

When the active school requires that a student's efforts  
come from the student instead of being imposed,  
and that his or her intelligence undertake authentic work  
instead of pre-digested knowledge from outside,  
it is simply asking that the laws of  
all intelligence be respected.

-Jean Piaget

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**HISTORY OF GIVING TREE SCHOOL**

Giving Tree began as a family day care home on the Northfield Mount Hermon School campus in 1974 and continued to care for children there until 1977 when it was licensed as a nursery school. Giving Tree then

moved to its second home, also the new home of Betsy Evans and Jeffrey Coulson (further up the dirt road from the current location). In 1981 Betsy and Jeff became the Incorporating Officers of Giving Tree, acquiring nonprofit status for the school. Due to the difficulties of negotiating a long and hilly dirt road to the school, the board of Directors acquired a loan from FmHA for a more accessible school site. Alan D, Wallace (a Giving Tree parent) and crew constructed our new schoolhouse with loving care for every detail, and in 1983 Giving Tree families moved the equipment and began to landscape a lovely new playground. A crew from Franklin County's CETA program built many of the adventuresome structures that parents and children helped to design (the climbing structure remains today), and our vision and dream were completed. In the fall of 1983, families old and new gathered to celebrate, planting flowers and the small maple tree [now an apple tree] that grows in front of the school - a symbol of love and growth to remind us of our task.

## **SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL AND FINANCIAL STRUCTURE**

Giving Tree is a nonprofit educational organization with a seven-person Board of Directors which oversees the program and finances. The Board consists of Betsy Evans and Jeffrey Coulson, Incorporating Officers and Founders, and five other parents and/or teachers. Vacancies on the Board are filled by inviting others to join, with suggestions of possible candidates made by the Board. The Board meets as needed throughout the year (a minimum of 2x per year). The meetings are open to all who wish to attend; financial discussions are restricted to closed meetings.

Board meetings are announced in advance. Each spring parents have an opportunity to offer feedback on our program and policies by filling out a Parent Questionnaire. Parents are encouraged to give us feedback on our program and policies at any time.

Parent meetings may be requested at any time. Four school days per year are set aside for parent conferences. Parents are encouraged to schedule a conference at least once a year to share perceptions of the

child's growth and development. During the conference, we present a depiction of your child at school through a series of anecdotes from your child's day. A Child Observation Record (COR) will organize our observations into nine general categories of child development based on the anecdotal notes of your child. (The COR is an assessment instrument created by HighScope.)

Parents of enrolled children are welcomed and encouraged to visit Giving Tree at any time during the school day. However, it may be prudent to speak with staff to ensure that the children will be at the school when you visit as we frequently go on nature walks.

Several family events are scheduled each year, such as the Fairy Festival, Soup and Sled night, fundraising events, or Work Bee days. These events are opportunities to get to know other parents within the school, to contribute to the school's wellbeing, and to further understand the school's program and approach to young children.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Program Administrator has administrative and financial responsibility for the school. This includes business management, record keeping, fundraising, enrollment, and grant-writing. The Program Administrator is assisted in these duties by members of the staff and a bookkeeper. The President of the Board of Directors serves as Program Consultant.

The Lead Teacher Director is at school every day overseeing the curriculum, supervision of staff, and overseeing the social service referral plan.

### **HOW TO GET IN TOUCH**

Questions/concerns about children may be directed to the teachers, either at pickup, or they may be emailed to the Program Administrator at [admin@givingtreeschool.org](mailto:admin@givingtreeschool.org). The Program Administrator will forward the communication to the teachers, and a member of the staff will follow up with a response.

Questions and feedback about the program should be directed to the Program Administrator, [admin@givingtreeschool.org](mailto:admin@givingtreeschool.org).

Appeals/suggestions for the Board can also be directed to the Program Administrator, who will disseminate the information to the board members. In the event that there is a matter that should be kept private from the Program Administrator, families may contact Betsy Evans, President of the Board: [betsy@kidsandconflict.com](mailto:betsy@kidsandconflict.com)

## **STAFF MEETINGS**

Staff meetings are scheduled to consult about program issues, program procedures and policies, program planning, parent/guardian communication, children's behaviors and meeting the individual needs of children, and the standards for the licensure or approval of large group and school age child care programs. Staff will maintain documentation of all observations and consultations.

At staff meetings, the Director and Program Administrator will discuss any administrative information relevant to the entire staff.

The teachers share responsibility for planning, implementation and evaluation of the program, and participation in parent conferences and events.

## **STAFF SUPERVISION**

The Giving Tree School staff is observed every other month by the Director. In utilizing the PQA [Preschool Program Quality Assessment by the HighScope Foundation], the staff is continually evaluated in areas of learning environment, daily routine, adult-child interaction and curriculum planning and assessment. The staff is also required to complete a self-assessment, which is then discussed with the Director. A bi-monthly check in with Board Members is scheduled to continually support the staff. Yearly, a staff evaluation is conducted, and then reviewed with our Director.

In order to address staff turnover, we at Giving Tree School keep open communication between the teachers, staff, and Board Members. A bi-

monthly check-in with board members is scheduled to continually support the staff. The staff is included in making program decisions, and is invited to board meetings, albeit excused from any financial discussions. A copy of the board meeting notes are made available to all staff members. Annually, the Board of Directors re-evaluates wages and benefits of the staff and provides staff bonuses when available. An exit interview is conducted should a staff member leave the program. The information is then discussed with the Board and taken into consideration when making program improvement plans.

### **BACKGROUND RECORDS CHECK POLICY**

In accordance with regulations set forth by the Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC), Giving Tree School requires ALL prospective employees to undergo a series of pre-employment background records checks (CORI, SORI, DCF, and digital fingerprinting) prior to having contact with children in our care. Candidates must receive proof of full suitability from EEC prior to beginning employment. Full suitability requires processing through all background record checks, including fingerprinting.

Current employees shall be required to repeat the background check process, including fingerprinting, at least every 3 years. Additionally, Giving Tree School may request that an employee submit to a background check at any time that administration or the board of directors feel that it may be called for.

### **PLAN FOR VOLUNTEERS**

When volunteers/interns or other non-employees participate in classroom activities on a regular basis at Giving Tree School, the following steps will occur:

The Program Administrator will run a BRC (background records check) on the volunteer. Participation in the program will not begin until the BRC process is completed.

Prior to volunteering in the classroom, the volunteer/intern will participate in a basic orientation of the program which includes viewing the EEC Orientation Presentation and reading the Department of Early Education and Care regulations.

All volunteers/interns will be required to read the Giving Tree handbook and conduct themselves in accordance with our standards. Volunteers/interns will be required to sign in and out in the staff time record log.

Volunteers/interns will be under the direct supervision of the Lead Teachers in the classroom at all times; children will not be alone with volunteers at any time.

### **ENROLLMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

Giving Tree requires parents to meet with the Director or his/her designee prior to admitting a child to the program.

1. Giving Tree offers children and parents/guardians an orientation to the program.
2. Giving Tree provides an opportunity for parent/guardian(s) and children to visit the program and meet educators before the child is enrolled.
3. Giving Tree seeks information about each child and family's interests and needs.
4. To support transitions and coordinate with services offered by other providers, Giving Tree requests that families share with them information about other therapeutic, educational, social and support services received by the child.
5. For children younger than school age, educators must discuss each child's developmental history with his or her parent/guardian at the time of enrollment. The developmental history must be updated annually and maintained in the child's records.
6. Children who attend Giving Tree School cannot be enrolled and simultaneously attend another preschool program



## **NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Giving Tree is open to all families. We do not discriminate on the basis of: race, religion, culture, political beliefs, marital status, disability, national origin, gender identity, or sexual orientation.

## **SCHEDULING POLICY**

Giving Tree School offers 3 standard schedules:

- 1) Monday/Wednesday/Friday
- 2) Tuesday/Thursday
- 3) 5 days a week

Children age four or older (as of Sept. 1 of the school year in question) must enroll a minimum of 3 days per week.

