

WELCOME TO LITTLE SPONGES

“Where a child is given the opportunity to absorb the very best right from
the beginning”

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PARENT HANDBOOK

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PHILOSOPHY

Little Sponges is dedicated to providing a sound early childhood program for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years of age. Our program is designed to adequately meet each child's social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs in a safe, loving environment. The unique characteristics of each individual child are valued at Little Sponges. Each child's interests and developmental stages are nurtured by our well-trained and talented team of early childhood professionals. At Little Sponges, we enjoy, appreciate and embrace each child's individuality.

We believe childhood should be a time of great joy, love and exploration. Our curriculum emerges from the combination of teacher direction and children's interest. Our early childhood professionals plan and prepare a program that is developmentally appropriate, and takes into consideration each child's ability, needs, and culture. In a developmentally appropriate program, hands-on experiences and age-appropriate play, activities and materials provide the foundation for early learning as well as early literacy. Our focus on developmentally appropriate strategies to build academic skills and our play-oriented activities offer choices to children in a learning environment that supports and fosters their freedom of expression, growing independence, positive self-esteem and academic excellence.

Our childcare philosophy is based on flexibility and choice for children. Little Sponges respects and accommodates the individual developmental levels of each child. Discipline is approached in a positive manner with the goal of helping children build problem-solving skills as well as self-regulation.

Excellent communication is a top priority at Little Sponges, with daily communication through our tadpoles program. Parents are able to receive daily messages, notes, and photographs as well as any important information regarding the child and or the center. The staff and parents work together to ensure a successful daily experience. In addition to regular communication with parents, Little Sponges provides parent teacher conferences, getting to know you and assessment meetings, periodically throughout the year. Parents are also encouraged to volunteer for classroom activities and events.

Little Sponges admits children and employs personnel without regard to race, color, creed, gender, religion, or national origin.

STAFF

Our teaching team at Little Sponges is made up of teachers who have a sincere love for caring and educating children. All of the teachers are trained in Early Childhood Education and hold one or more of the following, NYS certification, Master's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, Associates Degree and or a Child Development Associates Credential.

To insure the safety of the children all of our staff members are: First Aid and CPR certified, and prior to employment at Little Sponges must be screened and fingerprinted and have a full background check including State Central Register, and State Exclusion List Register. Once employed at Little Sponges all staff are required to attend workshops, lectures and continuing education classes to help them further their knowledge and implement new ideas in the early childhood environment.

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to provide the parents of our community as well as surrounding communities, a high quality, safe healthy developmentally appropriate environment in which promotes healthy development and lifelong learning. Each child is given the opportunity to explore, engage and develop their own unique individuality, while learning, playing and just having fun.

PROGRAM GOALS

The goal of Little Sponges is to provide a high quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood program that meets the needs of each individual child.

Our goal is to provide the following.

- A healthy, safe, nurturing environment;
- An environment which encourages emotional, social, physical, and intellectual development;
- An environment that will encourage the development of a positive self image.
- An environment that will provide learning experiences through discovery, exploration, and hands-on activities;
- An environment that will make learning fun so that children will develop a desire

to be lifelong learners;

- An environment that will encourage language development, creativity, and an appreciation of fine arts;
- An environment that will encourage children in learning how to interact successfully with other children and adults, and how to live together in a cooperative environment which promotes decision-making, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and respect for and care of others;
- We will always work towards forming a cooperative partnership with parents so that we can work together to meet the needs of each child, and insure a positive early childhood experience.

REGULATIONS / COMPLIANCE

Little Sponges is licensed and committed to abiding by the regulations set forth by

the: Office of Children & Family Services regional office located at

Perry Duryea State Office Building

250 Veterans Memorial Hwy.

Suite 2A-20

Hauppauge, NY 11788

(631)240-2560

A copy of the regulations is available at the front desk as well as in the main office.

PARENT / PROVIDER COMMUNICATION

Little Sponges maintains an open door policy at all times for all parents/legal guardians of children enrolled in the program, However all visitors must be supervised to ensure the safety and security of all children in the center.

Parents are always welcomed. We would appreciate your taking into consideration the classroom schedule when visiting. Please understand that the teacher may not be able to speak with you for a lengthy period of time during an unscheduled visit, the supervision of the children will always be the teachers first priority. Please be informed that from time to time Little Sponges may have children in the classes that require removal, prior to picture taking & unscheduled visits.

Be assured that there will always be opportunities for parents to have informal conversations with regards to their individual child and that parents may request a conference at any time.

To help keep the lines of communication open between the center staff and the parents the following will be implemented.

- Little Sponges will conduct at least two official parent / teacher conferences, meet the teacher and or getting to know you sessions per year.
- Each child will receive a daily Tadpoles report via email.
- Newsletters will be sent home monthly.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Little Sponges encourages parents to be involved in their child's daycare experience.

The following is a brief description of some of the opportunities available to help parents get involved.

- Special persons day
- Class celebrations
- Show volunteers – Event Volunteers
- Career Day
- Come read with us Day – Special Reader
- Mothers Day Tea
- Fathers Day Golf
- Graduation
- Prom

Resource Materials Available For Parents

Little Sponges will try to make all updated resources and material available at all times. The following is a list of some of the resource material presently available.

