

# Participant Handbook

2011-2012



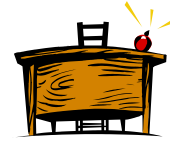
*Revised January 2011*

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## **Mission**

To provide a unique & high quality licensed youth enrichment program that combines the best in educational opportunities with recreational events to assist parents and guardians with providing the skills necessary for their child's positive development and socialization.

To provide a safe and enjoyable environment where children will thrive. We will do this by providing a warm and loving atmosphere, a creative curriculum with age appropriate activities, positive and enthusiastic teachers, and low teacher to child ratios.



## **Meet Our Staff**

### **Ms. Christy – Early Childhood Coordinator**

Young children need quality Early Childhood Education. Studies have been done that show children learn more between the ages of 0-3 years old than they do throughout the rest of their lives. They learn from interactions with adults and with other children. They imitate the people around them and they learn through play. Our teachers are educated and trained to teach your children through the current best practices in Early Childhood Education. We strive to be superior in all that we do. The main qualification for an early childhood teacher is a love of children. Exceptional teachers learn developmentally appropriate activities for children of all ages and they use every occasion as a teaching experience. Our teachers are creative, patient and caring individuals who make every effort to give the children in their care the best early childhood experience possible.

### **Ms. Lydia - 1 Year Old Busy Bears**

My name is Ms. Lydia and as the one year old teacher, I strive to endorse the importance of high quality early childhood education. At this young age most activities are short lived, which means we need lots of activities to fill our day! It's an exciting time in our Busy Bear class where the learning and fun never stop. We are constantly on the go with dancing, singing, puzzles, painting and outdoor play including lots of bubbles. Our literacy objective starts with our youngest participants. We read to every child, even in our Busy Bear classroom, at least 30 minutes per day.

### **Ms. Mari - 2 Year Old Frisky Frogs**

My name is Ms. Mari and I am the teacher in the two year old room. I believe that patience and creativity are fundamental qualities for teaching this age group. In the Frisky Frogs class, the foundation is laid for future learning. We focus on developing language and social skills. Early literacy continues to be a focal point with our two year olds. Story time, flannel boards, and interactive circle times are enjoyed by all. Fine and gross motor skills, along with self help skills, are cultivated daily. It is also very important for us to have fun!



### **Ms. Jackie and Ms. Kim - 3 Year Old Terrific Three's**

We are Ms. Jackie and Ms. Kim and we are the teachers in the 3 year old classroom. Our philosophy is that each child is capable of learning if given the appropriate circumstances. This involves being in tune to the individual children; knowing their characters and their personalities. Lesson plans are modified to accommodate individual preferences and temperaments. We work together to instill a love of learning by opening up a wonderful world of imagination in our classroom.



### **Ms. Mandy - 4 Year Old VPK**

My name is Ms. Mandy and I am a VPK teacher for one of our 4 year old classrooms at RYEC. My philosophy in teaching would be best described like reading a book. The first chapters are meant to be an introduction toward the special journey that unfolds as the chapters continue. Much like the classroom, daily experiences of preschool help build the young minds as they continue the journey of knowledge. During our day the normal subjects of teaching are covered like math, reading, music, and general knowledge. But, that is not all that can be taught. I like to think that laughter is also taught during the day. We all work together to make sure we do laugh daily to help the teaching process prevail.

### **Ms. Patty - 4 Year Old VPK**

My name is Ms. Patty and I am a VPK teacher for one of our 4 year old classrooms at RYEC. Along with providing a safe and supportive learning environment for my students, I focus on encouraging each child individually, so that they find learning fun and exciting. In my opinion, early education is one of the most critical times in our child's development. It sets the tone for a lifelong love of learning. Come by my classroom for a visit.....I look forward to meeting you and your child!!



## Hours of Operations

We are open Monday through Friday from 7:00 a. m. to 6:00 p. m.



## Inclusion

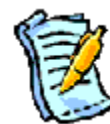
In an effort to provide everyone the same opportunity to experience the quality of our programs, we include children with special needs in our programs. If your child has special needs, we encourage you to tour our facilities and meet with the Early Childhood Coordinator ahead of time to discuss ways to accommodate your child.