**WAITLIST:** Giving Tree offers rolling enrollment throughout the school year on a non-discriminatory, first-come, first-served, space-available basis. Prospective families will be given the chance to fill out an enrollment request form along with a fee in order to be placed on the first-come, first-served waitlist. When a space becomes available, it will be offered to the family highest on the waitlist whose schedule request matches the space available. Waitlisted families who are flexible with their scheduling requirements are likely to be placed more quickly than those who are not flexible.

**ENROLLMENT FOR THE UPCOMING SCHOOL YEAR:** Returning families and incoming younger siblings of currently enrolled students will be offered the first choice of spaces for the upcoming school year (before incoming prospective families). After the enrollment request deadline for returning families, enrollment will be opened up to incoming new students.

**RETURNING FAMILIES:** The Program Administrator will make every effort to accommodate returning families' schedule requests. There will be a standard schedule space guaranteed for every currently enrolled returning family. However, *families who are requesting non-standard schedules should be aware that we may not be able to accommodate*

*them*. Being accommodated with a non-standard schedule one year does not guarantee that the school will continue to be able to make the same non-standard accommodation the following year (this includes 4-day week schedules). Additionally, returning families who wait until after the publicized deadline to submit schedule requests for the upcoming year run the risk of losing their space.

## **PAYMENT POLICY**

The total yearly tuition is divided into 11 payments. The first payment, due with submission of the Tuition Payment Agreement, is non-refundable and secures your child's space. The 10 remaining payments are made on the first of every month, beginning in September, through June. Payments are to be made promptly, or a \$40 late fee will be issued.

-Parents/guardians will be responsible to pay all fees for returned checks.

-Absences and school cancellations are NOT refundable.

-Payment is due WITHOUT EXCEPTION each month, September to June, *regardless of the number of days the student attended or missed that month*. This includes circumstances where a family goes away for a length of time. Regular monthly payments are what hold your child's space at Giving Tree.

-*Unscheduled* late pick-ups (after 4pm) will be charged a \$40 fee.

-Tuition payments overdue by more than 10 business days without prior approval by the Program Administrator will be charged a \$40 late fee.

-Your child's space may be forfeited if tuition is overdue for more than two months.

-Additional, per diem days outside of a child's regular schedule may be scheduled at least 48 hours in advance with the Program Administrator on a space-available basis. These will be charged at the daily rate, in addition to the regular tuition payment.

-Additional days outside of a child's regular schedule may not be "swapped" for unattended days in a child's regular schedule.

**FINANCIAL AID:** To be considered for financial aid, families must submit a financial aid application along with income verification to the Program Administrator (one month's pay stubs for each wage-earner, and their most recent IRS form 1040). Families are required to notify the Program Administrator of any changes in income. Financial aid is limited and will be awarded on basis of each family's documented financial need.

**MA CHILDCARE VOUCHERS:** To meet the income requirement for state childcare vouchers, your household income must initially be at or below 50% of the state median income (SMI). If your child has a documented disability or special need, your household income must initially be at or below 85% of the SMI. If you are interested in applying for financial assistance, call [Mass 211](#) or contact your local [Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCR&R\) agency](#). If you will be applying for or already have a state voucher, please share that information during the enrollment process. Families are required to notify the Program Administrator of any changes in income or family number that will change the family's voucher funding.

**WITHDRAWAL/REDUCTION IN SCHEDULE:**

Notice of withdrawal or reduction in your child's schedule is required **in writing 30 days in advance** of withdrawal/reduction. Without 30-day written notice, the next month's tuition payment prior to the revision must be made in full.

*Any withdrawal/reductions of a schedule to occur after February 1, of the school year will not receive a Tuition Contract revision and will be fully responsible to pay the remaining payments of the school year, regardless of the date/length of notice given.*

## **DIAPERING AND TOILET TRAINING**

Children may use the toilet at any time. Children are not required to be toilet trained to attend Giving Tree School. Teachers will be aware of children using the toilet and will be available nearby if the child requests help. Children will in no manner be punished (including by humiliation or by denial of food or drink) for not using the toilet properly or for soiling their clothes. No coercion or threats will be used to encourage children to use the toilet. Teachers will encourage children to use the toilet at a regular time each day and in accordance with any requests from the child's parents. Diapering changing surfaces must be covered by a disposable cover that is changed after each child has been diapered and is disposed of in a closed container. The diapering changing surface must be cleaned and disinfected after each child has been diapered.

## **PLAN FOR TRANSLATORS**

Giving Tree school will provide translators, as needed, at meetings, workshops and conferences to ensure strong communication between the program and families.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Parent/guardians are solely responsible for the transportation of their child to and from school. Every child must have a Transportation Plan on file, which is included in the Admission forms. Any and all persons transporting the child to and from school must have written consent from a parent on file.

## **GIVING TREE'S DAILY SCHEDULE**

8:00 Early Arrivals

8:30-8:55 Arrivals & Goodbyes

8:55-9:00 Clean Up & Greeting Circle

9:00-9:15 Planning & Snack

9:15-10:15 Choice Time

10:15-10:30 Clean Up

10:30-10:45 Recall & Small Group or Circle

11:00-11:55 Outside Time

12-12:30 Lunch and Half Day Departures

12:30-12:45 Tooth Brushing and Toileting

1:00-1:45 Rest/Quiet Time

1:45 Planning

1:45 -2:15 Choice Time

2:15 Clean Up

2:20-2:30 Recall & Large Group

2:30-2:45 Snack

3:00-4:00 Outside Time

4:00 Full Day Departures

4:00-5:00 Choice Time & Late Departures

It is very important that all morning children be at school, ready to start the day, by **8:50 am**. Please arrive in time for this transition.

## **PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM**

Giving Tree is a nonprofit educational organization that has been providing programs for young children since 1974. It is a preschool for children ages 2.9 through 5 years. Up to eighteen children participate together in a developmental curriculum, designed to foster social-emotional, cognitive, and physical growth, as well as respect for individual expression and experience. A limited number of children are enrolled for half days. For an extra charge, families can sign up for early drop off, at 8:00 A.M. and/or late pick up at 5:00 P.M.

Children are, by nature, active learners. They like to touch, feel, explore and manipulate objects in many ways, and to engage in parallel and

cooperative play with others. In order to meet each individual child's developmental needs, children are encouraged and supported in a process of making responsible choices for play, for play is the work of children. It is their way of learning about their world.

Our daily routine is designed so that children begin their day by planning with a teacher what they would like to do. This process respects their needs as individuals, by helping them to focus on individual ideas and interests. The teacher can help them to extend their ideas in increasingly more complicated ways, while encouraging new skills and posing new challenges. We call this part of our day **Planning**.

After making a plan, children move on to **Choice Time** during which they may use all areas of the school: Writing Table, Book Corner, Inventions, Block Rug, Investigations Table, Stage, Playhouse, Tub Table, Cozy Cube, and Toy Space. The room is clearly labeled so that children can easily put materials away before changing activities.

After Choice Time, children break into two separate groups for **Small Group** time. The teachers help children participate in a brief sharing of what happened during Choice Time - by showing something that was made or in some way representing an experience. We call this time **Recall**.

Each child then participates either in **Large** or **Small Group Time**. Large Group Time is a whole group time for movement, songs, stories and plays. Small Group Time is a time for exploring and interacting with a common set of materials, with each child participating in their own individual way.

Group time is followed by **Outside Time** in our Certified Outdoor Classroom. The adventuresome playground in our rural setting provides ample opportunities for discovering the environment. Natural exploration is an important part of our curriculum and is emphasized inside and outside.

Throughout all of the children's activities, the emphasis is on the importance of problem-solving and individual questioning, thinking and creating. The child's self-confidence and self-esteem are fostered with

this emphasis on the process of learning; the individual needs of each child are central to the curriculum and are supported by the environment, the Daily Routine and the teachers. Our hope is that play will be great fun as well as constructively challenging.

