



Parent Handbook

OUR VISION

To influence children positively; to provide them with new experiences and relationships which help develop and support their unique identities.

To support families and help them to feel a part of a community.

To support children with special needs and provide meaningful opportunities for children of all abilities to bring out the best in one another.

To be a great employer; to offer environments where people love to come to work, feel like they are valued, and provided with good compensation for their contributions to our children and families.

LOCATIONS

Bayridge Site

1035 Bayridge Drive
Kingston ON, K7P 3B8
Phone: 634-0003

Email: bayridge@unitychildcare.ca

Henderson Site

180 Henderson Blvd
Kingston, ON, K7M 3W3
Phone 613-507-0003

Email: henderson@unitychildcare.ca

Creekford (School Age) Site

2845 Creekford Rd
Kingston, ON, K7P 2Z3
Phone: 613-389-0485

Email: creekford@unitychildcare.ca



Terra Verde Site

1080 Terra Verde Way
Kingston, ON, K7P 0V3
Phone : 613-766-0337

Email: terraverde@unitychildcare.ca

Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement

All Unity sites are participating in the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Agreement (CWELCC). The CWELCC is an agreement between the Province of Ontario and the Canadian Federal Government that offers families financial relief through reduced average parent fees. Unity's Fee Schedule outlines our base fees, which include applicable discounts under the CWELCC, as well as non-base fees, including credit card processing fee and late fees, which are not eligible for discounts under the CWELCC.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Bayridge Site

7:15-5:30

Henderson Site

7:30-5:30

Creekford (School Age) Site

7:00-9:00 and 3:30-5:45

**8:30-4:30 on PA days & school holidays*

**Operates Sept-June only*

Terra Verde Site

7:30-5:30

Eligible hours of care are based on parent's working hours plus one half-hour for dropping off and one half-hour for picking up your child, for up to 9 hours of care total. For example: If your work or school hours are 9:00am-4:30 pm, then your eligible hours of care are 8:30am-5:00pm. We ask that you adhere to this policy since staffing of the centre is planned around the number of children attending at any particular time. Late fees apply for pickups after closing. Late pickups in excess of once per month may result in your child losing their space. Please see fee policy for details.

AGES SERVED

Bayridge Site

18 months - 5 years

Henderson Site

Birth – 12 years

Creekford (School Age) Site

3.8 years – 12 years

Terra Verde Site

18 months – 12 years

HOLIDAYS

The Centres are closed on the following statutory holidays as well as Easter Monday and the Civic Holiday in August – fees continue to apply (see fee policy for details):

New Years Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, Civic Holiday, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day

PLEASE NOTE: Bayridge, Henderson & Terra Verde full day sites closes at 3:30pm on Xmas Eve & New Years Eve; Creekford School Age program closes at 4:30pm

PROGRAM STATEMENT

Our Children

We believe that children are **competent, capable, curious, and rich in potential**. Children's interests and developing skills form the foundation from which our programs planned and implemented.

We believe that each child deserves the opportunity and encouragement to try new things, explore new ideas and develop their own **unique identities**. We value the individual gifts that each child brings to our classrooms. Children's personalities are celebrated and their preferences are honoured during routines as well as playtimes. Each child's learning and development is supported, and our program is inclusive of all children, including children with individualized plans.

The children's safety is our primary concern. Children are closely supervised by an adult at all times and educators conduct head counts to ensure all children are accounted for before, during, and after times of transitions. Precautions are taken to ensure that the equipment and materials that we provide are safe and in good repair. At our centres, children are encouraged to take **healthy risks** and educators help them to make decisions which demonstrate their competence during routines and play situations. Formal rules are limited in order to allow educators to engage with children using a problem-solving approach.

During play activities such as climbing, balancing, or jumping, adults stay physically close to children (arms length) in order to be able to offer them assistance as needed and to ensure their safety. Extra caution should be taken with risky play activities following injuries.

Children are encouraged to **work and learn at their own pace**. They are not rushed into an activity for which they may be unprepared. Routines are completed in small groups, wherever possible, and each child is supported to accomplish tasks at his/her own rate. Where possible, activities are offered for significant portions of the day so children can participate and repeat as often as they would like.

Self-regulation is supported not only in our environments but also through our interactions with the children. Children's desire for affection is nurtured with **hugs and snuggles** throughout the day and children are never left to cry.

Challenging behavior is viewed as missing skills and adults interpret, guide, and redirect children experiencing difficulties. We avoid separation-based techniques such as "time out" or not including children in a specific activity. Instead, adults use redirection and gentle physical assistance to help children to follow through on expectations. As children see educators treating a child who is "misbehaving" with understanding kindness, they learn to develop **empathy**, an important concept that we want all of our children to learn and carry into adulthood.

Our Families

Our families are competent and capable, curious and rich in experience. Families love their children and want the best for them. Our families come from **diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds**. Families are the experts on their children and our centres strive to meet family requests and preferences.

Educators' work schedules are arranged to try to maximize opportunities for **verbal communication** with families on a daily basis. Where possible, parents are asked to come directly into the classroom or fully onto the playground to speak with their child's educators and recognize that the educators must maintain supervision during dialogue with other adults. Where verbal dialogue is not possible, a written note may be completed to ensure families get important information about their child's day. Families can make an appointment with the Director to arrange a meeting with any of our educators if there is a need for a longer discussion.

Educators record children's progress and development through the use of **photo documentation of children's learning** and an electronic record of each child's activities is maintained and shared with parents. We are also happy to arrange parent-educator meetings to discuss children's progress.

We encourage families to become involved in our centres in whatever ways are meaningful and accessible to them. Our **open door policy** permits prospective families to pop in for tour of our centres at any time. Before a child starts at our centre, families are asked to attend "stay & play" visits, where parents, grandparents or other family members spend time with their child in their new classroom getting to know the educators, the other children and the class routine. Once children begin attending on their regular schedules, families are welcome to visit and spend as much time in the classroom with their child as they like.

Opportunities for volunteering as special visitors or to assist on field trips occur regularly throughout the year. In the case that a parent wishes to become a volunteer, a Police Records Vulnerable Sector Check must be obtained prior to the volunteer position. Educational and social **parent evenings** are held, and everyone is invited to attend our annual family BBQ. During the month of December, our centres engage in the celebration of family traditions. Family members are invited to share meaningful traditions from their family and together we share and learn about the values and beliefs that we have in common even among diverse cultures and family backgrounds.