- Parenting articles
- Lending Library with books and tapes
- List of community resources. Such as health insurance, WIC, Department of Social Services, Lead Screening for Children, Parent workshops, etc.

CENTER PROGRAMS

Here at Little Sponges we use a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and curriculum to help each individual children reach their potential. These curriculums follow the guideline of approval of The National Association of the Education of Young Children.

Infants, Twoddlers and Toddlers are nurtured in a playful atmosphere enhanced by colors, music and textile toys. Our well qualified caring caregivers work with the families in developing an individualized routines and or schedule that is adequate for each child. The program meets the changing needs of individual children by providing a safe and appropriate environment that is both challenging and stimulating. As the children develop independence and feelings of autonomy, the staff will provide opportunities for exploration and the development of gross and fine motor skills, self-help and language skills. The children can enjoy a variety of indoor/outdoor activities as they choose from a wide selection of equipment and toys. As infants emerge into the Twoddler, Toddler programs they become more curious and independent and are given opportunity to grow in a more structured/routine daily daycare program.

During the preschool years, children are involved in active learning through discovery and hands-on activities which will encourage social/emotional skills, language development, pre- math and reading skills, creativity, and the development of positive self-esteem. Each child is encouraged to make appropriate choices and reach his or her highest potential within a developmentally appropriate, nurturing environment. Our curriculum offers a wide range of academic activities to help each child master the readiness skills needed to go on to kindergarten. Our Pre School students also participate in a community service programs as well as extra-curricular classes. (Dance, Musical Theater, Music, Spanish, Lego Robotics, Yoga, Sign Language, Etc.) Our School Age Program is a safe supervised extended care program for children in elementary school in which provides homework help, tutoring and studying, as well as recreational and extra-curricular classes.

CHILD PLACEMENT

Infants and toddlers will always be grouped according to their chronological age in accordance with regulation's set forth by Office of Children and Family Services. Children 6 weeks to 18 months' old will be considered infants. 19 months – 36 month old children will be considered toddlers. Children ages 3-6 will be considered Preschool. Any child who is 18 months or older who may not be developmentally ready to advance to the next age group setting may be retained for a period of up to three months. A written agreement concerning this retention between the parent and the center is required. If this time period is expected to exceed three months, the center, in consultation with Early Intervention or Special Education staff and the parent, may exercise greater discretion in the placement of the child with a developmental disability or delay based on consideration of such factors as the child's developmental readiness, appropriateness of the classroom environment, the level of care the child requires and the needs of the other children in care. Placement is first determined by the child's chronological age, taking into consideration the New York State Education Department cutoff date for Nassau County enrollment date of December 1st. The center may also determine the group placement for a child based on the child's developmental readiness in accordance with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulations. In the event that a child is transitioned to a more appropriate class, Little Sponges will put a thirty day transition period into effect. Transitioning may sometimes be very challenging and difficult for some children as well as parents and may take longer than anticipated but if the child is given the proper support and encouragement the transition will be more successful.

Our staff will work with the child and parents to help the transition be a positive one, at the end of the transition period the parent will be notified of placement. When dealing with children with special needs who may or may not be receiving early intervention or special education Little Sponges may exercise greater discretion in the placement of such child with the following but not limited to developmental delay such as speech, physical, or emotional delay. Other factors of consideration regarding placement may also be the child's developmental readiness, appropriateness of the classroom environment, the level of care the child requires as well as the needs of the other children in the class.

Little Sponges will always make every effort to keep a child enrolled in a program; every reasonable accommodation will be made to help each child successfully achieve their individual goals.

HOURS OF OPERATIONS

Little Sponges Hours of Operation are 6:30 am to 7:30 pm.

FEES

Your specific rates will be outlined upon enrollment. Little Sponges requires a two week security deposit along with a registration fee upon enrollment. Deposits are non-refundable at any time for any reason, however can be applied the last two weeks of tuition providing Little Sponges receives a request in writing by parent at least sixty days prior to the last date of provided care. Payments may be made by certified check, cash, or credit card. Parents who choose Incentive Programs must understand that Incentive payments are non-refundable at any time. You must still pay for your child's scheduled time - regardless of attendance. Those days and times are reserved for your child. If you or your child is ill, or you chose to go on vacation your payment will still be expected on or before the due date.

Families who receive subsidize tuition will still be responsible for their parent fee. Parent's fees may be paid monthly or weekly. In the event that your subsidy payments are terminated, and/or discontinued a parent will be responsible for full payment for the duration in which the child was enrolled during the termination period. If subsidy payments are not made on the 1st day of each week the child will not be accepted for the following day. An applicable late fee will be added to your balance for each additional day the fee is not receive regardless of attendance.