### **STAYING “IN THE KNOW” AT GIVING TREE**

Giving Tree is a busy place and families lead busy lives. In order to help you anticipate events, sign up for conferences and workshops, etc., notices are posted daily in the entry way. Every time you pick up or drop off your child, please try to notice if there is new parent information posted. Teachers post daily on the “Today at Giving Tree” clip board, and newsletters and a calendar is distributed monthly. In addition, families receive a Giving Tree school calendar upon enrolling which has most events pre-scheduled. Please post this in a conspicuous place to help you anticipate important dates, as well as closures.

### **WEATHER CANCELLATIONS**

In the event of inclement weather affecting the school day, families may utilize the following methods to keep abreast of Giving Tree’s status:

- 1) Giving Tree School follows the Gill-Montague Regional School District for weather cancellations and delays. If Gill-Montague has a cancellation, delay, or early release, it is safe to assume that Giving Tree does as well.
- 2) The Program Administrator will maintain an email list of currently enrolled families and will email the group in the event of a cancellation, delay, or early release.
- 3) The school’s all-call system will be used to share information about weather-related scheduling changes.

### **DELAYS**

In the event of a 2-hour delay, Giving Tree will open at 10am for ALL students (regardless of early drop-off). Half-day pickups will remain the same, at 12:30.

### **TOYS FROM HOME**

We kindly request that all personal toys remain at home. As an exception to that rule, children *are* welcome to bring a stuffed animal FOR REST TIME ONLY.

### **LUNCH AND SNACKS**

At Giving Tree School, we believe in providing children the best opportunity to nourish their bodies with the healthiest of choices. We encourage unprocessed whole foods and water drinking. On each day that your child comes to Giving Tree, please supply them with the following items:

- 1) A healthy and nourishing lunch, packed without peanuts, glass containers, or sweets.
- 2) For full-day students, TWO healthy and nourishing snacks – one for the morning and one for the afternoon, packed along the same guidelines as the lunch (half-day students will need one snack). Parents may wish to pack the snacks in a separate bag from the lunch if they feel that it will help their child in saving some food for later in the day.
- 3) A reusable, non-breakable water bottle, pre-filled.

### **POINTS TO REMEMBER:**

**-WE ARE A PEANUT-FREE SCHOOL!** (Other nuts are OK unless student allergy requires us to exclude them, in which case signage will be posted).

-Please do not pack dessert/sweets, as we will ask your child to save any sugary treats from their lunch box for the ride home.

-Please label all of your child's containers/lunchboxes/water bottles, etc. with their name.

-Please send food cut, peeled, and prepped for your child to eat.



-Please avoid sending foods containing the following ingredients: Corn syrup; artificial colors or flavors; and/or partially hydrogenated oils.

### **SHARED FOOD/COMMUNITY POTLUCKS**

Children are instructed not to share or swap their food at lunch and snack. However, at certain times we do enjoy sharing food at Giving Tree. These times include:

-When teachers plan a group activity such as bread- or applesauce-making.

-In the event that a child's lunch is forgotten, or if they run out of food and are still hungry, teachers may provide them with options such as apples or rice cakes, with or without sunflower seed butter.

-When parents bring in a low-sugar birthday treat for the class to share.

-School events such as the Watermelon Social, Halloween Fairy Festival, Soup & Sled Night, and the Kindergarten Goodbye Party.

-Community potlucks (such as Work Bees and the end-of-year potluck picnic).

**Parents are required to keep Giving Tree staff up-to-date with any special dietary needs/restrictions for their child.** Changes to dietary needs should be submitted in writing, so that they may be effectively shared among the staff. Giving Tree staff will keep an up-to-date list of children's dietary needs near the food prep/eating areas.

To assist our families with special dietary needs in planning, the following foods can be expected at school special events. Parents of children with special dietary needs are welcome to bring alternative foods to these events if their child will be unable to eat the food provided by Giving Tree.

### **COMMUNITY POTLUCKS: GUIDELINES**

A few times a year, we gather as a school community for a potluck feast. Just as we do during the school day, we encourage an emphasis on

unprocessed, healthy, whole foods at these events. However, on these special occasions, we do welcome a few homemade sweet treats. In support of our families with dietary restrictions and/or allergies, we ask that you provide an ingredient list along with your potluck contributions. Thank you!

## **BIRTHDAYS**

We invite you to join us on your child's birthday. Children have the option of taking part in our "walk around the sun" ritual and families will be invited to share a pictures and/or favorite story about their child with the class.

**BIRTHDAY TREATS** – Due to dietary restrictions and food allergies, we do not share birthday treats at school. We appreciate in sharing in your celebrations and encourage families to send in pictures and stories of their child's life.

Please note, we kindly request that all birthday party invites to be sent directly to children's homes, and not dispersed at school. A class contact list is available for your convenience.

## **PICK-UP TIME**

For safety reasons, please first go into school to gather your child's belongings and then pick up your child on the playground. This time of day is a busy time with lots of cars and people arriving and departing over a short period. Once a parent/guardian arrives on school grounds, teachers assume that you are responsible for your child's behavior and watching out for the safety of your child. If you want to talk with the teachers at the end of your child's day, please come a few minutes early to do so.

Rather than allowing your child to run ahead to the car at departure time, we ask that children and parents/caregivers walk together to their vehicles when it is time to leave. Please help us to minimize the risk of accidents during this transition time!

We want everyone -- children and parents -- to end their day feeling

safe and attended to. We appreciate your careful attention.

## **KINDERGARTEN TRANSITION**

The plan for students at Giving Tree who will be moving onto Kindergarten includes the following activities to aid in the transition for the student:

- a. At the Spring parent-teacher conference, teachers and parents discuss the Kindergarten Transition plan, including where the child will be attending in the fall, and offer support to the parents.
- b. In May, the teachers make a transition poster with photos of all schools and students, illustrating where each student will be attending school in the fall.
- c. In June, the teachers assemble **Goodbye Cards**, which are individual posters of all children who will be moving on, listing the child's favorite thing to do at school, with a photo of the student, and a drawing by the student.
- d. The school hosts a special **Kindergarten Party**, which is attended only by the rising kindergarteners and their special adults.
- e. The school hosts an End of Year potluck picnic for all current families to celebrate the end of school, including a slideshow of the year's activities and special moments.
- f. We encourage all students to return to visit Giving Tree at any time and assure them that Giving Tree will always be their school.

## **SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**

Giving Tree staff will supervise children primarily by sight. Indoor supervision for short intervals by sound is permissible, as long as teachers check frequently on children who are out of sight (ex: a child who is using the bathroom independently; or a child who is reading in the Book Corner). When out-of-doors, supervision will always be sight,

by a teacher who is also outside (not watching from inside) and all children must be within view of at least one teacher.

## **BEHAVIORAL GUIDANCE & CONFLICT MEDIATION**

Discipline and behavioral guidance are based on the respect for and understanding of the child's individual needs and development. Observations of the child's difficulties and assurance that no one is being hurt shall be the first steps. The teacher will assess the situation to see if the children can resolve the problem without direct teacher intervention. If not, the teacher will use a conflict mediation approach, hearing both sides of the conflict, encouraging the children to listen to each other and to think of solutions together. If necessary, the teacher will suggest some possible solutions to the conflict and will support the children in deciding on a new course of action that will resolve their problem.

When a child exhibits patterns of behavioral problems, written teacher observations are made and shared with parents and staff. Staff will utilize staff meetings to discuss methods of helping the child.

When the staff has implemented all the strategies described above and the child is still experiencing extreme emotional difficulties and/or behaving unsafely, the parents or guardians will be informed. This parent/guardian-teacher discussion will provide a warning that the parent/guardian may be called to pick up their child early during the next occasion of extreme emotional upset. This is not intended to be a punishment but rather an effort to provide immediate family support for a distressed child as well as a safety precaution for the other children and the staff.

At no time is any child to be spanked or responded to in a physical way or otherwise treated in an abusive or humiliating manner by school staff. We suggest that parents and guardians also adapt a conflict mediation approach and refrain from using physical responses or threats with their children.