Parental feedback on our programs is highly regarded. The Director is always available to take emails, calls, or speak face to face to receive input or address concerns. A formal family satisfaction survey is completed annually and changes are made based on suggestions from families.

Our Educators

Our educators are **Registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)** or educators with related qualifications. Educators come to us from diverse backgrounds. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, competence and curiosity to our classrooms.

We support **child initiated and adult supported play** experiences in every age group. Our educators observe the children and follow their lead during play. We ask genuine questions in order to gain information about children and extend their learning. Educators have fun in their work. They are encouraged to be co-learners with the children, to investigate what interests them, to crawl around on their hands and knees, to play in mud, wet sand, and shaving cream, and to put on dress up clothes, and to tap into their inner child while playing alongside the children.

Educators make **responding to children's cues** the number one priority in their work. We recognize that children communicate in many ways, and we strive to ensure that children have a voice in all that concerns them. Educators interpret children's communication attempts and label what they may be thinking or experiencing.

An open mind and **commitment to continuous professional learning** are key values for our educators. We meet regularly, as a group, to study and learn together about current research and

best practices in the field of early childhood education. Professional reflections on a variety of topics are completed on a regular basis.

We utilize the following **Ministry of Education resources** and documents to guide our professional growth and reflective practice:

How Does Learning Happen: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years

Think, Feel, Act: Lessons from Research about Young Children

Early Learning for Every Child Today: A Framework for Ontario Early Childhood Settings

Our educators are encouraged to bring their own interests into the classrooms and to explore their individual passions with the children. Educators are **empowered** to adjust their program schedules or classrooms to suit the needs and desires of their groups. Educators are encouraged to work together, bounce ideas off each other and learn from one another's experiences.

Our educators also **support the professional learning of those who are new to the field**, including ECE students and volunteers, by acting as cooperating teachers and providing guidance and feedback.

Our Community Partners

We value the **relationships and connections** that we have with a variety of agencies that provide learning and support to our educators, children and families. These include:

Community Living Kingston
KFLA Public Health
Kids Inclusive
Kingston Fire and Rescue
Family & Children's Services
EarlyON Centres

Maltby Centre
Early Expressions Speech and Language
Local School Boards
St. Lawrence College ECE Program
City of Kingston Child Care Programs

When children join our centre who have special learning needs or require additional support to fully participate in our programs, an **Individual Service Plan** is developed which outlines strategies to best support the child's specific needs, in consultation with their family and a referral may be made to the appropriate community agency.

In addition to formal supports, our centres promote a sense of community by encouraging special visitors to come to the centre and, at times, taking the children on field trips to local museums, parks, stores, community service sites, retirement homes and libraries. Through engagement with community members of all ages, race, cultures, and developmental abilities, our children learn **pride and respect** for the diverse community in which we live.

Our Learning Environments

Our physical spaces incorporate elements of home, wherever possible, to reinforce children's **sense of belonging** at the centre. Parents are encouraged to provide photos and items from their home and culture, which will assist their child in feeling valued and connected to their families. Children are welcome to bring toys and other items from home that will provide them comfort throughout the day.

Classrooms are set up to encourage **exploration, play and inquiry**. Age-appropriate loose parts, such as buttons and boxes, are provided to encourage children to use their imaginations and use materials in a variety of ways.

Elements of nature are incorporated into both indoor and outdoor environments to encourage exploration and instill a sense of wonder of the natural world.

The use of materials such as metals and glass, as well as materials from nature such as rocks and twigs, are promoted to help children learn how to use **caution and respect** when handling delicate objects.

Educators plan for and create positive learning environments and experiences in which each child's learning and development is supported and which is inclusive of all children, including children with individualized plans.

Educators plan **activities based on observations of the children's interests** and developing skills to ensure children are engaged in learning at the centre. A wide range of activities including creative art, sensory activities, active play, dramatic play, construction activities and book sharing are offered in a free flow format daily. Children are invited but not forced into participating in activities and activities are modified to meet the individual needs of children.

Music and song are incorporated into many parts of the day. The educators sing songs to cue children when it is time to transition, such as to tidy up, go to circle, and go outside. **Self-expression** is encouraged through movement and dance to a variety of genres of music.

Children are encouraged to be independent and to ask for help, when necessary, as well as to assist others whenever they can. Children are taught the value of **interdependence** and the importance of being able to rely on each other as an integral part of caring relationships.

Mealtimes are important times to support the **health and well-being of children**. Our menus meet Canada's Food Guide requirements and treats, and sweets are not offered as a part of the regular menus. In addition to providing excellent nutrition, our centres provide healthy eating environments in which children enjoy the **social aspect of mealtimes**. Our educators sit with the children family style during meals and enjoy the food that has been prepared alongside of the children. Children are encouraged to try new foods, but new foods are never forced on children. Educators reinforce healthy eating habits, including food choices and portion sizes. Where applicable, menu adjustments are provided to accommodate allergies as well family requests and preferences. Children are encouraged to demonstrate their competence by helping to set the table, serving themselves with child sized serving utensils, pouring their own milk, buttering their own toast. When assistance is needed, children are encouraged to help each other, thereby reinforcing a sense of community at the centre. Our routine allows for **extended periods of time for eating** and children are never rushed through meals or snacks. During mealtimes, the focus is on engaging children in positive social conversation. Following the children's lead, educators may engage children in conversation about the food that is being shared, the day's activities, or what has been happening in children's lives at home.

Rest periods for the children are **relaxing times** designed to assist children in the development of self-regulation as well as contribute to healthy sleep patterns. Soothing methods such as rocking, rubbing backs, reading books, and snuggling are used to help ease children into nap times. Educators communicate with parents about calming techniques that work best for their child at home and attempt to mirror those methods at the centre. Children are encouraged to bring blankets and stuffed toys from home to provide comfort during rest times. Children who do not need to nap engage in quiet, calming activities to allow their bodies and minds to regroup and be ready for additional learning through play.

