hesitate to ask or explore our more detailed papers on [Risk Competence](#) and [Using the Injury Pyramid](#).

Children spend the majority of their time in their assigned classroom but may visit or explore other areas of the center with their teachers or families. Teachers work to help children connect with the center as a whole and sometimes will have cross classroom projects or visits. If you have children in two classrooms, we will work to create periodic opportunities for siblings to interact during the day.

Field Trips

Children may take field trips to further explore a classroom project or further experience nature. Parents will need to fill out a permission form for children to leave the center. The student-to-teacher ratio on field trips is the same as in classrooms. We invite parents to join the class on field trips to help lower ratios and increase family participation.

Guiding Children Without Rewards or Punishments

We believe that guiding children is an integral part of early childhood education. In viewing children as competent and able people, we reject the old disrespectful and ineffective reward-punishment model for behavior management. Most people were raised with some form of the reward-punishment model of discipline. Our caregivers rewarded us with their praise, food, or material things when we did what they liked or thought was good. When we didn't do what the caregiver wanted, made a mistake, or struggled we were punished with disapproval, by removal of material things, physically, or through a loss of attention and love. Our caregivers used rewards and punishments to manipulate our behaviors to try to get us to do what was right, good, or pleasing to them. This was a long-standing model, but now we know more about how children's brains work, and we can reject this model for another way that better serves children. Read the full paper on [Moving Beyond Rewards and Punishments](#) and please ask if you need support; we have a number of papers on common challenges for caregivers working to guide children without rewards and punishments.

What We Believe

- Situations and relationships, not rules, govern behavior.
- Decision making and critical thinking skills take a long time to develop, so start early.
- Logic works. We are logical beings and if you talk to and respect children they will understand.
- Intrinsic motivation is stronger and healthier than extrinsic motivation.

Support Reflection and Thinking Instead of Praise or Rewards

One of the first steps that can challenge caregivers as they work to move away from the reward-punishment model is our impulse to praise children. Praise is a reward structure that like other reward structures is based in fear and judgment instead of reflection. When things are going well, we want to reflect back our values rather than judgment. Instead of "You picked up the toys, you're a good girl." we tell children, "You picked up the toys, now they will be safe

while we run and play. We have so much space for play.” We live in a “good job” society, so shifting our language in this way will take practice. Read more in our [Coaching without Judgment](#) paper.

Tantrums

Young children occasionally have tantrums. A tantrum is an overwhelming emotional experience for children. A child having a tantrum is treated with calm, patient, loving words. We tell children that having a tantrum means they have lost control over their body and they need to breathe and calm to regain control of their body. If a child has a tantrum in a safe place, teachers will sit with them or nearby, modeling breathing and ensuring the safety of everyone, especially the child who is upset. If the child is in an unsafe space, the teacher will calmly say, “You have lost control of your body. It is not safe for you to throw your body down on the climber. I am going to pick you up and move you to the safe place so you are safe while you find your calm. Keep breathing. I am here with you. I will keep you safe.”

Once a child is safe, teachers just stay near them breathing and waiting. As children begin to calm, we try to connect the child with their emotional trigger and help the child to process the emotion before moving to problem solving. Having a tantrum does not change the expectations for behavior. If a child had a tantrum getting ready to wash her hands, the teacher would calmly remind her as she was calming, “You’re doing it. You are calming your body down! When you’re all calm we will have a hug, then you will wash your hands.” Read more about how we handle [Tantrums](#).

Aggressive behavior is a call for help.

Challenges are a normal part of the learning process.

Conflict is an opportunity to teach life skills.

Learning happens best through strong relationships and connection.

Biting

Biting is common among young children. Biting is typically motivated by children’s inability to communicate and the development or discovery of teeth. We take biting and any aggressive behavior as a call for help from the child. Our procedures do not change. We work first to understand the needs of the child. Children may be offered another item such as a teether to put in their mouths or provided the words to work through the conflict without using their teeth. Teachers also work to monitor children more closely as they work through biting. This time period can be difficult for parents and teachers, but we ask you to remember that this is a normal stage for young children and something they need our support to work through. Read more about helping children through [Hitting and Biting](#).

Providing a Healthy and Safe Space

We have a mantra we say with the children, the teacher says “It is my job to keep it safe.” The children respond, “It’s my job to help keep it that way.” Basic safety is necessary for children to be able to explore and grow.

*We can work
together to
keep the whole
community
healthy.*

Hand Washing

Hand washing is one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of disease. Please support us in keeping your and your child(ren)’s hands clean and our center healthy. We ask that you assist children to wash their hands upon arrival. We assist children in washing their hands after using the toilet or getting their diapers changed, upon coming in from outside, as well as before and after meals, and whenever they are soiled.

Cleaning and Sanitation

To keep our children healthy, we routinely clean all toys. Infants’ linens are washed daily and toddlers’ linens are sent home to be washed weekly. All surfaces are cleaned and sanitized before meals. We ask for your help and support in

cleaning around the center. If you notice something that needs to be addressed, please notify a teacher. In an effort to be environmentally friendly, we use BabyGanics, Method, and Seventh Generation soaps in addition to household bleach as required. If you have questions about the products we use, please don't hesitate to ask. We follow NAEYC's [cleaning and sanitation guidelines](#).

Illness

Sick children are a risk to other children at the center and are best cared for at home. Children who register a fever above 101° F, have recurrent vomiting or diarrhea, or are clearly ill enough to interrupt their daily activity will not be able to attend. If you notice your child not feeling well, please consider keeping him home. When germs get into a group care environment, teachers, parents, and children get sick. If all parents remain aware of their children's health and take precautionary efforts, we will all remain a lot healthier.