## **MEDIA AND CHILDREN'S PLAY**

Young children are growing into their independence. They are experimenting with how much control they have over their world and they are curious about power and its impact on relationships. Children are by nature active, expressive explorers. Media and toy creators are experts at exploiting these needs in children, by creating characters and fantasies that are active and express their power in many ways. This can be done constructively, but often it is done violently. As caregivers and teachers, we need to understand the needs of children and guide them with activities and growth toward independence in positive ways.

*Exposure to violence in media, including television, movies, music, and video games, represents a significant risk to the health of children and adolescents. Extensive research evidence indicates that media violence can contribute to aggressive behavior, desensitization to violence, nightmares, and fear of being harmed. Pediatricians should assess their patients' level of media exposure and intervene on media-related health risks. Pediatricians and other child health care providers can advocate for a safer media environment for children by encouraging media literacy, more thoughtful and proactive use of media by children and their parents, more responsible portrayal of violence by media producers, and more useful and effective media ratings.*

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics, November 2009, VOLUME 124 / ISSUE 5

The hurtful play that we observe while children play together is often an imitation of the ideas and actions they have seen on TV or in movies. When this happens, Giving Tree's policy is to respond, not by banning the exploration, but by guiding with problem-solving discussions and agreeing on solutions together. Children's play is a response to individual nature, developmental need and everyday experience. Children will play out experiences in order to understand them better. If a child watches cartoon characters that solve their problems with hurting or bullying, then they will pretend to be these characters and

hurt and bully their playmates. If children read about or see characters that solve their problems cooperatively, they will try to do the same. We urge you to select these visual experiences carefully so that together we can encourage children to respect each other and solve problems in a positive way.

## **GIVING TREE HEALTH POLICY**

### Emergency Numbers:

GILL FIRE - POLICE - AMBULANCE: 911

POISON: 1-800-682-9211

DCF CHILD ABUSE: 413-775-5000

24-HR CHILD-AT-RISK HOTLINE: 1-800-792-5200

BOARD OF HEALTH (TOWN HALL): 413-863-9347

### Hospital Used for Emergencies:

FRANKLIN MEDICAL CENTER: 413-773-0211

164 High Street, Greenfield, MA

## **PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCIES AND ILLNESS**

### **A. First Aid and Transportation to the Hospital:**

1. In the case of an emergency or illness (such as a seizure, a serious fall or serious cut), one lead teacher will begin administration of emergency first aid while the second teacher takes the other children to another area or room.

2. The second teacher will send for assistance by calling in the Director, a staff member or Board Member

3. The second teacher will contact the parent to come and pick up the child or, if response time is a factor, to have the parent meet the child and accompanying staff at the emergency room of the Franklin Medical Center.

4. In the event that a situation arises that is life-threatening or the child cannot be comfortably restrained in a car, an ambulance will be called immediately. The parent will be called to meet the child and staff at the hospital. The teacher or other designated staff will go with

the child in the ambulance. The child's file will be taken, including permission forms and pertinent insurance information.

5. If the emergency is non-life-threatening but the child still needs to be transported to the hospital, parents will be called to pick up their child. If parents cannot be reached, their emergency contact people will be called. In the event that neither parents nor emergency contact people are available to transport the child, an ambulance will be called. Any family that chooses not to list emergency contact people is automatically choosing ambulance transport if parents cannot be contacted in an emergency. The child's whole file will be taken to the hospital, including permission forms.

6. If the parent comes to pick up the child at school and needs assistance, a teacher or a director may offer to drive to the hospital or to accompany the child. The child will be properly restrained in a car seat and in a seat belt. The child will not be carried on a staff member's lap.

7. In the event a parent cannot be reached immediately a designated staff person will continue to attempt to reach parents.

8. Any time that it is necessary to transport a child to the hospital, staff will notify the MA Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) and submit an incident report immediately upon resolution of the incident.

## B. Emergencies While on a Field Trip:

1. If an accident or acute illness occurs while on a field trip, one teacher will take charge of the emergency, assess the situation, and give first aid as needed. The method and urgency of transportation for the child to receive medical help will be determined by the lead teachers based on the severity of the emergency or illness. If necessary, an ambulance will be called.

2. Another adult will be contacted by a teacher as soon as possible and asked to come to the scene of the emergency.

3. If there is going to be a delay in returning to the school, a

neighbor will be contacted to post a sign at the school telling parents about the emergency and where to pick up their child.

4. As a preventative measure, prior to departure from Giving Tree School, the following guidelines will be followed to insure the safety of the children:

- a. A first aid kit will be taken on all walking field trips and in all vehicles on road trips.
- b. Emergency information, including contacts and telephone numbers, will be taken on all field trips.
- c. Staff will carry a cell phone along on the field trip. In the event that there is no cell service, staff will know the location of the nearest landline and be prepared to use it.

### **ALLERGY POLICY**

Our goal is to keep every child safe and healthy. It is the parents' responsibility to inform Giving Tree administration of any allergies your child has and any accommodations needed. If a currently enrolled student has a known life-threatening allergy, Giving Tree School will, if possible, ban the allergen by making a school-wide announcement informing families about the banned allergen, and post signage at the entryway excluding the allergen. **Giving Tree School and grounds are a PEANUT-FREE zone at all times.** Other types of nuts are permitted, unless otherwise announced. Parents of students with life-threatening allergies will be required to submit an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP) signed by the child's medical care provider.

### **IMMUNIZATION AND MEDICAL DOCUMENTATION POLICY**

Massachusetts state law requires that no child be allowed to enter school without the required immunizations (or a valid medical or religious exemption). Parents will be notified in writing if their child's records are not in proper order and will be given a reasonable date to comply. The child will then be excluded from attending until the necessary documentation is submitted.



All students are required to have a medical file that includes:

- Up-to-date immunizations (or valid letter of exemption)
- Evidence of lead screening
- Physical examination within the last 12 months
- Information about any known medical problem or condition

### **TICK BITE PROCEDURE**

The removal of an attached tick is a procedure that does present risks to the child (such as the head of the tick remaining attached, or infection subsequent to removal). Giving Tree's state licensing agency prohibits staff from performing tick removal. For this reason, in the event that an attached tick is discovered on a child at school, Giving Tree staff will NOT remove the tick. Instead, the parents or guardians will be contacted and asked to come to school or pick up their child. Parents/guardians may come to school and remove the tick themselves, or they may take the child away for medical care. The child will be welcome to attend the remainder of the school day after the tick has been removed.

### **PLAN FOR MILDLY ILL CHILDREN**

Children who are mildly ill may remain in school if they are not contagious (refer to Plan for Infectious Disease) and if they can participate in the daily program including outside time.

If a child's condition worsens, or if it is determined that the child poses a threat to the health of the other children, or if the child cannot be cared for by the classroom staff, a teacher will contact the child's parent(s). The parent(s) will be asked to pick up the child. The child will be cared for in a quiet area, by a teacher until the parent(s) arrive to take the child home. If parents cannot be reached, emergency contact people will be called and asked to pick up the child.

Any toys, blankets, or mats used by an ill child will be cleaned and disinfected before being used by other children. In addition, toothbrushes MUST be replaced when your child has been out due to

sickness.

## **PLAN FOR MANAGING INFECTIOUS DISEASE**

A. Teachers will take extra special precautions when children who are ill are diagnosed at school and when children who are mildly ill remain at school.

Children who exhibit symptoms of the following types of infectious diseases, such as gastro-intestinal, respiratory and skin or direct contact infections, may be excluded from school if it is determined that any of the following exist -- **keep your child home if they display any of the following symptoms:**

1. The illness prevents the child from participating in the program activities or from resting comfortably
2. The illness results in a greater care need than the teachers can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children
3. Fever over 100F in the previous 24 hours
4. Diarrhea: If not caused by medication, children must be kept home until symptoms clear.
5. Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24 hours at home or once at school
6. Mouth sores, unless a physician states that the child is non-infectious
7. Rash with a fever or behavior change until a physician has determined that the illness is not a communicable disease
8. Scabies
9. Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge, often with matted eyelids) until examined by a physician and approved for readmission, with or without treatment
10. Tuberculosis, until the child is non-infectious
11. Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment, all lesions are dry, and the child has been without fever for 24 hours

12. Head lice, free of all nits and mites
13. Strep infection, until 24 hours after treatment and the child has been without fever for 24 hours
14. Hepatitis A, unless treated with Rafampin for 2 days;
15. Chickenpox – children must be kept home as soon as the rash appears and remain home approximately one week, or until all sores are dry and scabbed over.