Toileting and changing routines are valuable times for **positive child-caregiver interactions**. Educators take their time during these routines and focus on engaging with the children through conversation and simple social games. Our toilets and sinks are all child-sized and children are taught the importance of personal hygiene through role modeling and gentle physical assistance.

Outdoor play provides opportunity for the development of **self-help skills** as well **exploration of the natural world**. Educators take their time during cloakroom routines and to focus on social interactions. Dressing skills are taught in fun ways, (for example: the coat flip!) and children are encouraged to help one another as their confidence and ability to zip zippers, button buttons and do up shoes grows. Once outdoors, children are encouraged to engage their curiosities with plants, trees, bugs and other natural materials.

Educators make modifications to our environments and routines, where necessary, to meet the needs of the children in their care and to ensure that the **children are valuable contributors** to their learning environment.

Documentation and Review of Impact

In order to ensure that the ideas and methods described in our program statement have a positive impact on the lives of our children and families, our centres apply to the following strategies:

- Documentation of the children's activities, learning and progress
- Consultation with families on strategies specific to their own children
- Observations and documentation of educator's interactions with children
- Team meetings to learn about and discuss the implementation of the program statement
- Annual family satisfaction survey

Program Statement Review

Parents will be asked to review the program statement prior to enrolling their child(ren) with our centres. As a part of the registration process, parents will be required to sign that they have reviewed the document, which is included in this parent handbook. The Supervisor of the centre is available to meet with all new families and engage in dialogue about the Program Statement to ensure that parents understand what it means for their child and that they have had all their questions answered.

Every employee, student, volunteer shall review the program statement prior to interacting with children, at any time when the program statement is modified, and at least annually thereafter.

WAIT LIST POLICY

The waiting list will be prioritized according to the date of initial registration of the family. Families must use the City of Kingston's centralized registry to get on the waiting list. No other waiting list is maintained in addition to the City's centralized list. No fee will be charged for adding a child to the waiting list.

Children may be added to the waiting list prior to their birth, using the expected due date as the baby's birth date. Parents are responsible for updating their information in the City of Kingston's centralized registry their baby is born.

If parents wish to register their child for multiple Unity sites, they must place their child on each site's individual waiting list. If there is a gap in registration dates between sites, the centre Supervisor may align the date of registration for a specific site with the original date of waitlist registration of the family. Families on the waiting list are welcome to call or email the centre any time to inquire on their waitlist status.

Unity accepts children in both full time and part time capacities, as space permits. Part-time families will be accepted based on shared space availability (ex. a child who attends Mon/Wed/Fri may share space with another child who attends Tues/Thurs). For before & after school spaces, families requiring both B&A care will be given priority. Just before school care or just after school care may be accommodated based on shared space availability. Rotating schedules cannot be accommodated in any age group.

The following situations will be given priority on the waiting list:

- Children or grandchildren of staff members.
- Changes to circumstances of existing clients (ex. moving from one age group to another, moving centres, moving from part-time to full-time, or a change of part-time days).
- Children currently in care who have siblings waiting to get in.
- Families who have had previous children attend one of the centres.

At our Terra Verde site:

- Children with special learning needs who would benefit from the universal design of the centre.

Unity Child Care Centres does not discriminate between full-fee paying and subsidized clients. If the situation arises that City of Kingston subsidy dollars are spent before year end, those clients requiring subsidy will maintain their priority on the waiting list but will be considered 'on hold' until new dollars are available.

ADMISSION AND DISCHARGE

Unity Child Care Centres offer programs that serve children age birth to 12 years. All children are drawn from the City of Kingston's centralized waiting list.

In partnership with the child's family, the site Supervisor works out the optimal placement of the child in the program, based on the individual needs of each child / family. All parents will complete a registration package which includes an emergency contact and information about the child and their family. Proof of current immunization for all children not yet enrolled in public school is required prior to children starting at the centre. Children and families who would benefit from community support agencies are linked with the appropriate agency, when agreed to by the family. Specialized services may include but are not limited to: speech and language therapists; enhanced support workers; occupational therapists; organizations which provide subsidies, etc. When outside agencies are involved with the child and/or family, staff will attempt to include any recommendations in the daily program.

Fees for all programs are due monthly, in advance of care. All absences must be paid for in full, we cannot fill a child's space in their absence. Pre-authorized debit or automated credit card payments through the centre's child care management application are the only method of payment accepted. Please see the fee policy for details.

Two weeks' notice is required if families wish to withdraw their child from the program. Families accessing City Subsidy funding are responsible for any and all fees not covered by the City as well as fees incurred by the 2-week withdrawal notice.

Late fees will be charged for pick-ups after closing. The late fee will be added to the next bill. Late pickups in excess of one per month may result in the loss of a child's space.

A schedule of current fees is included in this parent handbook.

SAFE ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL POLICY AND PROCEDURS

Unity Child Care Centres will ensure that any child receiving child care at the child care centre is only released to the child's parent/guardian or an individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization the child care centre may release the child to.

The centre will not release any children from care without supervision.

Where a child does not arrive in care as expected or is not picked up as expected, staff must follow the safe arrival and dismissal procedures set out below.

Procedures

Accepting a child into care

1. When accepting a child into care at the time of drop-off, program staff in the room must:
 - greet the parent/guardian and child.
 - sign the child in on the classroom attendance record.
 - if the parent/guardian indicates that someone other than the child's parent/guardians will be picking up, the staff must confirm that the person is listed on the child's emergency card or where the individual is not listed, ask the parent/guardian to provide authorization for pick-up in writing (e.g., note or email).
 - whereas the person picking up the child is not listed on the child's emergency card, the staff must document the change in pick-up procedure in the daily written record.

Where a child has not arrived in care as expected

1. Where a child does not arrive at the child care centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or advised the closing staff at pick-up or indicated their absence on the centre's child care management app), the staff in the classroom must:
 - send a message to the child's parent/guardian no later than 15 minutes after transition to school time (approx. 9:15 am) for school-aged children in before school programs, 3 hours after the centre opens for children in full day programs.
 - inform the centre supervisor or designate that a message confirming the child not in attendance was sent.

