

NECK OF THE WOODS

**Center Based Infant - Preschool Childcare &
Enrichment Program**



Family & Caregiver Guidebook

Neck Of the Woods (NOW)
1673 Main Street
Waitsfield, Vt. 05673
Phone: (802) 496-6689
Email: info@neckofthewoodsvt.com

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HISTORY OF NECK OF THE WOODS

Neck Of the Woods (NOW) started in 2012 as Moretown Education Center for All (MECA), a childcare, after school program and summer camp based in the Moretown Elementary School. MECA started with twenty-five preschool and school age children, and grew over eight years to accommodate fifty-six preschoolers and ninety-five school age children by 2019 with summer camp serving one hundred and fifty children. As the program grew, it became time to expand to a space where creating more opportunities was possible for more families, children and skilled staff looking to work in the field in a larger setting.

When the coronavirus pandemic upended everyone's lives, MECA became Neck Of the Woods, a non-profit child care organization. Neck of the Woods was able to provide safe summer programming for families during the start of the pandemic and in doing so, ensured parents would have child care support by continuing to provide children with opportunities for social, emotional and developmental growth in a safe environment. Neck of the Woods partnered with the Mad River Valley Community Fund to work together to reach local families in need of support and enrolled 120 children ages 3-12 in summer camp programming across the Valley including the former Small Dog building adjacent to the Mad River in Waitsfield. Since that time, NOW has purchased the property and begun work to upgrade the campus, including the main building, a warehouse, and the surrounding 11 acres of land complete with trails and a large solar array that provides most energy needs at Neck of the Woods.

At this time Neck Of the Woods houses programs for infants through preschool and partners with the Harwood Union Unified School District to provide an after-school enrichment program, and youth leadership opportunities, as well as summer programming. NOW has also begun including training and support groups for parents and families, teen programs, collaborations with local mental health and education service providers, as well as classes for community members.

WHAT IS NOW?

A Center Comprised of:

EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

- *Year-round childcare for children from 6 weeks of age through Preschool*
- *Research-based best practices for early childhood development*
- *A focus on enriching the whole child through emergent curriculum*
- *Nurturing deep relationships in children and adults*
- *Cultivating brain-body connection*

AFTER SCHOOL & SUMMER CAMP CARE

- *Preschool and School age children ages 3 - 12*
- *Middle school leadership training summer opportunities combined with playful summer camp experiences*
- *A focus on strengths based education in the outdoor environment*
- *Problem and project based themes, derived from children's interests and passions*
- *Leadership and empowerment through camp positions working with younger children*
- *Outdoor summer adventure camp for tweens and teens*

AFFINITY-BASED ENRICHMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

- *Student led clubs and activities*
- *Development of leadership skills*
- *Opportunities for community service*
- *Integrated arts in fine arts, drama, music, dance, yoga, and more*
- *Enrichment opportunities offered by community members and trained professionals in varying areas of learning*

SUSTAINABLE CAREERS FOR STAFF

- *Working towards a livable wage for all employees*
- *A strong focus on the mental health and wellbeing of every employee*
- *A commitment to provide continued high-quality education and training*
- *A retirement plan offered to all staff*

Our Team & Contact Information:

- General Info/Enrollment/Neck of the Woods Office
 - <https://www.neckofthewoodsvt.org/>
 - info@neckofthewoodsvt.com - Please use this email for all enrollment inquiries
 - Phone: (802) 496-6689
 - Fax: (802) 821-4176
 - Brightwheel (Family Communication App)
- Executive Director: Moie Moulton
 - mmoulton@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Director of Operations & Administration: Katie DeFreest
 - kdefreest@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Bookkeeper: Lauré Murphy
 - bookkeeper@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Director of Preschool: Suzanne Gardner
 - sgardner@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Director of Infant & Toddler: Hayley Wilson
 - hwilson@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Head Start Coordinator for Infant/Toddler Programming: Amy Coolbeth
 - acoolbeth@capstonevt.org
- Director of Afterschool and Summer Programming: Larissa Darias
 - ldarias@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Brambles Classroom (Preschool Program):
 - brambles@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Inverness Classroom (Young Preschool Program):
 - inverness@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Dominoes Classroom (Oldest Toddler Program)
 - dominoes@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Grasshoppers Classroom (Middle Toddler Program)
 - grasshoppers@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Tumblers Classroom (Youngest Toddler Program)
 - tumblers@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Rumbles Classroom (Older Infant Program)
 - rumbles@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- Periwinkles Classroom (Younger Infant Program)
 - periwinkles@neckofthewoodsvt.com

PHILOSOPHY AND VALUES

WELCOME TO NECK OF THE WOODS

Mission:

NOW is committed to building community by offering equitable access to high quality childcare that honors the staff and individual children and families.

Vision:

At Neck of the Woods, we firmly believe in a strengths-based approach to education and learning, to social and emotional growth for children as well as their families and communities. Here, in the heart of the Mad River Valley of Vermont, we see ourselves as a vital thread woven into the tapestry of our community. With a child-centered approach to teaching a sense of place, a sense of self, and a sense of wonder, we encourage deep communication skills, collaborative play (& work!), natural affinity-building, academic growth, and holistic wellness. With inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach to education, in connection with Howard Gardener's Multiple intelligences, we strive to provide a high quality, developmentally appropriate environment. Our environment and our curriculum values the rights of children, emphasizes respectful communication, empowerment and resilience as key pieces of a healthy child that grows into a happy, healthy and well-adjusted adult.

THE 6 FOUNDATIONAL PILLARS OF NOW'S PROGRAMMING

Community

The bedrock of our values is the idea that Neck of the Woods is an integral part of our community. This includes understanding our role as partners to parents, caregivers, families, schools, and other community organizations that help grow children and families. As such, we seek to partner with parents, schools and community organizations to best support children and provide enrichment for children and families as they grow.

Support

Individuals, families and children face challenges throughout life. As a connected support system for families, community and staff, Neck of the Woods is a resource to assist in navigating difficult situations. This may come in the form of skill-building classes, parenting/community support groups and trainings, and this will include connecting children, families and staff to the right help outside of our organization. NOW strives to

- Support the mental health and well-being of families, community and staff.
- Provide staff with a livable wage

- Recognize that a liveable wage and affordable childcare are two very important factors that play a vital role in the health and well-being of our families, staff and children.
- Provide resources outside of our organization to best support the needs of families, staff and children.

Empowerment

Neck of the Woods harnesses growthful empowerment in children, families, community and staff through self discovery and skill-building techniques. The modeling of strong communication, engaging environments with opportunities to contribute strengths and exercise new skills are tools used at NOW to strengthen and empower children and families. Included in our curriculum are conflict resolution techniques, empowerment of children so they are able to grow, learn, take risks, make mistakes, and master new learning opportunities.

Resilience

Neck of the Woods offers a model for working through difficult moments, not only for the children we serve, but for staff and families as well. The ability to recover and rebound from difficult or challenging experiences is a key component to becoming a successful adult and community member. It is our hope that through practice and modeling both adults and children involved in our community will be able to foster resilience, and to find strength within themselves and also within a community that rallies together and supports one another.

Empathy

Neck of the Woods firmly believes that beyond all else the most important skill we teach is empathy. Like any muscle, empathy is something that must be practiced and exercised to grow and define. Empathy is a skill that, when developed, opens the door for healthy communication, positive relationships, growthful experiences and more opportunities throughout life.

Environmental Sustainability

We at Neck of the Woods are lucky to own a beautiful campus along the Mad River, with 11 acres, solar panels and two large buildings; one that houses our growing childcare facility and another the potential for further access to recreational programming for children and families. We believe that the status of our climate and environmental impact must inform our decisions about infrastructure, programming, planning, and how we teach about the future. We work to give children and families hope for the future by being proactive in teaching about our environment, and running our programs with a nature-based focus. Further, we ascribe to David Sobel's theory of place-based education and E.O. Wilson's biophilia, as described by Sobel, here:

“Nature programs should invite children to make mud pies, climb trees, catch frogs, paint their faces with charcoal, get their hands dirty and their

feet wet. They should be allowed to go off the trail and have fun. Second, environmental educators need to focus way more on hands-on experience with children and way less on systematic knowledge. Or at least understand that systematic knowledge can emerge organically from lots of hands-on experience.”

(<https://orionmagazine.org/article/look-dont-touch1/>)

Through hands-on experience in the natural world, children learn to love and care for the earth, and Sobel asserts, evidence shows they later come to fiercely protect what they love. By making the simple tasks of ecological stewardship routine and unemotional, we make protecting the environment part of our day and make it automatic. When we add in the love of nature & deep understanding of ecology developed through experience, children are equipped to tackle the love and knowledge of the natural world in their own ways, and adults get to re-experience the joy of discovery along the way.

ROLE OF ENVIRONMENT

Whether outdoor or indoor, the environments are set up to be enticing, engaging, and to create meaningful interactions with peers, adults, and materials. Materials are selected to spark learning and curiosity, and may include traditional toys, real life objects, natural materials and loose parts. School, town and field trip locations are central pieces of our programming, from infancy through school-age summer camps.

ROLE OF TEACHER

We see the adults at NOW as guides, narrators, and facilitators for children to explore with, mirror, observe, and make connections with. Teachers not only provide learning experiences, but model behaviors and give words for emotions, express themselves so children learn to share their own thoughts and feelings, and help children take ownership for their own minds, hearts, and bodies. Adults model collaboration with one another and parents, as well as with children, and help children to collaborate with one another. Adults provide experiences where children can be self-directed and be successful.

We align our curriculum model with the Multiple Intelligence theory of Howard Gardner, and project-based teaching theories such as Emergent Curriculum and Reggio Emilia. Early Childhood Education theory is often changing and shifting, and best practices include utilizing the Vermont Early Learning Standards, developmentally appropriate practices, and current research on education, psychology, and brain-based learning. Teachers also observe children across their abilities, using informal and formal assessments, recording skills, and watching the hard work of play.

ROLE OF CHILD AS LEARNER

Children of all abilities and interests are active, engaged, and determined learners bursting with

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curiosity and potential. They are contributing members of society, home, and school, and all have the right to their education. Special rights are afforded to those who need extra in order to access their right to an education. Children learn through play and imagination, and this work of childhood is to be respected and honored. At NOW it is important to us that children are given the opportunity to engage in enrichment activities that will help them to see their natural affinities, try new things and have ample experiences to learn and grow as individuals. Our programs work hard to create ample opportunities for this growth and development.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Here at Neck of the Woods, we encourage families and the community to engage with us, our program and their children within the Programs.

We see NOW as a piece of the larger Mad River Valley community, and we recognize families as valued, essential partners in the systems that support young children's development, learning, and wellness. We encourage caregivers to share their skills, talents, time & effort with our Programs, and always welcome input about ways we can better support families. We also encourage families and community members to share their talents and skills with children and families as an enrichment club/theme teacher whenever these opportunities arise.

Parent / Teacher Communication

A summary of the day's activities may be posted as a curriculum on the wall, on white boards in your child's classroom each day, and/or posted via our childcare management app (Brightwheel). Newsletters are also sent out monthly to each classroom.

This lets parents/caregivers know what ideas are being explored, as well as specific activities that have been done and what is being planned for the weeks ahead. This can be a good "jumping-off point" for talking with your child about the day's events, as well as finding other things to do at home that relate to what's happening at NOW.

Staff for infant and toddler programs will be entering children's diapering/toileting, eating and sleeping activities throughout the day, however teachers may not be available to enter these activities immediately, as they are busy working with the children. Messages and pictures especially may not be posted or answered until each classroom teacher has a rest/break time daily. If there is an emergency, please call our office at 802-496-6689.

