FLATWATER BANK
EARLY LEARNING
CENTER

Parent Handbook
2024

902 12th Street
Gothenburg, Nebraska
308-351-5008

Monday-Friday
6:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Director: Casey Madsen

Owner/Management: Impact Center Board of Directors

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SECTION 1 – CENTER OVERVIEW

1.1 Welcome

Welcome to the Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center! We are pleased you have chosen us to care for your child(ren). We understand the decision to trust someone else with your precious little one(s) is not easy, and we will work hard every day to earn your trust. The practices we follow in our Center are based on years of research and best practices from across the early childhood landscape and they are designed to provide the very best care and education for all of the children in our care.

We believe a strong collaboration between parents and caregivers is the best way to meet the developmental and personal needs of each child. You know your child best and will be a powerful advocate for him/her, while our childcare professionals can serve as a valuable resource for you concerning most areas of child development. Working together, we believe we can create an environment that provides positive experiences that support healthy growth and development for your child.

This handbook has been developed to give everyone a clear understanding of the expectations at Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center – both for staff and parents – by providing specific information about many of the Center's policies and procedures.

If there are any questions about anything outlined in this handbook, or things that may have inadvertently been omitted, please contact the Center Director.

1.2 Mission Statement/ Philosophy

Mission Statement

The Early Learning Center is caring for our community's children and families by providing every child in our care with consistent, high-quality early learning opportunities from compassionate and dedicated staff in order to prepare each child for their next milestone.

Program Philosophy

The Early Learning Center believes every child in our care will be engaged in quality experiences that offer a healthy and compassionate home away from home. These experiences will be:

- **Inclusive** – meeting the needs of and creating opportunity for every child
- **Collaborative** – taking into account the strengths of staff, parents, and the community to grow together, building each other up and working together in mutual respect
- **Fun** – learning and connecting through play and positivity
- **Intentional** – making choices that best support identified early learning objectives
- **Developmentally-appropriate** – best suited for the specific needs of each child

This program believes in and practices a positive teaching method. Teachers are to spend time on the children's level as often as possible and to lead by example as role models. Signs of this include but are not limited to:

- Using kind voices
- Utilizing positive reinforcement
- Implementing center-wide discipline techniques as trained
- Doing activities with the children
- Joining in conversation with the children
- Playing with children on their level
- Teaching developmentally-appropriate lessons to help children with their development

1.3 Center Organization

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center provides care for children from ages six weeks through 12 years old and is organized into three "neighborhoods" made up of five classrooms each – Infant (6 weeks to 12 mo.), Toddler 1 (12-24 mo.), Toddler 2 (24-36 mo.), Pre-K 3/4, and Pre-K 4/5.

- Upon enrollment, children will be assigned to a neighborhood and will move up to the next classroom in the same neighborhood each year.
- Every effort will be made to keep all the children from a family in the same neighborhood for ease of drop-off and pick-up.
- After consultation with parents, management may choose to move a child or family to a new neighborhood only after all other solutions have been tried, including following the grievance policy (section 2.5).
- Ages are approximate and children will be moved to the next classroom depending on developmental appropriateness and space.
- Each neighborhood has a Curriculum Director who is responsible for the training, coaching, and supervision of the education staff in their neighborhood to ensure quality and continuity throughout the Center.

The Impact Center Board of Directors will govern the business of the Impact Center, including the operations of the Early Learning Center. This board of directors will make policies and have the final say on all matters pertaining to the Impact Center, including the Early Learning Center.

The Early Learning Center Director will oversee and manage the day-to-day operations of the ELC. This position will be responsible for meeting all licensing requirements, any required paperwork, staff scheduling, and other operational matters outlined in the job description.

The Curriculum Directors are responsible for the training, coaching, and supervision of the education staff in their neighborhood. These Curriculum Directors are responsible for the planning and coordination of the comprehensive curriculum plan offered in the ELC to ensure the needs of every child are met.

Teachers in classrooms are responsible for the implementation and coordination of the education program in his/her classroom in consultation with the Curriculum Director in that neighborhood.

1.4 Accreditation/Licensing

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center is licensed by the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and as such will adhere to the rules and regulations of this licensing. The Center's license is displayed in the reception area for review. A copy of the DHHS licensing regulations is available in the ELC Director's Office or online on the Nebraska DHHS website. Parents must cooperate with the Center in carrying out all governmental laws, rules, and regulations affecting the operation of the Center. The Center's licensing record is available upon request from the department, including, but not limited to, evaluation forms from the health, building, and fire departments that inspected our Center.

The policies and procedures listed in this handbook are both an explanation of these regulations and policies designed to provide a high-quality environment beyond what is simply required.

In order to provide this high-quality learning environment for all children, we participate in **Step Up to Quality**. This program is designed to help participating providers intentionally go beyond what is required to recognize quality and offer the best possible care and education for the children in their care. SUTQ provides a center coach for the director and staff to make sure we are offering the best

quality available. This program also does center evaluations, including our curriculum, teacher/child relationships, teaching skills, social and emotional education and environment. We are rated on these items and our center score is posted on our website and at the main entrance. Scores range from 1-5.

1.5 Inclusion and Non-Discrimination

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center provides access to high-quality care for any family. No child will be denied care based on race, color, religion, sex, age, or physical or mental disability so long as there is room for the child in the program under State licensing ratio regulations.

The ELC believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in childcare. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

The Center strives to meet the needs of all children, including those with special needs. A specific written plan will be designed for each child with verified special needs by the teacher, curriculum director, and parent before enrollment. In order to provide consistent care, we also ask that we be able to communicate and work with any outside sources that also provide special services to the child. Parents are asked to make the initial contact and release relevant information to the Center staff. If areas of concern arise, parents are encouraged to work with the responsible curriculum director and the appropriate services.