B. A child who has been excluded from school may return after being evaluated by a physician, physician's assistant or nurse practitioner, and it has been determined that he/she is considered to pose no serious health risk to him or herself or to the other children. Nevertheless, the teachers may make the final decision concerning the inclusion or exclusion of the child

C. If a child who has already been admitted to school shows signs of illness (for example: a fever equal to or greater than 100 degrees by oral or auxiliary route, a rash, reduced activity level, diarrhea, etc.), he/she will be offered their rest mat on which to lie down. If the child manifests any of the symptoms requiring exclusion (see previous list) or it is determined that it is in the best interests of the child that he/she be taken home, his/her parents will be contacted immediately and asked to pick the child up as soon as possible.

D. When a communicable disease has been introduced into the school, the teachers will immediately post this information on the foyer. Whatever information the school has regarding the communicable disease will be made available to parents. The staff will consult the Day Care Health Manual for such information and may also contact the school's health consultant for guidance and further information. Please notify the school if your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease so that we may notify other parents of possible exposure.

## **PEDICULOSIS POLICY**

Giving Tree School, in agreement with the Centers for Disease Control,

recognizes that no disease process or evidence of poor hygiene is associated with pediculosis (head lice), a common problem among young children. However, since the condition can be transmitted to others, proper and successful treatment is essential. Research has shown that screenings in school do little to reduce the incidence of head lice, which is primarily spread by head-to-head contact. Pediculosis is best prevented when parents check their children throughout the school year at home. Giving Tree will work cooperatively with families, using approaches recommended by public health experts. Up-to-date resources on prevention, identification, and treatment of head lice will be available and shared through school communications.

### **Giving Tree Head Lice Control Protocol at School:**

- Families are encouraged to check their children regularly during the school year and any time a child is having symptoms.
- Giving Tree staff will check a child's head if he or she is demonstrating symptoms, and if requested to do so by a parent.
- If active head lice are confirmed, the parent or guardian will be notified that the child should be picked up as soon as possible.
- Information on identification and life cycle of head lice will be provided through the Program Administrator, as well as guidance on treatment. The family is encouraged to contact their medical provider for recommendations and advice. Families should check all household members and notify all close contacts of the student.
- On return to school, prior to the parent or guardian leaving the child at drop-off, the child must be given a head check by a Giving Tree staff member. At this time, the staff member will also review the course of treatment at home. If the child has any remaining nits or lice, they will be asked to return home until free of all evidence of infestation.
- Upon returning to school, the student will be re-checked by a Giving Tree staff member at weekly intervals for two weeks and as needed.
- If one or more cases of head lice are confirmed, the Program Administrator will notify the school community of possible exposure,

while maintaining confidentiality.

## **MEDICATION POLICY**

We ask that whenever possible, you administer medications for you child at home. However, your child may occasionally need to take medicine at school.

### **Plan for Administration of Medication**

#### **A. PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION:**

1. Prescription medication must be brought to school in its original container and include the child's name, the name of the medication, the dosage, the number of times per and the number of days the medication is to be administered. This prescription label will be accepted as the written authorization of the physician. Some parents find it convenient to have the pharmacy give them two bottles, one for home and one for school.

2. Giving Tree will not administer any medication contrary to the directions on the label unless so authorized by written order of the child's physician allowing the parent to train the staff in implementation of their child's individual health care plan

3. Parents must fill out the Authorization for Medication Form before the medication can be administered.

4. Staff authorized to administer medication will be annually evaluated on their ability to follow the medication procedures as specified in 7.11(2)

#### **B. NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION:**

1. Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician. Giving Tree will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it is signed.

2. Along with the written consent of the physician, Giving Tree will also

need written parental authorization. Parents must fill out the Authorization for Medication form which allows the school to administer the non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician. The statement will be good for one year from the date it was signed.

3. Giving Tree will make every attempt to contact the parent prior to the child receiving the nonprescription medication unless the child needs medication urgently or when contacting the parent will delay appropriate care unreasonably.

### C. TOPICAL OINTMENTS & SPRAYS:

1. Topical ointments and sprays such as petroleum jelly, sunscreen, and bug spray, etc. will be administered to the child with written parental permission. The items must be handed directly to a staff member by the parent, and should not be kept in the child's cubby. A signed statement from a parent will be valid for one year and will include a list of topical non-prescriptive medication. ***Please note: This includes cough drops, lotions, lip balms, and the like. Children may NOT keep these items in their cubbies.***

2. When topical ointments and sprays are applied to wounds, rashes, or broken skin, Giving Tree will follow its written procedure for non-prescription medication which includes the written order of the physician which is valid for a year and the Authorization for Medication form signed by the parent.

### ALL MEDICATIONS:

A. The first dosage must be administered by the parent at home in case of an allergic reaction.

B. All medications must be given to the teacher directly by the parent.

C. All medications requiring refrigeration must be sent to Giving Tree in an insulated bag with an ice pack. Our refrigerator is accessible to children and is thus not a safe storage place for medication. All

medications will be kept on a high shelf out of children's reach.

D. Giving Tree will maintain a written record of the administration of any medication (excluding topical ointments and sprays applied to normal skin) which will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage, and the name of the staff member administering the medication. This completed record will become part of the child's file.

**E. All unused medication will be returned to the parent.**

### **EXAMINATIONS FOR CHILDREN**

Giving Tree School requires proof of annual physical examination and update immunization records for every enrolled student, dated within the last 12 months. Additionally, staff may request that parent(s) obtain medical, dental, vision, or hearing checks when symptoms, appearance, or behavior of the child indicate the need for such examinations.

### **EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLANS**

A. WATER: In the event that Giving Tree loses water, the program will continue to run for three hours. If water is not restored within three hours, parents will be notified that they must pick up their children as soon as possible. Giving Tree will remain closed until water is restored.

B. HEAT: In the event that Giving Tree loses its ability to heat the building, the inside temperature will be monitored. If the internal building temperature reaches below 60 during the winter months of November through March, parents will be notified that they must pick up their children as soon as possible. Giving Tree will remain closed until heat is restored.

C. ELECTRICITY: In the event that Giving Tree loses electricity for duration of more than three hours, parents will be notified that they must pick up their children as soon as possible.

D. FIRE: In the event of a fire at Giving Tree, the children and staff will evacuate to the home of the south side neighbor at 385 Main Rd. Parents will be notified to pick up their children as soon as possible.

### **MISSING CHILD PROCEDURE**

The staff and teachers of Giving Tree School have the highest regard for the safety of our students. Giving Tree School has many measures in place to prevent a child from becoming lost or missing. These measures include:

- A chime installed on the entry door notifies staff when the door has been opened.
- Gates around the Outdoor Classroom are kept closed and latched.
- The attendance sign in/sign out sheet in the entryway is kept current at all times.
- ID checks are required of any persons entering the building who are unknown to staff.
- Every staff member is expected to be aware of how many children are present and take head counts at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- Children are taught as new students and reminded throughout their Giving Tree careers the safety rules regarding boundaries, and they learn the rule that doors and gates are to be opened by adults only.
- Staff take head counts before transitioning from one space to another.
- One staff member will always walk at the head of the line, and one will walk at the end of the line to ensure that no children are left behind. Children are instructed to stay inside the “teacher sandwich”.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of their responsibility to sign in and out and ensure that their child’s departure and arrival are noted by a staff member.
- Parents/guardians are made aware of the expectation that responsibility for their child transfers over to the parent as soon as the



parent arrives for pickup in the classroom or playground.