## Registration Process

The registration packet must be complete and accompanied by the yearly registration fee prior to your child's first day. Each child will receive a T-shirt with their registration. The registration packet includes the following:

- The enrollment form, signed and completed
- Florida Certificate of Immunization, signed and dated by a licensed Florida Physician
- Student Health Examination Form, signed and dated by a licensed Florida Physician
- Registration fee may be made by cash, Visa, MasterCard, debit card, or by personal check made out to "City of Palm Beach Gardens."
- Proof of Residency
  - Current Florida driver's license
  - Property tax document in addition to a photo ID

*Please report any changes in address and/or telephone numbers that would affect our ability to contact you in case of emergency.* It is imperative that parents keep records updated. We also like to be made aware of any changes in normal routine for children. Communication between the families and school is essential.



## Health and Safety

### Medical Forms Required by the Health Department

Chapter 77-620, Special Acts, Laws of Florida, requires all children to have the following on file:

- A physical form DH 3040, (the yellow form) signed and dated by a licensed Florida physician, stating the child is healthy, free from communicable diseases, and may attend child care. The physical form needs to be updated every two years.
- Complete immunization record on DH 680, (the blue form), also signed and dated by a licensed Florida physician.

These forms need to be replaced on or before their expiration dates.

## Arrival/Dismissal Procedures

Parents are to sign their child in and out in the Sign In/Out Books in the lobby. Parents are responsible for bringing their child to their classrooms. We will not release students to minors that are less than 16 years of age.

Children will only be released to persons authorized in writing by a custodial parent. Please submit written authorization if your child is being picked up by someone other than persons listed on your child's enrollment form. *Everyone will also need to show photo identification.*

In the case of emergency only, we will take a phone request. At the time of the phone call we will give you specific instructions to be followed. This is only to be used in the case of a true emergency. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter to ensure the safety of your children.

### **Cell Phone Use**

One of the most important aspects of what we do at the Riverside Youth Enrichment Center is build relationships with the families registered with our facility. For this reason we ask that cell phones remain off or on silent when entering our facility. We hope that you understand that both drop off and pick up times are very important times for your children and they need your full attention during this transition.



### **Dress**

We suggest comfortable, easy for them to unbutton or unbuckle clothing. Children should have the freedom to explore with paint, glue, sand, and/or play dough without having to worry about getting their clothes messy or dirty. For safety reasons, **sneakers** and **socks** are required. We request that you do not send your children in sandals, open-toed shoes or Crocs due to safety reasons. Children need to be comfortable running and climbing. Parents should also clearly label all sweaters and jackets with their child's names. We are not responsible for lost articles of clothing.

All children should have at least one extra set of clothes, clearly labeled with their name. Please place clothes in a Ziploc bag marked with your child's name on the outside of the bag. When children are in the process of potty training we recommend sending more sets of clothes. Remember to think about changes of weather. During winter months, send long pants and shorts in the summer.

### **Lunch/Snacks**

Lunches should be sent in a lunch box labeled with your child's name on the outside. All plastic containers and eating utensils should be labeled also, as many lunch boxes, plastic containers, and cups are identical. Please do not send sodas, chocolate, or any glass containers. Due to health department regulations, we do not microwave food. You may send food in a thermos to keep it warm or cold. On Tuesdays and Fridays we order pizza. This is optional and there is a \$2 charge per day.

We provide a morning and an afternoon snack with juice. There is a menu posted on the parent board of the snacks we provide. *Please advise the staff if your child has any allergies!* Gum is not allowed in our program.

Formula and baby food for the infants must have the child's name on each container, lid and/or cap. Parents are required to provide pre-made bottles labeled with their child's name on a daily basis. Bottles will be refrigerated.

We prefer children to eat breakfast at home. Snack is generally given between 9:00a.m. and 10:00a.m. However, children who come before 8:00a.m. may bring breakfast in with them.

### **Birthdays**

We do celebrate birthdays! If you wish to bring a snack in, we recommend healthy snack items for celebrations in our program. Please check with your child's teacher for suggestions as to what the children would enjoy. All food and refreshments must be store bought. Gifts for your child's classmates is not encouraged, we recommend that you save this type of celebration for your homes.