Staff are permitted to use cell phones ONLY for Brightwheel communication, documentation and in an emergency, or when "off-site" when Brightwheel is not an accessible option.

Staff are not permitted to give their cell phone numbers to parents/guardians. If parents/guardians already have staff cell phone numbers due to friendships or relationships outside of Neck of the Woods, those cell phone communications are not permitted during Program hours. All communication regarding Neck of the Woods, or care being provided for children and families, must take place using the landline phone, Brightwheel or emails specific

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to Neck of the Woods staff. Brightwheel handles immediate engagement regarding general communication surrounding each child's daily routines and updates (e.g. food intake, toileting, general check-ins), and email or phone will be used to provide a more formal channel for comprehensive information and official announcements.

Assessments, Conferences and M.T.S.S. (Multi-tiered System of Supports)

Assessments will be conducted by each co-teaching team twice a year. Assessments will be completed September to December in preparation for conferences in January & then again from February - June. We currently use ASQ (Ages & Stages Questionnaires), along with Ounces for our Head Start classes. Parents will be required to complete their portion of the ASQ prior to conferences. ASQ's are calculated according to date of birth.

There will be 1 annual conference with families in January. Prior to and after January, parents and teachers can request a conference to discuss anything concerning the care and growth of the child(ren) enrolled.

M.T.S.S. is a framework to provide academic and behavioral support to all students through a tiered system of interventions, starting with universal, high-quality instruction and moving to more targeted or intensive supports as needed. At Neck of the Woods we work with families, teachers and other professionals to ensure we are pursuing the best course of action possible when working with children who have additional needs. Based on assessments, observations and parental/guardian input we work together to build a team to support every child while they are building their skills.

DIFFERENCES AND INCLUSION

We define diversity as inclusive of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, neurodiverse learning styles, age, ability, nationality, immigration status, physical appearance, religion, belief systems, language, and more. A diverse, inclusive, and respectful community enhances the academic and emotional intelligence of all students and lays the foundation for them to make a change in meaningful and mindful ways.

We believe that inclusion of all kinds enables us to better understand ourselves and others, value multiple lived experiences, practice advocacy, and become activists towards creating a more just and equitable world.

Differences lift us.

Holidays:

We believe in respecting and celebrating the families we serve, and recognize that this means

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there may be a range of holidays, celebration styles, and important traditions in our NOW family. Some teachers are more comfortable than others bringing holiday traditions to the classroom, but all families are always welcome to share about their culture, history, and unique experiences with the classmates in their child's group. We also welcome parents who wish to share a teaching experience or project about their cultural history with NOW.

Racism:

Racism of any kind at any time will not be tolerated. We recognize that expressions of racism are a teaching opportunity, and we will use it as such. Here at Neck of the Woods, we believe that Black Lives Matter. We recognize the systemic racism within this country and will continue to educate our students about these injustices. We, as an organization, are making a commitment to continue to examine our own personal biases and to promote inclusion here at Neck of the Woods through employment opportunities, enrollment, and challenging systemic racial issues wherever we see them.

HOW WE EMPOWER CHILDREN

Classroom and Behavior Management:

Our center, programs, culture and philosophy promotes growth and learning in all children of all abilities, backgrounds, and differences based on their personal strengths. Inspired by the idea that all children encompass multiple intelligences and everyone has strengths to share, we manage behaviors from a positive perspective. We view the environment and curriculum as an additional teacher. A carefully planned space and activities lead behaviors naturally in a positive direction, where children are allowed to shine and show their best selves. Further, we recognize that negative or disruptive behaviors are an expression of needs and wants, and we can help children to meet such needs in a safe and appropriate manner.

In the Early Childhood Program this may look like redirection, gentle reminders, adult intervention, talking through a situation, or removing a child from an unsafe environment. We see young children as unique individuals who are learning what it means to express themselves, get their needs met, and engage with others. Rather than forced apologies, we put the focus on checking in with one another around feelings and safety, followed up by asking what we can do to work towards a solution together (time ins, not time outs). For young children this is often an apology, or a hug, or the sharing of a toy. Working through the process helps them to name & share their emotions, hear others, and to work collaboratively to support a safe and welcoming space for all.

When difficult situations arise with our older Early Ed learners, adults observe to see if children are able to handle the situation themselves, and follow up by making observations about what went well. Solutions may include redirection, engaging children in creating solutions, and encouraging them to take ownership over their own behavior and the effect it has in their

learning environments. We utilize systems for conflict resolution that we call “fire breaks”, as well as restorative circles. A “fire break” is a tiered process that allows children to step away from the group, and center themselves, and then to share with an adult and other children involved how they perceived the situation. We also ask them to check in with others and ask how they are feeling. Together, they will then work on solutions. Restorative circle practice allows a larger group of children to come together to find solutions to problems as a team, using agreements and solution oriented prompts. Adults are present to help as needed through all conflict resolution, but children lead so that the solution is authentic, positive, and more easily followed through with.

At all times, safety and respect are non-negotiables, and we work to help children understand what that means, and what it looks like. We expect that they may forget, have questions, need guidance, and make mistakes. Through these processes we are able to help children bloom into compassionate, respectful, resourceful and responsible young people. We also ensure that if a child is using a language of aggression towards staff or children and planned procedures used by staff and Directors are not effective, then a new plan will need to be implemented for the child to have success in programming. This does occasionally mean that a family may be asked to reduce the amount of time a child attends programming to give them smaller portions of time in attendance so that they may find success more easily, in the hopes that their time can be gradually extended in a positive growth pattern. This also does sometimes mean that the Neck of the Woods programming may not be the appropriate fit for a child if NOW does not have the staffing to support a child who needs one on one support and guidance.

Biting Policy:

In children under age three, biting is a typical behavior that often occurs as children learn to communicate their needs.

There are numerous reasons why a child might bite: instinct, a result of a lack of words or maturity to express needs and wants, sore teeth, cause and effect exploration, imitation, satisfying an oral-motor need, in self-defense, to communicate hunger or fatigue or another need, to communicate difficult emotions, and even to get attention at times.

Punishment does not stop biting behavior.

Multiple strategies can be used, based on the reason behind the biting.

In children over age three, a pattern of biting is not a typical behavior. If a child over age three is presenting with a pattern of biting, Early Intervention (EI) services would need to be established immediately based on eligibility measures (i.e. possible developmental delay, behavior intervention necessity), and/or an immediate plan to determine continuation of care would be established.

For children under age 3 showing a pattern of biting behavior NOW follows this procedure:

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1. Children will be involved in active, organized, and supervised activities during which positive behaviors will be praised, and healthy communication will be scaffolded based on developmentally appropriate practice for each age group/classroom.
2. If a staff member observes a biting incident, the “bitten” child will be attended to and comforted immediately. It is imperative that children feel safe and secure at school. Being bitten hurts and can be scary for a child.
 - a. When a child is bitten, the attention is given ONLY to the bitten child to ensure they are ok, and cared for first and foremost.
 - b. The area of the bite will be gently cleansed with soap and water, and ice and antibacterial cream/bandaids will be applied if necessary.
 - c. The bitten child is encouraged to express their feelings to the child who bit them, “don’t hurt my body!” “No!” “Stop!” “That hurt!”, in ways that meet their communication abilities.
 - d. The bitten child is validated out loud by the staff present, with the child who bit participating in the conversation, “when you were bitten it hurt your body!” “It is not ok for _ to bite your body.” “Biting Hurts!”
 - e. The child who did the biting will be thoroughly involved in reparations with the child who was bitten, providing comfort, support, ice pack etc. This may happen after a period of deescalation, or immediately after the bite, depending on the individual children involved in the incident. This is meant not as a forced apology, but an invitation to build a bridge of empathy between children, and positively reinforced scaffolded self-reflection.
 - f. Children who have been bitten may feel fear or worry after a bite that the child who bit them will bite them again, especially if they have been bitten more than one time. If they are presenting as such, extra care is taken to support the child emotionally, coach and encourage the child to express their feelings (in age appropriate ways based on their communication), reminding them that teachers are here for them to keep them safe and encouraging children to be firm in creating a boundary that biting them is unacceptable.
 - g. Staff take extra care to create space between the child who was bitten and the child who bit them, coaching both children about body boundaries, respect and safe touches.
 - h. Our philosophy at NOW encourages a process oriented mindset, centered around deep learning, where whatever is a prominent need for focus (such as biting incidents) will be addressed as a classroom issue. Circle times, classroom communication and curriculum will be centered around resolving these issues as a community through problem solving, advocacy, boundary setting and ultimately growthful communication from all involved.
3. The parent or guardian of the child who was bitten will be called or notified upon pick up.
4. The biting incident will be documented through Brightwheel for both the child who was bitten and the child who bit. The incident report will be posted on Brightwheel under “staff only”. All necessary staff (teaching staff and Directors) will review the report by the end of the day to ensure all accurate and appropriate communication is present. The incident will then be discussed at pick up with parents/guardians and then staff will move the report on Brightwheel so that parents/guardians have access to it by the end of the day.

- If a picture was taken of the incident the picture will be posted along with the report on Brightwheel.
5. Staff will communicate with the Parent/Guardian of the “biter” and we will work with them to identify possible biting causes; discussing strategies to help change the behavior.
 6. If the child continues with a pattern of biting, the classroom environment will be reviewed (MTSS) to ensure no biting antecedents may be present, causing the biting child to continue to bite. The staff will review supervision strategies and closely observe the biting child to seek out possible antecedents that may be contributing to the biting behavior, asking questions such as, “is the child possibly teething?” “Is the child biting objects/mouthing many things, or strictly biting other children?” “Is the child appearing to have a feeling of fear/excitement/anger/frustration etc. associated with biting?” “Is the child biting adults?” “Is the child experiencing a possible sensory need that is not being met?” etc.
 7. Staff will use observations to create an individualized behavior plan for the child. This behavior plan includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Redirection when antecedents for biting are occurring
 - b. Sensory breaks from the classroom at intervals that are appropriate to the child’s needs as a preventative measure
 - c. Teethers used at appropriate intervals based on the child’s needs
 - d. A supervision plan that ensures a teacher be near the biting child coinciding with the times a child may be liable to bite
 - e. A meeting set up with the parents/guardians of the biting child to ensure continuity across environments and any/all preventative measures taken at home
 - f. Snacks/food/water/milk provided to the child as needed throughout the day to prevent hunger (outside of typical meal times) and provide proprioceptive input.
 - g. Medication provided to ease teething pain as determined by the parent/guardian/pediatrician
 - h. Various communication strategies implemented to help the child learn to communicate needs without biting (sign language, one word requests, de-escalation techniques, co-regulation techniques)
 - i. Evaluations completed as needed to determine sensory needs/services
 - j. OT and/or EI services provided for the child if determined eligible
 - k. Grant/one on one services provided to the child if determined eligible (note: grants/services are rarely possible unless other major behaviors are present, and is a lengthy process).
 - l. A plan created with the parent/guardian that includes possible early pick ups determined based on a level of risk assessment associated with the individual child.
 8. The process of observation and implementation of preventative measures should be carried out for each individual child for a duration of at least 3 months prior to any discussion of termination of care. The timeline to determine what measures are working to lessen/eliminate a child’s biting behavior is individualized based on determination of progress, or lack thereof. If progress is being made, there will be an extension to the three month timeline. If no progress is being made, or biting incidents/attempts increase, the timeline will decrease.