#### PROCEDURE (IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THAT A CHILD BECOMES LOST)

Every measure is taken to ensure that Giving Tree students are accounted for at all times. Giving Tree School has never had a missing child incident. However, in the unlikely event that a child goes missing, the following procedure will be followed:

- 1) The most senior staff member on duty will bring the children inside to the purple rug and take attendance. Once attendance is taken, this staff member will remain inside with the children and maintain as normal a routine as possible.
- 2) The remaining staff will search the building and grounds, starting with a visual check of the driveway and Main Rd.
- 3) After 10 minutes of thorough searching, if the child has not been found, a staff member will call 9-1-1 and report a missing child, and then call the child's parents.
- 4) While waiting for emergency services and parent/caregiver to arrive, all staff members except the one remaining with the children will continue to search.
- 5) The most senior staff member who is not with children will be responsible for meeting emergency services and the child's parent(s)/caregiver.
- 6) Once the situation has been resolved an incident report will be written and an internal investigation will take place to examine how the situation occurred and put immediate measures in place to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

## **EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES**

NEIGHBORHOOD LOCATION (e.g., for fire):

385 Main Rd.  
Gill, MA 01354

REMOTE LOCATION: (e.g., for widespread local emergency):

Greenfield Community College  
1 College Dr.  
Greenfield, MA 01301  
413-775-1000

A. Emergency Evacuation Plans will be posted at all exits.

B. Accounting for children in an evacuation:

1. The center will maintain a daily attendance list that is current. Staff is responsible for marking children present or absent.

2. Early departure or late arrival times will be noted on the Daily Attendance Sheet.

4. The Lead Teacher Director will be responsible for taking the attendance list and for accounting for all children in the class once they are safely out of the building.

C. In the event of a fire or other emergency, the school will telephone the Gill Fire Department via cell, and evacuate as follows:

1. The Lead Teacher will take the attendance log and lead the children out exit #1 (door by Bridge), with alternatives #2 (door by Teacher's Bathroom) and #3 (door in Sunspace) used if necessary. All will proceed to the well cover from exit #1 or to the wooden house from exits #2 and #3.

2. The other teacher will check for missing children and secure the building, meeting the others at the designated point.

*In the event of a MEMA Emergency, the Emergency Alert System will notify Giving Tree via the Gill EAS tone alert radio and the children will be evacuated by bus to the UMASS campus, Amherst or to Greenfield Community College.*

D. Emergency evacuation drills will be conducted every month at different times of the day as determined by the teachers.

E. Children and staff will practice using different evacuation routes so that the children and staff will be familiar with all of them.

F. The Director or Designated Director will maintain documentation of the date, time, and effectiveness of each drill in the Fire Drill Log. This documentation will be maintained for five years.

G. The staff will notify the MA Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) in the event that an evacuation is necessary.

#### EMERGENCY EVACUATION – OFF-SITE LOCATION

In the event that an emergency off-site evacuation is required, a message will be emailed and auto-called, telling parents that the school has been evacuated and where they may pick up their children. A notice will also be posted on the door of the school. This notice will describe the nature of the emergency and will tell parents where they may pick up their child. **Students will only be released to persons listed as emergency contacts on the student’s enrollment form.**

#### OFF-SITE EVACUATION PROCEDURE

-The Director will notify local emergency personnel that the preschool will need to be moved to a remote location as soon as possible.

-Teachers will take attendance clipboard and emergency backpack as they exit.

-Teachers will take attendance and report any missing students to the Director.

-Staff will notify the Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) in the event that an evacuation is necessary.

## REUNIFICATION

- The Director will notify GCC of the need to relocate and instruct GCC security to prepare for arrival of students.
- Giving Tree staff will secure a holding area for arriving students and staff away from waiting family members.
- Staff will set up a parent/guardian report area to sign in and check ID if necessary.
- Staff will set up a student release area where students will be escorted to meet their parent/guardian and sign out.
- Staff will only release students to persons listed as emergency contacts on the student's enrollment form, and only after checking adult ID and signing student out.
- Staff will instruct parents/guardians to leave the site once they have signed out their student.

## SHELTER-IN-PLACE POLICY

In the event of an emergency where evacuation would put students and staff at risk, Giving Tree staff will implement shelter-in-place protocol. Possible reasons for implementing shelter-in-place protocol include tornado warning, outside environmental hazard such as hazardous waste spill, or threats involving weapons, explosions, or fugitive or suspect being pursued nearby by law enforcement.

## SHELTER-IN-PLACE PROCEDURE

- Director will order students and staff to shelter-in-place. Our designated shelter-in-place location is the large bathroom.
- Communication will be by cell phone.
- If warranted, the Director will shut off heating, ventilation, and air conditioning to stop the flow of outside air into the building.
- If warranted, the Director will place towels along bottoms of doors.
- The Director will close and lock all exterior doors and windows, and close shades.
- In the meantime, teachers will call 911 on a cell phone if emergency services are required.

- Teachers will take attendance and account for all students and report any missing student to the Director.
- Teachers will be prepared to announce a change in status (drop, cover, and hold).
- Emergency backpack will be on hand including students' emergency contact information and first aid kit.
- No students or staff will be allowed outside the building.
- The Director will monitor the main entries until the "all clear" is given.

## **INTRUDER POLICY**

In the event of the threat of violence including intruders and/or armed persons threatening the safety of students and staff, Giving Tree staff will implement lockdown protocol.

### **THREAT INSIDE THE BUILDING**

Giving Tree School does not have a lockable "safe room" inside the school building. Therefore, in the event of a threat inside the building, Giving Tree staff will move to evacuate the building as quickly as possible.

### **LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE – THREAT OUTSIDE THE BUILDING**

- The Director will order staff to begin the lockdown procedure.
- The Director will close and lock all exterior doors and windows, and close shades.
- The Director will call 911 on a cell phone, identify the name and location of school, describe the emergency, state that the school is in lockdown, provide intruder description and weapon(s) if known.
- Teachers will move students to the nearest safe place, away from doors and windows, and instruct them to stay as quiet and still as possible.
- Teachers will take attendance and account for all students and report any missing student to the Director.
- No one should move unless instructed by authorities, or the Director changes the status to Evacuate, or until the "all clear" is given.

## **SHELTER-IN-PLACE/LOCKDOWN DRILLS**

The staff of Giving Tree School are required to know and practice the procedures for sheltering-in-place and lockdowns. However, the effectiveness of training children *at the preschool age level* in these procedures is questionable. Thus, Giving Tree does not conduct lockdown or shelter-in-place or drills with students. Fire drills are conducted, as outlined above.

## **PEST MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Structural and landscape pests can pose significant problems for people and property. Pesticides can pose risks to people, property, and the environment. It is therefore Giving Tree's policy to incorporate Integrated Pest Management (IPM) procedures for control of pests. The object is to provide necessary pest control while minimizing pesticide use. The director will serve as IPM coordinator. The duties will include training the staff in IPM procedures, monitoring the pest situation at the school, and maintaining a log of pest sightings and pesticide use.

Parents will be notified of all pesticide applications. Giving Tree's IPM policy is in accordance with "The Act Protecting Children and Families from Harmful Pesticides", and is on file at the school.

## **ANIMAL POLICY**

Due to the rural setting of Giving Tree School, the odds of encountering wild animals on our grounds is high relative to other schools. While we have great appreciation for the abundant nature around us, we also recognize that it comes with risks. Any fur-bearing animal is susceptible to the serious and fatal disease of rabies. Infected animals can transmit this disease to students and staff. In the event that staff or students discover any of the wild/stray animals listed below on our grounds, staff will bring students inside as quickly as possible and remain indoors until the grounds are found to be clear. In the event that an animal such as a bat should be discovered indoors, Giving Tree staff will follow the

building evacuation protocol as outlined previously.

Based upon the recommendation of the Massachusetts Department of Health and Education, the following animals are expressly prohibited from Giving Tree School unless an exception is approved, in advance, by the Director.

**WILD ANIMALS AND STRAY ANIMALS** – Due to the high incidence of rabies in bats, raccoons, foxes, skunks, and other wild carnivores, these animals (whether alive or dead) are not permitted in the school building or on the school grounds under any circumstances.