### **Parent Involvement/Visitors**

We welcome parent involvement in our classrooms. At times we will even invite you into the classrooms to participate in certain activities. We can always use volunteers, either parents or grandparents to help in our school. All visitors other than custodial parents must be approved by the custodial parent and the City of Palm Beach Gardens.

There are times if a child is having a hard time adjusting to preschool, when it is better not to spend extra time in the classroom. A quick "good-bye" is usually best. You may always call during the day to find out how your child is doing. Speak with your child's teacher for suggestions on how to make the transition easier for your child.

### **Parent Partner Program**

We give all parents the opportunity to help support our school by participating in our Parent Partner Program. For \$25.00 per year, you can significantly offset the cost of supplies, materials and snacks that are essential in each of our classrooms. In return, you will receive recognition in the RYEC newsletter and a certificate of appreciation. This is a wonderful opportunity for parents to become involved with their child's school in a positive and supportive way. If you are interested in participating in the Parent Partner Program, please stop by the front desk and let us know.



### **Personal Belongings/Toys from Home**

For naptime, we suggest a small blanket. You may also send a crib sheet to cover the mat and/or a small pillow. Over-sized pillows, blankets, and/or sleeping bags will be sent home due to lack of storage space. Remember to label everything with your child's name!

Toys from home are not permitted in the program and may be taken away by the teacher. On certain days, teachers may ask children to bring in a particular item from home. (Show and Share days are a perfect example.) No toy guns or weapons of any kind are ever permitted!

The City of Palm Beach Gardens and the members of the staff are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal property; this includes items such as electronic games, jewelry, money, sports equipment, etc.

## Field Trips

Various field trips will be arranged throughout the school year (4 year olds only). A permission slip will be sent home indicating the time and place of the field trip and any fee involved. For safety reasons, children are **required** to wear a program t-shirt. It is easier to keep children together when they are all wearing the same t-shirt. Additional t-shirts are available for purchase in the front office. Remember children must have a signed permission slip and a program t-shirt to participate on a field trip.



## After School Program

We will pick up children from local Palm Beach Gardens Elementary Schools. We make every effort to provide a secure, comfortable, and enjoyable place for your child to spend his or her time after finishing the day at school. There will be assistance with homework, computers, arts and crafts, games, and various other activities offered daily. As always we will keep our low staff to child ratios even in the elementary school age groups.

After school children are offered a snack and juice in the afternoon. There is a menu of the snacks we offer on the parent board. Please advise the staff if your child has any allergies. Gum is not allowed in the program.

We also celebrate birthdays with this age group. Ask your child's teacher for snack suggestions on what to bring in for the group!

## Communicable Diseases in Children

Any child showing symptoms of illness will be sent home. We **do not** accept doctor's notes to explain such symptoms as diarrhea, fevers, etc. If these symptoms are present, the child will not be able to attend, whether or not they have a doctor's note. **The child shall be kept home until 24 hours after all symptoms are normal.** This is to protect all children and staff. Signs and symptoms of illness are:

- Severe coughing, causing the child to become red or blue in the face or make whooping sound
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Stiff neck
- Diarrhea (more than one (1) abnormally loose stool within a twenty-four-hour period)
- Temperature of one hundred (100) degrees Fahrenheit or higher taken under the arm when in combination with any other sign or illness
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Untreated infectious skin patch(es)
- Vomiting
- Pediculosis (head lice)
- Any other unusual sign or symptom of illness



If you need to be notified because of your child's illness, it is imperative that we be able to reach someone. If you or your spouse/significant other are listed as emergency contacts, please make sure one of you can be reached at all times. If there is ever a situation where you know you cannot be reached, for whatever the reason, please make sure the staff has the name and phone number of another individual that can always be reached. We also request that if you are notified of your child's illness, you arrive at the center to pick them up within one hour of being contacted. Please understand that a sick child requires one-on-one care. This is an extremely difficult situation at our center due to the amount of children that we care for each day.

If your child contracts a contagious illness, please notify us so that we may pass the information on to other parents. Your cooperation will help us keep the number of illnesses to a minimum. When children are out sick no credit is given on tuition.