9. After all preventative steps have been taken for a child not eligible for external services, a one on one plan will be created in-house for up to one month to mitigate the possibility of biting and thoroughly document the trajectory of attempted biting incidents/connected biting incidents. If a one-on-one is not available at any point in time, the two staff present for the day will have one staff member focused on the child, while the other focuses on the rest of the class. The schedule will be moved around to ensure support can be provided to the classroom for all necessary transitions or determined times of need.
10. If after one month of implementing a one-on-one through an individualized plan is not successful, and the child continues to bite, NOW Admin will attempt to help the family find a more suitable childcare arrangement for the child.

Though there are many reasons why a child may bite it is imperative that children feel safe at school and at no point is biting an acceptable way to communicate needs. Children who are bitten can feel big emotions around how their body has been hurt because of a child biting them and need to be treated with utmost care throughout the process of a child learning not to bite. All parents should be prepared to communicate throughout the process of children learning new communication skills that redirect them away from biting or other aggressive communication behaviors. We, the teachers/parents/mentors/guides need to work together as a team to ensure the safe growth and development of our most precious and vulnerable community members.

Program Details: Hours, Locations, Calendar, Closures:

*Neck of the Woods Early Education (Infant - Preschool) Programs are open Monday - Friday from 7:45am - 4:45pm

Strict Drop Off Policy: Doors open at 7:45am year round, which means that children and families are welcomed into programming between 7:45am - 9:00am. Children **MUST** be dropped off by 9:00am, as it greatly affects the children's routines and ability to acclimate if they are not present by or before 9:00am. Parents/guardians will need to update the Center with a 24 hour notice if children will be dropped off after 9:00am so that extra support can be planned ahead of time.

Strict Pick Up Policy: As many childcare/after school/summer programs are having to close their doors due to staffing issues, overextension and burnout, NOW strives to continue to run at as close to a full wrap around work day for families as possible. Staffing issues, overextension and burnout are very common in children's programming and to keep this from happening in our programs we ensure that our staff work only the hours they are scheduled to work, and no more than this. Our doors close at 4:45pm, which means that children and families have said their farewells to NOW staff and friends for the day **BEFORE** 4:45 pm daily and staff are locking up and heading home at that time.

Late pick up fee: If staff are left waiting with a child past 4:45pm, that family is required to pay a late pick up fee of \$20. If a child is not picked up by 5:00pm the rate increases to an additional \$1/minute that the staff member waits with the child. Within 24 hours of a late pick up occurrence, this payment is to be handed to the staff member left waiting after hours, as they are off the clock at that time.

Early Closure Days: NOW will close early (2:30pm) once per month for staff meetings. These dates are listed in the yearly NOW Calendar. Normal rates still apply.

PROGRAM LOCATIONS:

Early Childhood Education School Year & Summer Programs: Ages 6 weeks to 5 years

Neck of the Woods
1673 Main Street
Waitsfield, Vt. 05673

After School Programs (end of Aug. - beginning of June): Preschool - 5th grades

Moretown Elementary School
940 Vt. Rte 100B
Moretown, Vt. 05660

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School Age Summer Programs (June - August): 1st - 8th grade - based on grade entering in the fall of the upcoming school year

Moretown Elementary School
940 Vt. Rte 100B
Moretown, Vt. 05660

- Information regarding the 2026 summer program will be available on the Neck Of the Woods [website](#) or by request from info@neckofthewoodsvt.com in the early Spring of 2026.

All times and days of operation may be affected by state-mandated protocols, licensing requirements, weather, or state of emergencies, and any changes to staff to child ratios made by the state. Families will be informed if such changes occur as early on as possible to ensure families have as much time as possible to make arrangements for said changes.

NOW 2025/2026 CALENDAR BY CLASSROOM

Click here to find the [Calendars](#) for each age group on our Website.

POTENTIAL CLOSURES

Inclement Weather, Natural Emergency, or other Emergency Situations:

We will follow the HUUSD district closing schedule; if there is a closing or delay based on weather for the HUUSD schools, Neck of the Woods will also be closed or delayed. Please check school closings on VPR and WCAX if in doubt. We will also send a notice via Brightwheel with an alert text message as well as through email. No refunds will be given.

Virus and Disease Outbreaks:

NOW reserves the right to close classrooms based on disease and viral outbreaks (e.g. Covid, flu etc.). At NOW's discretion, a decision will be made based on the health and well-being of students and staff. This will be determined using a risk assessment that will include Board members, Management and medical professionals (as necessary to the situation). If such a closure should occur NOW management will contact families via Brightwheel with an alert text message as well as through email. No refunds will be given.

Licensing Information

Neck of the Woods is a licensed early childhood and school-age childcare program. Our state license is through the Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division and Child Care Licensing. *Our proof of license can be found on the Bright Futures Information System under the name, Neck of the Woods (NOW), as well as on the wall in each classroom.*

REGULATIONS

Many licensing regulations affect our operations, and they are referenced throughout this Guidebook.

Licensing regulations can be found online [here](#).

RATIOS

One important licensing regulation that governs NOW operations is the ratios of staff to children depending on children's ages. Below is relevant ratio information:

Indoor Ratio Capacity:

Groups of children cannot combine in an indoor classroom at NOW beyond the max capacity set for that classroom and the children's ages.

Age	Maximum Group Size	Staff/Child Ratio
Birth - 18 months	8	1:4
18 months - 30 months 1.5 yrs - 2.5 yrs	10	1:4
24 months - 36 months 2 yrs - 3 yrs	10	1:5
32 months - 42 months 2.7 yrs - 3.5 yrs	15	1:6
36 months - Kindergarten 3 yrs - 5 yrs	20	1:10

Bodies of water reminder: Adult to child ratios change when near bodies of water for children age newborns - age five to **1:2**

Youngest child ratio rule: When combining inside of the building the max capacity allowed in a space is based on the youngest child in the group.

Outdoor Ratio Capacity & Combining Groups Outside:

Groups of children can combine in an outdoor setting at NOW beyond the max capacity set for their indoor classroom and the children's ages with guided rules.

When groups are combined on playgrounds staff are required to count their children from their classroom, for active supervision purposes, but must also count the entire number of children in the space as a combined group so that ratio can be adhered to, based on the youngest child in the setting, with a stipulation.

Stipulation: If it is clear which classroom teachers are present with their children, and that classroom is within their appropriate ratio for their children's age group, it is ok to combine classes above the ratio set by the youngest child in the setting.

ACTIVE SUPERVISION

All NOW staff are trained in active supervision. Active supervision promotes a safe environment and prevents injuries in young children. It requires focused attention and intentional observation at all times. Staff use active supervision strategies to make sure children of all ages explore their environments safely. Each program can keep children safe by teaching all staff how to look, listen, and engage. Keeping children safe is a top priority for all NOW programs. Using active supervision, staff position themselves so that they can always observe all children — watching, counting, and listening. During transitions, they account for all children with name-to-face recognition by visually identifying each child. Staff also use their knowledge of each child's development and abilities to anticipate what they will do, then get involved and redirect them when necessary. This constant vigilance helps children learn safely. NOW staff follow these guidelines when using active supervision.

1. Have backpack, radio and attendance (in Brightwheel) at all times
2. Count the children, hovering a hand over each of their heads to keep an accurate count
3. Make sure that the number of children is the same as what is on the attendance.
4. Make sure that all children are in line of sight as they transition from one place to the next.
5. When arriving at a destination, count children again.
6. Count children often and move around the space and keep all kids in line of sight.
7. If children are getting dropped off or picked up: sign them in/out in Brightwheel immediately using their correct pick up codes.

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8. As an additional visual in classrooms; use whiteboards with the correct number of children listed at all times.

As an additional visual on playgrounds; use the laminated chart and laminated numbers to indicate the number of children present upon arrival, and change that number as children arrive/are picked up.

9. If a change in shifts occurs and children are entering the care of another teacher, the current teacher **MUST** ensure the new teacher has an updated Brightwheel and head count of children before exiting the space. The new staff **MUST** follow the rules listed above.

10. If a teacher is leaving a space with any number of children, the teachers must communicate how many children they each have before the transition occurs.

Family Information kept on file as per state child care regulations under section 3.4.4

- A completed child's admission form signed and dated by the parent that includes the first date the child attended the CBCCPP and the 32 days and hours the child is regularly scheduled to attend the CBCCPP T
- The child's name, current home address, and current home telephone number
- Identification of child's home language
- The child's date of birth
- Name, address, and all applicable current telephone numbers for parents
- Name, address, and all applicable current telephone numbers for at least two (2) other people designated by the parents as emergency contacts
- Names for all persons authorized to pick the child up from the CBCCPP
- Record of an annual physical and health history as required in the rule 5.1.2 of these regulations that includes the name and telephone number of the child's primary health care and dental care providers (if the child has a dental care provider)
- A description of any special medical, developmental, emotional, or educational needs of the child including allergies, existing illnesses or injuries, previous serious illnesses or injuries and any prescribed medication including those for emergency situations
- Written authorization from the parent for the CBCCPP to be able to obtain emergency medical care and transportation
- Child's immunization record or Vermont Department of Health approved exemption document as required in the rules in section 5.1.3 of these regulations
- Written permission from parents for the CBCCPP to transport the child, if transportation is provided, as required in the rule 5.10.6.6.1 of the regulations
- Written permission from parents for the child to participate in swimming activities, if swimming activities are a part of the program, as required in the rule 5.10.5.1 of these regulations
- If applicable, a copy of court orders on custody and visitation arrangements required in the rule 3.6.4 of these regulations
- If applicable, any obvious injuries discovered and documented on daily health check as

required in the rule 5.3.2 of these regulations.

STARS

STARS is Vermont's Quality Recognition and Improvement System for child care, Preschool and afterschool programs.

Participation in STARS means that our program is striving to go beyond licensing regulations to meet a higher quality of standards, uphold professional practice, and commitment to quality improvement.

We currently have 3 STARS. A 3-star rating signifies that a program has achieved a certain level of quality as defined by the system, which focuses on factors like adult-child interactions, family engagement, and responsive practices. NOW is currently working on accreditation reaching the 4th and then 5th STARS rating.

Capstone Early Head Start (EHS) Programming

Neck of the Woods currently has 5 Early Head Start Classrooms. These classrooms are Periwinkles (young infant), Rumbles (older Infant), Tumblers (youngest toddler), Grasshoppers (middle toddler) and Dominoes (oldest toddler). Early Head Start's mission is to help children grow up to be capable adults, able to choose their own path and contribute to society. Early Head Start offers high quality support and services to partnered Centers and their children and families through coaching, providing equipment and materials, diapers, wipes and more. EHS provides wrap-around support, connecting school to home to outside community resources that can ultimately raise families out of poverty and help establish healthy living, career building, advancement in education and parent training and support services.

EHS PROVIDES

- High quality early childhood education
- Parent supports
- Full time family service workers for every 30 families. They work to help families become stable and assist parents to work on goals, ranging from finding housing to enrolling in college, and everything in between.
- Instruction in parenting, finance, continuing ed, employment skills and a range of other topics.
- Assistance to families to achieve goals for DCF, REACH UP, and other entities and assisting them to be engaged with those supports.
- Health, Nutrition, Dental & Mental Health supports
- Support through contract with dental hygienists, a nutritionist, and multiple mental health clinicians.
- Consultation with staff and families about dietary needs. Assistance in creating menus in centers. Periodic unannounced observations of meals at centers to ensure quality.
- Nutritious, dietician approved breakfast, snack, and lunch.
- Consultation with staff and families about medical issues. Help in creating an Individual Health Plan for children with special health needs. (ex. asthma, epilepsy)
- Screenings for children, including medical, dental, hearing and vision.
- Support for children to have a regular doctor and dentist as well as to attain health insurance.
- Diapers and wipes are provided while children are in care.
- Consultation with staff and families about dental issues. Provide training to classrooms as well as dental screenings for children.
- Help families to get in to see a dentist.
- Mental health consultations with staff and families about mental health. Twice yearly classroom observations and as requested. Initial visits with child and/or family (including

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siblings), as needed.