Payments are due in cash and/or CLEARED payments by the first of each month. If you are paying by credit cards or checks, payments must be made by the 28th of the previous month in order to allow ample time for the transactions to clear for daycare as of the 1st of the following month. Parents who wish to process credit card payments online, must forward the receipt of payment on the 28th in order to avoid Daycare Interruptions. In the event that payments are not paid and cleared by the 1st of each month, daycare services will be suspended until payment is received and cleared. Also note multiple late payments, insufficient payments, and return credit card payments can cause termination of child care services.

Tuition rates are subject to change without prior notice. September –June will be considered school, July and August will be considered summer session.

TERMINATION / WITHDRAWAL

Enrollment can be terminated by parent with sixty days written notice, no other notice will be accepted. All payments must be current prior to letter acceptance. If parent(s) wishes to terminate this agreement without a sixty days in advance written notice they will still be responsible for any owed tuition fees and any deposit automatically will be non-refundable and voided. Subsidized parents are also responsible for given proper written notice.

Absences of more than one week without notification and/or payment can result in an automatic withdrawal with all fees dues and deposit surrendered. Re-admittance, if accepted, will include all back pay including late fees, re registration, and new deposit.

If parent/guardian breeches contract he/she will be liable for all collection, attorney, court, any/and all costs involved in breach. Little Sponges reserves the right to terminate without prior notice for the following reasons but not limited to: (With all fees due, payable and non- refundable as well as deposits voided)

Lack of compliance in accordance with handbook policies as well as program rules and regulations.

Failure to pay or frequent late payments

Failure to complete required forms

Lack of parental cooperation, Disrespect, Conflict of interest between provider/staff and parent.

Involvement of parent/caregiver in slandering and/or gossiping with regards to facility, students and or staff

False information given by parent either verbally or in writing

Consistent late pickups/early drop offs disrupting classroom routine

Failure of child to adjust to the child care program after a reasonable amount of time. Physical or verbal; abuse of any person, animals, or property by parent and or child Little Sponges inability to meet the child's and or parent's needs

Lack of parental cooperation

Excessive behavior

Refusal from parent to help their special needs child

Parents please understand that if your child is terminated from Little Sponges your agreement will be voided effective the termination date and your child will not be accepted for re-enrollment. If Little Sponges terminates your child's enrollment, it will be out of necessity and in the child's best interest.

ARRIVALS / DEPARTURES

All children are to be signed into the daycare program via key touch system, thumb print Id or sign in sheet at the front desk and a teacher or assistant will accompany the child to their room. This program has been implemented for safety and security reasons. After the child has entered their classroom, then a parent may choose to go down to the room and look in on the child as we do have an open door policy in place. Please send your child(ren) clean, well rested, and dressed for the day and fed (if arriving after 8:30). It is normal for some children to have difficulty separating from parents in the morning or not wanting to leave when its time to go home. Please be very brief during these transition times. The longer you prolong the departure the harder it can get, and we need to focus our attention all the children.

This is also a time of testing when two different authority figures are present (the parent and the provider). Sometimes children will test to see if the rules still apply. During arrivals and departures, we ask that parents/guardians please back up the daycare rules. If you do not, I will remind the child that their behavior is inappropriate at Little Sponges and take action to correct, if needed.

You are responsible for your child during drop off/pickup up times, please be in control of your child(ren). Children are not permitted to go out to their car unattended at pick up times. We will only release your child(ren) to the parent/guardian or someone you designate. If someone else is to pick up your child, please notify us ahead of time. We MUST have written permission to release your child whether or not they are on your contact list. Please inform emergency contacts, or people designated to pick up your child, that we would need to see a photo ID. We will not let a child leave without a parent's written permission and identification.

If you will be dropping your child off later than usual please call ahead, this way your child will not be considered absent. However please note that we will not accept non called late arrivals past 10:30AM. Please keep in mind that the children follow a daily classroom schedule and attendance as well as punctually are very important. A child arriving to school late might have a more difficult time due to confusion in routine. If your child is going to be absent from daycare, please call. If your child is absent due to illness a doctor's note must accompany the child on the first day back to daycare.

AFTER SCHOOL CHILDREN

All of the children attending the Little Sponges after school program will be given the opportunity to complete their daily homework assignments. We will do our best to help a child who has forgotten their homework at school, but returning to school will not be an option.

If your child is registered for after school care, please be aware should your child's school be closed or for some other reason your child cannot attend school (other than illness) then you must pay the emergency care fee in addition to your regular tuition on or before the closed days. If you will be registering for childcare for school holidays or vacation, then a request form must be submitted at least fourteen days prior to needed care, the fee will then be an additional fee. Please understand that we may not always have availability to accommodate your child without prior request, and cannot accept children that are ill for the day.

LATE PICKUP / EARLY DROP-OFF FEE

Daycare ends at 6:30 for full time daycare children and 3:00 for children on the kindergarten program with no extended care. Any child attending after their scheduled time will need to be registered for extended care, which will be billed in advance. The fees are as follows: \$1.00 per minute. Fee is calculated to the nearest minute. These fees are for pre registered extended care only. If you (or any of your designated drop off/pick up people) drop off/pick up before/after your contracted times, and the child is not pre registered for extended care then there will be a fee applied to your child's tuition for the late fees at a \$1.00 per minute.