1.6 Curriculum and Child Assessment

Much time and effort has been put into choosing the best curriculum for our Center. The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center follows Creative Curriculum. This curriculum is a research-based, high-quality learning tool with appropriate lessons and activities for children of all ages. This curriculum is supplemented with appropriate activities in math, science, creative arts, literacy, and interpersonal skills, among other things that help prepare the children for kindergarten.

Each classroom is overseen by a Curriculum Director who will assist the teachers with preparing and implementing lesson plans as needed.

As part of this curriculum, we gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress. This information allows teachers to modify and adjust what they are doing in their classroom to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

Information about your child's day and how learning is taking place in the classroom will be communicated through normal Center communication tools. Questions may be directed to classroom teachers or Curriculum Director.

The Center uses the Teaching Strategies Gold. To coincide with curriculum-based assessment(s), we monitor each child's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment.

The developmental screening process is a collaborative one, involving parents/guardians and done in conjunction with the child's primary care provider and health, education, and early intervention consultants. Developmental screening is conducted with written consent from the child's parent/guardian(s).

1.7 Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released except when required by our regulatory and partnering agencies or state law.
Center staff has been made aware of the confidential nature of working with children and families and is expected to keep this information confidential at all times.

1.8 Role of the Caregiver

High quality caregivers are essential to a program that wishes to maintain high standards of care and education. Caregivers must be professionals who are willing to assume responsibility for establishing an educational program that meets the developmental and personal needs of a child. For these reasons, we have established some guidelines that we feel are imperative to the role of a caregiver.

1. Caregivers will provide a safe environment where children can freely explore their surroundings without fear of harm.
2. Caregivers will assess each individual child's developmental needs. Based on this assessment, the caregiver will provide a personalized, individual program with activities and experiences that help to facilitate the child's continued growth.
3. Caregivers will be knowledgeable about early childhood development and use this knowledge to facilitate the child's learning.
4. Caregivers will provide a stable environment that maintains necessary routines but allows for flexibility in routines to most appropriately meet the growth needs of each child.
5. Caregivers will be a facilitator of communication between parents and the Center. Caregivers will work with parents to provide an environment that is most beneficial to the child.
6. Caregivers will be child advocates. They will look out for the child's best interest in the Center, the family and the community. They will bring their concerns to the attention of the appropriate people.
7. Caregivers will maintain confidentiality about each child and his/her family.
8. Caregivers will act as a resource person for families and their children. They will bring information about child development and about other resources available in the community.
9. Caregivers will organize the setting to encourage open movement, free choice, and involvement in all activities.
10. Caregivers will keep accurate daily records for all the children. These records shall be used to keep the parents informed about their child's daily activities and chart observations about problems and progresses that the child may be encountering.
11. Caregivers will give children in their care their undivided attention, limiting personal cell phone and smartwatch use to break times.
12. Caregivers will be responsible for attending in-services and other conferences to keep them well informed about current topics in early childhood development.
13. Caregivers must always remember that a childcare program should be a supplemental service that can enrich a child and his/her family's lives. To do this, it is necessary to work closely with the child's parents to provide a program that is most beneficial to the child.
14. Caregivers must try to understand a parent's perspective on an issue and to provide support to parents.

15. Most importantly, caregivers must immediately see to the child's physical and emotional needs for food, clothing, cleanliness, safety, security, and nurturance. Above all, we want parents to feel that they have selected a Center they can trust.

1.9 Maintenance of Equipment, Fixtures, Furnishings, and Toys

Classroom areas will be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition. Toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated will be removed and disinfected prior to using again. This also applies to other surfaces in the classroom. Toys and surfaces will be disinfected using a disinfectant wipe or other acceptable disinfectant. Machine-washable cloth toys that have been placed in a child's mouth or that are otherwise contaminated will be laundered before another child's use. Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized will not be used. Staff will be trained in cleaning techniques, proper use of protective barriers such as gloves, and proper handling and disposal of contaminated materials. Routine cleaning will be supervised by the classroom teacher.

Facility cleaning requiring potentially hazardous chemicals will be scheduled when children are not present to minimize exposure of the children. All cleaning products will be used as directed by the manufacturer's label. Nontoxic substances will be used whenever possible.

All equipment, fixtures, furnishings, and toys will be examined regularly to make sure they are in good-working order and are safe for the children. Anything found to be broken will be repaired if necessary. Anything that cannot be repaired will be removed and disposed of in the proper way.

1.10 Parking and Traffic Flow

The location of the Impact Center on a very busy intersection requires all drivers to observe some simple but important traffic flow rules. All traffic entering the Impact Center parking lot, including parents coming to the ELC, **MUST ENTER THE PARKING LOT FROM 12TH STREET.** Parents coming to the ELC will then turn left and follow the one-way traffic flow to the parking spots near the ELC entrance designated for drop-off or pick-up.

Parents who are leaving the ELC parking lot must continue to follow the one-way traffic and exit the parking lot on Avenue I. Cars exiting the parking lot **MUST TURN RIGHT (NORTH)** onto Avenue I.

1.11 Child Abuse/Neglect Reporting Policy

The State of Nebraska requires that all members of childcare institutions be on the lookout for, and report to the State, any and all cases of abuse to a child. The Center, therefore, is obligated to report to the State any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect.

If The Center has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to conditions or circumstances which would result in abuse or neglect, we shall report such incident or cause of report to be made to the proper law enforcement agency, or to the Nebraska Department of Social Services Child Protective Services on their toll-free number 1-800-652-1999.

Such report may be made orally by telephone with the caller giving his or her name and address, shall be followed by a written report, and to the extent available shall contain the address and age of the abused or neglected child, the address of the person or persons having custody of the abused or neglected child, the nature and extent of the child abuse or neglect or the conditions and circumstances which would reasonably result in such child abuse or neglect, any evidence of previous child abuse or neglect including the nature and extent, and any other information which in the opinion of the person may be helpful in establishing the cause of such child abuse or neglect and the identity of

the perpetrator or perpetrators. Law enforcement agencies receiving any reports of child abuse or neglect under this subsection shall notify the department on the next working day by telephone or mail.