***Note:** The centre's child care management app includes the following provisions to support safe arrival procedures:

1. When a child does not arrive at the centre, and the parent/guardian has not reported the absence in advance via the parent portal, program staff will receive a notification on the centre's child care management app requesting confirmation that the child has not arrived. This notification will be triggered as follows:
 - For school-age programs in the morning: at the time of transition to school (bus or drop off time)
 - For school-age programs in the afternoon: 15 minutes after transition from school (bus or pickup time)
 - For infant, toddler, and preschool programs: 3 hours after the centre opens
2. If program staff does not confirm the child's absence within 15 minutes and/or if their DigibotGO device is offline, the site supervisor will be required to confirm the child's absence.
3. If the child's absence has been confirmed by program staff within this time, authorized parents/guardians will receive a notification asking them to confirm the child's presence or absence. If parents/guardians do not confirm the child's absence within 20 minutes of the notification being sent, the incident will be escalated to the site supervisor (or designate), who will personally attempt to contact each person listed on the child's emergency contact listing in the sequence identified in the child's file.
4. If the child's absence is not confirmed by program staff within this time, the incident will be escalated to the site supervisor (or designate), who will personally attempt to contact each person listed on the child's emergency contact listing in the sequence identified in the child's file. Once the incident reaches the site supervisor (or designate), they will determine next steps based on situational factors. The site supervisor (or designate) will document all interactions in the Digibot-generated incident report – including phone calls, voicemails, emails, conversations with the school and any contact with third party agencies – as these occur. The incident will be considered resolved if, at any point, the child's check-in or absence is properly recorded
5. Once the child's absence has been confirmed, program staff shall document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence (ex. Illness, home day) in the daily written record.

Where a school aged child does not arrive as expected to an after-school program

1. Where a child does not arrive at the child care centre and the parent/guardian has not communicated a change in drop-off (e.g., left a voice message or indicated their absence on the centre's child care management app), the staff in the classroom must:
 - call the child's parent/guardian immediately upon arrival of the group to the afterschool program
 - if the parent/guardian can not be reached by phone, send a message to the child's parent/guardian through the child care management app
 - inform the centre supervisor or designate that the child did not arrive as scheduled to the after school program
2. Once the child's absence has been confirmed, program staff shall document the child's absence on the attendance record and any additional information about the child's absence (ex. Picked up at school by parent) in the daily written record.

Releasing a child from care

1. The staff who is supervising the child at the time of pick-up shall only release the child to the child's parent/guardian or individual that the parent/guardian has provided written authorization that the child care may release the child to. Where the staff does not know the individual picking up the child (i.e., parent/guardian or authorized individual),
 - confirm with another staff member that the individual picking up is the child's parent/guardian/authorized individual.
 - where the above is not possible, ask the parent/guardian/authorized individual for photo identification and confirm the individual's information against the parent/guardian/authorized individual's name on the child's file or written authorization.
 - no child will be released to any person who, in the opinion of the educator, is under the influence of alcohol or any other substance or does not appear to be competent.

Where a child has not been picked up and the centre is closed

1. Where a parent/guardian or authorized individual who was supposed to pick up a child from care and has not arrived by the centre's closing time, staff shall immediately proceed with calling the parent/guardian to advise that the child is still in care.
2. In the case where the person picking up the child is an authorized individual, the staff shall contact the parent/guardian first and then proceed to contact the authorized individual responsible for pick-up if unable to reach the parent/guardian
3. If the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or authorized individual who was responsible for picking up the child, the staff shall begin contacting authorized individuals listed on the child's file.
4. Where the staff is unable to reach the parent/guardian or any other authorized individual listed on the child's file (e.g., the emergency contacts) by fifteen (15) minutes past the centre's closing time, the staff shall proceed with contacting the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) at 613-545-3227. Staff shall follow the CAS's direction with respect to next steps.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

The childcare centres have emergency management policies and procedures as required under the Child Care and Early Years Act.

Trees are kept trimmed up to a height of 6 feet to ensure that staff have good sight lines of any person approaching the building. As soon as it becomes dark, staff are responsible for ensuring that the outdoor lights are turned on. Motion sensor lights are checked regularly to ensure that they are in proper working order. Blinds are to be closed during hours when the centre is not open.

In the case that a situation outside of the centre poses a threat to the safety of the children, Hold and Secure and/or Lockdown measures may be implemented. Where a situation such as this occurs, that does not require evacuation of the centre, the Supervisor will provide notice of the incident to parents via email once the situation is resolved.

If it is determined to be unsafe to remain in our centre, the children will be evacuated from the building and relocated to an emergency evacuation shelter. For our Bayridge site: the HRC Business Centre on the corner of Bayridge Drive and Princess St; for our Henderson site: J.R. Henderson Public School. For our Creekford School Age site: Unity Child Care Centre - Bayridge site. For our Terra Verde Site: Waterford Retirement Residence. If emergency evacuation occurs,

the Supervisor or Director will notify the parents as soon possible via the child care centre's management app/email and the centre's voicemail box will be updated to inform parents that the centre has been evacuated as well as details of the evacuation site location and contact information. We will stay at our emergency shelter until the children can be picked up by their parent. Emergency evacuation procedures are practiced on a monthly basis.

No child will be released to anyone without the specific direction of the custodial parents, and only when that person has shown photo identification. Please see the safe arrival and dismissal policy and procedures for more details.

PARTNERSHIPS

CITY OF KINGSTON

Unity has a service agreement with the City of Kingston, which offers support to our centre, staff, and families in a variety of capacities, including but not limited to: Fee subsidy for families, Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program (CWELCC) discounted fees, wage subsidies for educators, one-time funding programs for toys and materials/health and safety etc. As part of administration and accountability within our service agreement, there may be times when it is necessary for us to share information with the City of Kingston about the children and families in attendance. This information may include names, birthdates, attendance of children, and names of parents receiving discounts and/or subsidies. This information will only be used within the parameters of the administration of programs covered in our service agreement.

COMMUNITY LIVING KINGSTON & DISTRICT

We offer inclusive programs at all Unity sites. A professional from Community Living Kingston & District (CLKD) Preschool Resource Consultant Services regularly visits our centres and assists our educators in implementing best practices of inclusive programming. By request of the Supervisor or classroom educators, the Resource Consultant observes classrooms and provides feedback, suggestions, and resources which will help the educators ensure that the individual needs of children are being met. Where the needs of the children are substantial and require additional support, the Centre may apply for funding for an extra staff member (Enhanced Support) to assist the educators in meeting the demands of all the children in a group. Enhanced Support staff do not work with a specific child or children.

