Dear Parents,

**Welcome to the Auraria Early Learning Center!** We believe success begins early. By working together as partners in education, we can help foster your child’s positive attitude towards learning through a successful adjustment to the school environment.

We encourage you to be aware of the goals, objectives, and activities of our program so that your child’s school experience can be supported and reinforced at home. In turn, we make an effort to be aware of your expectations for your child’s achievement and behavior at the center, your attitudes on education, and your beliefs about child-rearing. In this way, we can work together to provide a program that is responsive to both environments.

The information included in this handbook offers a brief overview of the Auraria Early Learning Center program and policies. Additional information and references on our curriculum, mission, and goals are available from staff members. Please feel free to ask for further information at any time.

We look forward to beginning this special partnership with you and your child.

Sincerely,

Mary McCain, Director
Auraria Early Learning Center
Mary.McCain@ahec.edu
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Introduction

The Auraria Early Learning Center (AELC) provides programs for children who are 12 months and walking to 5 years old, with a fully accredited kindergarten program and summer camp for children through age 8. The center serves students, faculty, and staff of the Community College of Denver (CCD), Metropolitan State University of Denver (MSU Denver), University of Colorado Denver (CU Denver), and the Auraria Higher Education Center (AHEC). On a space-available basis, the center also serves the Denver community. All of the AELC’s programs are fully licensed by the Colorado Department of Human Services.

What You Will Discover at the AELC?

- Highly qualified teachers, educational consultants, and support staff who are experts in the field of early childhood education
- Full- and part-time schedules with healthy meals and snacks included
- Individualized teaching with an emphasis on cultivating children’s sense of wonder and discovery
- Small classroom setting with a low child-to-teacher ratio
- Balanced, high-quality curriculum that introduces foundational subjects, including reading, math, science, and social studies
- Social-emotional development with opportunities for self-expression through language, art, and dramatic play

Mission

The AELC mission is to support children as they learn about and discover their own uniqueness in a rich, caring, and loving environment where relationships between children, families, and staff are nurtured.

Philosophy

The AELC believes children learn through play and discovery.

The AELC instills learning by ensuring the environment is rich in developmentally appropriate materials and activities that nurture exploration and growth in physical abilities, language, literacy, cognitive skills, math, science, social studies, the arts, dramatic play, and social-emotional skills.
The AELC Believes in Empowering the Growth of Each Child by:

- Assigning children to primary caregivers and ensuring continuity of care
- Providing warm, attuned interactions between adults and children
- Furnishing well-planned and thought-out daily schedules, transitions, activities, and environments
- Using careful observation and assessment as the basis for communicating and interacting with children, for planning based on the interests and uniqueness of each child, and for fostering communication and connections with families

The AELC Believes in Building Community With Families

Building relationships provides a strong foundation for community, learning, and personal growth. The AELC nurtures relationships by connecting with children, families, and each other on a personal level, and by taking time for reflective practice. Each child, family, and staff member is unique. The AELC respects that uniqueness by listening carefully, communicating clearly, and encouraging partnership.

Interpreting Services

The Auraria Early Learning Center provides interpreters upon request. Please see the front desk for the list of available languages. Both written and verbal translations will be provided in the family’s native language. If the native language is not available for translation, the center will connect the family with resources.
Curriculum & Assessment

The educational community consistently recognizes the AELC as a high-quality early learning center. The program is based on a developmentally appropriate curriculum that emphasizes discovery-based learning and active involvement by children.

AELC teachers and administration have studied early childhood development for several years. The curriculum is constantly evolving based on the newest, most relevant research available. Currently, the curriculum includes, but is not limited to, the following practices:

- Activity-Based Environment
- Whole Language Approach
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children (DAP)
- ECE Cares
- Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC)
- Teaching Strategies Gold (TS-Gold)
- Pyramid Plus
- Creative Curriculum

Activity-Based Environment

Young children learn best by “doing.” Classroom activities involve extensive hands-on experimentation. Children gain problem-solving skills by learning through their actions and drawing conclusions from their experiences. The AELC focuses on encouraging, supporting, and extending the children’s choices to help them learn about the world around them.