EHS CHILD CARE PARTNERSHIPS SUPPORT HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE BY

- Having lower child teacher ratios, which means more quality time with each child
- Increased money for each child care program to provide high quality materials and helps to maintain the financial stability of the program
- Professional development for teachers through classes, mentoring, and coaching to help teachers develop their skills as teachers so that they can provide the best care and learning environment for children.
- Routine monitoring (several times a month) of the program to ensure that Head Start's higher standards are being met.
- Note: Head Start standards exceed Vermont State Licensing requirements so that children are receiving higher quality care, in a safe and healthy environment.

HOW TO QUALIFY FOR EHS

Qualifications: Any one of #1-5 qualifies a child but #6 is a MUST

1. Families receiving Reach Up, Reach Ahead, Child-Only Reach Up grants, SNAP, or 3 Squares
2. Families with a receiving SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
3. Children in foster care
4. Families who are homeless
5. Families whose gross income is at or below the federal poverty guidelines
6. Must be a child between the ages of 6 weeks and 36 months

HOW TO SIGN UP FOR EHS

Please contact Amy Coolbeth: Capstone EHS, Early Childhood Specialist at acoolbeth@capstonevt.org or call 802-622-4137

SCHEDULE & TUITION

The NOW Early Childhood Education Programs serve children ages 6 weeks to age 5.

ENROLLMENT

Prior to your child's first day attending NOW Programming parents/guardians must complete the NOW enrollment form. These online forms can be obtained via phone 802-496-6689 or email info@neckofthewoodsvt.com, or by visiting our [website](#). Once families have filled out the form, the Director of Operations and Administration will reach out to confirm receipt and connect parents/guardians with the appropriate Director to schedule a tour. After a tour, the Director of Operations and Administration will reach out to determine whether the family would like the slot and send official enrollment forms through the Sawyer platform. Enrollment forms are sent annually to currently enrolled families each Spring for the following school year.

Program Openings:

At the start of each new school year all children enrolled in NOW programming age up into a new classroom. This is the only time of year that NOW guarantees openings will need to be filled in the Periwinkles (young infant) classroom. All other classrooms are full year-round unless an unexpected slot becomes available. If this occurs, the slot will be offered first to families currently enrolled to add days. If the slot remains available then it will be offered to the first child on our waiting list in that age group.

TUITION

Infant, Toddler and Preschool Tuition is based on an average monthly rate that will remain constant throughout each month for the year, based on the child's age. Families are billed monthly and any changes in schedule will need to be approved by the Director of Operations and Administration.

Neck of the Woods 2025-2026 Tuition Rates

Infant: Ages 6 weeks - 23 Months

Toddler: Ages 2 - 35 Months

Preschool: Ages 3+

<u>Days/Week Enrolled</u>	<u>Infant Daily</u>	<u>Infant Monthly</u>	<u>Toddler Daily</u>	<u>Toddler Monthly</u>	<u>Preschool Daily</u>	<u>Preschool Monthly</u>
5	\$82	\$1,763	\$77	\$1,656	\$72	\$1,548
4	\$84	\$1,428	\$79	\$1,342	\$74	\$1,256
3	\$85	\$1,084	\$80	\$1,019	\$75	\$955
2	\$86	\$731	\$81	\$688	\$76	\$645

Sibling Discount (applies to all Programs):

Children enrolled in NOW programming are eligible for a sibling discount (4%) if all siblings are enrolled for at least 3 days per week, and discounts will be applied to all siblings.

Annual Supply Fee:

An annual supply fee of \$25 will be applied to each individual enrolled in NOW programming. These fees will be applied to September's tuition, unless a family joins mid school year, at which point the supply fee will be added to the first month's tuition for that family.

Tuition Increase:

An annual tuition increase should be expected, relative to local and national inflation rates. Information regarding specificities around tuition rates will be confirmed and sent to families along with the following year's enrollment information that goes out each Spring.

SUBSIDIZED FUNDING (AVAILABLE TO ALL PROGRAMS)

The NOW program accepts subsidized funding for qualified families. If information is needed regarding subsidy please contact the Family Center of Washington County (802) 262-3292. All paperwork must be sent to the child's Program Director prior to a child's first day of attendance.

To be eligible, a family must:

1. Have an [accepted service need](#) (reason) for childcare,
2. Meet the [income guidelines](#) (effective date 3/23/3035) The income guidelines are waived for children who have an Adoption Assistance Agreement through the Vermont Department of Children and Families and legal guardians who receive a Reach Up Only Child grant.
3. Live in Vermont, and

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4. Have less than \$1 million in [assets](#).

How to Apply:

There are two ways to apply for CACFP:

1. Complete the [paper application](#) and submit in person or by mail to your [local community childcare support agency](#) OR
2. Submit an online application through the Child Development Division Information System ([CDDIS](#)) [Parent Portal](#).

MRV COMMUNITY FUND SCHOLARSHIP (AVAILABLE TO ALL PROGRAMS)

If families are from the Mad River Valley there are tuition scholarships available through the Mad River Valley Community Fund for those who qualify and whose tuition is not fully covered by a different means of financial assistance. Please contact Jill Ellis: jill@mrvcommunityfund.org for more information.

BILLING

Each family is billed monthly.

New Enrollees:

- New families must fill out a waitlist/registration form found on the Neck of the Woods [website](#). Or inquire by phone or email: 802-496-6689 or info@neckofthewoodsvt.com
- The Director of Operations and Administration will contact families within 5 business days after inquiry and if a slot is available then the full enrollment process will begin.
- A slot that is available is considered a slot that a family would like to fill within one month of confirmation of enrollment.
- If a family is seeking a slot that is not immediate (within the first month of being approved for enrollment) then the family would need to pay to hold the slot for the duration of time between the first month of enrollment through the date that the child begins attending.
- If a family does not wish to pay for this slot to be held for the child until they begin care then the child will be added to a waiting list and families will have the opportunity to contact Neck of the Woods one month before intended enrollment to see if a slot is available.
- If a slot is not available at any point of inquiry, and a family would like to be added to the waitlist, they will be added and informed of where they are placed on the waitlist.
- After a slot has been confirmed, the family will be sent a link to complete the full registration process on Sawyer (the NOW online registration platform).

Payment Process:

Billing is done in two different ways:

For families using the Child Care Financial Assistance Program:

Invoices are sent midway through each month, reflecting a bill for the following month. That month's bill is not due until the END of the month, after all subsidy payments have been applied. The NOW bookkeeper will reach out to let families know what portion of the month's tuition is due after subsidy payments have been applied, and payment is due within one week of receiving this invoice.

Example:

October Bill:

Invoice Emailed on Sept. 20th noting "DO NOT PAY"

Post Subsidy Invoice Sent on November 5th

Payment for October Due by November 12th

No payment made on Nov. 12th

\$20 late payment fee applied on Nov. 13th

No payment made by Nov. 20th

Care discontinued by Nov. 30th

Making a Payment:

Families paying a Family Share after subsidy is applied can either pay online using the link attached to the invoice or pay by check made out to "Neck of the Woods" and sent to Mailing address: 584 Route 100B Moretown, Vt. 05660, Attn. Lauré Murphy: Mad River Bookkeeping.

For Families NOT using the Child Care Financial Assistance Program:

Full payment for the following month will be due by or before the 1st of each month. Full monthly payments will be made automatically on Sawyer through the payment method on file on the first of each month. If the online payment is unsuccessful and payment is not received by the 1st of each month, a late payment fee of \$20 will be added to the bill. If payment is not made, including the \$20 late payment fee, by the 20th of the month the family will be sent a notice that their childcare slot will no longer be available by the end of the month if payment is not made.

Payment Expectations Regardless of Missed Days or Closures:

If a child misses time due to any illness families will still be obligated to pay. If families choose to not send a child for any reason they will still be obligated to pay. NOW reserves the right to close due to inclement weather, unforeseen emergencies, Health Department or government guidance, or any other circumstances that may place the NOW community at risk. No refunds will be issued.

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SCHEDULE CHANGES

Adding days outside of a typical weekly schedule:

If families would like to add a day that they are not typically enrolled, but not change their child's usual weekly schedule, they must confirm this change with the Director of Operations and Administration (info@neckofthewoodsvt.com). When this change has been confirmed, the Program will bill the daily rate for any added days either through a Sawyer quickcharge or with an updated Quickbooks invoice (for families who receive subsidized funding).

Adding to a typical weekly schedule:

If families would like to add a day to their child's weekly schedule *consistently* they must confirm with the Director of Operations and Administration (info@neckofthewoodsvt.com) that this schedule change can occur. When this change has been confirmed, the Program will bill for that daily rate for any per diem add-on days in the current month. The new billing cycle will reflect the change in schedule in their invoice with a new monthly flat rate for infant, toddler and preschool programs reflecting all additional days.

Subtracting days in a typical weekly school year schedule:

If families would like to change their schedule to subtract days from a typical weekly schedule they must give a two week paid notice with the Director of Operations and Administration (info@neckofthewoodsvt.com).

ARRIVALS, DEPARTURES & CLASSROOM SCHEDULES

ARRIVALS

Children may arrive between 7:45am - 9:00am. NOW respectfully request 24 hour notice via phone call or app if a child will arrive later than 9 am, and a call by 8:30 am if a child will not be attending that day. All children should be escorted by parents/guardians into the classroom and walk through their morning routine with them before departing. **This includes putting items in cubbies, toileting/diapering and washing hands.**

DEPARTURES

Parents/guardians must pick up BEFORE 4:45 pm. Please see "Hours of Operation" for important information regarding our STRICT drop off and pick up policies.

SIGN IN/OUT

NOW uses the Brightwheel child care management system for sign in and out. Every parent/guardian, emergency or approved pick up will be given sign in information to gain access to their child(ren)'s Brightwheel account online. Every single person who is eligible to pick up a child from NOW programs has their own four digit check in/out code. Codes are individualized and ARE NOT interchangeable between family members/approved pick ups. Please make sure that emergency contacts and approved pick ups are updated so that each parent, guardian, emergency contact and approved pick up have their own 4 digit code. Staff sign children in and out with codes specific to the individual to reflect the correct person in Brightwheel having dropped off and picked up the child. This is for licensing and safety purposes.

Unauthorized Pick Ups:

Unless authorized, it is not acceptable for anyone under the age of 18 to escort a child to and from the Center. If anyone not listed as an authorized pick-up person will be picking up a child, there must be written notice (email, signed note and Brightwheel are good options) or a phone call must be received in advance stating the name of the person and their phone number so that a Brightwheel code can be created for them. Anyone unfamiliar to the teaching staff will be asked for identification and a phone call will be made to parents/guardians before the child can leave the premises.