1.12 Firearms

Personal possession of firearms is prohibited within the Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center with the exception of law enforcement officers with jurisdiction.

SECTION 2 - ADMISSION INFORMATION

2.1 Enrollment Procedures

Families wishing to enroll a child in The Center should contact the Center Director to request a registration packet. All pieces of the registration packet **must** be completed for each child and returned to the Center Director within the first week of care or the child will not be allowed to return until the paperwork is complete.

Required forms and information to be returned includes:

1. Registration Fee of $25 per child (Non-Refundable)
2. Activity Fee of $25 per child (Non-Refundable)
3. Permission Forms
4. Signed Parent Agreement Form
5. Payment Agreement Form
6. Photo Release Form
7. Nebraska Health and Human Services Children's Record Form
8. DHHS Parent Handbook Form
9. Copy of Current Immunization Record information
10. Emergency Medical Authorization Form

Parents wishing to reserve a spot for a child should turn in all of the above **PLUS** two weeks' payment. **This deposit is non-refundable** and covers your child's first week of care.

The Center does not discriminate against any race, creed, religion, and/or sex in the enrollment of students or the hiring of staff.

Parents are encouraged to talk with their child's teacher to develop a transition plan that works for everyone involved.

2.2 Attendance Expectations

During enrollment, families contract for the time they intend to use the services of the ELC (see section 4.1). The information in this contract is used for the purpose of scheduling staff, preparing meals, and the ability to accept other children, all of which affects the expenses incurred by the Center. Parents are expected to have their children at the Center during the time indicated on the contract and are responsible for paying for this time, regardless of attendance.

Parents who repeatedly do not bring their children during the time stated on their enrollment contract will receive a verbal warning, then a written warning. Parents who continue to be inconsistent in

attendance will be referred to the Board of Directors, who will make the determination on termination of care in order to free up a spot for a family who can use the spot on a regular basis.

All children are expected to arrive by the time specified on the contract. If you plan to arrive late because of a previously scheduled appointment or an unexpected situation, please let the Center know of your situation as soon as possible. If your child has not arrived and you have not called in that day, a staff member will attempt to contact a parent.

Families who receive state subsidy (Title XX) are expected to utilize the Center for full-time care. Any absences above five days a month will be billed to the family as private pay and must be paid for the child(ren) to remain in care.

2.3 Center Rules

A. Be Kind (share, inside voices, soft touches)

B. Be Safe (walking feet, listening ears, stay together)

C. Be Helpful (clean up, stay in line, help others)

2.4 Family Expectations

Our childcare program strives to be a partner with parents in caring for and educating their children. In order for this partnership to be successful and beneficial for each child, the following are expected from parents in our program.

1. **Adherence to Guardian Agreement**: A signed Guardian Agreement must be submitted upon the child's enrollment and parents are expected to follow the statements on this agreement. Parents are expected to visit with the Director if anything on this Agreement is unclear or if the parent is not able to abide by the Agreement.
2. **Home/Center Communication**: A child benefits most from a smooth transition between home and childcare with consistent rules and consequences. To make this happen, adults must openly communicate with staff pertinent information about the child on a daily basis. This should include such things as illnesses, death, changes in living situation, changes in sleeping, eating or elimination habits, teething habits, and so forth.
3. **Use of the Center Communication App**: The Center will utilize an electronic means of communicating with parents, and parents are responsible for having the app and checking it regularly for important updates and notices regarding their child.
4. **Fundraising**: The Center is a non-profit organization that works hard to provide high-quality childcare while keeping rates as low as possible. In order to do this, families will be asked to participate in fundraising opportunities each year. Parents are encouraged to participate in these opportunities, helping their children approach friends and family to share these opportunities. The money raised helps us keep tuition down and provides funds for special items or activities.
5. **Family Connection Activities**: Regular Family Connection Activities will be scheduled as a time for parents and Center staff to gather outside of regular business hours to share in a brief time of information sharing designed to be mutually beneficial to everyone, as well as a time to visit and connect with other parents. Families with children enrolled in the ELC program are expected to attend these activities as much as they are able.

Parents are invited to participate in the life of their child at the Early Learning Center in the following ways:

1. **Lunch**: Parents are welcome to join their child for lunch at the Center. Please notify the Director at drop-off in the morning if you would like to eat lunch with your child so the meal count can be adjusted.
2. **Special Interests**: Parents are invited to come to the Center and share their knowledge about a special interest with their child's class. Please contact the Director to make arrangements for such a presentation.
3. **Donations**: Donations to the Center are tax deductible. As your child develops mentally and physically, please consider whether books, toys, or outgrown clothes may be appropriate for use in our Center.
4. **Field Trips**: Students will have the opportunity to participate in various field trips throughout the year, and there may be opportunities for parents to join their children on these field trips. More information regarding chaperoning will be shared with each specific field trip, and parents are encouraged to consider whether they might like to come on one or more trips, giving consideration to other parents as well.
5. **Daily Communication**: Caregivers will do their best to speak with parents/guardians every day. Since staff days are devoted to caring for children, it is usually not feasible to have a long discussion during regular program hours. If a situation requires a longer discussion, kindly arrange for an appointment.
    a. **Family Connection App**: Daily notes on the Center app will keep you informed about your child's activities and experiences throughout the day.
    b. **Bulletin Boards**. Located throughout the center, bulletin boards provide Center news, upcoming events, holiday closing dates, announcements, etc.
    c. **Newsletters**: Monthly newsletters provide Center news, events, announcements, etc.
    d. **Email**. We encourage you to provide an email address that you use regularly so we may send you announcements, event invitations, newsletters and general updates.