LATE PAYMENT FEE

You will be billed a fee of \$5.00 for each day the payment is not received (to include sat & sun). If fee isn't paid by the following Monday morning, Services will be halted until the outstanding balance is paid and your child will not be accepted into care. Continued late payments will result in termination of services (with all fees due and payable).

RETURN FEE

You will be billed a fee of \$30.00 as well as any additional bank cost that we may incur for any declined credit card payment or returned automatic check withdrawal. Services will be halted until we receive full payment made by alternative methods.

EXTENDED ABSENCES / SPECIAL PROGRAMS

For any days or week(s) that children are absent due to vacation, maternity leaves, or extended leave (teachers) or, illness you are still required to pay your full tuition to hold your child's placement. Should the parent decide for any reason to remove the child from the program for any period of time without payment, the child's enrollment will be terminated and all deposits surrendered. Then the said child must be reregistered into the program upon return and pay all fees applicable. There will be no guarantee that Little Sponges will be able to accommodate the returning child nor have placement.

In the event you will be enrolling your newborn sibling (if spaces are available), you will be required to pay the registration fee and two weeks (full amount) deposit in order to hold the position four weeks prior to start date. Little Sponges cannot hold an infant's position for more than thirty days.

There are a limited number of spaces available; therefore payments are not based on child's attendance. NO refunds are given for late arrivals, early departures, parental vacations, or exclusion due to illness, weather and holidays.

Should the parent not wish to hold the child's placement during the summer but parent would like to re-register in the fall for the upcoming school year providing placement is available, should understand that there is no guarantee that a child will be accommodated upon re registration. Children attending the summer program have priority over children returning into the program. Any child unable to return to the program can be placed on the waiting list for up to nine months. If a parent doesn't give written notice by April 15th that their child will not be attending summer all deposits will be considered non-refundable and surrendered.

PARTIES

Birthdays: Each child's birthday, turning 2 and above will be celebrated with cupcakes supplied by parent(must be peanut free with ingredient label attached). If a parent wishes to send in any gift or goody bags for the classmates, please note that the items must be age appropriate, peanut free, and in a sealed bag or container. First birthday children, a parent may wish to provide a single cupcake for their child. If you choose to have a birthday party for your child and would like to distribute invitations through Little Sponges, please note that we can only distribute invitations if every child in the class is invited. If you wish to only invite a select group of children, you must need to contact the families on your own.

HEALTH

Health Policies:

1. For the protection of all the children, if a child is ill with a communicable condition such as but not limited to (sore throat, conjunctivitis (pink eye), chicken pox, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, etc.), attendance must be discontinued until the child is symptom free for 24–72hours (see illness report) with a doctor's note.
2. Children with obvious symptoms of illness will be sent home.
3. If a child becomes ill at day care, a parent will be promptly notified and the child will be cared for in isolation for up to one hour until a parent or designated person comes to pick up the child. In the event that a parent cannot be reached, Little Sponges will have no choice but to contact Emergency Services. If a child goes home sick, they will not be allowed to attend the program on the following day. (24-72-hour rule will be in affect) No exceptions.
4. Parents are responsible for keeping emergency contact information, such as phone numbers and alternate contacts, up to date. These numbers will be verified upon enrollment and periodically thereafter.
5. Each child must have a physical examination by a physician within 90 days prior to admission into the program. In addition, all immunizations must be kept up to date. The required medical form must be filled out by a physician and returned before care can be provided.

6. Each child must have a physical examination by a physician on an annual basis. Immunizations for each child must be kept up to date. The required medical form must be completed by a physician every six months or as needed and returned in order for the child to continue attending the program.
7. Regardless of diagnoses, it is the rule at little Sponges that if a child cannot participate in their classroom or outdoor daily schedule, then they are too ill to attend daycare/school need clearance to return to daycare.
8. Any child sent home with an obvious symptoms or illness must bring in a doctor's note upon returning to daycare.
9. If a child is taken outside of the country for any reason, the child will not be allowed back into the program without a clearance of health from a physician.

MEDICATION

Little Sponges has staff members which are MAT Trained and can administer medication under the following conditions.

Medication Policies:

1. Prescription medication to be administered during the hours of child care must have prescription label from pharmacy and in the original container. The medication must be accompanied by written instructions from the prescribing physician, along with a written permission from the parent.
2. Over the counter medications will only be administered with a consent from the physicians/parent. All medications must be in their original container with the child's full name and date noted on the label and specific instructions from physician must be written.
3. A parent must send in a written notice as to the last dosage given prior to returning to daycare.
4. Proper medications forms must be filled out in order for medication to be administered. Forms can be found in each enrollment package. For extra copies please contact the office.

5. Inhalers, Epi Pens, and or medications being left at Little Sponges must be in a proper labeled medical bag.
6. Children over 2 years of age with Allergies are expected to wear an allergy bracelet on a daily basis.

Please note that if the process of administering medication becomes too difficult or unmanageable for a particular child, it will be discontinued.