**FUR-BEARING ANIMALS** – Pet dogs, cats, wolf-hybrids, ferrets, and other fur-bearing animals may pose a risk of transmitting rabies as well as parasites, fleas, and other diseases and injuries. As detailed above, this prohibition does not apply to guide, hearing, or other service animals or law enforcement animals. These animals are allowed in the school building or on school grounds with proof of current rabies vaccination.

**BATS** – Bats pose a high risk for transmitting rabies and should not be brought in the school building or on school grounds. Bat houses should not be installed on school buildings or school grounds.

**POISONOUS ANIMALS** – Spiders, venomous insects, poisonous snakes, reptiles, and lizards are prohibited from the school building and school grounds for safety reasons.

## **REFERRALS FOR SPECIAL SERVICES**

Giving Tree staff will support and assist families who wish to pursue special education referrals and/or evaluations for their enrolled children. Parents may request a referral for outside evaluation at any time. In Massachusetts, these are available free-of-charge through the Early Intervention (EI) program for children ages 0-3; or the family's resident school district for children ages 3 and up.

In the event that Giving Tree staff identifies a child as a candidate for evaluation for physical, developmental, social, or other special needs, the following steps will be taken:

- 1) A need is identified. Teachers discuss the need at a staff meeting.
- 2) The Director or Lead Teacher conducts an observation and

assessment of the child's needs. Written, dated observations are entered into the child's file.

3) Director requests a meeting with the parent(s).

4) Parent Conference:

a. Discussion of teacher observations using written anecdotes and descriptions.

b. Gather information from parents/caregivers, explore any areas of concern they may have.

c. If the Director recommends further evaluation, they will instruct the parents on how to submit a request for evaluation to their family physician or the local school district's Special Education Department.

d. It will be the parent's choice whether or not to pursue the recommended evaluation.

e. The written observations, signed and dated by the parents, will be placed in the child's file.

f. Follow-up: Parents will be asked to report back to the teachers concerning the problem, with a follow-up conference scheduled.

g. All of the above shall be logged in detail by the teachers or by the Director.

Giving Tree School will not pursue outside evaluation or release child information without explicit written parental consent.

**SERVICENET/REACH:** (Early intervention and developmental assessment for children ages birth-3): **413-665-8717**

**PRESCHOOL SPECIAL SERVICES:** Preschool-aged children aged 3-5 with disabilities are eligible to receive a free and appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. Contact the school district in your city or town to learn more about early learning services for children age 3-5. Ask to speak with the Administrator of Special Education at your school district. You may also contact the Massachusetts Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC) at **617-988-6600**.



## **SPECIAL SERVICES IN THE CLASSROOM**

If a parent wishes, their child may receive special services by a certified special services professional contracted by the parent (including, but not limited to: speech therapy, occupational therapy, or physical therapy) during the course of the regular school day, in the context of the school environment. Giving Tree administration will work together with the parents and specialists to obtain full background checks for the specialist prior to entering the school, and schedule appointments for services at times that fit with the daily schedule. In-school services are to take place under full supervision by Giving Tree teachers; at no time may a specialist remove a child from teacher supervision. Negotiation of payment for special services is to remain exclusively between the parent and the specialist. Giving Tree will not assume responsibility for payment of special services. Giving Tree reserves the right to discontinue the admittance of the specialist to the school at any time for any reason.

## **PARENT RIGHTS**

Chapter 28A, Section 10 of the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts mandates to the Department of Early Education and Care {EEC} the legal responsibility of promulgating rules and regulations governing the operation of day care centers (including nursery schools). These regulations must be adhered to by the licensee in order to ensure a minimum level of care for the children serviced by the day care center and/or nursery school. The licensee (day care center owner) is required to inform all parents of "the rights of parents" as stated in the regulations at the time of admission of their child to the center. These rights are as follows:

**Meeting with parents** In Group Day Care Programs: The licensee shall ensure that the administrator or their designee shall meet with the parents) prior to admitting a child to the program. The Licensee shall provide the opportunity for the parents) to visit the program's classrooms at the time of the meeting or prior to enrollment.

**(2) Parent Information:** the licensee shall provide to the parents upon admission of their child:

- (a) The program's written statements of purpose, administrative organization and services
- (b) The procedure for parent conferences and reports
- (c) The procedures for parent input
- (d) The policy for parent visits during the school day
- (e) The behavior management policy
- (f) The referral policy
- (g) The termination and suspension policy
- (h) A list of the types of nutritious foods that should be sent for snacks
- (i) The policy and procedures for identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect
- (j) The procedures for emergency health care and illness exclusion policy
- (k) The transportation plan
- (l) Upon request, a full copy of the health care policy
- (m) The procedure for administration medication
- (n) A copy of the fee schedule
- (o) In group day care, the procedures relating to children's records.

**(3) Parent Conferences:** the licensee shall make the staff available for individual conferences with parents as parental request.

**(4) Parent Visits:** the licensee shall permit and encourage unannounced visits by parents to the program and their child's room while their child is present.

**(5) Parent Input:** the licensee shall have a procedure for allowing parental input in the development of program policy and programs.

**(6) Reports to Parents In Group Day Care Centers:** the licensee shall, periodically but at least every six months, prepare a written progress report of the participation of each child in the center's program. This report shall be maintained in the child's records. The licensee shall provide a copy of each report to the parents) or meet with them at least

every six months to discuss their child's activities and participation in the center. In addition:

**(7) Notification of Injury:**

The licensee shall inform parents immediately of any injury which requires emergency care beyond minor first aid and shall inform parents in writing of any first aid administered to their child within 24 hours of the incident.

**(8) Confidentiality and Distribution of Records:**

Information contained in a child's record shall be privileged and confidential.

a. The licensee shall not distribute or release Information in a child's record to anyone not directly related to implementing the program plan for the child without the written consent of the child's parents. The licensee shall notify the parent(s) if a child's record is subpoenaed.

b. The child's parent(s) shall, upon request, have access to his child's record at reasonable times. In no event shall such access be delayed more than two business days after the initial request without the consent of the child's parent(s). Upon such request for access the child's entire record shall be made available regardless of the physical location of its parts.

c. The licensee shall establish procedures governing access to duplication of, and distribution of such information, and shall maintain a permanent, written log in each child's record indicating any time a child's record has been released.

1. Each time information is released or distributed from a child's record the following Information shall be recorded: the name, signature, and position of the person releasing or distributing the Information, the date, the portions of the record which were distributed or released; the purpose of such distribution or release; and the signature of the person to whom the information is distributed or released.

2. Such log shall be available only to the child's parent(s) and program personnel responsible for record maintenance.

**(9) Amending the Child's Record:**

a. A child's parent(s) shall have the right to add information, comments, data or any other relevant materials to the child's record.

b. A child's parent(s) shall have the right to request deletion or amendment of any information contained in the child's record.

1. If the parent is of the opinion that adding information is not sufficient to explain, clarify, or correct objectionable material in the child's record; the parent shall have the right to have a conference with the licensee to make his objections known.

2. The licensee shall, within one week after the conference, render to the parent(s) a decision in writing stating the reason or reasons for the decision. If the decision is in favor of the parent(s), steps shall be taken immediately to put the decision into effect.

**(10) Transfer of Records:**

When the child is no longer in care, upon written request of the parent(s), the licensee shall transfer the child's record to the parent(s), or any other person the parent(s) identifies.

**(11) Charge for Copies:** the licensee shall not charge an unreasonable fee for copies of any information contained in the child's record.

**(12) Research and Experimentation:** Unusual Treatment: no licensee shall conduct research, experimentation, or unusual treatment involving children without the written, informed, consent of the affected child's parents or guardian, for each occurrence. In programs where observations of children (by other than parents of the children in the center) are common, a general parental consent may be obtained in writing. Observation shall mean that there is no interaction between the child and the observers and no identification of the individual child. In no case shall the licensee allow a child to be harmed during research, experimentation or unusual treatment. Research and experimentation shall not mean program evaluation or data collection for purposes of

documenting services of the program which do not identify individual children.