If a child becomes ill while in care, she will be excluded from contact with other children and attended by a teacher. We will contact her parents to make arrangements to pick her up. Parents are responsible for picking up sick children within one hour of being notified. If we are unable to contact parents, we will call emergency contacts to pick up the child. To return to school, a sick child must be fever-free without medication, and not vomiting for 24 hours. Additionally, the child can return to school when diarrhea has ceased, and any contagious lesions are no longer pus filled. If your child is underimmunized she will be excluded from care if a vaccine-preventable disease to which children are susceptible occurs in the city.

- Fever-free for 24 hours
- Vomiting ceased for 24 hours
- Diarrhea ceased
- Any contagious lesions are no longer pus filled.
- Well enough to participate

When a child at the center has a communicable disease, we will post a notification in the classroom and on the #illness-alert channel so that other parents can be aware of possible contagion. Please let your child's teacher know when he or she is diagnosed with any illnesses.

Medication and Medical Procedures

Parents must obtain a physician's signature before Our Neighborhood can dispense ANY medication – over the counter or prescription. Please arrange for medication to be administered at home whenever possible. Parents who

All medication requires
doctor and parent
authorization.

wish for their child to receive medication must turn in the medication authorization form. A [blank form](#) is available on the #paperwork channel for families to access. The form is typically valid for 10 working days unless otherwise specified. The medication will be administered only as directed by an authorized staff member. Medication must be taken home after the authorization form expires or it will be discarded.

Diaper cream, insect repellent, and sunscreen are not classified as medication. Authorization for these topical ointments is included on the child registration form. Topical medications, including any lotions or creams, is provided by the family and must be labeled with the child's name.

Emergency Situations

We have extensive emergency plans to be sure we are prepared in case of emergency. We ask that parents remain calm if they are on site during an emergency. During an evacuation, parents must exit the building and remain with their child and his class. Parents wishing to take their child home during an emergency MUST sign the child out with his teacher. Parents on site during a lockdown should follow the instructions of the teachers in the classroom. In the event of a lock down, no one will be allowed to leave the center until we are given a notice of all clear. When the adults in the building are calm and follow emergency protocols, we can achieve our goal to keep all children,

We are happy to share
the details of our
extensive emergency
plans and regular drills.¹⁶

teachers, and families safe. If you have any additional questions about our emergency preparedness plan, please ask. If an emergency occurs and you are off site, you will be notified by your child's teacher if you are required to pick up your child. We practice our emergency plans frequently to ensure teachers and children are prepared.

Child Abuse

Our Neighborhood Child Development Center is committed to keeping all children safe. All Our Neighborhood employees are mandated by the Commonwealth of Virginia to report any suspicions of child abuse. We take our responsibility to report child abuse seriously. If you witness any questionable behavior or notice suspicious marks on any child while at Our Neighborhood, do not hesitate to bring it to the attention of any team member. If you are struggling at home with frustration, depression, or any issues that affect your relationship with your child(ren), please talk to us. We are here to support you. Our detailed child abuse policies are available to review if desired.

Accidents and Injuries

The safety of children in our care is of the utmost importance. Our policies and procedures are designed to provide children with opportunities to explore and grow while learning about health and safety and discovering their personal limitations. We believe children must be given the opportunity to take risks and explore boundaries in a safe environment.

We strive to keep all children safe, but accidents and injuries are a typical part of life for growing young children. Teachers are trained to attend to injured children and give proper first aid. Teachers will notify parents by phone of any injuries to the child's head or face, as well as if the teacher believes the child needs to be picked up from care or seen by a doctor. Parents are required by licensing regulations to authorize emergency medical treatment in the event of serious injuries. If a child is seriously injured in care, she will be transported to the University of Virginia Health System Emergency Room and her parents will be notified immediately. Typically, injuries are minor and parents will simply receive a note regarding the injury that occurred. The note is signed by the parent and will be kept on file. Parents are welcome to make a copy of the note and/or view it in their child's file. You will always be notified of injuries by the end of the day at the latest. If you notice an injury at home, please discuss it with your child's teacher.

Your Role as a Member of Our Community

We want and expect parents to play an active role in the Our Neighborhood community. This section of our handbook outlines our expectations for parents, how to be actively involved in our community, and how to support your child to be successful at Our Neighborhood.

Parental Rights

We believe your rights as parents go far above and beyond those basic rights outlined by licensing regulations. Of course, custodial parents have the legal right to access the program at any time while their child is attending. But more than basic access, you have a right to be a part of a program that supports you and your child. You have a right to the same conscious connection, authenticity, mutual respect, and free choice that our community values for all its members. Furthermore, we believe that parents have the right to expect quality care and education for their children. You have the right to be a part of your child's education, and we invite you to participate and share ideas with us.

Confidentiality

The confidentiality of our children, parents, and teachers is of utmost importance. We will make every effort to keep information that is shared with team members confidential inside

*Help us to
respect each
individual's
sense of
confidentiality*

and outside the center. Parents have the right to ask for privacy for discussions. All files related to teachers and families are kept locked when not in use. Different families have different ideas about what information is confidential, so please share your views with us. We ask families to sign media clearance forms for any public display of children’s photos. Outside the center, we maintain confidentiality with names, photos, and information regarding our children and families. We ask families to support our efforts by respecting one another’s right to privacy in what you know and hear, as well as what you share with us, about other families.