2.5 Grievance Policy

If a parent has a concern, question, or grievance about their child beyond the normal home/center communication, they are encouraged to utilize the following steps until a resolution is reached.

1. Schedule a time other than drop-off or pick up to visit with their child's teacher to find a solution.
2. If the issue is not resolved, the parent is asked to find a time to visit with the teacher and his/her supervisor.
3. If there is still no resolution, a meeting is to be scheduled with the teacher, supervisor, and Center Director.
4. After these steps have been taken, if there is still no resolution, the parent may appeal in writing to the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors.

2.6 Suspending or Terminating Care

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center is committed to providing access to high-quality early learning experiences for every child. It is never our desire to see a child suspended or terminated from attending our program. However, extreme instances may occur when that must happen.

Our trained early childhood professionals will work with children to teach them the skills needed to understand and practice appropriate behaviors, utilizing the discipline procedures outlined elsewhere in

this handbook. However, there may be instances where suspending or terminating care becomes the only option for the safety of the other children or staff at the Center. This will only be done as a last resort after the steps outlined in the Grievance Policy (section 2.5) have been followed.

Parents will be contacted if a child's disruptive behavior is not being corrected through the course of normal discipline procedures and may be asked that the child goes home for that day. Repeat occurrences may require suspension from the program until appropriate corrective actions have been taken.

The ELC reserves the right to terminate care for a child or family including but not limited to the following reasons:

- Violent or destructive behavior – physically endangering another child and/or the teacher
- Profanity, vulgarity, and/or inappropriate actions
- Inconsistent and infrequent attendance
- Failure to return required forms (medical, immunization, food program, etc.)
- Unpaid fees
- Failure for parent cooperation in following all center policies
- Refusal to pick up an ill child or continual disregard for the illness policy (section 3.10)
- Continual child or parent disrespect towards staff
- Lack of attendance at meetings with Center staff regarding their children

SECTION 3 – CARING FOR CHILDREN

3.1 Hours/Days of Operation

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center will be open to care for children from 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The Center will be closed on the following holidays when these holidays fall on a weekday:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- 4th of July
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Christmas Day

A full week's tuition will be charged even if the Center is closed for one of these holidays.

A Center calendar will be approved by the Impact Center Board of Directors each year. This calendar will identify these holidays and other days when the Early Learning Center anticipates being closed. Keeping in line with the ELC mission, it is the intention that childcare will be offered to families for as many work days in a year as possible. On days prior to or following a holiday - for example, the Friday after Thanksgiving - a sign-up system may be implemented to help give management accurate counts to avoid overstaffing. Families who do not sign up for these days are not guaranteed a spot, but may call the office that morning to check on availability if care is needed.

3.2 Inclement Weather Policy

It is the goal of the Center to provide care for children of working parents during regular days and hours of operation, regardless of weather. The Center will not necessarily follow the school regarding closure due to weather. Instead, on inclement weather days the Facilities Director will determine if the personal safety of staff is threatened by bad road/weather conditions. The decision will be made as to whether

the Center will open on time, open at a later time, or be closed for the day. Staff will be notified of this decision and employees will be expected to report for duty if possible to provide care for parents who still need to work.

Parents will be notified of any change in opening time as soon as possible. Parents will then have the opportunity to notify the Center to let the Director know if their child(ren) will be attending that day or not.

In the event of severe or dangerous weather during hours of operation, Center staff will follow the emergency plan outlined in section 3.6 and no student will be dismissed during a severe weather warning. Should winter weather develop during the day, the Facilities Director will determine if staff and students need to be dismissed in order to arrive home safely. Should that be necessary, families will be notified and asked to pick their child(ren) up as soon as possible. Closing early will only be done in extreme cases and for the safety of the staff and families who might need to travel on dangerous roads.

3.3 Outdoor Weather Policy

Children are expected to participate in all activities including outdoor play. Time spent outdoors each day gives children the benefits of fresh air, sunshine, exercise, and learning in a different environment. Children will go outside every day unless weather conditions are too dangerous for outdoor play (heat index, windchill, etc. as determined by guidelines). Parents need to provide appropriate articles of clothing so children do not get overheated or chilled.
During the winter, children should have a winter coat, hat, and mittens every day. It is recommended that children have boots and snowpants if there is snow on the ground or in the forecast. If a family is unable to access appropriate winter clothing, let the Center Director or a Curriculum Director know and assistance will be provided if possible.
During the summer, parents will be notified prior to water days, and on these days children should have a swimsuit, towel, and water shoes. Parents are also responsible for providing sunscreen for their child.
If the weather conditions are too dangerous to be outside, children will be given time to play in the connected Sports Training Center.

3.4 Security

The Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center takes the safety of all children and staff very seriously. Access to the ELC outside of normal drop-off and pick-up times will be monitored electronically, and access to the building outside of those times will be granted by staff as appropriate.

The connection of other components of the Impact Center to the ELC are electronically locked and secure at all times. Only staff with access key cards will be able to pass through these doors. At no time will the general public be able to access ELC entry through these public use areas.

3.5 Staff/Child Ratio

The Center will be staffed to meet the following ratios:

- Infant/Toddler 1 (6 wks – 18 mos) – 4:1
- Toddler 2 (18 mos – 3 yrs) – 6:1
- 3-yr old preschool – 10:1
- 4-5-yr old preschool – 12:1
- School age – 15:1 (ratio may be lower due to certain field trips)

The Center Director will ensure that adequate staff is on hand to accommodate and manage staff breaks. During nap/rest time, at least one teacher will be in every room to meet naptime ratio requirements. Infant room ratios do not change.

3.6 Emergency Plan

In the event of a disaster including a fire, tornado, flood or other natural or man-made disaster, staff and children will follow these evacuation procedures. All procedures will be practiced so students are familiar with these actions.