STUDENTS AND VOLUNTEERS

Unity Child Care Centres support the education of students and volunteers in the community by offering placement opportunities for students interested in pursuing a career working with young children. During the school year, we regularly have students from St. Lawrence College and/or Queens University completing placements, as well as co-op students from several of the local high schools. During school breaks, we sometimes have high school volunteers completing their community service hours. Students and volunteers over the age of 18 must provide a criminal record/vulnerable sector check and all students must provide current immunizations before commencing placement. Students and volunteers complete a thorough orientation which covers emergency procedures and a review of the centre's policy and procedures. Students & volunteers are closely supervised, never left alone with children, and are not counted in the staff/child ratio.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE

Positive and consistent techniques which encourage the development of self-regulation should be used to encourage children whose play actions are both appropriate and inappropriate.

Preferred Practices

- A focus on building relationships as the cornerstone of positive behaviour
- Positive verbal and gestural reinforcement for appropriate behaviour, redirection of inappropriate behaviour
- One verbal request (ensuring understanding) followed by gentle physical assistance
- Teaching and practicing preferred behaviours
- Offering children age-appropriate choices and assisting them to follow through

Prohibited Practices (applies to all staff, students, volunteers, and parents while on the premises)

- corporal punishment of the child;
- physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting himself, herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent;
- locking the exits of the child care centre premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures;
- use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth;
- depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding;
- inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Sanitary Practices

Our centres adhere to the KFL&A Public Health recommendations and guidelines for sanitary practices and the centres are inspected regularly by Public Health staff. Toys and materials are regularly disinfected in all the classrooms and as mouthed in infant and toddler rooms. Changing and eating areas are disinfected using a Public Health approved sanitizer following each use. Frequent hand washing, of both educators and children, contributes to a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

Rest Times (does not apply to School Age programs)

Young children need to have time for rest and relaxation each day. Infants are napped according to their individual schedules as outlined by parents. A rest period for toddler and preschool children is offered following the mid-day meal. The times of the rest period may vary from group to group depending on the needs of the children, however, it will not exceed 2 hours per classroom. A cot, sheet, and blanket will be provided for your child's daily use. If your child has his or her own blanket or stuffed animal, they are welcome to bring it to the centre; please clearly label it. Educators provide soothing methods as required to assist children to settle into sleep, such as tucking them in, snuggling, rocking, or rubbing their backs.

If a child is unable to sleep or does not require a nap, alternative quiet activities will be offered during rest periods. Naps will not be withheld from children indicating that they would like to nap and/or who are showing signs of tiredness.

Infants under 12 months of age are placed for sleep in a manner consistent with the recommendations set out in the Joint Statement of Safe Sleep (in approved cribs and on their backs) unless a child's physician recommends otherwise in writing. Educators closely monitor infants for signs of tiredness and put them down for naps in cribs according to their individual schedules.

Direct visual checks are performed every 15 minutes for all sleeping infants and every half hour for sleeping toddlers and preschoolers.

Cribs and cots are labeled with each child's name, sheets are laundered at least weekly, and beds are sanitized at least weekly.

Pets

Unity Child Care Centres sometimes have centre pets which live in one or more classrooms. Our animals play an important role in the lives of the children. They have a calming effect on children experiencing separation anxiety and other upsets. As children assist with caring for our pets, they learn responsibility and the importance of nurturing. The centres follow KFL&A Public Health requirements about animals in childcare centres and adhere to their recommendations, including ensuring pet cages and tanks are cleaned regularly and children and staff are required to wash their hands following contact with the animals.

Field Trips

Full-day programs at Unity Child Care Centres sometimes take children on Field Trips off the child care premises. This may include neighborhood walks, trips to libraries, parks, and local businesses. Required ratios set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act are always maintained. Parents are asked to sign a permission form upon registration for their child to be taken off the premises and are notified in advance when children will be leaving the centre.

Medical Information

For all children not yet enrolled in school, we are required under the Child Care and Early Years Act to have a copy of each child's immunization record or a statement of religious or conscientious objection to immunization. Wherever possible, parents are asked to administer medications at home. As required by the Ministry of Education, we will only administer medication with written permission from the parent, when administration is not possible at home due to a physician's recommended timing. Non-prescription medications are only administered in certain circumstances, please see the site Supervisor to discuss individual situations. Medications must be handed directly to an educator at the centre and a medication permission form must be completed and signed by the parent.

Do not leave medications in your child's bag or backpack.

If a child has a medical need that requires specific instructions, an individual plan will be developed which outlines the details of the medical need any modifications or responses that may be required.

***Please note that we are proud to offer smoke-free premises. Smoking is not permitted in our buildings, on our playgrounds or in our parking lots.**

Illness

Children who are too sick to participate in the program (including outdoor play) should not attend. If a child becomes ill while at the centre, the child will be separated from the other children, parents will be contacted immediately and will be required to pick up the child. The centre uses the KFLA Public Health guidelines to assist in determining when children should be excluded from the program; please refer to the communicable disease poster at the child care centre for more information.

Children who are sick with **vomiting or diarrhea** should be **symptom-free for a full 48 hour period** before returning to the centre. Children must also be **fever free** (without medication) before returning to the centre.

If an outbreak situation occurs, the centre will follow Public Health guidelines for increased exclusion times, increasing levels of disinfectant, and reporting procedures.

Injuries

All Supervisors and staff in ratio are trained in CPR and 1st Aid. If your child is injured while at the centre, staff will administer basic first aid. If medical attention is required, attempts will be made to reach the parents immediately. Staff will call Emergency Medical Services (911) if required. All accidents will be documented and kept in the child's file and a copy of the accident report form will be provided to the parent.