Center Visitors

Parents and family members are welcome to visit the classroom at any time. We may have professional visitors, volunteers, or adult students in the classroom in addition to teachers. Visitors will never be left alone with children and do not count in the teacher to child ratio. We welcome visitors but request that they speak with a teacher in advance and make an effort to not disturb the children’s learning.

Sharing Your Ideas and Giving Us Your Input

We aim to actively seek out parental input for our program. We want our program to meet the needs of each family. If you have ideas for Our Neighborhood’s improvement, we welcome your input. You can help us be the best program

You can always share
your thoughts and
ideas with anyone
on our team.

we can be by providing us with constructive feedback. You’re encouraged to participate in classroom family meetings and parent teacher conferences to provide feedback to the teachers. You are always welcome to email or set an appointment with any of our team members to provide your input throughout the year.

Parent Surveys

We distribute parent surveys each year to help us understand how we could provide a better service for families and children. We hope you will support our growth by providing this feedback. If you do not have access to the internet, you are welcome to use the computers in the Our Neighborhood staff lounge to complete the online survey.

Annual Meeting

We hold an Our Neighborhood annual meeting on the third Wednesday evening in October at 7pm. We discuss current operations and plans to improve the program. The annual meeting is a time to come together with teachers and other families to talk about how Our Neighborhood is meeting its goals and plans to improve our program. A spaghetti dinner will be provided during the meeting. Because both teachers and parents will be attending, you will need to arrange your own childcare for this meeting.

Third
Wednesday
in October at
7pm

Grievance Process

Parents who are not satisfied with the center’s policies and procedures, classroom management, or their child’s care should bring issues forward. We ask that concerns in the classroom are brought first to the teacher to try to be resolved, but center-wide concerns or any issues unable to be handled by the teacher can be brought to the Relationship Reconciler role. We maintain an open door policy for all families to discuss concerns at any time.

Getting Involved

We work to understand the unique challenges of family life. Each family has their own time, resources, and energy constraints. We expect families to be actively involved in our community, but we respect that involvement will look

different for each family. We want to support you to be involved in any way you can. Below we list some ideas of ways you can get involved, but feel free to come up with your own.

- Come in and spend some time with your child at the center.
- Join in a morning or just a simple activity together.
- Help to organize with other parents to show teachers appreciation.
- Share something from home; a story, a book, an activity you used to do when you were young.
- Write a story of your child or a letter to your child and share it with teachers to add to your child's portfolio.
- Drop in and have lunch with us.
- Visit the classroom's Amazon wish list and send them a surprise.
- Attend parenting discussions or meetings at the center.
- Ask to sit in on lesson planning with your child's teachers.

Teacher Appreciation

Parent volunteers work together to show appreciation to teachers throughout the year. Teachers have mailboxes in the staff lounge and parents are always welcome to drop by and write a note to the teachers. We appreciate all that our parents do to make Our Neighborhood a great place for teachers, and you can always reach out to the teacher appreciation team, teacher-appreciation@oncdc.com, if you have an idea you'd like to try.

Becoming a Parent Volunteer

We value the importance of parents being involved in the Our Neighborhood community, so we offer a tuition discount for parent volunteers who commit to spending 3, 5, or 8 hours a week in the classroom. Parent volunteers typically spend their time in their child's classroom interacting with the children. As a volunteer, we will ask you to support the teachers in creating the best learning environment for children. Having a volunteer provides the teaching team an extra hand to have a messy activity, just help out, or give one of the teachers an opportunity to work on documentation.

Volunteering families are always supervised by a teacher and do not change children's diapers other than their own child. We have had moms, dads, and grandparents join us as volunteers and all families are welcome to volunteer. Parent volunteers must attend an initial orientation that covers health, safety, and emergency procedures; guidance and classroom management techniques; child abuse and neglect reporting procedures; and regulatory requirements.

We are flexible about scheduling volunteer time, but we try to avoid having multiple parent volunteers at one time. Talk with your child's teacher to organize when you will be able to schedule a block of time to come in and volunteer.

Tuition and Payment

Parents are responsible for paying tuition each month. Tuition is due at the first of each month to cover care for the following month. Tuition includes all center activities. Parents do not pay a special enrollment fee, but must pay the first and last months of tuition upon enrollment. If tuition is not paid by the fifth of the month, it is assumed that the child will be withdrawing from care at the end of the month.

There is a \$20 late fee for tuition payments made after the fifth of the month. The child's space in the center may be at risk if payments are continually late.

We accept personal checks or cash for tuition payment. We also offer monthly automatic withdrawal from any checking account. Please note that inadequate funds in the account may result in additional charges. Receipts will be

All fees, discounts, and programs are detailed on the tuition rate sheet, Appendix C.

emailed monthly to parents. Receipts include Our Neighborhood’s EIN (tax ID) number, 45-0818003. They should contain all the necessary information to file for tax benefits.

Continuity-of-Care Bonuses for Teachers

Beginning in 2014, we began a system of continuity-of-care bonuses. This system is designed to help reduce teacher turnover and put a clear emphasis on the importance of continuity-of-care. A direct bonus to teachers from parents puts continuity at the top of the mind of both parents and teachers. At move up, parents will be asked to participate in a continuity-of-care bonus for their child’s family link teacher. The bonus is a voluntary \$500 payment made to Our Neighborhood at move up. The teacher then receives half of the total funds collected immediately and the other half is saved. Ideally, teachers will receive a total of \$6,000 over the course of their three years with the children if they complete a full cycle of continuity-of-care. This is a clear way to put our money directly into the quality of relationships between children and their teachers.