Tornado

In the event of a tornado warning, all children will be immediately escorted to the designated shelter, a hardened space specifically built to serve as a storm shelter. Children are required to stay there until the National Weather Center cancels or expires the warning. For safety reasons, no child will be released during this time.

Lock Down

In the event of a lock down, classroom doors will be locked, lights will be turned off, and students will be placed out of the line of sight from the door.

Evacuation

In the event of fire or other emergency requiring evacuation, students will line up and be immediately escorted from the building through the nearest safe exit. If students need to be removed from the property all together for their safety, they will go to Gothenburg High School and parents will be contacted with more information.

Medical

In the case of a medical emergency, 911 will be called first and then notification will be made to the child's parent.

Civil

In the event of a civil emergency, all instructions provided by local/national authorities will be followed and parents will be notified of actions as possible.

3.7 Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

Timing

Every child MUST be picked up by 6:00 p.m. A charge of $1.00 per minute, per child will be assessed for any child remaining past 6:00 p.m. Multiple occurrences of late pick-up will be reported to the Board of Directors and may be cause for termination of care.

If a parent knows he/she will be picking up their child(ren) later than usual, even if it is before the 6:00 p.m. closing time, parents are asked to notify the teacher or Director so appropriate staffing can be coordinated to cover the extra time.

Safety

It is important that parents and staff work together to ensure the safety of all children at all times. Parents are asked to closely supervise their children during drop-off and pick-up times when many other families are arriving at the same time.

- Parents must always accompany their children from the parking lot to their classroom.
- If possible, hold your child's hand from the car into the building at drop-off and again from the building to the car at pick-up time.
- If it is not possible to hold your child's hand (carrying an infant in a carrier, etc.), please be sure your child stays close to you at all times.
- If you have more than one child, your family is asked to stay together throughout the check-in process. Walk each child to his/her classroom and complete the check-in routine. **Do not send a child to his/her classroom alone.**
- At pick-up time, complete the check-out process for each child and keep all of your children with you as you move from room to room. Please do not leave children alone in the hallway for any reason.

Children will be clocked in and out by the classroom teacher upon arrival and dismissal. This is extremely important so accurate attendance is recorded for emergency drills or events. Parents are asked to follow proper procedures during drop-off and pick-up times so teachers are able to accurately clock in everyone.

Children will only be released to parents or guardians unless written permission is given for an alternate pick-up. See below for more information.

No child is ever to be left alone or unsupervised.

To ensure the safety of all children, any child who walks or is learning to walk must wear shoes at all times.

Alternate Pick-Up

- Children will only be released to parents and/or guardians unless written permission is given for an alternate pick-up. Written permission may be made through the center messaging app.
- Parents may have a list of alternate pick-up people identified in writing and on file with the Director.
- In no instance will a child be released to an unknown person, even if that person is listed as an alternative pick-up designee until the identity of the individual is verified by a valid ID.
- Parents must contact the child's teacher or Center Director prior to pick-up time in person, by phone call, or through the Center app.
- Employees of a state program (i.e. DHHS) picking up a child in their official capacity must provide a valid badge stating their name and program.

Child Endangerment

If any Center employee has reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child, a request will be made for another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact to pick up the child. If the request is refused, law enforcement will be contacted to prevent potential harm to the child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the

responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

All available parents/guardians are responsible for making payments for care unless there is a court order stating otherwise. Parents are expected to make any private arrangements necessary to be sure the bill is paid as agreed to in the payment agreement. In the event that payment is not made, both parents will be held responsible for making the overdue payment.

3.8 Naptime

Every full-time child in the Center will be expected to take a nap or observe quiet time, dependent on the child's age.

Infants sleep according to their own schedule and are put to sleep on their backs. Teachers directly observe infants by sight and sound at all times and check on sleeping infants every 10 minutes.

After lunch, all children in the Center's care will participate in a quiet rest time. Children are not required to sleep and may be given quiet activities during that time as long as they do not disturb the other children.

School age children, although not required, shall be provided an opportunity for a regular rest period during the summer. Children are encouraged to bring a book to read during this time, or quiet activities may be chosen for the child.

All toddlers and preschool students are expected to have a small blanket for use during quiet time. Cots will be provided by the Center. The blanket will be washed on-site by Center staff.

3.9 Personal Belongings

What to Bring

- **Infants**: enough clean bottles for a day's use, breast milk or formula if not using center-provided formula, a pacifier if used, a small blanket, at least six diapers per day, and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Toddlers**: water bottle or sippee cup to stay at the Center, six diapers per day and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.
- **Older Toddlers**: a water bottle to leave at the Center and at least two changes of clothes or more per day if going through the toilet training program.
- **Preschoolers**: a water bottle to leave at the Center, at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **Kindergarteners**: at least one change of clothes, socks and shoes.
- **After School Care Children**: books for homework, appropriate play clothes

Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items.

In the summer, parents must provide a bottle of sunscreen labeled with their child's name to be used as needed.

If supplies are not brought in prior to running out they will be purchased and charged to your bill. Notice will be sent home when your child's supplies are low.

Cubbies

Upon enrollment each child will be assigned a "cubby." Cubbies are clearly labeled. Please check your child's cubby daily for items that need to be taken home.

Parents are asked to ensure children do not bring any personal belongings to the Center, including toys, books, stuffed animals, or food.

3.10 Illness

The Center has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for all of the children entrusted to our care. Attending and working at a childcare center carries with it some measure of risk, but the following health policy is intended to limit the exposure to contagious conditions and safeguard the health and safety of all who are part of our daily activities.

A full-time nurse is on staff to help teachers evaluate children and their medical conditions, and the determination of the nurse to exclude a child based on any of the following criteria is final.

If you are contacted and asked to pick up your child because of one of the following illnesses, you are required to pick your child up within 45 minutes. If the child is not picked up within 45 minutes a fee of $30.00 will be applied to the family's account. After 1 hour, emergency contacts will be contacted for that child. There will be an additional $15.00 applied every 15 minutes the child is not picked up after the 45-minute mark.