APPROXIMATE DAILY PRESCHOOL SCHEDULE (MAY VARY BY AGE AND CLASSROOM)

7:45 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. Free time inside/outside depending on weather

8:45 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Morning meeting

9:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. Snack

9:15 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Structured activity/free play/curriculum/enrichment/outdoor ed

11:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Lunch

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11:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Quiet activities (books and puzzles)

12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Rest time

2:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. Clean-up from nap/pack-up

2:30 p.m. After School starts

3:00 p.m. Snack

3:30 p.m. to 4:45 p.m. Outside/Free choice/Activity

Infant & Toddler Schedules:

All Infants and young toddlers are on their own schedule, and we respect their natural rhythms, as well as family guidance on their child's day. As older infants transition to young toddler days, they will gently be guided into the rhythm of the toddler classroom schedule.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

WHAT TO BRING

Infants:

Enough clean, already prepared bottles for a day's use, at least 8-12 diapers per day, and at least 2 changes of clothes per day. **All bottles must be labeled and dated.**

Toddlers:

Enough clean bottles/sippy cups for one day's use (if applicable), 8-12 diapers and at least two changes of clothes per day. All bottles must be labeled and dated.

Older Toddlers:

At least two changes of clothes (more if potty training) as well as diapers/pull-ups or underwear, if toilet training.

Preschoolers:

At least one change of clothes, socks and shoes. *Please label all items brought from home with your child's name* (i.e., gear, footwear, backpacks, water bottles, diapers, pull ups, pacifiers, sheets, blankets, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost.

Footwear:

Indoors children may wear indoor shoes, slippers, or socks, and outside they must have a pair of outdoor shoes that are appropriate for weather conditions. *Please label your child's footwear with their name.*

Outdoor Gear:

~At least two pairs of clothes including underwear and socks

~Outside clothing (weather appropriate -- rain boots and raincoat for rainy days; Hat, mittens, winter boots, snow pants, and winter jacket for Winter; shorts, t-shirts, a bathing suit and towel for Summer; etc..) *Please label all outdoor gear with your child's name.*

Sunscreen/Insect Repellent (if not provided by NOW):

NOW provides sunscreen and insect repellent to children whose families choose to sign up on the enrollment packet to have this provided. For those who would prefer to bring these items from home for children please provide it, labeled with the child's name.

*Please note that classroom teachers may have alternate requests for belongings based on their classroom routines, so please reach out to the child's teacher to correspond on what to

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bring if what they are asking for differs from what is listed here.

TOYS FROM HOME

We request that children NOT bring toys from home into the center unless they are part of a show-and-tell activity, or for rest time that will be kept with their sleeping items. If a child is having a particularly difficult time transitioning to care/camp please connect with the program's Director/Teachers to decide if a home item may assist in the transition process.

Infant/Toddler/Preschool - Other Required Items:

Rest-time items: NOW will supply children with a rest mat or crib. Please bring a small blanket, a flat sheet for the nap mat, and/or pillow (not for infants). A stuffed animal or soft comfort item is sometimes helpful at naptime as well. *Please label everything with your child's name.*

Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center. Please check your child's cubby on a daily basis for items that need to be taken home, and watch for messages on our child care app. At times, we may launder clothing and nap materials here. Nap items must go home weekly to be laundered.

- *Please note: if your child is in need of items that are continually not brought to the center after multiple times reaching out to let parents/guardians know that items are low/need to be replenished (i.e. diapers and wipes) the staff will purchase these items, using the NOW credit card for your child and will hand parents/guardians a receipt at pick up that must be paid back to the Neck of the Woods within 24 hours.*

LOST & FOUND

We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. You can ask for lost items via Brightwheel and bring found items to the teachers to place in the Lost-and-found Box located in each classroom. Please note that we are not responsible for lost personal property. We ask that clothing or personal items of considerable value or sentimental value be left at home, as we can not guarantee children will not misplace them. All personal items MUST be clearly labeled, and labels checked periodically to be sure they have not worn off.

FOOD & DRINK

Snack:

We ask that parents/guardians provide children with both a morning and afternoon snack, as well as lunch. Children tend to eat a lot during their days at NOW, expelling a great deal of energy, working bodies and minds. The heartier snacks and meals can be, the better. We believe that good nutrition is absolutely essential for proper health and learning in young children, and ask that families do their best to provide healthy options.

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When packing a lunch for your child, please include nutritious and low-sugar foods. Sandwiches, rolled-up deli or cooked meats, vegetables with dip, hard-cooked eggs, yogurt, sliced fruit and cheese are all good options. A healthy snack should consist of fruits, vegetables, whole grains etc. Please refrain from sending your child with sugary snacks- candy and sugary drinks are not allowed as a lunch or snack option. An insulated thermos is an excellent choice if you wish to send warm food, and is especially good at NOW because we are an outdoor education facility. Please send your child's lunch in a well-marked lunch box or bag. Lunchtime is a time for teachers and children to enjoy good food and the company of one another. To maintain a positive atmosphere, we will not dictate the order in which your child's lunch is to be eaten. Questions of "what should I eat first?" are met with "What do you think?", except for sweets, which we ask you to leave at home, or we may ask children to save them for home. We strive to foster independence and self-confidence and this continues into mealtime. Pack a lunch that you feel good about your child eating in any order (and be aware that dessert-type items are often eaten first). Candy is not allowed at school. There are many school lunch foods that are essentially candy, and we ask that you do not send these items with your child. Please see myplate.gov for more information on healthy eating and what to send to school for lunch and snack items.

If providing your child with a snack becomes a financial burden please speak with the NOW Directors, and we will work out snacks and meals for your child. However, we do not have a stocked kitchen at Neck of the Woods at this time, and do need advanced notice. For help with school lunch, please email us at info@neckofthewoodsvt.com

Families with children in child care in Vermont are encouraged to follow the guidelines for nutrition put forth by the Child and Adult Care Food Program standards set by the USDA.

While we are currently not enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program, it is our intention to explore the feasibility of offering this option as soon as possible and are working hard to put in a kitchen/cafeteria that will enable us to provide a food program.

Please pack children with lunch boxes that contain at least one ice pack to keep food fresh. The NOW program is not a Peanut Free Zone, however, there will be a notice that will go out to all families if this changes.

Water Bottles:

Please provide your child with a clean, full water bottle at the start of each day. Water bottles can be refilled at the center/camp but we would appreciate children arriving with full water bottles. Please label your child's water bottle with their name and take them home to wash often.

Food Allergies:

Please let us know of any and all food allergies your child has, as well as the severity. If your child has an allergen to a common ingredient such as gluten, dairy or eggs, it is helpful to provide us a “special snack” to keep on hand so your child is not left out on a special snack day

Infant and Toddler foods and bottles:

All infant and toddler food must be provided for each day. Keep in mind sometimes children eat more in one day, and we request that you leave a few extra options for your child in case they are hungry beyond that day’s foods. Please provide us with enough bottles for your child for the day. Older children should have at least 2 sippy cups. Please label all foods, cups, bottles, formula, and breastmilk with your child’s name and the date.

Formula and Breastmilk:

Formula and breastmilk must be labeled with your child’s name. Breastmilk must also have a date on it. We can utilize frozen breastmilk and packaged formula as back up when we run out of the prepared bottles that each family provides daily.

Note: All bottles must also be dated if you plan to leave milk in the fridge for more than just a day, as we follow the following guidelines.

-- Reg. 5.11.6.8: Open containers of ready-to-feed or concentrated formula shall be covered, refrigerated, and discarded after forty-eight (48) hours if not used. Freshly mixed powder or liquid concentrate shall be covered, refrigerated, and discarded after twenty-four (24) hours if not used. Unused portions of formula that were offered to the infant shall be discarded after each feeding.

– Reg. 5.11.6.9: Unused portions of breast milk that was offered to the infant shall not be served again and shall be labeled as expired, refrigerated, and returned to the parent after each feeding. Freshly expressed breast milk which has not been fed to the infant may be stored at room temperature for no more than four (4) hours. After which it shall be refrigerated or fed to the infant. Unused, stored breast milk shall be returned to the parent after ninety-six (96) hours if refrigerated and after six (6) months if frozen.

Infant Feedings:

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed “on cue” to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent caregiver/teacher.
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies.

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Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to six months.

- Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.

COMMUNICATION POLICIES (Confidentiality, Respectful Conduct, Mandated Reporting, Complaint Policy, Communication Plans)

STUDENT CONFIDENTIALITY

All children's records are kept confidential, unless there is information on file that will permit the program to coordinate with other appropriate agencies. In issues dealing with school teams, we will ask parents to sign a release of records. We will also adhere to HIPAA and FERPA laws as they apply to certain confidentiality situations.

If there is an incident that occurs on school grounds that involves more than one child, it is the policy of the NOW program to inform both parents/guardians of the children involved. Due to our confidentiality regulations the other child's names will not be given.

Furthermore, any time NOW needs to communicate with your child's doctor, other caregivers, school & for any referral reasons to an outside organization, you will need to give written permission to do so, and for what purpose that communication is needed. We have a form in the parent packet, which you can request another copy of, or you may write out your own. This form will be dated, utilized for a specific amount of time, and may be rescinded for any reason you have. Lastly, this form will be kept in your child's file.

Photographs and Publicity:

Photographs will be taken at the Program periodically throughout the year to put up around the rooms, for parents/guardians to view, to occasionally be put in the local newspapers, on our Website, on our childcare management app and shared with other families, on our NOW Facebook and Instagram pages. The Program will provide a photography permission form to photograph and publicize pictures of your child.

RESPECTFUL CONDUCT POLICY

1. Purpose and Commitment

Neck of the Woods (NOW) is committed to maintaining an environment that is safe, respectful, and free from all forms of harassment, discrimination, aggression, and retaliation.

Every individual—whether an employee, volunteer, contractor, board member, client, or visitor—deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. Harassment or aggressive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

All employees (full-time, part-time, seasonal, or temporary)

Volunteers and interns

Board members

Contractors, vendors, and visitors

Clients, customers, and parents/guardians of program participants

It covers behavior that occurs:

On the organization's premises or during any work-related or organization-sponsored activity

In any work-related communication, including email, phone, text, or social media

3. Definitions

a. Harassment

Harassment is unwelcome conduct based on legally protected characteristics such as race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, age, disability, or any other protected status.

Examples include:

Offensive jokes, slurs, or name-calling

Physical assault, threats, or intimidation

Unwanted touching or gestures

Displaying or sharing offensive materials

Repeated unwanted attention or comments

b. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, such as:

Unwanted touching or suggestive remarks

Sexually explicit jokes or messages

Conditioning benefits or services on sexual conduct

c. Aggressive or Abusive Behavior

The Organization also prohibits aggressive, abusive, or threatening behavior by any individual—whether staff, volunteer, client, parent, or visitor—toward employees, volunteers, children, or others.

Examples include:

Verbal abuse, shouting, or use of profanity

Physical intimidation, gestures, or threats of violence

Bullying or harassment through communication or social media

Damage to property or attempts to disrupt services

Repeated disrespectful or hostile conduct toward staff or volunteers

Such behavior may result in creation of a mandatory Communication Agreement, immediate removal from the premises, suspension of services, or termination of the client relationship.

4. Reporting Harassment or Aggression

Anyone who experiences or witnesses harassment, discrimination, or aggressive behavior should report it immediately to:

The Executive Director.

A supervisor or manager

A designated HR representative or Board officer

Reports may be made verbally or in writing and may be submitted confidentially if desired.

No one will face retaliation for making a good-faith report or participating in an investigation.

5. Investigation and Response

Upon receiving a report, the Organization will:

1. Promptly investigate all complaints in an objective and confidential manner.
2. Take appropriate action based on findings, which may include disciplinary measures up to termination or, in the case of clients, suspension or discontinuation of services.
3. Notify parties involved of the outcome when appropriate.