Infant Move Up to Toddlers	Toddler Move Up to Two’s	Two’s Graduation
(marks the end of the first year)	(marks the end of the second year)	(end of the third year)
3 families - \$500 from each	4 families - \$500 from each	5 families - \$500 from each
Teachers receive \$750	Teachers receive \$1,000	Teachers receive \$3,750
\$750 rolls over	\$1,750 rolls over	

Withdrawing from Care

We are sad to see children leave our center. If there is any issue causing you to consider withdrawal, we would love to talk with you prior to terminating care. If you decide to withdraw, we ask that you notify the enrollment coordinator, enrollment@oncdc.com, in writing at least two months prior to withdrawal. If you know earlier it is helpful to know as soon as you make that decision. We will make every possible effort to collect your child(ren)’s belongings and portfolio to prepare for your departure. Parents typically will have paid the last month’s tuition at enrollment and that tuition will cover the child’s final month. If our program is unable to meet the needs of your child(ren), we reserve the right to terminate care and we will be happy to assist you in finding alternate arrangements.

Important Routines

We ask parents to support us in creating and sustaining helpful routines. Starting in infancy, young children use daily routines to help them understand their world and organize their brains. If we work together, routines will help your child to feel safe and comfortable while at school. We are a full-time program because infants and toddlers thrive in an environment that is consistent and predictable.

Children without predictable routines are often more anxious, nervous, and stressed because they don’t understand what is going to happen next. Significant or sometimes even small changes in routines are disruptive to a child’s understanding of her world and often result in atypical behavior. Parents and teachers should discuss changes in routines and plan with the child whenever possible. Change happens, but we can work together to minimize the stress that change places on children. To create consistency, teachers will share the routines, songs, and transitions of the classroom with families. We work hard to maintain these important routines each day and we appreciate your help!

Four Day a Week

We offer a four-day-a-week option for families, but the day out must be a Monday or a Friday. It is important for your child and for the classroom organization that your child comes to school consistently.

Morning Drop-Off Ritual

Children should arrive to school clean, healthy, and dressed for indoor and outdoor play. At arrival, parents should change their children's diapers or help them to use the potty and then wash their hands before beginning the day. You should apply sunscreen either before or upon arrival to the center on sunny days. Parents are responsible for signing in their child and being sure the child is greeted by a teacher. Parents who drop off their child late should take him to join his class. If the class is for any reason unavailable, the child may temporarily be signed in to another classroom and supervised by another teacher. Please try to arrive before 9:00 am or communicate a different arrival time with teachers in advance.

Separating from family is one of the largest struggles of early childhood, and we want this separation to be as smooth as possible. Many people call this 'separation anxiety'; however, we like to look at it from the child's perspective. Being angry, nervous, or sad when parents leave is very normal, and we want children to know it is okay to feel upset and that they can find comfort in their teachers and friends. Our Neighborhood believes feeling connected is important. A little ritual is a good way to help children feel confident in saying goodbye to their parents and joining our group. Once you and your child have washed hands and put away your belongings, you're welcome to play a little bit before you say goodbye. Include a specific action such as a tight hug, a spin around hug, a big kiss, or a positive statement such as "I am going to miss you. I will see you so soon." Some families establish a ritual like: read one book, have one hug, and then say goodbye. Consider what works for you and for the timing of the classroom as you drop off. Don't hesitate to involve a teacher. The goal of the ritual is connecting while acknowledging that the separation may be difficult for both of you. Be consistent and try not to linger after saying goodbye.

Afternoon Pick-Up Routines

When you arrive to pick up your child, he will be excited to see you. We ask that you attend to him fully (i.e. leave cell phones behind, try not to rush him). Teachers will have posted information about the happenings of the day and your child may want to show you things or finish an activity with you. We invite parents to relax and play during pick-up. Be sure to talk with a teacher before leaving the room to ensure she is aware the child will be leaving and to learn about any important things that may have happened. Be sure to check for soiled clothing, unconsumed food and containers, or paperwork that needs to go home with you. Like all transitions, saying goodbye to school and going home can be stressful for children. Prepare to be ready to empathize with big emotions at the end of the day too.

For safety, teachers will only release children to custodial parents or individuals authorized in writing by the parents. If someone new will be picking up your child, notify the teacher AND add the individual to the approved pick up list. Children cannot be released to anyone not authorized in writing or younger than 16 years of age. If a child is not picked up by the end of the day, the center will contact you. If we are unable to contact parents, we will begin to contact the child's emergency contact individuals. If children are at the center 1 hour after closing and we have been unable to reach parents or emergency contacts, we will notify the proper authorities. Consistently late pick ups will result in additional fees.

Absences, Appointments, or Coming in Late

We appreciate you letting us know if you and your child will not be coming into school, or if there is a change in your normal routine which will cause you to arrive late. In order to maintain structure in the children's day, all children must arrive at school by 11 am. Additionally, if a child is picked up early, they may not be brought back to school. When you are scheduling appointments, please be

Children must arrive
each day by 11 am.

mindful of your child and the classroom's schedule. To minimize disruption of routines, schedule appointments early in the morning so that you can still get to school before lunch or late in the afternoon so that you can head home after the appointment. Especially as children move into the one-year-old year, we ask parents to be mindful of the classroom schedule and bring their child ready to engage. If you know your child is going to miss morning snack for example, be sure to explain that to them and ensure they have eaten enough in the morning to be full until lunch. We understand that many things will affect your routines, and appreciate you letting us know so that we can support you and your child upon your return. As important as routine is, it is also important to be flexible and have fun as a family. We certainly understand having a "home day" or adjusting the schedule sometimes.