Children may be sent home if the on-site nurse observes the following conditions:

- Fever (100.4 degrees or higher)
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting
- Pink eye/conjunctivitis
- Head lice/nits
- Severe cough, cold, or influenza type of illness
- Rapid or difficult breathing
- Yellowish skin or eyes
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Infected skin patches
- Pain of which child complains and interferes with daily activities
- Evidence of infection
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- Excessive fatigue that interferes with daily activities

Children will be required to be fever free for 24 hours without the use of a fever reducer before returning to the Center. A child may return to Center before the 24 hours if a doctor's note is present stating that the child is not contagious.

A child experiencing stomach flu symptoms needs to be vomit and diarrhea free for 24 hrs. If a child gets sick to his/her stomach at the Center, the child will not be readmitted until at least 24 hours after that time.

Any child infected with lice or nits will be required to wait for a period of 24 hours after treatment before returning to the center. Children will be checked by staff upon return, and if live lice are still present child will be required to leave.

The Director will notify all parents of enrolled children in the case of a communicable disease on the same day.

- Communicable disease will be posted at check in-station

- Children who are not in attendance that day, parent will receive notification by phone call, app message, or text from director or teacher
- Ill child's name will *not* be used
- A doctor's note is required for the child to return to care following such a diagnosis

All children enrolled in the Center are required to be vaccinated and remain up-to-date on their vaccinations. Parents must submit new records every time they are updated OR provide their child's social security number so the nurse is able to look them up as needed.

3.11 Injury Response Protocol

Safety is a major concern in childcare and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the Center area in order to prevent injuries. First Aid will be administered by the on-site nurse or another trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Each classroom is equipped with a First Aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance while we try to contact you or an emergency contact.

The ELC has liability child accident insurance covering each of the children in our care during business hours.

3.12 Behavior Policy

The goal at the Flatwater Bank Early Learning Center is to help children develop a positive self-image by teaching them the necessary skills needed for knowing and understanding appropriate behavior. We help children to learn self-discipline skills, adaptation, responding appropriately to adults and peers, and taking pride in making the right choices. Therefore, when children use inappropriate behavior, we get down on their level and explain to them why the behavior is inappropriate. We then discuss what some better choices would be.

- A child may be asked to "take a break" when he/she acts out in violence towards the teacher or other students, refuses to comply with directions (other options are offered when appropriate), or in other instances where the teacher feels it is needed for the child.
- A child may rejoin the group once they have shown they are calm and ready. Before they rejoin, they will talk with the teacher about what a better choice would look like and why. They may be asked to apologize or do what they were originally asked depending on the situation.

Children are encouraged to utilize the "Calm Down Area." Each class has an area where children can go to calm down which includes sensory bottles, relaxing materials and small manipulatives. The purpose of this area is to teach kids to recognize when they need to remove themselves from a situation and how to calm themselves in times of frustration.

- All teachers model appropriate behaviors as examples for the children.
- We encourage children to use their words to describe their feelings rather than inappropriate actions.
- If a child is endangering the safety of other children and/or the teacher, the child will be removed from the classroom and the parent will be contacted. Depending on the severity of the action, an action plan may need to be developed between the parents, child's teacher, Curriculum Director, and Center Director.
    - Parents MUST be willing to work with the center to create a positive outcome.
    - Resources and support will be offered to families to help rectify the situation.

- If behaviors are severe, continual, and/or endangering to self or others, the child may be suspended or terminated from the program.

3.13 Biting Policy

Small children aged 2 and under will often use their teeth instead of their words out of sheer frustration. We always encourage children to use their words when they are angry or frustrated but sometimes biting occurs before the teacher can intercede in an escalating situation between two children.

If your child is in an Infant or Toddler Room the biting policies are as follows:

1. If your child is bit or bites another child, an incident/accident report is completed and made available for the involved parents to see. The names of the children will not be given to either parent.
2. The hurt child is cared for first. Then, the biter is removed from the situation and is spoken to and about the dangers/consequences of biting. We also will do lessons, finger plays, and/or books to help the children understand that teeth are not for biting.
3. If a child bites more than 3 times in one day, the child will be asked to leave the Center due to the safety of the other children and/or the teacher for that day.
4. Resources will be provided to parents to support them in their efforts to reinforce the Center's teachings. Parent cooperation is necessary and expected.
5. If the behavior continues, the child may be asked to leave the center permanently for the safety of other children. However, as this is a developmental stage, this option is a last resort.

If your child is 3 years old or older, the biting policies are as follows:

1. If your child is bit or bites another child or teacher an incident/accident report is written up for the parent, teacher, and director to sign and a copy sent home to the parents and another copy is put in the child's file.
2. The teacher will take care of the hurt child first. Then, the biter will be removed from the situation and is spoken to and about the dangers/consequences of biting.
3. After the second bite, the parents, child, teacher, and Director may have a conference to discuss the problem before the child is readmitted to the Center.
4. After the third bite the child may be asked to leave the Center permanently.

3.14 Meals/Snacks

The Center participates in the Child Care and Adult Food Program. We offer the children in full-time care breakfast, lunch, and one afternoon snack. Students in part-time preschool are offered one snack during their class time and school age children will receive a snack when they arrive after school. We include fresh fruits and vegetables in our meals and snacks. We also make sure that we include all of the healthy food groups in our daily meals. This includes but is not limited to dairy, protein, grains, vegetables, and fruits. At least one whole grain is offered every day. We encourage children to try new things and to live a healthy lifestyle.

All meals will be served family-style for teachers and children in their classroom.

- Children are encouraged to try all of the foods offered, but children do not need to take food they do not want.
- Children must try all food groups before getting seconds (i.e. they must try their vegetables before they receive more tater tots).