6. Responsibility

All members of the Organization's community share responsibility for maintaining a safe, respectful, and harassment-free environment. Supervisors and leaders must model appropriate behavior, respond promptly to concerns, and ensure reports are addressed.

Employees and volunteers must treat others respectfully and report any misconduct or aggressive behavior they observe. Clients and visitors are expected to adhere to this policy at all times while engaging in services, events or activities with the organization.

7. Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation against anyone who reports harassment or aggression, participates in an investigation, or refuses to tolerate abusive behavior is strictly prohibited and will result in corrective action.

8. Training and Awareness

All staff, board members, and volunteers will receive regular training on this policy and the procedures for addressing harassment and aggression. Parents and clients will be made aware of the Organization's standards of conduct as referenced in the NOW Guidebook.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Director and Board of Directors to ensure it remains compliant with current laws and reflects best practices for workplace safety and respect.

MANDATED REPORTING POLICY

Staff members of the NOW Program are mandated by State of Vermont Law to report any suspected or observed abuse and/or neglect of children.

GENERAL COMPLAINT POLICY

Purpose:

At Neck of the Woods we value the feedback of parents/guardians/volunteers/community members/employees/board members/contractors. Neck of the Woods (“the Organization”) is committed to maintaining a safe, positive, and responsive environment for children, families, staff, and volunteers.

This policy provides a clear and fair process for raising and resolving complaints or concerns regarding the Organization’s programs, services, staff conduct, or operations. Our goal is to address concerns promptly, respectfully, and constructively — ensuring that issues are resolved in a manner that protects the integrity of the program and supports open communication.

Scope:

This policy applies to:

- Parents and guardians of enrolled children
- Employees, volunteers, and board members
- Contractors and community members who interact with the Organization

Complaints covered by this policy may include:

- Program or classroom concerns
- Staff or volunteer conduct
- Safety or supervision issues
- Administrative or billing matters
- General dissatisfaction with services or communication
- Complaints involving harassment or discrimination are handled under separate, specific policies (e.g., Respectful Conduct Policy).

Guiding Principles:

The Organization is guided by the following principles when handling complaints:

- Respect and professionalism: All parties will be treated with courtesy and fairness.

Updated Nov. 2025

- Confidentiality: Complaints will be handled sensitively and shared only with those directly involved in addressing the issue.
- Timeliness: Every effort will be made to resolve complaints promptly.
- Non-retaliation: No person will face retaliation for raising a concern in good faith.
- Continuous improvement: Complaints will be reviewed to identify opportunities for program or policy improvements.

COMPLAINT PROCESS:

Step 1: Direct Resolution (Informal)

Whenever possible, individuals are encouraged to address concerns directly with the persons involved. Many issues can be resolved quickly through open and respectful communication in person, over the phone or via email (please do not use the BrightWheel system to raise complaints).

If direct discussion is not comfortable or effective, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Submit a Formal Complaint

If the issue is not resolved informally, a formal complaint should be submitted using this [form](#).

The written complaint should include:

- Name and contact information of the complainant
- Description of the concern, including dates, individuals involved, and any relevant details
- Steps already taken to address the concern

Step 3: Review and Response

The Executive Director will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five (5) business days.
2. Review the information, which may include meeting with relevant parties.
3. Provide a written or verbal response outlining findings and any corrective or follow-up actions.

The goal is to resolve most complaints within 15 business days.

Step 4: Appeal (if needed)

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, they may submit a written appeal [form](#) to the Board of Directors Chair within 10 business days of receiving the response.

The Board (or a designated committee) will review the matter and issue a final decision. The Board's decision is final.

Documentation:

All formal complaints and resolutions will be documented and maintained in a confidential file by the Executive Director.

Records will be used to monitor trends, ensure accountability, and guide organizational improvements.

Retaliation Prohibited:

Retaliation against any person who raises a complaint or participates in an investigation in good faith is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

Communication of Policy:

This policy will be shared with all employees, volunteers, and families and included in the Parent and Staff Guidebooks. Copies are available upon request.

Policy Review:

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Executive Director and Board of Directors to ensure continued compliance with best practices and state childcare licensing requirements.

Reporting program concerns to Child Care Licensing:

If you have a concern and have moved through the process of filing a complaint to the Executive Director, filled out a formal complaint, completed an appeal with the Board of Directors and you are still dissatisfied with the outcome, please call the Child Development Division Licensur on Duty number, 1-800-649-2642, Option 3.

COMMUNICATION AGREEMENT AND OTHER CONSEQUENCES FOR UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

NOW adheres to Vermont Child Care Licensing Regulations regarding disruptive and dangerous behavior. NOW is a place of safety, mutual respect and dignity and strives to provide an appropriate environment for children to grow, learn, and develop. Achieving this environment is the responsibility of all NOW employees and each family member. An incident of hostile, aggressive, threatening, or otherwise unacceptable behavior is not tolerated at NOW. If an incident or repeated incidents that amount to such behavior under the regulations occurs, NOW staff reserves the right to require anyone to control their behavior through a Communication Agreement, limit or restrict access to the facility, report the incident to authorities, and terminate the client relationship.

Reg. 5.10.1.15: Disruptive or Dangerous Behavior. The licensee shall prohibit any person, including but not limited to parents, staff, partner staff or volunteers, from the CBCCPP and property, when his/her presence or behavior disrupts the program, distracts the staff from their responsibilities, intimidates or promotes fear among the children and/or staff, or when there is reason to believe that his/her actions or behavior presents a risk of harm to children present.

HEALTH

GENERAL HEALTH STATEMENT

If your child is not healthy enough to participate in the program, as determined by the NOW staff, they should not be attending the program that day. If your child is not feeling well the NOW staff will check symptoms and contact parents/guardians as needed. Please note that NOW staff are not medical professionals and will ask parents/guardians to consult with medical professionals as needed to evaluate symptoms and diagnose children. Staff may ask for doctor's notes to confirm medical communications and will also reach out to medical professionals within the NOW community to verify guidance and promote best practices to ensure a safe and healthy learning environment for all members of the NOW community.

NOW reserves the right to close classrooms based on disease and viral outbreaks (e.g. Covid, flu etc.). At NOW's discretion, a decision will be made based on the health and well-being of students and staff.

ILLNESS GUIDANCE: WHEN TO RETURN TO CHILDCARE

Most Common Illnesses:

Fever (100°F or higher):

Staff procedure to check temperatures: When a child presents with a fever, staff will check the child with 2 or 3 different kinds of thermometers. Staff will wait at least 20 minutes after a child has woken up to take their temperature. Children can have elevated temperatures for different reasons (overheated, just woken up, the thermometer is wrong, teething etc.) and if a child is presenting normally but just happens to have a temperature reading over 100°F, they may not actually be sick and should be checked again before parents are contacted. If a child does have a fever of 100°F or higher due to likely illness the child will not be allowed to attend care.

When to return to care: When the child has been fever free (temperature below 100°F) for at least 24 hours without fever reducing medication and is feeling well enough to return and participate in the day's activities.

Diarrhea:

Staff procedure when a child has loose stools/diarrhea/abnormal stools: Staff will contact parents/guardians if a child has loose stools/diarrhea/abnormal stools, for tracking purposes and to ask if there was anything introduced into the child's diet that may be the cause for this symptom to arise. IF the child has no adjoining symptoms (fatigue, fever, vomiting, generally feeling unwell, etc.) then staff and parents/guardians will work together to track bowel movements in an attempt to determine root cause. Loose stools/diarrhea/abnormal stools can

occur for many reasons including new foods being introduced, changes in growth, too much of one food item, too few of others, intolerances, toddler diarrhea etc.

IF a child has an adjoining symptom of illness (fatigue, fever, vomiting, generally feeling unwell, etc.) or is unable to participate in the daily programming, the child will not be able to attend care.

When to return to care: A child with loose stools/diarrhea/abnormal stools, with adjoining symptoms of illness (fatigue, fever, vomiting, generally feeling unwell, etc.) can return to care 24 hours after the last episode of diarrhea and if the child is able to participate as they typically do when feeling well.

Vomiting:

Staff procedure when a child has vomited: Staff will contact parents/guardians if a child vomits. IF the child has no adjoining symptoms (fatigue, fever, diarrhea, generally feeling unwell, etc.) then staff will monitor the child for further symptoms of illness. Vomiting can occur for many reasons including new food or formula being introduced, choking, acid reflux, overeating, mental dysregulation, overwhelm, intolerances etc.

IF a child has an adjoining symptom of illness (fatigue, fever, diarrhea, generally feeling unwell, etc.) and is unable to participate in the daily programming the child will not be able to attend care.

When to return to care: A child who is vomiting, with adjoining symptoms of illness (fatigue, fever, diarrhea, generally feeling unwell, etc.) can return to care 24 hours after the last episode of vomiting and if the child is able to participate as they typically do when feeling well.

Colds:

Staff procedure when a child has a cold: Staff will monitor all cold symptoms and let parents/guardians know if a child is not feeling well enough to participate in the daily programming. Colds are very common in childcare settings and children are not excluded from care due to cold symptoms, unless they are experiencing adjoining symptoms of illness (fatigue, fever, diarrhea, vomiting, generally feeling unwell, etc.).

When to return to care: If a child is sent home due to a cold it will have either been because an adjoining symptom is present OR they are not feeling well enough to participate in daily programming. Children are welcomed back the next day as long as they are feeling well enough to participate and no other adjoining symptoms compromise their ability to return.

Covid:

Staff procedure when a child is presenting with Covid symptoms: Staff will monitor all cold/covid-like symptoms and let parents/guardians know if a child is not feeling well enough to participate in daily programming.

When to return to care: If a child is diagnosed with Covid they must be fever free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medications, and either have no more symptoms of Covid or wear a mask (if 3 years old or above, and able to keep a mask on.) Because Covid is more likely to impact adults than children for longer periods, NOW's preventative measures take into consideration the likelihood that staff would be impacted for a longer period of time, therefore raising the possibility of classroom closure due to lack of staffing.

Other Contagious Illnesses - When to Return:

- Severe Cough: Must remain home until 24 hours after coughing has subsided.
- Streptococcal Infections (includes Scarlet Fever & Strep Throat): Must remain home until 24 hours after medication has begun, OR 4 doses have been given.
- Conjunctivitis: Must remain home until after a prescription eye drop medication has been given for at least 24 hours.
- Chicken Pox: Must remain home until the last sore has scabbed and there is no oozing.
- Impetigo: Must remain home until antibiotics have been given for at least 48 hours and all areas must be fully scabbed over, with no areas of open blister/rash, or new blisters/rash forming. It is suggested that even when an individual who has been diagnosed with Impetigo returns, any leftover scabs should be covered to prevent leakage if the scab is accidentally opened.
- Coxsackie (Hand, Foot and Mouth): Must remain home until after the rash/blisters/lesions are gone and no new ones are forming. All mouth blisters must be completely gone.
- Measles: Must remain home until 5 days after rash appears and a note from a physician
- Head Lice: Must remain home until after a prescription shampoo has been administered and all of the eggs are removed. The child will need a follow up treatment in one week.
 - If an alternative treatment method is used the child will need to remain out of care for a full day to ensure lice are dead and all eggs are removed.
- Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV): Must remain home until at least 5 days after the diagnosis
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough): Must remain home until 10 days after the diagnosis
- Jaundice: Must remain home until 24 hours after symptoms are gone.
- Rash: Must remain home until after a physician has been seen and has determined the circumstances of the rash.
 - If a rash is open or oozing the child cannot be present until the rash has dried/healed, or a doctor's note is provided that indicates that the child can return without risk.