Serious Occurrences

Our caregivers work diligently to provide a safe, creative, and nurturing environment for each child. Despite the best precautions, serious occurrences can sometimes take place. Serious occurrences include but are not limited to: a life-threatening injury to a child, fire or other disaster on site, lost or missing child, allegations of abuse or neglect, or other occurrences of a serious nature. Serious occurrences are reported to the Ministry of Education following Serious Occurrence procedures and information regarding the serious occurrence will be posted on the parent board for at least 10 days to inform the parents about the outcome of the situation, as well as follow-up actions taken. The privacy of the individuals involved will always be respected and no names or other identifying information will be posted.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important aspect of our program. We aim to create a supportive environment which promotes awareness and understanding of the benefits of physical activity for the children to have fun, gain confidence and develop fundamental movement skills. We strive to meet recommendations within the Canadian Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years.

Weather permitting, infants, toddlers and preschoolers spend a **minimum of 2 hours per day outdoors**, for play or sleep or a combination of both. Children in Before & After School Programs spend at least 1/2 hour per day outdoors.

Children are encouraged to be as active as possible during outdoor play through both planned and free play outdoor games and activities. During spring and summer, parents are asked to apply sunscreen to their child before bringing them to the centre in the morning; educators will apply sunscreen to children before afternoon outdoor play.

Clothing

Please dress your child casually for freedom in creative play. Exploration often requires getting messy! All the materials that we use are washable, however, we are aware that some paint colours and other materials are difficult to fully remove. We cannot keep your child away from creative materials; they are an integral part of the program. Please provide an extra set of clothing labeled with your child's name; accidents do happen, and we want to keep your child comfortable. Soiled clothing will be rinsed, placed in a tied plastic bag, and hung on your child's hook to be taken home for laundering.

During the winter months, your child will require a hat, mittens, and snow suit. During the spring, splash pants and rain boots are useful. In the summer, a hat and shoes or sandals with backs are necessary. **Please label all of your children's clothing items.** Our teachers will use their discretion when the children are dressing for outdoor play since temperatures can vary considerably from early morning to afternoon. If you have any special dressing requests, please let us know.

Nutrition

The three-week rotating menu is planned according to the Canada Food Guide and recommendations from our local Public Health Unit. All food is served with consideration of maintaining its full nutritional value. Children are encouraged to taste a variety of foods, but no child is ever forced to eat foods that they do not wish to. All parts of the meal make up a child's nutritional requirement; therefore, no food will be withheld.

For full day infant, toddler and preschool programs, the centre provides a morning and afternoon snack and a midday lunch. For B&A programs, the centre provides a morning and afternoon snack.

For school age children at Henderson, Terra Verde & Creekford* sites

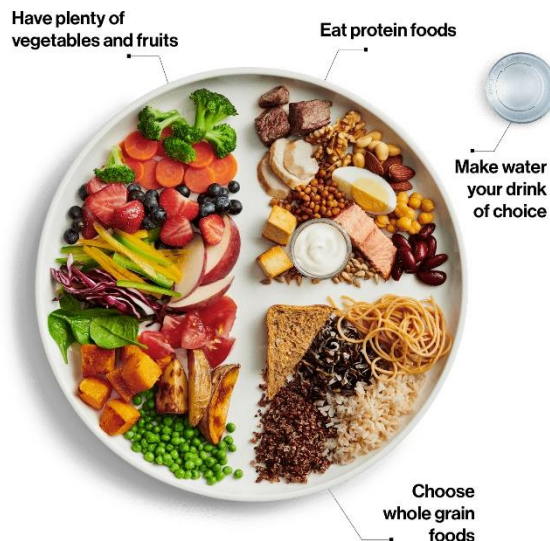
Full day programs (PA days & school holidays): am and pm snack & midday lunch provided

Before & After School: morning & afternoon snack provided

**Due to the limited kitchen facilities for food preparation at this location, Public Health requires that a Culligan water dispenser is provided for drinking water and only disposable cups/dishes/utensils are to be used when eating centre provided snacks.*

For more information on Canada's Food Guide, please refer to the following website:

<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>



Special Diet

Parents are required to provide written notification of any and all food allergies or medical/religious/lifestyle reasons for diet restrictions. We will do our best to accommodate the needs of all children. If a child requires food that we do not use, it is the parent's responsibility to provide it. Please review our posted menu plans at each site.

Nutrition Policy for Infants

Depending on an infant's stage of development, specialized food may be necessary. For infants who are unable to eat all or part of our regular menus, the centre provides finger foods, as well as blanched and/or pureed vegetables, fruits, and meats for infants under the age of 12 months. It is the responsibility of the parent to provide the following food items for infants: breast milk (fresh or frozen), formula, and infant cereals.

Upon registration, parents of children under 12 months will be required to provide written instructions about feeding. Parents are asked to fill out an infant feeding plan and identify foods on our menu that their child has already been exposed to, as well as foods which have not yet been introduced. Parents are responsible for updating the feeding plan as their infant's needs change. Staff will not be permitted to introduce new high allergen foods (ex. soy, dairy, sesame etc) to infants that they have not previously been exposed to in the home setting.

Please note: The centre provides milk daily for full-day children in the amounts recommended by Public Health. If parents wish their children to have additional milk (ex. Bottles) or other types of milk (ex. Soy, rice etc), they should provide it a container labeled with their child's name and attach written instructions on the amount and times of day the milk is to be given.

Anaphylaxis Policy

Overview

In our centres, we have at times children who are at risk for potentially life-threatening allergies. Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that can be caused by foods, insect stings, medications, latex, or other substances. While anaphylaxis can lead to death if untreated, anaphylactic reactions and fatalities can be avoided. Education and awareness are key to keeping children with potentially life-threatening allergies safe.

Identification of Children at Risk

At the time of registration, parents are asked about medical conditions, including whether children are at risk of anaphylaxis and asthma. All staff, students and volunteers must be aware of these children.

It is the responsibility of the parent to:

- Inform the centre Supervisor of their child's allergy (and asthma).
- Before the child attends the centre, complete medical forms and the Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan (AEP) which includes a photograph, description of the child's allergy, emergency procedure, contact information, and consent to administer medication. The AEP will be posted in all classrooms, the office, and the food preparation and serving areas and a copy attached to the child's emergency card.
- Provide training on the details of the AEP to the Supervisor or designate of the centre.
- Ensure that updated medications are provided to the centre before existing medications reach their expiry date.
- Advise the centre in writing if their child has outgrown an allergy or no longer requires an epinephrine auto-injector.
- Parents should be encouraged to have their child wear medical identification (e.g. MedicAlert® bracelet).
- Prior to sending food from home to the centre, parents should consult with centre staff regarding ingredients/foods that should be avoided for the safety of the other children in the class (ex. Allergies)
- Label food brought from home to the child care centre with the child's full name and the date the food arrived at the child care centre and advise staff of all ingredients.