ACCIDENTS & EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

1. Parents are required to sign an Emergency Release Form for each child.
2. Parents are responsible for keeping all emergency contact phone numbers up to date.
3. First Aid kits are available in the first aid room located near the restrooms.
4. In the case of a minor accident the provider will administer first aid, according to provider's training and experience. The provider will contact a parent immediately if it is necessary and an incident/ Boo Boo report will be sent home.
5. In the event of a serious accident or should there be a need for emergency medical treatment the provider will do what is in the best interest of the child according to the following but not limited to.
 - a. Administer first aid, if possible.
 - b. Have the child transported to the Emergency Room.
 - c. Call a parent (or emergency contact if a parent cannot be reached).
 - d. Stay with the injured child until a parent or appointed contact person arrives.
6. In all cases of accident or injury, the provider will fill out an accident report form, which will be signed by both the provider and the parent of the child involved.

CHILD RELEASE

1. Children will be released only to an adult, age 18 or older. Do not send a child under 18 to the door to escort siblings to the car. Children must hold an adult's hand walking from the door to the car.
2. Names of those permitted to pick a child up from care should be stated on the Child Information Form.
3. Anyone picking a child up from care must have photo identification with them.
4. Parents should make the provider aware in advance of any alternate pick up arrangements. If arrangements are not made in advance, a parent or guardian must be contacted and a faxed release form must be received before the child will be released to anyone who is not pre-authorized.

CUSTODY & VISITATION ISSUES

1. If there are custody or visitation issues to address, the daycare must have a copy of any custody and visitation orders or agreements in order to enforce them. We cannot deny the release of a child to a parent without legal court documentation such as custody order or restraining order. Without an official documentation pertaining to custody and or restraining order on file the center must grant any parents on file access to the child.
2. All information used in the event of an emergency will be as noted by the custodial parent.
3. All mailings, conferences and special functions information will be sent to the attention of the custodial parent.
4. We encourage all parents to attend all shows, teacher conferences and school functions but it is the responsibility of the custodial parent to notify the other parent of such.

TRANSPORTATION / FIELD TRIPS

1. Parents must sign a Transportation Authorization Form for each child.
2. Little Sponges offers the children age appropriate field trip throughout the school year. In the event that we will be going on field trip, such as to a zoo, park or library, parents will be notified in advance. A signed permission slip for the specific field trip will be required prior to the child attending the trip. Should a parent decide not to allow your child to attend a class trip, it will be the parent's responsibility to seek alternative care for the day. Parents are always welcomed and encouraged to attend their child's trips.
3. Please Refer to Transportation Policy Packet.

Fire Procedures and Drills

Fire Drills will be conducted at least on a monthly basis Staff and children will be properly instructed on drill procedures. Fire drills consist of actual usage of our fire alarm system. When drills are conducted the alarms will sound as well as lights will flash as if it were an actual fire emergency.

Lockdown Procedures and Drills

All Little Sponges employees are instructed to stop and question all unescorted, unidentified or unauthorized persons that they do not recognize as belonging to our facility. Such persons are to be requested to report to the front desk and/or administration office in order to be present proper identification and regain escorted access to facility if necessary Staff immediately reports the intruder or suspicious person to the administration office. In the event that such person does not have valid reason to enter the facility, the individual will be escorted out of the building. If the individual(s) refuse to leave, inform them that they are in violation of the law and that the police will be notified. The administration and or any staff member will authorize a 911 call or other appropriate emergency notification. At the time of the 911 call the school will then be instructed that a lockdown procedure is in effect. For safety and security reasons, during lockdown drills and or actual procedures, no one will be admitted into the facility nor dismissed from the facility except for authorized personal such as police and fire officials.

Lockdown drills will be conducted at least four to six times per year, Children and staff will be instructed on proper lockdown procedure implementations. Lockdown drill consist of all children and staff, securely locked down in classroom/multipurpose rooms, doors would be locked, shades or curtains drawn, lights off, and children and staff will be instructed to secure themselves in a corner/closet/safe area of the room and will remain there until proper

authorities authorize release of lockdown.

Shelter In Place

In the event of an unforeseen circumstance such as Severe weather conditions, extreme temperature (hot or cold) a public disturbance that escalated to violent acts, Chemical or biological spills, Rabid animal sighting, etc. in which we have no choice but to commit to a shelter in place procedure, Staff and children will be advised that it would be necessary for all students and staff members to stay at Little Sponges for a period of time and/or overnight. Proper necessities such as food, water, diapers, toiletries, etc. are stored on premises to be used in the event of an emergency. Please note that all parents, guardians, as well as staff members emergency contacts, will be contacted via Emergency phone call services, email, texts, and individual contact calls if necessary.

Relocation

In the Event of an Emergency in which the children of Little Sponges would need to be relocated to an alternative site for safety and or security reasons, the alternative relocation sites are as followed:

Site 1

Amber Court
3400 Brush Hollow Road, Westbury NY 11590
516-334-3838

Site 2

Westbury NYCB Theater
960 Brush Hollow Rd, Westbury NY 11590
516-247-5200

In the event we are redirected to a different location other than the ones listed above we will contact all necessary parties accordingly.