**(13) Unauthorized Activities:** the licensee shall not allow children to participate in any activities unrelated to the direct care of children, without the written, informed consent of the parent(s) or guardian. "Activities" shall mean, but not be limited to: fund raising; publicity, including photographs and participation in the mass media.

## **SUSPENSION AND TERMINATION POLICY**

### **STUDENT SUPPORT PROCESS:**

In the event that a student's ongoing needs or behaviors impact the staff's ability to consistently maintain a safe and supportive learning environment for all enrolled children (including the child in question), the following steps will be taken simultaneously:

- **Staff bring their concerns to the Director.** Staff and Director will meet to discuss the challenging needs or behaviors as well as work to identify the student's strengths and favored or regulating activities. The student's progress will be discussed and documented on an ongoing basis at weekly staff meetings, until the situation is resolved.
- **The Director will communicate concerns about the child with the child's parent / guardian** via parent-teacher conference or phone call. The parent / guardian will be a valuable member of the student's support team and will be kept apprised of the child's progress through regular communication. The Director will share with parents written observations documenting the problem and the staff's current strategies for working with the child.
- If the concern is due to challenging behaviors, **the staff will document challenging behaviors**, taking note of time of day, part of the daily schedule, or other factors that may be influencing the child's ability to regulate.

- Together, **teachers and parents will develop a plan of action.** They should consider strategies such as:
  - o Prevention – What elements in the program could be adapted to prevent the behavior?
  - o Education – Is the child missing skills that could be taught to replace the challenging behavior?
  - o Intervention – What response will help prevent the behavior from reoccurring?
  - o Other supports – Giving Tree staff may offer referral to families for evaluation, diagnostic or therapeutic services; pursuing options for support services to the program, including consultation and educator training; and developing a plan for behavioral intervention at home.

#### SUSPENSION (KNOWN AS “REST AND RECOVER”):

If a child engages in behaviors that put themselves or others at risk, or otherwise makes it difficult for Giving Tree staff to maintain a calm and safe environment for all students, Giving Tree staff may contact the child’s parent/guardian(s) to request an immediate pickup for the child (Rest and Recover). The duration of the suspension will be at the discretion of the Teachers and Director, but should typically not last more than 1-2 school days. Unattended days due to a suspension will not be eligible for tuition credit or refund. Following a suspension, parent/guardian(s) will be offered a conference or phone call to discuss the events leading up to the suspension, and to develop a plan of action following the child’s return to school. If, at the time of the child’s suspension, the Director and Staff have not already engaged in the support strategies outlined above, they should begin the Student Support Process.

#### DECISION TO TERMINATE ENROLLMENT:

There are times when Giving Tree’s educational program cannot meet the needs of individual children. The determination that a child's needs cannot be met within the staffing structure of Giving Tree is an example of a circumstance that may lead to a termination decision. This decision is always part of a process of assisting a family in finding the appropriate services needed to ensure the optimum growth and development of their child.

The Director and staff will make termination decisions together. If, after following the above plan of action, including ongoing documentation and communication with the parent/guardian, the teaching staff and Director determine that Giving Tree is still unable to meet the needs of a child or a family, or that the child’s needs or behaviors negatively impact the staff’s ability to consistently maintain a safe and supportive learning environment for all enrolled children (including the child in question), the Director and Staff together may decide to terminate enrollment. If a decision to terminate enrollment is made, the Director will:

1. **Notify the parent/guardian(s) in writing of the termination decision.** At this time, the parent/guardian(s) shall be provided a copy of the school’s Suspension and Termination policy.
2. **Offer the parent/guardian(s) a conference** to discuss the plan for transition out of the school. The Director will facilitate the conference.
3. **The parent/guardian(s) will be offered support in transitioning the child to a different program and/or referrals to support services.** If the family wishes to engage Giving Tree in the transition process to outside agencies, schools, or services, the parent/guardian may sign a release of records, and Giving Tree will work in good faith to provide any information requested.
4. When a child is terminated from the program, at the initiative of either the parent or the school, the **teachers will prepare the**

**child for their departure from Giving Tree School** in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

5. If the reason for a termination is the identification of special needs that require additional teaching support for a child, written teacher observations will serve as documentation substantiating the need for additional support.

When a student's enrollment is terminated, families will be responsible for paying tuition owed up to the date of the student's termination of enrollment (including any past unpaid tuition invoices). Families shall not be charged for unattended days that occur after the date of termination.

### **CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT**

#### **PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT AT HOME**

All teachers are mandated reporters according to Massachusetts General Law C119, Section 51 A. This means that if a teacher has a reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of a child, he/she must file a report with the Department of Social Services.

The following procedure will be followed:

A. A teacher who suspects abuse or neglect must document her observations including the child's name, date, time, child's injuries, child's behavior, and any other pertinent information. The teacher will discuss this information with the Directors.

B. A Director, or the teacher with the assistance of a Director, will make a verbal report to DCF to be followed by a required written report 51 A within 24 hours.

DCF Telephone # Is: **413-775-5000**.

C. If a staff member feels that an incident should be reported to DCF, and the Director disagrees, the staff member may report to DCF directly.

D. All concerns of suspected abuse and neglect that are reported to DCF will be communicated to the parents by the Directors unless such a report is contraindicated.



## PROCEDURE FOR IDENTIFYING AND REPORTING CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT AT GIVING TREE:

It is Giving Tree's commitment to protect all children in care from abuse and neglect. The following are procedures for reporting suspected child abuse/neglect while the child is in the school's care.

Any report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child will be immediately reported by the Director to the Department of Children and Families. A meeting will be held with the staff member in question to inform him/her of the filed report. The staff member in question will be immediately suspended from the program pending the outcome of DCF, EEC and Giving Tree investigations.

Parents may contact the EEC for information regarding Giving Tree's regulatory compliance history.

Dept. of Children and Families (DCF): **413-775-5000**

Dept. of Early Education and Care (EEC): **413-788-8401**

1441 Main Street, Ste 203

Springfield, MA 01103

When allegations of abuse or neglect are made against a Giving Tree staff member the following procedures will be followed:

**A.** DCF will be contacted by the Directors immediately.

**B.** The accused staff member will be removed from the classroom and will have no further contact with children until DCF has determined if an investigation is necessary. If DCF decides an investigation is necessary, the accused staff member must remain out of the classroom.

**C.** When DCF is contacted the EEC will also be contacted. If DCF chooses not to investigate, the Director, in consultation with the Board of Directors and in communication with the staff member's teaching partners, will decide if the accused staff member will return to the classroom before further investigations by Giving Tree and the EEC.

This decision will be based on the seriousness of the allegations and the facts available.

**D.** Giving Tree will conduct its own internal investigation which will consist of the following steps:

1. The Board of Directors, the Directors and the staff member's teaching partners will meet to discuss allegations.
2. The Board of Directors and the Directors will meet with the staff member who is accused of abuse or neglect.
3. The Board of Directors and the Directors will meet to determine what follow up, response or consequences are appropriate.
4. If allegations of abuse and neglect are substantiated, it will be the decision of the Board and the Directors whether or not the staff member will be reinstated.
5. The Directors and staff will cooperate fully with all investigations.

**CRISIS SERVICES/SOCIAL SERVICES/ABUSE/NEGLECT**

Dept. of Children and Families (DCF) - Office for Abused & Neglected Children: **413-775-5000**

DCF 24-HR CHILD-AT-RISK HOTLINE: **1-800-792-5200**

Crisis Services of Franklin County & North Quabbin: **413-774-5411**

Community Action Greenfield (family support/mediation): **413-774-2318**

Clinical & Support Options (CSO): **413-774-1000**

CHD (social services): **413-774-6252**

Baystate Franklin Medical Center: **413-773-0211**



## **PARENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Each parent/caregiver is required to read the handbook and adhere to the school's policies. If questions should arise, it is the responsibility of the parent to seek clarification from the Program Administration.

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please carefully remove this page and return it to the Program Administrator. The signatures above acknowledge that you have read and understand the contents of the handbook.