Supporting Your Child's Healthy Eating

Our center does not supply any food at this time. Parents are responsible for providing nutritional snacks and lunch. Parents must provide formula or breast milk for infants. We follow the requirements of Virginia State Licensing, the Health Department, and the recommendations of NAEYC. As a general guideline, food should be brought to the center in the morning and taken home each evening. Food brought to the center must be labeled with the child's name and the date it was brought to the center. We believe that hydration is an important part of supporting brain development. Parents should provide a water bottle for their children to use each day.



We are allowed to keep some shelf stable foods at the center (formula, crackers, etc.). We can mix formula bottles for infants at the center. If your child is eating table foods and will be present during the meal times, please provide appropriate food.

We strive to support mothers who choose to breastfeed. You are welcome to nurse at the center at any time. We recommend introducing solid foods after 6 months of age. Solid food will not be mixed into a bottle. Whole milk is recommended for children 12 to 24 months, and 1% milk after age 2. Juice is not recommended. We request that grapes, hot dogs, raw carrots and meat are cut for children under four years of age to prevent choking. Hard pretzels, raw peas, nuts, and popcorn are not recommended. We sit down throughout the day to eat together. Children are encouraged to practice independence by self-feeding, but are assisted as necessary.

We have found food to be one of the more stressful parts of parenting. We invite you to explore our paper on [Meeting Children's Needs for Nutrition](#). The entire Our Neighborhood team is here to be a resource for you, so we hope you will reach out to us with your food challenges. We can do this together.

Personal Items at the Center

Each day, children should have comfortable, washable clothes that support active play. Please ensure your child has weather-appropriate clothing and sturdy shoes for play indoors and outdoors. We make every effort to go outside each day; therefore, children should bring appropriate hot weather, rain, or snow clothing depending on the season. A few changes of seasonally-appropriate clothing should be kept in the child's cubby to be used as needed. All personal items at the center should be labeled with your child's name.

We highly recommend the small stickers with your child's name for labeling your child's personal belongings.

Our Neighborhood believes it is important for a child to feel comfortable in the center as they spend long days away from home. We encourage parents to bring in photos of children, their families, and friends to have at the center. We also encourage parents to bring in books or toys that are applicable to the classroom projects or your child's developing interests. However, any toys that your child is not willing to share with the class should be kept at home. Please also be mindful of the risk associated with bringing personal items to the center and refrain from bringing fragile, valuable, or

irreplaceable items. We work diligently to keep materials clean and in good repair; however, with many children in the room there is an increased risk of items being damaged or misplaced.

Celebrations

We love to share in family celebrations. Celebrating together helps bring our center closer. Food brought for classroom celebrations should be healthy, low in sugar and sodium, and organic if possible. We also ask parents to be mindful of choking hazards. Please consult with teachers about classroom allergies before bringing in food.

Your Child's Experience

At Our Neighborhood, we work hard to take and understand the perspective of the children in our program. This section is designed to explain to parents what their child is likely experiencing each day in the classroom. You can strengthen your relationship with your child by seeking to understand his perspective.

Understanding Your Child in the First Year

Infants go through natural periods of alertness, excitement, and calm. When we are attuned to our infant's cues, we will see when they are seeking more engagement and when they need quiet. For any caregiver, reading infants cues takes intentional work. Our teachers work to be attuned to infants so we can provide responsive care. When infants have a need, discomfort, or emotion, they cry. With sensitive, attuned care over time, they learn that their needs will be met. Their cry will no longer sound like panic, and we begin to understand cues as to what the child is trying to communicate. In the early months, crying is an infant's only means of communication. When a baby cries, they are calling for our help, but our role is not to fix their crying. Our role is to understand what they are trying to communicate and work with your baby to meet his need.

At Our Neighborhood, we approach infant care with a strategy of working-with rather than doing-to. When we work with infants, we tell them what we are going to do before we do it. We attune to their cues and needs, then support them to participate in their care and learning. Infants are whole beings at birth and deserve our respect. We believe that all people, and especially young children, learn through play. We believe that when an infant is fed, rested, and clean, they need time for uninterrupted play. Through that time, they learn to solve problems, move their body, explore the environment, and connect with their friends. Teachers try to be relatively hands-off during children's exploration time. We do not believe children need to be stimulated or entertained. We know infants can drive their own learning if they are given a safe, engaging space and uninterrupted time to play. Teachers will coach children who are struggling and be present to check in if needed, but we do not lead children's play or try to teach them to do things they are not yet ready to do. We know children will develop in their own way and in their own time if they are given an engaging space to explore. Read more about [Understanding Infant Development](#).

Understanding Your Child One to Two

As children approach their first birthday, a fundamental shift occurs. In the toddler room, children are largely mastering physical challenges and eagerly exploring the social world. Young toddlers who have had responsive care as infants can trust that they are safe in the world, and they will begin to seek more independence. Young toddlers need routines and rhythm to begin to understand their world and their role in the world. Toddlers thrive in an environment that is physically challenging and emotionally safe. As young toddlers' language develops rapidly, they will show a strong interest in new types of play and exploration. Toddlers need peaceful leadership from the adults in their world.

Toddlers need to know that adults will keep them safe and that the adults love them unconditionally. Emotionally, toddlers are developing rapidly, so they often experience a rush of emotion and very passionate feelings.