## **Medication**

The City of Palm Beach Gardens prefers not to administer medicine of any kind to any child. When necessary, only prescription medication will be dispensed. The name of the doctor, child, and medication directions for administration must be written on the label. All medication must be in the original prescription container. A written request signed by the parents shall accompany the medication stating the time and amount of dosage and the name of the medication to be given to the child. The staff at Riverside Youth Enrichment Center will record the name of the child, medication, date, time, amount and method of dosage administered.

Medications shall be plainly labeled and stored in a locked Medicine Box.

*Administering of Epipens: The City of Palm Beach Gardens will retain on staff persons who have been trained by our EMS department for the administering of "epipens" for those participants who are in the care, custody and control of childcare programs offered by the City and make known the need for such assistance. This training and supervision will be in accordance with "administration of epinephrine", Florida statutes 381.88.*

## **Administering Topical Non-medicated Physical Barriers**

Physical barrier lotions, ointments, and creams such as sunscreen, insect repellent and diaper ointment are generally not medications. The Riverside Youth Enrichment Center program will apply non-medicated lotions, ointments, and creams with written parent permission. Parents must first fill out the parental permission form, sign and date it. Parents are to supply all lotions, ointments and creams.



## **Boo Boos, Accidents, and Other Minor Incidents**

Please understand that children do fall down and will obtain bumps and bruises at school. In most cases parents will be notified of boo boos and accidents by a Boo Boo or Accident Report. Please sign and return immediately. County regulations limit first aid provided at the school to cleansing properly and applying band-aids or ice packs.

## **Financial Obligations**

Tuition may be paid by the week or by the month. However, all tuition is due on the Friday prior to the week of attendance. If payment has not been received by Monday of the current week, a

\$5.00 per child late fee will automatically be added to the account by Tuesday morning. The entire amount due, including the late fees, must be paid no later than Friday of the second week in order to continue in our program. *We will not allow balances on accounts.*

The City of Palm Beach Gardens accepts exact cash, MasterCard, Visa, American Express, debit cards and personal checks made out to the City of Palm Beach Gardens. You also have the option to sign up for auto debit or you can pay online from the convenience of your home. See the front desk for more information on these options. *PLEASE NOTE: we will not accept personal checks for past due balances.*



### **Returned Checks**

Collections for fees due, cancelled checks or declined credit cards will be made by Recreation staff by personal contact then by certified mail. Persons with outstanding balances will not be allowed to register themselves or guardian children for other recreation programs until all fees are paid, including any costs associated with the collection of payment.

Participants or guardians that produce uncollectable checks or credit cards will be placed on a cash or credit card payment plan after two instances within a calendar year. This will be in effect for 12 months after it is started.

### **Program Late Pick-Up Fee**

Any person arriving late to pick up a child from a program will be charged a late fee. A late fee of \$10.00 for each portion of 15 minutes will be issued for each participant picked up after their scheduled program ending time. Excessive late pickups will result in termination of the participant, student, camper, etc. The 1st – 4th late pick-ups will be the fees as indicated. The 5th late pick-up will result in 1 day suspension\* from the program and late fees. The 6th late pick-up will result in 2 days suspension\* from the program and late fees. The 7th late fee will be a permanent dismissal\* from the program and late fees.

\*Suspensions and permanent dismissal will take place on the next program day your child is regularly scheduled to attend. There are no refunds of program fees paid for suspensions or dismissals.

### **Withdrawal**

When it is time to withdraw your child from our program, two weeks written notice is required. Parents are responsible for tuition payment during this two week period.

### **Refunds for Medical and/or other Emergencies**

**A ONE WEEK NOTICE IS REQUIRED FOR REFUNDS**



- Refunds will be given in circumstances of medical emergencies and other life altering changes
- A Request for Refund form must be filled out in order for a refund to be processed. Request for Refund forms are available at the front desk.
- All refund requests are subject to a \$10.00 processing fee.
- Medical refunds will be pro-rated if a child can only attend a portion of a session. We reserve the right to ask for a doctor's note if a medical refund is requested

## Holidays and School Closings

*The City of Palm Beach Gardens will close for general building maintenance one week during the normal winter break observed by the Palm Beach County Schools. We will also close for two teacher planning and preparation days. The exact dates for the planning days will be announced each year at the time of fall registration.*



We are also closed the following days:

Labor Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving Day, Thanksgiving Friday, Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, and Independence Day.