- Food exceptions cannot be made for individual children, except in the case of allergies or medical exception. A written statement from a physician is required.
- Weekly menus are posted in the Center and parents may refer to this at any time.
- Children will be offered seconds and even thirds until all of the prepared food is gone or everyone is full.
- Mealtimes are viewed as bonding moments. Teachers are to sit at the table and include themselves in children-led conversations.
- All employees are asked to add to their plates the same food that the children are offered.
- Children are not allowed to bring any food to the table that is not served to everyone.
- Children are not allowed to bring food to the Center with the exception of special occasions (see section 3.19) Adequate meals and snacks are provided and families are asked not to send any additional food with their children.

3.15 Medication Administration

If a child requires medication, parents must complete and sign the provided medication form which gives appropriate permission for The Center to administer medication to the child.

Medication will be stored in a locked medication storage container, usually in the nurse's office. Emergency medications such as inhalers or Epi-Pens will be kept in a locked cabinet or container with the child's class.

All medication brought to the Center must comply with the following rules:

- All medication must have the original label on it.
- The child's first and last name and date must be on the label.
- Over-the-Counter medications must include written dosage instructions from the parent, with a doctor's note if the dosage exceeds the label dosage.
- Written instructions are required for special procedures. Parents are to visit with the nurse prior to any special procedure being performed and it is the parent's responsibility to inform the nurse of any special training needed to perform the procedure.
- The nurse or other staff will document medication delivery on the appropriate form, including the time medication was given and by whom.
- Anyone dispensing medication will wash their hands before and after medication is dispensed.
- Expired medication will be returned to parents or disposed of by staff according to licensing requirements.

3.16 Diapering/Toilet Training

We begin working with children to introduce potty training once they are 16-20 months of age. This includes sitting them on the potty during every bathroom break to help them become familiar with the toilet, reading books about going potty and having lessons/activities about potty training. Your child may be put in underwear/training pants once they can accomplish these three tasks on their own:

- Communicate with their teacher that they need to go potty (verbally or by pointing, etc.)
- Can pull down and up pants on their own.
- Is able to get on and off of the toilet.

If your child cannot accomplish all three of these tasks BUT goes potty on the toilet during group bathroom breaks and therefore is showing us they are ready to potty train, we will keep working with them on their potty training and help them with the tasks listed above.

If your child has 3 accidents in a day or if they only have one extra outfit left, they will be put in a diaper/pullup for the remainder of the day.

We will NOT force a child to start potty training if they are not ready or do not want to. This includes showing fear of the toilet, getting upset, etc.

Every child must be potty trained before moving into the preschool room. This includes being able to wipe themselves, wash their own hands, pull up and down pants, etc. We will work with families on this if there is a medical issue causing the child to not be potty trained.

Children who are being potty trained are asked to have an extra pair of socks and shoes to be kept at the Center if possible, along with a change of clothes.

3.17 Transportation Policy

Any time children in our care are transported in a vehicle for any reason, the vehicle used will be properly registered, insured, and in good working order. The vehicle contains a First Aid kid and parent contact information, either in hard copy or electronically. Each child will be properly restrained and in the correct safety seats for their age and weight limit. If the vehicle is a school bus, all school bus safety protocol will be followed. In the event of an emergency, the driver and staff will follow proper protocol as learned in the appropriate transportation safety training. In the event that a child becomes ill, the vehicle breaks down or is involved in an accident or other emergencies, proper procedures will be followed and parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

Parents must sign the transportation permission portion of the enrollment form in order for the Center to provide transportation for the child. Parents must sign a permission slip for each field trip prior to the day of the field trip. A staff member trained in First Aid goes on all trips, taking a First Aid kit and emergency information for each child.

3.18 Appropriate Clothing

<u>Outdoor Play</u>

Children are expected to participate in all activities including outdoor play. Children will go outside every day unless weather conditions are dangerous for outdoor play (heat index, windchill, etc. as determined by guidelines). Parents need to provide appropriate articles of clothing so children do not get overheated or chilled (i.e. coat, snow boots, warm clothes for winter days, swimsuit for water days, jackets for cool days).

For the safety of all children, flip flops are not permitted at the Center. All children must arrive in close-toed shoes or sandals with straps. Water shoes are appropriate for pool/water days.

- Parents are required to provide sunscreen for their child(ren) and may be asked to provide bug spray during summer months. These items will be applied to children by staff only. If the item is expired, it will be disposed of properly.
- Parents may also bring lotion and/or Chapstick for their children. The teacher will keep these in the room out of reach of other children and allow them to be applied as needed. Items should be labeled with the child's name.
- All items provided by the parents must have the child's name clearly labeled on it.

<u>Extra Clothing</u>

Each child must have a change of clothing that is left in the child's classroom to be used for emergencies. All clothes must be marked and must fit the child. Please check your child's extra outfit periodically to be sure it is the right size and for the right season (i.e. pants in winter, shorts in summer.)

3.19 Special Occasion Treats

Students who want to celebrate their birthday or participate in classroom holiday celebrations by bringing special treats may do so. Parents are to talk to the teacher **PRIOR to the day** the treats will be provided to become aware of any food allergies and to let the teacher plan for the special snack. The total number of snacks needed for the students and teachers in that room should also be noted. Failure to follow allergy restrictions will result in the snack not being able to be served.

All treats are to be left in the office and will be delivered to the classroom at snack time. Parents may leave the treats in the morning during drop-off or bring the treats to the Center office anytime prior to snack time. Parents are asked to be sure children do not bring food to the Center at any other time.

The Center staff will limit or prohibit food items that pose a danger to students due to allergies or other medical conditions as needed. Such limits or restrictions will be clearly posted and families in those classrooms will be notified.