Our Neighborhood teachers know that toddlers need help understanding their big emotions and working through those feelings. We work to provide a consistent and loving environment where young toddlers can continue to drive their learning and explore their world. As we continue our practice of working-with in the toddler room, we expand young children's vocabularies through talking about what is happening and explaining emotions. We begin offering toddlers more choices in their care and play so they are able to see themselves as decision makers. Teachers continue to help intentionally support self-regulation and problem-solving. We coach young toddlers through new social interactions and help give words to the different perspectives during interactions. A challenge for adults in the toddler years can be managing the behaviors that are seen as intentionally hurtful or not helpful. Teachers always work with toddlers to help explain and problem solve. We know that young children are still building their decision making capacities and our role is to calmly coach them to be helpful in every way.

Understanding Your Two Year Old

As children turn two, their quest for independence does not falter, but their newly mastered communication skills push their learning forward. Two year olds are largely able to solve problems, regulate emotions, and express their needs and desires in appropriate ways. Hitting, pushing, screaming, and crying are still a regular part of a two year old's day, but they are more able to solve problems with minimal coaching and return to their play. Two year olds can continue to drive their own learning and do not need any pushing from teachers to find meaningful work. Two year olds are full of questions as they try to figure out the world and their understanding deepens. Children are now able to tell stories, recall experiences, and make plans to understand the world in new ways.

Teachers continue to provide calm leadership to help maintain routines of caring for themselves and others and solving problems. Play with peers develops in new ways and two year olds are able to sustain their play together with very little intervention. Teachers work with two year olds to have multiple problem-solving tools to meet their needs. Children's minds are expanding rapidly and we work to write down their ideas and help children see their learning process as they begin to reflect on their own experiences.

Paperwork

This handbook has outlined joining our center, our role, your role, and your child's perspective. All that's left is the paperwork.

Regulatory Bodies

Our Neighborhood is licensed by the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) division of licensing. Virginia state licensing insures that child care programs meet minimum health and safety standards to care for children. We believe these standards are absolutely necessary to ensure all children are in a safe and healthy environment. Our Neighborhood appreciates and works closely with our licensing agent, Diann Reed, to ensure we meet their standards while fulfilling our philosophy. DSS visits Our Neighborhood twice a year to support the continuation of Our Neighborhood's child care license. Yearly, we schedule health department and fire official visits to insure our program is healthy and safe for children.

Center Facilities and Equipment

Our center is licensed by the state of Virginia to serve 48 children from ages 4 weeks to 6 years. Though our program serves children from zero to three, our license is written to allow flexibility in our program. Between three and three-and-a-half, we encourage you to find a preschool program. The center operates Monday through Friday from 7:30am to 6:00pm. Children are placed into classrooms based on their developmental needs and age. We work to support the development of relationships among children and their teachers through continuity-of-care. Children remain with the same teachers and classmates throughout their enrollment at Our Neighborhood whenever possible. Our center consists of three large classrooms, two fenced outdoor play areas, children's and adults' bathrooms, a conference room, a staff lounge, and a small staff kitchen.

- Infants (ages 6 weeks to 12-18 months): 4 teachers care for up to 12 children
- Toddlers (ages 12 months to 24 - 30 months): 4 teachers care for up to 16 children
- Twos (ages 24 months to 36 - 45 months): 3-4 teachers care for 15-20 children

We have a private, handicap-accessible bathroom available in the toddler room; we ask that adults and children over the age of five use this private bathroom. The child development center is a smoke-free environment. We ask families to refrain from smoking in the building or outside the building within forty feet from any entrance or playground space.

We expect that parents will show respect when using cell phones at the center. Children are very excited to see their parents at the end of the day; they want and deserve your full attention. Additionally, pick up and drop off is an important time for teachers to communicate with families. Please end phone calls prior to entering the center and if at all possible wait until leaving the center to answer calls or texts.



The center playground is designed for children like yours and you are more than welcome to use this space when the center is closed. We ask that you take good care of our equipment and materials. Remember, the toys are typically suitable for children zero to three and require supervision at all times. Our Neighborhood is not responsible for any accidents or injuries on our playground outside of business hours.

Parents who do not have access to a computer at home are welcome to use the computers in the staff lounge and are asked to respect the teachers who are working. We have a variety of books for children, parents, and teachers. If you are interested in borrowing any of the center books, please do.

Our Neighborhood does not provide transportation for any children. Families or other authorized individuals are responsible for bringing children to and from the center. Any individual picking up children in a motor vehicle is required to have a proper child restraint seat.

Holidays and Planned Closures

We are closed for the following holidays: President's Day, Memorial Day, one week around Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the following Friday, and Christmas Eve through New Years Day. We may observe two additional holidays scheduled by the calendar crew as necessary. We are also closed up to 9 additional days each year for professional development. We will publish a school calendar each June and December to keep parents informed of days we are closed.

Inclement Weather

Our Neighborhood responds to severe weather in the following ways: lock down during a tornado, evacuation during a flood, closure during a severe snow storm. You will receive notification of a closure as quickly as possible. If we are closed for a severe storm, we will record a message on the phone as well as email families and post in Slack. If you're interested in updates, you can check our facebook page. Unless notice is given, the center is open and operating as normal. If we close in the middle of the day for any reason, we will contact parents to pick up their children.

Equal Opportunity

Our Neighborhood Child Development Center is an equal opportunity organization. We do not discriminate against applicants, employees, or families based on race, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion, marital status, nation of origin or military status. We ask that all families are conscious of our diverse community when you engage with Our Neighborhood, teachers, families, and children.