If the actual holiday falls on a weekend, school will close on either the Friday or Monday closest to the holiday. This would be decided in advance by the City of Palm Beach Gardens.

Palm Beach Gardens Recreation Division does offer other programs for certain ages on some of these holidays. No credit on tuition is given for holidays.

## Hurricanes, Extreme Weather Conditions, and other Emergencies

With regard to severe weather alerts, please listen to news reports for notices of closings.

The City of Palm Beach Gardens will make every effort to notify participants and media if the facility will be closed due to weather conditions. Concerning hurricanes, generally the recreation facilities will close when the public schools close. Riverside Youth Enrichment Center will remain closed pending damage assessments and availability of water, electricity and/or staff.

## Emergency Drills

Practice drills will be conducted for fire safety, evacuation, tornado and lock down scenarios throughout the year. If you find yourself in the facility during one of our emergency drills, we encourage you to participate with your child.



## Vacation Policy

Tuitions are based on a yearly basis, broken down into weekly payments. No credit on tuition is given for scheduled school holidays and closings, emergency school closings, or random sick days.

In order to take a vacation week, you are asked to notify the program coordinator in advance and pay one-half of the weekly tuition for each program week of absence. If your child attends any portion of a week, a full week's tuition will be charged. Children may take up to 2 vacation weeks during the year. Each additional vacation week will be billed as a full week's tuition.

## **Discipline Policy**

The City of Palm Beach Gardens strives to create a stimulating and creative environment where children learn and play while participating in age appropriate activities. Children are encouraged to control their own behaviors and actions. We set clear and reasonable limits and give positive directions. Inappropriate behavior will be discussed with children and model behaviors suggested. We prefer preventive discipline, positive reinforcement, and redirection. The use of physical punishment is not permitted.



Children who do not respond to these methods of discipline will be temporarily removed from the group and not permitted to continue an activity for a short period of time. Continued misbehavior will be brought to the attention of the Early Childhood Coordinator. On certain occasions, parents will be contacted and possibly even asked to attend a private conference concerning their child's behavior. If necessary we will suspend a child from our program for a day. We reserve the right to remove a child from the program when necessary.

Biting is fairly common amongst young children. It is very possible that at some time in every young child's life, he or she will either bite or be bitten. We will deal with each occurrence on a case by case basis. Children play in small groups and are closely supervised. We will make every effort to work with children who bite to teach them other appropriate ways to express themselves. However in certain cases continued biting may lead to dismissal from our program. If you would like more information on children biting, contact the Early Childhood Coordinator.

## **Gift Policy**

The commercialization and media pressure to buy, buy, buy at holiday times and end of the year celebrations is overwhelming. We prefer to focus on other meaningful ways to celebrate without spending money. Therefore, we ask that no gifts be given to staff and that you find other ways to show your appreciation (a flower, a nice note, a donation to the class, or some other small token gift, for example). Our gift policy for our staff is based upon state law which defines the size and extensiveness of gifts to state employees. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in this matter. If you have any questions, please contact the Early Childhood Coordinator.



## **Conflict of Interest/Babysitting**

In an effort to maintain the professional status of our center and prevent any potential conflicts of interest, babysitting by center staff is strongly discouraged. However, if you choose to have one of our staff members babysit your child, services must be outside the center premises and with the understanding that such arrangements are solely between you and the person who is caring for your child.

## **Tuition Incentive Program**

We offer a \$100 tuition incentive program to the immediate families of currently enrolled students for referring another family to our center. Please speak to our front desk specialists to learn more about our program.

## **PARENT/GUARDIAN AGREEMENT**

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby agree to comply with the rules and regulations regarding health, absences, scheduled times, fees, etc. as stated in the Participant Handbook.

I agree that the Riverside Youth Enrichment Center has the right to withdraw my child if I do not follow these rules.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_