SECTION 4 – MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

4.1 Contracts and Fees

Contracts

Each family will be contracted to full time, weekly, part time or daily/hourly rates fitting with the family's schedule as much as possible. The rates will depend on the number of hours that a child is enrolled to attend the Center. A full day is 5 or more hours. A half day is less than 5 hours of attendance. If the maximum hours your child is contracted for is exceeded, you will be charged an hourly rate. If your child is enrolled as hourly/drop-in, you must call or talk to the Director the day before or as soon as possible to make sure a spot is available. **Drop-in/hourly students are not guaranteed a spot and can only come if a spot is available.** Every attempt will be made to accommodate drop-in students whose regular caregiver is unexpectedly unavailable. Drop-in charges must be paid the day of care.

The Center closes at 6 p.m. and a late fee of $1/child will be charged for every minute that the child is in attendance after 6 p.m.

State Subsidy (Title XX)

It is our goal that every family will have access to high-quality childcare regardless of cost. To help working families who may struggle to cover the full cost of childcare, we accept Title XX (state subsidy) payments and we offer tuition assistance to families who are not eligible for Title XX.

Parents can learn more and apply for state subsidy at https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Care-Subsidy-Information-for-Parents.aspx. Your eligibility is determined by your income, family size, the time parents are working or attending school, and the number of children in childcare. If approved, you will receive a letter providing you with information about the number of hours your child can attend and the amount of your co-payment if applicable. When you receive your letter, bring it to the Center and the Director will assist you. Children of families receiving Title XX must be enrolled and attend as full-time students.

Tuition Assistance

If a family has applied for Title XX and been denied, they can visit with the Center Director to learn more about the tuition assistance program and how to apply.

Fees

All payments are due by 6:00 p.m. on the Friday after you have received your bill. Please leave all payments in the payment box in the reception area. All cash must be put in a "Cash Envelope" (available on the side of the payment box) before it's deposited in the payment box. If your payment is not received by 6 p.m. on Friday, you will be charged a late fee of $10 per week. If your bill exceeds $200 at any time you will be charged a $10 per week fee and your child will be unable to attend the Center until the bill is paid. If you are having trouble meeting your financial obligations, please speak to the Director about a payment plan or tuition assistance.

In the event of an emergency drop-in, the daily rate must be paid that same day.

Checks should be made payable to: Flatwater Bank ELC. A fee of $35 will be assessed to your account for a returned check.

We do offer a direct deposit payment plan or families may set up auto-pay through the Center's communication app. Direct deposit is strongly recommended by the Center to help avoid late fees/missed payments and may be required for families who are repeatedly late paying their bill. Please see the director if this is something you are interested in.

4.2 Questions, Comments, and Concerns

Parents are encouraged to find a time to visit with their child's teacher other than drop-off or pick-up time to share a concern or ask a question. If the issue can't be resolved in that conversation, parents are encouraged to follow the steps outlined in section 2.5. General questions or concerns about the Center can be addressed by contacting the Center Director:

Casey Madsen: 902 12th Street | 308-351-5008, ext. 100 | cmadsen@myimpactcenter.com

Policies and procedures above and beyond the Nebraska State Regulations as outlined in this handbook have been developed and approved by the Impact Center Board of Directors. Questions and concerns not resolved through conversations with staff or the Center Director may be directed to the President of the Board, Colten Venteicher, at coltenv@bvv.law.

More information on state services and regulations can be found online at:

https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Care-Parents.aspx or https://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Child-Care-Regulations.aspx

4.3 Agreement

This handbook contains important information to ensure all of the adults in your child's life have a mutual understanding as they work together to provide the best care possible.

As a parent or guardian, you agree to follow all of the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook, including but not limited to the following:

- Complete all required registration paperwork and pay all fees as outlined in Section 2.1.
- Have your child(ren) at the Center during the time indicated on your enrollment contract as outlined in Section 2.2 except due to sickness or other special circumstance.
- Notify the Center as soon as possible of any change in the times your child(ren) needs care, including no attendance due to sickness or weather, family emergency, or if you will be later than usual to pick up the child.
- Follow the grievance policy outlined in Section 2.5 with any concern or question you might have.
- Pick up your child before the 6:00 p.m. closing time.
- Follow the illness policy as outlined in Section 3.10, including not bringing a sick child to the Center and, if contacted, picking your sick child up within 45 minutes.
- Provide appropriate clothing for outdoor play and extra clothing as outlined in Section 3.18.
- Ensure your child does not bring any food or personal items into the Center except when bringing classroom snacks to share or an item to "show and share" or otherwise part of the lesson as requested by the teacher.
- Attend all meetings regarding your child(ren) as requested by the teachers or Directors.
- Pay all tuition and fees associated with the care of your child as outlined in Section 4.1.

As a Center, the staff agrees to follow all of the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. Staff also commit to the following in the care of your child:

- Providing a safe environment where children's physical and emotional needs for food, clothing, cleanliness, safety, security, and nurturance are seen to, where children can freely explore their surroundings without fear of harm, and where they are able to experience open movement, free choice, and involvement in all activities.
- Assessing each individual child's developmental needs and providing a personalized, individual program with activities and experiences that help to facilitate the child's continued growth.
- Providing a stable environment that maintains necessary routines but allows for flexibility in routines to meet the growth needs of each child most appropriately.
- Facilitating communication between parents and the Center to provide an environment that is most beneficial to the child, including acting as a resource to share information about child development and about other resources available in the community.
- Advocating for the child's best interest in the Center, the family, and the community, bringing any concerns to the attention of the appropriate people, including mandatory reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect as outlined in Section 1.11.
- Maintaining confidentiality about each child and his/her family as outlined in Section 1.7.
- Keeping accurate daily records, informing parents about their child's daily activities and charting observations about problems and progresses that the child may be encountering.
- Giving children in their care their undivided attention, limiting personal cell phone and smartwatch use to scheduled break times or lunch periods in non-working areas.
- Attending in-services and other conferences to keep them well informed about current topics in early childhood development.