Babysitting Policy

We welcome you to seek babysitting services from teachers, which can support close relationships between the teachers and children. However, we do not endorse our staff members or accept any responsibility for their work outside the Our Neighborhood Child Development Center. We ask that parents and teachers be mindful of confidentiality of families and children in all their discussions.

Contact Us

Email Addresses: Each team member has an email that is their first name @oncdc.com.

Catchall: hello@oncdc.com
Tours, Waitlist, Enrollment, and Withdrawal: enrollment@oncdc.com
Teacher Appreciation Crew: teacher-appreciation@oncdc.com
Financial Communications: director@oncdc.com
Questions, Concerns, and Grievances: help@oncdc.com

Website: oncdc.com

Mail: 2110 Ivy Road,
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Phone: (434) 202-8639

Fax: (434) 202-8689

Introduction to Holacracy

OUR NEIGHBORHOOD CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER



Just A Minute: January 2017

In the Summer of 2016 as Our Neighborhood approached it's fifth birthday we adopted a new organizational and governance structure. We chose Holacracy because it melded well with the Our Neighborhood values and most importantly promoted a power-with instead of power-over structure. Just as we reject a power-over reward-punishment structure with children we believe adults too deserve and thrive in a working-with approach.

Beliefs and Values

- Mutual respect begins with the organization.
- People are naturally good and structures should support people to fulfill their roles.
- Clarity of purpose and clarity of authority with autonomy lead to success.
- What is happening should match what is written and both should be moving towards what is ideal.

Core Holacracy Structure

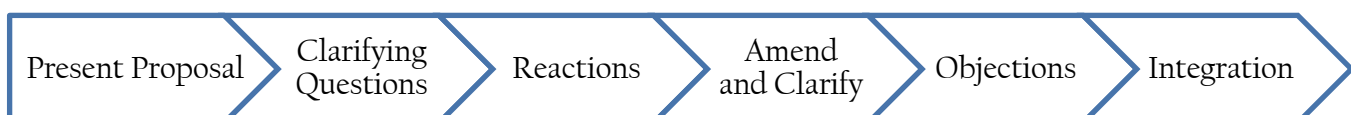
We use a circle structure to hold all the roles of the organization. A role is a basic organizational unit and each team member will hold multiple roles. When a role's purpose becomes more than a single role can hold the role can become a circle. A circle is a collection of roles with a purpose. The structure then becomes a collection of nested circles. Roles within a circle are governed by the team members within that circle. At the time of this writing for example, Jenn fills the following rolls anchor circle lead link as well as holding the role of director, human resources, finance, public relations, enrollment, and growth. For clarity, we use an online system called Glassfrog which provides a clear picture of all the current Our Neighborhood roles and a method for viewing who is filling each of the roles. Glassfrog outlines all current mentor roles and offers a search function to help you explore the roles at Our Neighborhood.

Each role has a purpose and accountabilities. Accountabilities are things that the team can rely on the person holding the role to do. Some roles may also have domains. A domain is a piece of work or property that has been fully delegated to the role filler. The role description defines clearly the purpose and authority of the team member holding the role and give that team member full authority to act to fulfill their purpose within the policies defined by the organization. Once a circle, collection of roles, is established, it operates and governs the business of that circle as a semi-autonomous unit. For this there are four core roles of a circle lead link, rep link, secretary, and facilitator (see descriptions below).

All team members have an explicit responsibility to act as a sensor for the organization. Team members interact daily with the children, families, team, and community and sense ways in which we could better fulfill our purpose. This sense we could be better is called a tension. Brining these tensions forward is key to Our Neighborhood fulfilling our purpose and flourishing. Tensions help us sense what's going on in the organization and respond to better achieve our goals.

Governance Meetings

Circles hold monthly governance meetings. Governance meetings provide the process for making necessary changes to move us towards our mutual purpose. Changes to roles, accountabilities, domains, and policies are made through a governance meeting. Governance meetings include all team members holding a role within a circle. Governance meeting agendas are built on the fly at the beginning of the meeting. Meeting members give a few word place holder to the secretary to build the agenda. One tension is addressed at a time. A structure of rounds is used to maintain the meeting flow. Decisions in governance are made by consent.



Tactical Meetings

There is a second meeting structure provided by Holacracy that gives structure to the circles weekly work meetings. Policies and changes to roles happen in governance meetings and everything else happens in tactical meetings. Tactical meetings include a checklist review, metrics review, project review, and then a triage of current tensions.

Glassfrog

Glassfrog is an online software that holds the current written roles, policies, and details of the organization and the Holacracy meeting structures. An image from Glassfrog on 1.12.17 is pictured to the right. Each of the small circles is a role, if you click on the role it will show the details as well as who fills the role.

Holacracy Jargon

Role – a basic organizational unit with a purpose and accountabilities that performs work for the organization. A role is an aspect of a team member's job description. A team member can view all their roles (in Glassfrog) to see build a current picture of their job description. Ex: Raindrop Room Shutterfly Coordinator

Circle – an organization unit with a purpose that includes multiple roles. A circle is a semi autonomous unit and contains core roles to support self governance; lead link, rep link, secretary, and facilitator. The organization's largest circle is the anchor circle and then there are more specific circles within the anchor circle to organize the work of the organization. Ex: Raindrop Room

Lead Link – a core circle role and the functional leader of a circle. The lead link serves to bring the purpose of the larger circle into the more specific sub-circle. Setting the circle strategy and appointing people to circle roles. Lead links are a member of both the smaller and larger circles.

Rep Link – a core circle role and the representative of the circle and its purpose. The rep link serves to bring the purpose and needs of the circle to the larger circle. The rep link is elected sociocratically by the circle members. Rep links are a member of both the smaller and larger circles.