Each age group has adequate emergency bags that consist of all necessities that consist of adequate short term supplies, in which staff has been previously advised to bring in the event of an emergency.

Bus Evacuation Drill

Staff will prepare the children prior to them leaving the building. Children will be informed that a drill will occur and the procedures that should be followed:

Staff will specify what children will do if the driver is hurt and cannot help. (Such as: honking the horn) Staff will assist the children with the practice drill procedures at least twice per year. THE FOLLOWING STEPS WILL BE FACILITATED BY THE DELEGATE AGENCY STAFF AND BUS DRIVER BACK DOOR EVACUATION

1. All enrolled student per age group that participate in field trips and or home/school transportation will have opportunity to participate in bus evacuation drills.
2. Bus driver will explain to the children the drill procedures

3. Bus driver will be given the number of children participating in the drill
4. Bus driver will warn the children that the loud noise coming from the back of the bus will be the alarm
5. Children will be removed from child restraints/seats/by staff, and volunteers.
6. The closest staff person, volunteer or bus driver will open the back exit
7. The children will climb out of the back door, assisted by staff, and or volunteer. Children will be instructed to sit in order to slide out the back door. Children will be instructed not to jump out in order to avoid injury. In some cases children are carried off the bus by a staff member and or volunteer.
8. As children are exiting they are gathered in a group by staff and directed toward a safe area near the bus.
9. Driver and staff person conduct a clean sweep of the bus to ensure everyone is off the bus
10. When all of the children are out of the bus, the driver and staff will conduct a head count
11. Staff will lead the children to a safe area away from the bus for drill purposes.
12. Staff will then notify children that the drill has been conducted and completed and then will lead the children safely back onto the bus and ensure all children are properly restrained in seatbelts or car seats.
13. Staff will then document bus and evacuation form prior to departure.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Little Sponges is committed to an anti-discrimination policy in all of its programs and services. Little Sponges is consciously and proactively inclusive of all areas of diversity including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, socioeconomic status, marital status, language, disability, or immigrationstatus.

MEALS & SNACKS

Little Sponges is a NUT FREE ENVIROMENT. No nuts or nut containing products will be served or allowed on premises. Little Sponges does not authorize outside food in the building unless your child has a medical necessity accompanied by physician's documentation. It is the parent's responsibility to notify Little Sponges of any food allergies that their child might have.

1. All children are eligible for the meal program unless there are dietary concerns or allergies, which would be unreasonable to accommodate. Breakfast, Lunch and snack are included with tuition. Menus are prepared in accordance with CACFP and will be posted on the family board located at the front desk.

2. Each child will receive the meals and snacks that are scheduled during his/her hours of care. The meals will be offered however under no circumstances will we force a child to eat.
3. Infants are fed on demand. All baby foods, special diet foods and formula sent in by parents must have full name labeled on it and must be in original containers or jars with ingredient labels and instructions.
4. You are responsible for feeding your child if he/she will be arriving to the program after the beginning/end of a meal time.
5. If your child is on a specialized diet, you will be required to submit a letter from your child's pediatrician in addition to the alternate nutrient form from Little Sponges.
6. If you are sending in homemade food for your infant or toddler, please specify the contents of the containers.
7. If your child requires a special diet it is the parents' responsibility to send in pre-approved meals by Little Sponges.

OBSERVANCE OF HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Little Sponges encourages the children to learn about the rich multicultural diversity in our society. We at Little Sponges understand that our families celebrate different religious and ethnic holidays and have a diversity of observances. We feel it is important that our children become comfortable and familiar with and begin to appreciate the multicultural pluralism of their classmates and the larger society. While we wish to maintain an atmosphere where children are not over-stimulated by holiday activities, we will involve the children in positive, age-appropriate holiday experiences, as well as celebrations of other cultures for learning purposes. We invite and encourage parents to join their children in sharing significant traditions and holidays from their family's cultural heritage throughout the year. We also put great effort into incorporating diversity in our daily program through activities, crafts, toys, books, music, and dress up clothing.

IN THE EVENT OF INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event of inclement weather when school districts are open but the weather is treacherous Little Sponges intent will be to stay open for as long as possible as long as we are in no way risking the health and safety of the children and staff although no transportation will be available.

Little Sponges will follow the Westbury/Jericho school district weather advisory. If the school district closes due to inclement weather, Little Sponges will be closed as well. If the school district closes early due to weather conditions, it is possible that Little Sponges will have to do the same, parents will be expected to pick up their child or make arrangements. At any time transportation will be cancelled due to extreme weather conditions.

TOYS

NO TOYS WILL BE ALLOWED AT DAYCARE. The toys and activities provided at day care are carefully chosen to suit the ages of all the children in care keeping health and safety in mind.

CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable clothing suitable for play and appropriate for the season. Little girls who choose to wear dresses to school must wear shorts or leggings underneath due to the activeness of the day. Please do not dress your child in anything you are worried about staining. The children are very active and could easily stain their clothing while playing or eating. We provide smocks as well as aprons and bibs for the children, but these items do not always protect the clothing from being stained.