Creating an Allergy-Safe Child Care Environment

1. Children and staff will wash their hands before eating and/or serving food.
2. When it is reasonable to do so, the centre will provide food substitutions for children with allergies. In some cases, parents will be asked to provide appropriate substitutes for their children.
3. Children with food allergies will be highly supervised. A 'no sharing' policy for food allergic children is in place.
4. Food will be placed on a napkin rather than in direct contact with a table.
5. Allergy/food restriction lists and individual AEP's will be posted in conspicuous places in the child's classroom AND wherever food preparation takes place. A copy of the AEP will be attached to the child's emergency card.
6. All staff, students and volunteers are made aware of the location of Epipens.
7. Epipens and cell phones will be brought outside during outdoor play times.
8. When a child with an anaphylactic allergy enrolls at the centre, a notice will be sent out to all parents, staff, students, and volunteers informing them that there is a child attending the

centre who is at risk for potentially life-threatening allergies and the foods or causative agents.

9. Staff, students and volunteers are trained in the individual AEP's of all children. Staff at the Bayridge site who may be responsible for food prep for the Creekford School Age program will also receive training on those children's individual anaphylactic emergency plans.
10. Empty food boxes and/or containers that are used for art and/or dramatic play are checked to ensure that they do not contain allergens before being set out for the children's use.

Allergy Procedures for Families

1. A copy of the anaphylaxis policy will be included in the parent handbook which is provided to all families upon registration.
2. All parents will be required to identify their child(s) allergies on the registration form including whether or not an EpiPen is required.
3. Where an EpiPen has been prescribed for a child, an Individual Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan will be developed, with input from the child's parent or guardian and the child's physician (if the child's parent is of the opinion that they should be consulted), that includes emergency procedures in respect of the child.
4. The AEP will include the child's photo and allergy information, signs and symptoms, brief action plan, contact information, consent to administer the medication and the signature of the child's parent.
5. The AEP must be in place before the child can receive care at the centre and the parent or physician must provide training to the Supervisor or designate on the procedures to be followed in the event of a child having an anaphylactic reaction, including how to recognize the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis specific to the child, and what actions should be taken by staff and how to administer medication. The Supervisor or designate receiving the training will review children's plans, including emergency procedures, with all staff/students/volunteers, and the plans must be implemented as needed.
6. With parental permission, school-aged children are permitted to carry their own EpiPen.

Allergy Protocol for staff

1. Prior to commencing work at the centre, all staff will provide proof of certification in Standard 1st Aid and CPR, including EpiPen training.
2. The Anaphylaxis Policy and Individual AEP for children with anaphylaxis shall be reviewed by all employees, students and volunteers before they begin employment and at least annually thereafter as well as any time a change is made to the policy or the individual emergency plan.

During an emergency:

- One adult stays with the child at all times. One adult goes for help or calls for help.
- Before administering epinephrine check for; the right medication, the right child, the right dose, the right route of administration
- Administer epinephrine at the first sign of reaction. The use of epinephrine for a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction will not harm a normally healthy child, if epinephrine was not required. Note time of administration.
- Call 911. Have the child transported to an emergency room even if symptoms have subsided. Symptoms may recur hours after exposure to an allergen.
- Contact the child's parents. One calm and familiar adult must stay with the child until a parent or guardian arrives.

Parent Issues or Concerns

Parents/guardians are encouraged to take an active role in the childcare centre and regularly discuss what their child(ren) are experiencing with our staff. As outlined in our program statement, we support positive and responsive interactions among the children, parents/guardians, educators, and other staff, and foster the engagement of and ongoing communication with parents/guardians about the program and their children.

We maintain an open-door policy for all families registered with us, meaning that family members are welcome to come in and spend as much time with their child in the program as they would like. Feedback on our programs is welcomed at any time and a formal feedback survey is given out to all families to complete at least once a year.

All issues and concerns raised by parents/guardians are taken seriously by Unity Child Care Centres and will be addressed. Every effort will be made to address and resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all parties and as quickly as possible.

Issues/concerns may be brought forward verbally or in writing. Responses and outcomes will be provided verbally, or in writing upon request. The level of detail provided to the parent/guardian will respect and maintain the confidentiality of all parties involved.

An initial response to an issue or concern will be provided to parents/guardians within one (1) business day. The person who raised the issue/concern will be kept informed throughout the resolution process. Investigations of issues and concerns will be fair, impartial, and respectful to parties involved.

Every issue and concern will be treated confidentially, and every effort will be made to protect the privacy of parents/guardians, children, staff, students and volunteers, except when information must be disclosed for legal reasons (e.g. to the Ministry of Education, College of Early Childhood Educators, law enforcement authorities or a Children's Aid Society).

Our agency maintains high standards for positive interaction, communication, and role-modeling for children. Harassment and discrimination will therefore not be tolerated from any party.

If at any point a parent/guardian, or staff feels uncomfortable, threatened, abused, or belittled, they may immediately end the conversation and report the situation to the Director of the organization.

Concerns about the Suspected Abuse or Neglect of a child

Everyone, including members of the public and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. If a parent/guardian expresses concerns that a child is being abused or neglected, the parent will be advised to contact the local Children's Aid Society (CAS) directly. Any allegation of abuse against a staff member, student or volunteer must also be reported by the centre to CAS.

Persons who become aware of such concerns are also responsible for reporting this information to CAS as per the "Duty to Report" requirement under the *Child and Family Services Act*.