- Bacterial Meningitis: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Polio: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Shigella: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Campylobacter: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Salmonella: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Giardia: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Parasites (e.g. pinworms/round worms/tape worms): Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Diphtheria: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Tuberculosis (Active): Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Hepatitis A: Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.
- Rubella (German Measles): Must remain home until a medical professional indicates that it is safe for the child to return. A doctor's note is essential to return.

When sending a child home for any reason:

1. Staff will contact their classroom's Supervising Director to inform them of the child's health status.
2. The Director will call parents/guardians to pick up and follow up with a Brightwheel message. If the class's supervising Director is not present, the communication will come from the Director of Operations and Administration or the Executive Director.

Parent/Guardians Questions Surrounding Health Guidance or When to Return:

If a parent/guardian has questions about whether a child is able to return to school, or surrounding NOW health policy/guidance, it is the responsibility of the Directors of the Program to communicate with the parent/guardian. Directors will also determine if a Doctor's note will be required at any time. Teaching staff will not determine eligibility for return or communicate with parents/guardians regarding best practices surrounding health policy or guidance.

General Health Statement Regarding Adults/NOW Staff:

NOW Staff will stay home when sick and unable to work effectively, however, unlike young children, staff/adults are capable of adhering to appropriate safety measures (personal hygiene

practices, the use of PPE, etc.) that work to mitigate the spread of illness, without the necessity of exclusion when diagnosed with an illness. When staff are presenting with mild symptoms of a spreadable illness they may continue to work upon discussion with their Direct Supervisor, as long as they follow precautionary health measures to limit the possibility of spread. Child care programs are especially susceptible to outbreaks of illness and it is within NOW's mission to continue to operate fully as often as possible, even when there is an outbreak of illness. Staff work hard to limit the spread of illness using a risk reduction method. This method balances the likelihood that staff will develop symptoms of illness while also determining eligibility to continue to work in an attempt to remain open for children and families.

Communication Regarding Illness:

If your child has a contagious illness or has been exposed to any of the symptoms listed above it is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report this to the NOW Program. It is the responsibility of the NOW Program to inform parents/guardians if children have been exposed to these symptoms while s(he) was in attendance. This communication is done consistently through the info@neckofthewoodsvt.com email.

Medical Emergency Notice:

In the event of a medical emergency or accident, the Program will contact parents/guardians, the child's pediatrician and E.M.Ts if necessary. If parents/guardians cannot be reached the emergency contacts will be called. All Neck of the Woods employees are trained in CPR and First Aid.

Required Doctor's Notes:

Like most child care centers, Neck of the Woods does not have a licensed medical professional on staff. Because of this lack of professional medical support it is imperative that staff, NOW Board members, families and outside medical professionals work together to ensure the safety and health of all children in care. In order to maintain effective communication around children's health and wellbeing, contact with the child's health care provider, indicating the child's health status, may be required. This may be in the form of a doctor's note, release paperwork from an ER visit, or the parent/guardian and NOW staff may decide that a release shall be signed for medical professionals to speak directly with staff regarding a child's health.

Scenarios that may require this form of request or requirement include; a child who has an illness, accident or injury during program hours that requires Neck of the Woods staff to request the parent/guardian pick up the child and take the child to a health professional, OR the parent/guardian is called to pick up the child and they determine that the child is experiencing a form of a medical emergency, OR staff must call for emergency services. In these scenarios a parent/guardian may be asked to provide the center with a note and/or release paperwork from the Medical Professional if the child will be returning back to the center within 24 hours of release after such an illness, accident or injury occurs. Other possible scenarios where a note

may be required are listed in the above illness section in “when to return”.

If a child has been out of care due to illness, accident or injury for an extended period of time, a doctor’s note may also be required before the child returns to care.

MEDICATIONS

If a child is receiving medications within Program hours the medications must be sent enclosed in its original packaging, labeled with a pharmacy or over the counter medication label. Medications must be brought to Program Directors or Staff by parents/guardians. If the medication must be administered during a time that children are attending NOW parents/guardians must inform the NOW Director or staff and fill out the appropriate medication administration paperwork. Parents/guardians must inform the NOW Director if medication will be sent in with a child. Medications will only be administered if a completed medication administration packet is filled out by parents/guardians. NOW will have forms for parents to fill out if medications will need to be given. Only staff who have completed the state training on medication administration are able to administer medications to children.

CLEANING & SANITIZING PRACTICES

NOW Cleaning Policy/Procedures

2.2.10 “Cleaning” means the removal of all dirt and debris by washing with a detergent solution in accordance with the manufacturer’s directions.

2.2.18 “Disinfecting” means to destroy or inactivate most germs on objects or surfaces. Disinfecting is appropriate for non-porous surfaces that will not be in contact with food or be mouthed by children.

2.2.45 “Sanitizing” means to reduce germs on objects and surfaces to levels considered safe by public health codes. Sanitizing is appropriate for surfaces that are in contact with food or anything that children may place in their mouths.

At Neck of the Woods staff will remove all dirt and debris from areas daily dependent on use of rooms and materials.

At Neck of the Woods staff will sanitize daily all surfaces that are in contact with food or anything that children may place in their mouths.

At Neck of the Woods staff will disinfect all non-porous surfaces daily.

Staff will ensure that all types of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting will be done prior to and after children eat, sleep and when using the bathroom/diapering.

Staff will ensure that all types of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting will be done on all areas that are in use by adults and children daily, and as needed throughout the day.

Staff will ensure that all types of cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting will be done at the onset of any contagious/communicable diseases that have been diagnosed by a physician.

Neck of the Woods will ensure that the building will be cleaned three times a week while no one is present to ensure proper cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting occur daily and when there is a diagnosed contagious/communicable disease.

Neck of the Woods will use E.P.A. and Green Approved Cleaning Agents

5.10.1.10.4 Materials required for routine cleaning shall be stored and used in a safe manner out of the reach of children.

All staff will complete the Green Cleaning Training through Better Kid Care.

Neck of the Woods will periodically review its use of green products and Green Cleaning and hereby reserves its right to change use of said products or cleaning methods.

Hand Washing:

Children and adults will be washing their hands upon arrival at the Program each day, after using the toilet, before meal times, after blowing noses, coughing in hands, before preparing and/or serving food, after playing in stagnant water with others, and after cleaning.

TOOTHBRUSHING

Neck of the Woods, in collaboration with Early Head Start, requires infant and toddler programs to effectively promote dental hygiene in the form of toothbrushing at least once per day during Program hours.

Older Toddler Toothbrushing Guidance (ages 2 - 3):

Children in older Head Start toddler classrooms will brush once daily, after a meal. Staff will assist children in brushing their teeth using a small smear of toothpaste. Assist can mean anything from putting the smears of toothpaste on the back of a Dixie cup, for children to scoop onto their brushes, to supervising/overseeing the process, to actually helping the children with brushing -hand over hand- reaching all teeth, including the tongue. If staff are actually helping the child with the brushing process – rubber gloves are worn and changed between children.

Updated Nov. 2025

Toddler Toothbrushing Guidance (ages 1 - 2):

Children in Head Start toddler classrooms will brush once daily, after a meal. Staff will brush children's teeth with a soft bristled toothbrush, using a small smear of toothpaste. It is good for them to begin holding the toothbrush themselves and begin practicing to brush- this is how they'll learn, but staff also play an active role and actually brush the children's teeth in this age group. Rubber gloves are worn and changed between children.

Infant Toothbrushing Guidance (under age 1):

Children in Head Start Infant classrooms will brush once during the program day, staff must wash their hands and then cover a finger with a gauze pad or soft cloth and gently wipe infants' gums. A soft-bristled baby tooth-brush, with no toothpaste, may be used as children approach one year old. Rubber gloves are worn and changed between children.

Caring for Baby's Gums:

NOW, along with Capstone Early Head Start believe that caring for dental hygiene can start early on in infancy, taking these steps:

1. Get a soft, moistened washcloth or piece of gauze.
2. Gently wipe down the baby's gums at least twice a day.
 - a. Especially wipe the baby's gums after feedings and before bedtime. This will wash off bacteria and prevent them from clinging to gums. Bacteria can leave behind a sticky plaque that damages infant teeth as they come in.

Bacteria in the mouth usually can't harm the gums before the teeth emerge, but it can be hard to tell when the teeth are starting to push through, so it is beneficial to begin the dental hygiene process early on. Getting babies used to having their mouths cleaned as part of their daily routine should also make it easier to transition into toothbrushing later on.

DIAPERING & TOILETING

Diaper Changing Procedure:

1. Staff assemble the diaper changing supplies, preparing a wipe for staff hands, a wipe for the child's hands and wipes for the child's diaper area.
2. Staff washes hands for 20 seconds
3. Staff put on a pair of gloves
4. Staff puts the child on the diaper changing station, with one hand on the child at all times
5. Staff removes the soiled diaper
6. Staff cleanses the child's diaper area (front to back)
7. Staff disposes of the dirty diaper, used wipes and gloves
8. Staff wipe their hands with a diaper wipe
9. Staff wipe the child's hands with a diaper wipe

10. Staff put a clean diaper on the child
11. Staff dress the child
12. Staff wash the child's hands with soap and water
13. Staff cleans the diaper surface with soapy water
14. Staff disinfects the diaper surface with Oxivir and lets it dry for 1 minute before wiping
15. Staff wash their own hands with soap and water

POTTY TRAINING POLICY

Assessing child readiness:

Signs that a child is ready to start potty-training:

- They will stay dry for longer periods of time
- Predictable bowel movements
- Discomfort in soiled diaper
- Ability to pull pants up & down
- Physical ability to get on and off of the potty
- Interest in the potty or bathroom
- Awareness of bodily functions
- Ability to follow simple instructions
- Ability to communicate need to use the potty
- Has a desire for independence

Individualized approach:

This looks like:

- Parents and teachers shall have open communication regarding child's potty training
- Personalized strategies - children may bring their own training potty from home, need a book to read to them on the potty, a certain song, visual aids, and the environment adapted to make it more comfortable.
- We shall offer breaks from potty training if regression occurs.

Communication with families:

- All "tries", successes, & accidents shall be put in Brightwheel in a timely manner
- Parents and teachers shall communicate regularly on how the child is progressing or regressing, what has felt successful, what has not, & new ideas or tactics.
- Parents shall communicate changes in bowel movements or dietary changes that may affect their child's ability to make it to the toilet.

Positive reinforcement & Intrinsic motivation:

- The main reward shall be the activity itself, not a separate reward like a sticker or candy or a consequence of any form.

- Negative consequences are strictly prohibited (regression is natural)
- We shall not give external rewards for potty training.
- Potty training shall be offered as a fun, exciting, and engaging activity.
- We shall focus on factors such as building on curiosity, creating a sense of challenge, and making the task enjoyable.
- We shall not ever force a child to use the potty.

Scheduling & Consistency:

- We shall offer the potty times at scheduled times throughout the day
- We shall observe for body cues such as squirming or crossing legs and prompt the child to use the bathroom
- We keep track of the child's BM schedule so that we may determine predictable times that BMs may occur
- We shall always allow access to the potty when the child expresses a need to go

Hygiene & Safety:

- Children and staff must wash their hands after they use the potty, even if they only tried
- If a child has two accidents in a day we reserve the right to put a pull-up or diaper on the child. Multiple accidents in a day become a health and safety concern.
- Soiled clothing will be placed in a plastic bag and put in the child's bag. The soiled clothing should be removed from the back pack before returning to school the following day.
- Staff will always wear gloves when helping a child use the potty
- The toileting area should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized after each use

Vocabulary:

- We do not ask children if they would like to use the restroom, instead we prompt them to use the restroom by saying "let's" and "then" statements, "lets use the potty and then we can come back and play on the playground"
- We will try to make sure that our vocabulary between home and school is consistent by asking parents what vocabulary they are using with the child during potty training
- Here, at NOW we believe that children should know the correct names for their anatomy.