Each child must have a complete change of clothes, including a shirt, pants, socks and underwear, to be kept at day care in case they are needed. During the winter months, each child should have an extra hat and gloves or mittens as well. If a child becomes soiled and does not have an extra set of clothing in their bag, we will have no other choice but to contact the parent/guardian to have the child picked up. Under no circumstances will we allow a child to stay soiled and/or inappropriately dressed in childcare.

We ask that no jewelry be worn to daycare to avoid loss, accidents and or choking.

Little Sponges will not be responsible for loss or damaged items.

PACIFIERS, SIPPY CUPS, DIAPERS & PULL UPS

If a child requires diapers or pull ups the parent must provide an adequate supply as well as wipes and diaper ointment weekly. All must be labeled.

Any child enrolled in any of the toddlers and or creative 2's programs that are not yet able to use the restroom can wear pull ups while training. No diapers or pull ups will be allowed in any of our (PreK3, Pre K 4 rooms) unless needed for medical reasons, in which we must receive proper notification from the child's physician.

Any parent that is requesting that their child use a pacifier during daycare hours must abide by the following:

1. Pacifiers will only be accepted in Infant and Twoddler Rooms.
2. Pacifier must be attached to a safe, strangle/Injury free pacifier intended strap labeled with first and last name. As well as a container also labeled with first and last name in which the pacifier can be placed in when not in use.
3. Pacifiers are solely used during nap sessions and or on necessity basis.

4. Little Sponges will not be responsible for lost or damaged pacifiers.

Sippy cups are for infant twoddler and Toddler rooms, sippy cups must be age appropriate and intact. Cups will be sent home daily to be properly disinfected and cleaned. Any cup that is broken or deemed harmful will be discarded.

TOILET LEARNING

Learning to use the toilet properly is one of the most complex developmental tasks of early childhood. Toilet learning requires specific neurological and physical maturations in the child. When the child is ready, and is showing signs of willingness to train, parents and staff will discuss the child's individual toilet learning program and work through the processtogether.

Please note that we do not believe in pressuring a child during toilet training. Therefore, we mustinsist that parents provide an adequate supply of pull ups until the child is accident free at day care for atleast two full weeks.

NON VIOLENCE

We do not allow any type of gun play at Little Sponges. Recognizing that gun play can be an important way for some children to feel powerful, Little Sponges will provide many alternative opportunities for children to play out the important theme of powerful decision-maker, without weapons of any kind. Our staff will help define the limits of aggressive fantasy play to ensure that all children feel safe and comfortable while in care. We create a play environment in which children have many real choices and can therefore exert control throughout such play.

NAPS

1. Children will be offered the opportunity to take a nap during the day from 12:30 – 2:00.
2. Each child will nap on their own nap cot provided by Little Sponges.

(Infants nap in cribs/playpens)

3. The parent is responsible for sending in a small light blanket labeled with the child's first and last name to be used for nap time. This blanket will be sent home daily to be laundered and should be returned daily.
4. Any child who does not take a nap will be offered an activity instead. There will be books,

puzzles, crayons and other materials available for the children during this time. This activity will only be offered after a nap is attempted.

5. Each child requires a different amount of sleep. If a child is still asleep at the end of nap/quiet playtime, the child is generally allowed to continue sleeping for a short period of time. If you prefer that an attempt be made to wake your child after a given period of time, please inform the classroom teacher.

DISCIPLINE

Little Sponges staff encourages the children to practice acceptable behavior and they help guide children into developing self-control through positive guidance.

Under no circumstances will the use of physical or corporal punishment or harsh language be permitted and we do not believe in the Time Out method. We ask that parents refrain from using such techniques as well.

Actions that may cause a child to hurt themselves, others and/or damage property will not be permitted, understand that we do recognize a child's need to express both happy as well as unhappy feelings and seek to provide safe, alternative means of expression. Children will be urged to participate in solving behavior problems that involve other children or adults in the classroom environment. On occasion, it may be necessary for a child to be removed from the group for a short period of time so the child can regain control, and rejoin the group. When such need occurs the child will remain with their own class, just in a separated area. Should the behavior become unsafe for the said child and or classmates or staff, A staff member will then contact administration to inform of such behavior. At that time the child will then be removed by an alternative staff member to be brought to an alternative safe location within the facility, where a parent will be contacted. Under no circumstances will discipline be associated with toileting accidents or failure to eat and or sleep. Many discipline problems can be avoided by the use of developmentally appropriate activities, environments, and teaching methods. Positive reinforcement of appropriate behavior, redirection, decision-making strategies, as well as age appropriate conflict resolution will always be practiced. The Little Sponges staff will have open communication with the parents in regards to the behavior at all times, and with the consistency of the parent and teacher involvement we can prevent re occurrence of such behavior.

☒ If a child is receiving services such as behavior modification, District and or county SEIT, special education or any other therapeutic services from an outside source, please note that all such professional must a hear to our discipline policy and under no circumstances may choose to self-discipline any child in their care.