Secretary – a core circle role and the record keeper. The secretary is elected sociocratically by the circle members. The secretary also serves to schedule meetings and notify circle members of the meeting.

Facilitator – a core circle role and the holder of the meeting structure. The facilitator is responsible for holding the meeting structure, ensuring everyone has a voice, and moving the group through the meeting rounds.

Tension – a sense that things could be better than they are. A tension is the feeling that a purpose could be better accomplished. Tensions sensed by team members are key to developing governance that drives the organization.

Resources

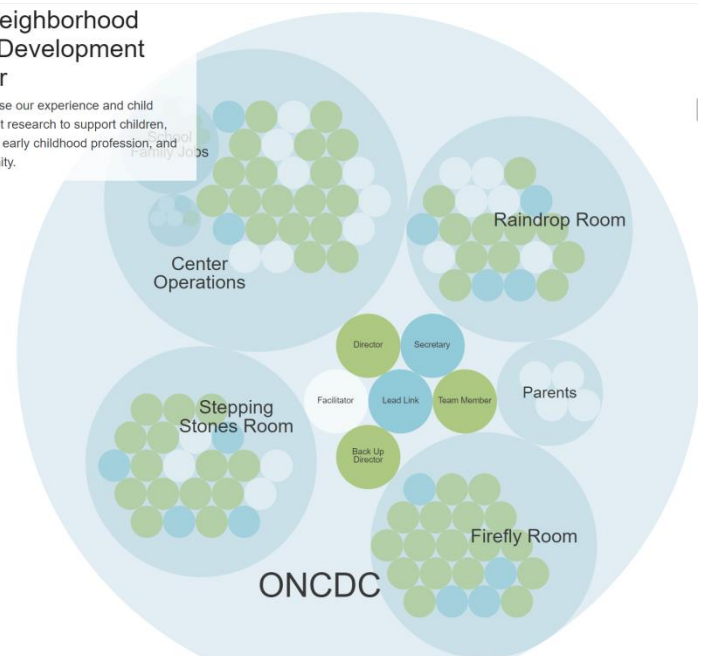
We have compiled a list of resources at,

https://drive.google.com/open?id=14ts0cqPPLEyo_jVZr_gyX4WSYGAN6hl1SHALo8LcImc.

We recommend the "Holacracy" by Brian Robinson, TED Talks, Holacracy.org, and the Holacracy comic book.

Our Neighborhood Child Development Center

Purpose: Use our experience and child development research to support children, families, the early childhood profession, and the community.



Our Neighborhood Child Development Center

2110 Ivy Rd., Charlottesville, VA 22903 – (434) 202-8639 – www.ourneighborhoodcdc.com

Ouch Note



OUR NEIGHBORHOOD CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Name:	Date:	Time:	Where did injury occur? (Circle one) Classroom Playground Other:
What happened?			
Type of injury:	Location on body:	First Aid Given:	
Witnesses Names:			
How was parent notified?	Date:	Time parent was notified:	
Future Action to Prevent Recurrence of Injury:			

Staff Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____
(Parent Signature required. Authorized pick up not acceptable.)

Revised 10/2017

Recorded ☐

Ouch Note



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Revised 10/2017

Recorded ☐

Tuition Rates

Our Neighborhood Child Development Center
Updated: June 1st, 2019



Effective June 1st, 2019 tuition will be **\$1,675 per month**. We collect first and last month tuition on enrollment. Tuition increases are only applicable to new enrolling families. Once enrolled your tuition rate will remain the same. Effective June 1st, 2020 tuition will increase to \$1,710 per month.

Four Days a Week Discount

We are a full time program but allow families to choose a four day a week option however the day off must be either a Monday or a Friday. This is because consistency and routine are important for children to begin understanding their world. This is important for not only your child but also the other children in the classroom.

\$100 off monthly tuition

Cooperative Discount

For families who commit to participating in the program we provide a tuition discount. Families wishing to volunteer in the program set times with their child's teacher and volunteer in their child's classroom.

3 hours a week - \$100 off monthly tuition
5 hours a week - \$150 off monthly tuition
8 hours a week - \$200 off monthly tuition

Multi-Child Discount

We know the cost of child care is a significant portion of a family budget so for families with multiple young children we offer a discounted tuition for the second child enrolled in care.

\$200 off the second child's monthly tuition

Non-Attendance Discount

Our Neighborhood is a full time program to hold your space you must pay tuition. We do not allow reduced tuition for vacations or missed days. To accommodate long summer breaks and families who accept spaces earlier than needed, if your child not be attending for a full month we provide a 30% tuition discount. A non-attendance discount is available for a maximum of two months per calendar year. Attendance for a single day during a month will not be prorated and will result in full tuition being billed.

Move Up Teacher Bonus

To support our goal of continuity of care we have initiated a new bonus for teachers provided by parents at move up. **When your child transitions to a new classroom with their teachers a \$500 payment is due for teacher bonus.** Teachers receive half the money for each move up and the remaining funds when the process is completed at 3 years of age. We are hoping this structure of bonuses will help remind teachers and families how important continuity of care is for our program and children. (See handbook for more details.)

Payment

There is a \$20 late fee for tuition payments made after the fifth of the month. Additional fees may occur for late pick up of children or failure to provide lunch/snacks for your child. We encourage you to consider automatic withdrawal from your bank account to guarantee stress free and on time tuition!

*Note for partial months we will prorate tuition at \$80 a day. This is available only to enrolled or enrolling families, not for drop in care.