Clothing:

- While potty training it is imperative that children have clothing that they can easily pull up and down themselves. Leggings, sweat pants and anything stretchy works well.
- Children should not be wearing overalls, jumpers, rompers or anything that goes over the shoulders and makes it difficult to undress themselves/ dress themselves independently
- Children shall be packed plenty of extra clothes in the event that an accident occurs

Accidents:

- Accidents are a normal and expected part of the potty training process. Children shall never be shamed for having an accident.
- If a child has an accident they shall be met with kind words of understanding "Accidents happen, lets go get cleaned up, next time we will use the potty"
- The child shall be changed as soon as possible after an accident. If the group is out on the trails, a change of clothes, wipes, bags, and sanitizer shall be prepared in backpacks, in the event that an accident occurs.

Do not rush the process / do not force:

- A child shall never be forced to use the potty.
- If a child is showing resistance to potty training, they shall not be pushed, it is imperative that the child feel comfortable using the potty.
- If the child is regressing in potty use, we shall take a break from active potty use, and work on helping the child feel safe and comfortable using the potty.

Child-led, non-reward based system:

- A rewards based system to potty training does not align with the NOW philosophy. We will not enforce a rewards-based system to potty training here at NOW.
- A parent may do so at home, but shall be reminded that consistency is best when it comes to potty training.

SAFETY

Incident/Accident Reporting:

If a child has an incident or accident during program hours, that does not need immediate medical attention beyond basic first aid, or require immediate parent contact/pick up (i.e. need for transport to a physician, dentist) then an incident/accident report shall be posted on Brightwheel under “staff only”. All necessary staff (teaching staff and Directors) will review the report by the end of the day to ensure all accurate and appropriate communication is present. Accidents/incidents will be discussed at pick up with parents/guardians and then staff will move the report on Brightwheel so that parents/guardians have access to it by the end of the day.

If a picture was taken of the incident/accident (broken skin, bruise, abrasion, etc.) the picture will be posted along with the report on Brightwheel. All incidents/accidents that leave a mark of any kind will include a picture on the child’s profile that the mark belongs to. If a picture of a child’s injury must be posted on the profile of the child who caused the injury, all elements of the child outside of the injury itself will be blocked out.

Incident/accident reports shall be observation and fact ONLY. There shall be absolutely no use of language that formulates an opinion about what happened or why it happened.

Example:

Fact - Child A pushed child B using his hands. Child B fell and hit their head on a toy truck. Child A processed with staff and child B and got child B an ice pack.

Opinion - Child A pushed child B using his hands because he wanted the toy that child B had and was angry. Child B fell and hit his head on a toy truck and was sad and hurt. Child B doesn’t like to share and child A wanted him to.

Difference between an OPINION and a FACT:

A FACT: a statement that can be verified.

- It can be proven to be true or false through objective evidence.
- Relies on denotative language (literal meaning of a word, without any emotional or cultural associations)
- Frequently uses measurable or verifiable numbers, statistics, dates and measurements

AN OPINION: a statement that expresses a feeling, an attitude, a value judgment, or a belief.

- It is a statement that is neither true nor false. Or it may feel true for some, but false for others.
- It cannot be presently verified
- Relies on connotative language (adding emotional association to words)
- Can mean different things to different people
- Uses value judgment words and comparisons such as “best,” “most,” etc...

Clothing:

Children should be dressed daily in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Children will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, water, and other sensory activities. At the NOW building our playgrounds and 11 acres are used as an extension of the classroom & curriculum, and our daily activities involve the outdoors whenever weather permits.

We will play outdoors in all but extreme weather. Please be sure that children have appropriate clothing for each season.

- Winter: Full snowsuit or snow pants and jacket, hat, insulated mittens and insulated boots. Labeled with the child's name.
- Spring and Fall: Warm layers, rain boots, rain pants and jacket. Labeled with the child's name.
- Summer: Sun hat and light layers to protect from the sun, bathing suits, water shoes (or shoes that families deem appropriate for water play). Labeled with the child's name.

Extreme Weather and Outdoor Play:

Outdoor play will not occur if the outside temperature "feels like" greater than 98°F or less than 10°F degrees. Short intervals of winter play will happen between 10-20°F. Air quality is also closely monitored. Air Quality Guidelines at NOW:

When air quality is 0-50 the air quality is good and we can spend the day outside.

When air quality is 51-100 the air quality is moderate. Very sensitive groups may have a hard time, so we are careful about any children or staff who are in this category, otherwise we can spend the day outside.

When air quality is 101-150 the air quality is unhealthy for sensitive groups. Children fall into this category, along with anyone with heart or lung issues and older adults. When air quality is in this category we do not go out for long periods of time and do not allow anyone to do high intensity/strenuous activities. In this category we generally allow around 20 - 40 minute intervals of time outside, not to exceed 2 hours in a day if the air quality remains in this range.

When air quality is 151-200 the air quality is unhealthy for everyone. There is no outside time allowed in this range.

When air quality is poorer, we check it every hour and send an alert to all staff each hour to ensure everyone knows the update and can prepare throughout the day if plans need to pivot, and children need to stay indoors or limit their outdoor time.

Safe Water-Play:

Unsupervised water play will not happen. Supervised children are permitted to engage in water-play. Precautions are taken to ensure that communal water-play does not spread communicable infectious disease. In summer, wading pools and the river may be visited, but swimming in deep water is not an option. Children will always be supervised near water, and adults will have radios and phones to contact other staff whenever children play in water. All

water play in the river, wading pools, sensory bins, or other places will adhere to the rules set by the state of Vermont regulations for Center-based Child Care & Preschool Programs regulations.

Injuries:

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside in all areas that children will be, in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that children sustain a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). Parents/caregivers 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, parents/caregivers will be contacted immediately. If parents/caregivers are not available an emergency contact will be contacted. Each classroom/program is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations, and all staff have up to date infant, child & adult First Aid and CPR certifications.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, and parents and/or emergency contacts will be called.

SAFE SLEEP POLICY

All children are monitored during naps and sleeping. As per state regulations, we will ensure that each child, except school-age children, has an individual crib, port-a-crib, cot, mat, or bed that is safe for the child's age and development, in good repair, and used by only one child each day. No child shall nap directly on the floor or on furniture not designed for sleeping. Cribs or port-a-cris shall be used for children under twelve months of age. Children shall not nap in cribs or port-a-cris if they are physically able to climb out unassisted. All cribs and portable cribs will meet Consumer Product Safety Commission 16 C.F.R. Part 1220. NOW will maintain documentation of each crib's compliance with this mandate, and any crib that does not meet 16 C.F.R. § 1220 is removed from the premises. Cots, mats, and mattresses shall be nonporous or have nonporous coverings. Each child shall be provided clean, individual bed linens either by NOW providing them directly or requiring parents to provide them. No child shall nap directly on nonporous coverings. These are sanitized daily.

Children shall be supervised by staff while napping or resting. Staff shall directly observe a sleeping infant at least every fifteen minutes to check the infant's face, view the color of the infant's skin, and check on the infant's breathing. Lighting to permit appropriate supervision shall be provided in sleeping areas where children are napping or resting. This means that staff can see the child's face, view the color of the child's skin, and check on the child's breathing. Wet or soiled cots, cribs, mats, and bedding shall be changed promptly and stored in a sealed plastic bag or container until laundered. Bedding used by a child shall be stored in a manner that prevents contact with bedding used by other children.

Infants at rest:

Infants will always be allowed to nap when tired, and will always be placed on their backs to sleep in a crib or port-a-crib, unless a parent/caregiver has given written instruction (for children who are able to roll over) to place the child on their stomach. No infant will be placed to sleep on soft surfaces, such as a couch or sofa, pillow, quilts, sheepskins, or blankets. Infants will not be placed in car seats, swings, high chairs, stroller, jumping chairs or similar equipment for sleep. Any child that falls asleep in this type of equipment shall be gently transferred to a crib or port-a-crib as soon as feasible.

Each crib and port-a-crib shall have a firm, tight-fitting mattress covered by a tight-fitting crib sheet. Soft objects, toys or loose bedding shall not be used in infants' sleep areas. Soft or loose bedding includes bumper pads, pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, blankets, flat sheets, cloth diapers, and bibs. Infants shall not be swaddled for sleep. Clothing sacks or similar clothing designed for safe sleep may be used. Bibs, necklaces (including amber teething necklaces), and garments with ties or hoods will be removed from the child prior to placing the child in the crib or port-a-crib. No positioning devices shall be used unless required by the child's health care provider. Instructions for the use of any such device shall be kept in the child's file in writing from the child's health care provider. Infants shall not be placed in cribs or port-a-cribs with bottles. Pacifiers are permitted in cribs and port-a-cribs with parental permission. Pacifiers may not have cords or clips that may pose a strangulation risk.

Rest for Children over 12 months of age:

The Program Directors/Lead Teachers will be sure the classroom's schedule is designed to ensure that every child younger than school age, and present for five hours or more, shall have the opportunity for sleep or rest. Children over twelve months of age may sleep/rest with blankets, pillows, and soft toys. Children shall not be required to sleep. Children who do not nap shall be provided space and equipment for quiet play, and allowed to get up after a reasonable amount of time.

DRUG & ALCOHOL POLICY FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, & STAFF

All child care centers in the state of Vermont have a no-smoking policy for staff and parents on the grounds at any time. NOW also requires that staff be drug and alcohol free on the grounds at all times. Further, no designated pick-up person appearing to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol will be allowed to remove a child from the property and a back up person from the child's list will be contacted. NOW staff reserve the right to prohibit a designated pick-up person from picking up a child if the designated pick-up person appears to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol. If a designated pick-up person appearing to be under the influence tries to leave the premises with a child, the authorities will be called.

WATER & LEAD TESTING

NOW has a public water system that is treated and all drinking water is safe to drink. Our drinking water is tested by Clear Water Filtration and the State of Vermont regularly.

EMERGENCY POLICY & PROCEDURES

- In conjunction with Waitsfield and Washington County preparedness, Neck of the Woods has developed a plan for emergency circumstances that could arise.
- In the event of an emergency, families will be contacted via phone and Brightwheel
- Whenever it is both possible and safe, children and staff will remain at the Neck of the Woods building.
- In the event of an intruder in the building, lockdown procedures will take place within each classroom. In the event of a potentially violent situation outside of the building, lock-in procedures will be implemented, and all children will be moved to a secure interior space.
- Natural disasters that threaten the safety of the building or property will require the most senior staff present to make a decision about evacuation. In the event of an evacuation, children and staff will walk to the following location: The Hartshorn Farmstand from the Neck of the Woods building & the track and field area across the street from Harwood from the Harwood Union Middle School. If these locations are not secure, children and staff will walk to: Mad River Park from the NOW building and the DeFreest Farm from Harwood Union Middle School. In the unlikely event that the building is not safe, and walking to either previously listed locations is also not safe, children and staff will be evacuated by vehicle to Waitsfield Town Offices from the NOW building and Crossett Brook from Harwood Union Middle School. Families will be notified via brightwheel, email, and whenever possible, a phone call.