USE OF VIDEOS

Videos are occasionally incorporated into the curriculum. The videos chosen have been previewed by staff, have an educational content, and are entertaining at the children's level of understanding. Such videos contain no commercials and are always nonviolent and age appropriate.

CHILD ABUSE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Staff Recruitment, training and Supervision

- Reference checks on all prospective employees and program volunteers will be conducted, documented, and filed prior to employment.
- The director will work with the Office of Children and Family Services to secure State Central Register, and State Exclusion List Clearance, Criminal Conviction Statement as well as Fingerprinting through The Division of Criminal Justice Services of staff and volunteers who work and/or volunteer within the facility.
- All new employees, and volunteers to will be required to participate in an orientation and/or private meeting pertaining to explaining our policies, procedures, and regulations as well as being a mandated reporter. Staff is made aware of legal requirements and by their signature, they acknowledge having received and read appropriate policies and procedures.
- Employees and volunteers working directly with children will be provided training such as the Mandated Reporter Training and information about child abuse and maltreatment, as well as identifying signs of possible child abuse, and procedures for responding to the suspicion of child abuse or maltreatment and the process of reporting.

Staff Relationships with Children

- In order to protect individuals, employees, volunteers, as well as for the safety and protection of the children in care, Adults are encouraged to avoid, where possible, being alone with a single child.
- Daycare employees and volunteers are encouraged not to socialize with program participants under the age of 18 outside of the program activities.
- Our employees and volunteers should be alert to physical and emotional state of all children each time they report for a program. Signs of injury or suspected child abuse should be reported immediately to Child Protective Services, as well as on their daily health checks. Once a report is submitted, staff members or adults must notify director or assistant director of their report and proper documentation must be filled out.

Reporting to Parents

- Parents will be informed about their child's program participation. We have an open door policy in which parents may visit our program at their discretion however each parent/guardian etc. must be escorted by Little Sponges staff throughout the building at all times.

Reporting Procedures

- When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child in your care has been subjected to possible abuse, neglect or maltreatment; the employee and or volunteer to whom it has been disclosed or the first person who has discovered and or suspects possible abuse must immediately contact Child Protective Services to make the report. After reporting to Child Protective Services the employee and or Volunteer must inform the owner and or Director, the reporting of suspected child abuse situations is a personal obligation as well as a professional and legal one. By law, reports must be made by all mandated reporters such as but not limited to: medical, educational, daycare staff, social services, and law enforced personnel. All Staff will have training and be properly informed of their standing as a mandated reporter. All suspected child abuse must be documented in writing after the report is called in to Child Protective Services using form 2221A.

Report to Whom: Statewide Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment (1-800-635-1522)

Investigation: When conducted by Child Protective Services within 24 Hours of receipt of a report.

When conducted: Finding to be made no later than 60 days after receipt of report.

Who conducts: The local child protective service agency.

Procedure and Requirements: Immediate investigation into the condition of other children and into protection of other children in the house.

Penalty for Failure to Report: Any person required to report or any person required performing any other function who knowingly fails to do so, or any person who threatens or attempts to intimidate a witness shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor.

418-1.10(Child Abuse and Maltreatment (b)(2)(ii))

6.(C) In accordance with provisions of Sections 413 and 415 of the Social Services Law, Child Day Care center staff must be report any suspected incidents of Child Abuse or maltreatment concerning

a child receiving child day care to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, or cause such a report to be made, when such staff have a reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their capacity as child day care center workers is an abused or maltreatment child. This must be done in the following manner:

(1) Child day care center staff must personally make, or cause to be made, an immediate report to Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and maltreatment by telephone, followed by a written report within 48 Hours, in the form and manner prescribed by the Office, to the child protective service of the social services district in the county in which the child resides.

(2) After making the initial report, the reporting staff person must immediately notify the director or licensee of the center that the report was made.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Little Sponges will always keep each child's educational information, health records as well as parent's financial records confidential. A parental written request will be required in order to release a child's records, unless the request comes from a state agency or is court ordered. Staff members may also be advised of information on such records if the information is needed in order to provide adequate and or special needs care to the child.

PERMISSION SLIPS

Aside from a permission to attend a field trip the following is a list of but not limited to of permission slips that each parent will be asked to review and sign at the time of enrollment.

Permission to:

- Photograph
- Swim
- Play with water / sand
- To participate in activities
- Permission for sunscreen / Diaper ointment
- Permission to participate in multicultural activities and projects
- To join smile programs
- To go on walking trips
- To go on bus trips

EXTRA CURRICULA ACTIVITY

Little Sponges offers a wide variety of extra curriculum activities throughout the year. These activities are arranged by age and ability of each child. These programs are made available to all children registered at Little Sponges. Any activity that takes place during the classroom hours is expected to full class participation. If a parent wishes for a child not to participate in a whole school activity it is expected for the child to be kept home for that day. With any program that is solely conducted on an aftercare basis enrollment will be optional.

LITTLE SPONGES PARENT HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

Parent/Guardian Name:	Contact Number:
Child/ren Name:	DOB:

() I have read the updated parent handbook in its entirety and I agree to abide by its content of rules and regulations.

Parent Signature:	Date:
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