For more information, visit

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/index.aspx>

Procedures in respect to parent issues or concerns:

Nature of Issue or Concern	Steps for Parent and/or Guardian to Report Issue/Concern:	Steps for Provider, Staff and/or Licensee in responding to issue/concern:
Program-Related E.g: schedule, toilet training, indoor/ outdoor program activities, menus, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the childcare staff directly or - the site Supervisor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Address the issue/concern at the time it is raised; or - arrange for a meeting with the parent/guardian within 5 business days. Document the issues/concerns in detail. Documentation should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the date and time the issue/concern was received; - the name of the person who received the issue/concern; - the name of the person reporting the issue/concern; - the details of the issue/concern; and - any steps taken to resolve the issue/concern and/or information given to the parent/guardian regarding next steps or referral. Provide contact information for the appropriate person if the person being notified is unable to address the matter. Ensure the investigation of the issue/concern is initiated by the appropriate party within 5 business days or as soon as reasonably possible thereafter. Document reasons for delays in writing. Provide a resolution or outcome to the parent(s)/ guardian(s) who raised the issue/concern.
General, Agency- or Operations-Related E.g: fees, placement, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the site Supervisor or Director. 	
Provider- Staff-and/or Licensee-Related E.g: conduct of provider, agency head office staff, etc.	Raise the issue or concern to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the individual directly or - the site Supervisor or Director. 	
Related to Other Persons at the Child Care Premises	Raise the issue or concern to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the child care staff directly or - the site Supervisor 	
Student- / Volunteer-Related	Raise the issue or concern to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the person responsible for supervising the volunteer or student or - the site Supervisor. 	

Escalation of Issues or Concerns:

All issues or concerns about the conduct of the licensee, staff, student, volunteer, or other persons at the childcare premises that puts a child's health, safety and well-being at risk should be reported to the organization's Director immediately.

Where parents/guardians are not satisfied with the response or outcome of an issue or concern, they may escalate the issue or concern verbally or in writing to the Director of the organization.

Issues/concerns related to compliance with requirements set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and Ontario Regulation 137/15 must be reported to the Ministry of Education's Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Branch.

Issues/concerns may also be reported to other relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. local public health department, police department, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Labour, fire department, College of Early Childhood Educators, Ontario College of Teachers, College of Social Workers etc.) where appropriate.

Fee Policy

Unity Child Care Centres uses a child care management software for invoicing and payment collection.

FEES for all programs are due monthly **in advance of care**. Invoices are generated on the first of the month and can be viewed on the child care management program under the Finance tab. Our preferred method of payment is PAD or credit card payment through the child care management program. E-transfers will be accepted if PAD is not possible for individual families; please contact the Payments Administrator to discuss individual circumstances. **Payment for the full month is due on receipt of the invoice.** All absences must be paid for in full, we cannot fill your child's space in their absence.

All clients pay for statutory holidays, as well as Easter Monday & the Civic Holiday in August, as per our parent handbook.

All **NSF fees and corresponding invoices** must be paid via e-transfer before the next month's scheduled billing period.

If a balance on an account remains unpaid at the end of the month, a withdrawal notice may be issued and care will be terminated. Unpaid accounts will be sent to a collection agency.

Two weeks' notice is required if you wish to withdraw from the program.

Over payment of fees (due to inaccurate billing, withdrawal from the program etc.) will be returned via direct deposit through the child care management app or e-transfer, depending on individual circumstance and family preference.

Families accessing **City Fee Subsidy** funding are responsible for any and all fees not covered by the City. This may include fees for exceeding allocated absence days, as well as fees incurred by not adhering to the 2-week withdrawal notice.

Fee Schedule

Base Fees (apply to all Unity programs)

Infant

Full day program

Fee (CWELCC eligible)

\$22.00/day

Toddler

Full day program

\$22.00/day

Preschool

Full day program

\$22.00/day

Henderson School Age Program – Kindergarten to Grade 7* - walking to J.R. Henderson Public School

	<u>Fee</u> (6yrs +)	<u>Fee</u> Kindergarten CWELCC eligible
**Before &After School	\$25.00/day	\$12.00/day
Before School Only	\$12.00/day	\$12.00/day
After School Only	\$13.00/day	\$12.00/day
Full day (all school holidays)	\$44.00/day	\$19.85/day

**Registrations will be accepted for Monday-Friday B&A care for all children. Mornings and/or Afternoon care only will be considered depending on available space.

Terra Verde School Age Program – Kindergarten to Grade 7* - busing to Bayridge Public School, St. Marguerite Bourgeois Catholic School, Amherstview Public School

	<u>Fee</u> (age 6+)	<u>Fee</u> Kindergarten CWELCC eligible
Before &After School	\$27.00/day**	\$12.29/day
Before School Only	\$13.50/day	\$12.00/day
After School Only	\$13.50/day	\$12.00/day
Full day (all school holidays)	\$44.00/day	\$19.85/day

*Children in JK/SK may be accepted in limited numbers

**Registrations will be accepted for Monday-Friday B&A care for all children. Mornings and/or Afternoon care only will be considered depending on available space.

Creekford School Age Program – Kindergarten to Grade 7* – busing to Holsgrove Public School, St. Genevieve Catholic School, Amherstview Public School

	<u>Fee</u> (age 6+)	<u>Fee</u> Kindergarten CWELCC eligible
Before &After School	\$27.00/day**	\$12.29/day
Before School Only	\$13.50/day	\$12.00/day
After School Only	\$13.50/day	\$12.00/day
Full day (PA days only)	\$44.00/day	\$19.85/day

*Children in JK/SK may be accepted in limited numbers

**Registrations will be accepted for Monday-Friday B&A care for all children. Mornings and/or Afternoon care only will be considered depending on available space.

Non-Base Fees (apply to all Unity programs)

Credit Card Payments: An additional **2.4% fee** is charged through the child care management program for all credit card payments.

Late Fees: Apply for pick-ups after closing. \$10.00 for the first 15 minutes plus \$1.00 for every additional minute. The late fee will be added to your next bill. Please remember that staff members also have family commitments and expect to leave their workplace on time. Late pickups in excess of one per month may result in the loss of your child's space.

NSF Fees: \$25.00 per failed payment



BENEFITS

- Hands on management style – the Director is the Owner/Operator so your questions and concerns can be answered immediately; family suggestions are welcome and encouraged.
- The power to be flexible to the individual needs of each child and family.
- A staff of Registered Early Childhood Educators and related professionals dedicated to our philosophy that children and families have unique needs and diversity should be celebrated.
- Welcoming spaces that support children's learning across all areas of development.