Whole Language Approach

The AELC looks at language as a continuum, beginning with the acquisition of verbal and listening skills and extending into the development of literacy skills, including pre-reading, letter recognition, and letter sound skills. Research and experience show that a child’s communication skills develop out of the desire to express needs, insight, and excitement. Staff work to promote positive language opportunities for children at each stage of development.
Developmentally Appropriate Practices for Young Children (DAP)

DAP provides a framework for preparing learning environments and planning activities according to what is known about young children’s stages of development. DAP considers several key factors:

**Age Appropriateness** — indicates there are universal, predictable stages of growth and change for children in all domains of development: physical, emotional, social, and cognitive. These stages typically occur within specific age ranges.

**Individual Appropriateness** — recognizes that each child is a unique person with an individual sequence of growth, and an individual personality, learning style, and family background. Activities in the classroom and child/teacher interactions are responsive to individual differences and developmental stages.

Child-initiated, child-directed, and teacher-supported play are essential components of developmentally appropriate practices.

Pyramid Plus

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Young Children (Pyramid Model) provides a tiered framework of evidence-based interventions for promoting the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children.

Creative Curriculum

Creative Curriculum is a researched-based curriculum designed for children from infancy through kindergarten. It balances both teacher-directed and child-initiated learning. It incorporates developmentally appropriate practices that consider the child’s developmental level, and provides opportunities for teachers to work with children who have various skills and abilities. The curriculum is delivered within a play-based format, and integrates all areas of development including social-emotional, physical, language, cognitive, literacy, mathematics, science and technology, social studies, and the arts within daily classroom routines and structure.
**ECE Cares**

The AELC works hard to develop caring classroom communities. The center cultivates an environment where all children are safe to express who they are, talk about their ideas, have their own experiences, practice problem solving, and learn to settle disagreements in a peaceful way. The three essential “Safety Rules” are an important ECE Cares strategy:

1) We keep ourselves safe.
2) We keep each other safe.
3) We keep our things safe.

**Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC)**

The AELC is dedicated to helping children learn to express their emotions in developmentally and socially appropriate ways. Teachers model behaviors and guide children in developing skills for managing difficult feelings such as frustration, anxiety, and anger. Using LINC as the framework for the social and emotional curriculum, AELC staff help children develop a competent and autonomous sense of self. Children learn positive ways of relating to peers, adults, and themselves.

**Teaching Strategies Gold (TS-GOLD)**

TS-GOLD is a tool that enables teachers to increase the effectiveness of their assessments. TS-GOLD compiles results generated through a teacher’s documentation, and offers support with lesson planning and individual goals. In addition, TS-GOLD gives teachers the opportunity to more effectively share information about a child’s progress with his/her family.

**Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines: Birth Through Third Grade**

The AELC curriculum meets and assesses all the domains listed in the Early Childhood Leadership Commission’s development guidelines chart.
This graphic illustrates the essential domains of learning within the Colorado Early Learning and Development Guidelines. It represents the progression of these domains across ages, rather than the relative importance of each domain within any one age group. The complex connections within and among domains are more fully explored throughout the guidelines.
Early Childhood Development

The term “early childhood” refers to the years from birth to approximately age eight. While most research on early childhood only focuses on one specific aspect of development, AELC staff have found that it is most beneficial to incorporate a variety of approaches into the curriculum. Using a combination of approaches stimulates the development of young children in the following areas:

- Intellectual/Cognitive Development
- Language/Communication
- Social and Emotional Development
- Self-Help Skills
- Gross and Fine Motor Skills

Intellectual/Cognitive Development

During early childhood, rapid growth occurs in cognitive and intellectual development. Although each child develops at an individual rate, there is a clearly defined sequence of developmental milestones from infancy to adulthood as set forth by Piaget’s theory of childhood development. The AELC creates an enriched environment for children based on knowledge of the needs of children at each milestone; as well, the center understands that each child has an individual rate of progress.

Language/Communication

Vocabulary growth and the ability to communicate needs and wants may be two of the most noticeable advancements for children between the ages of two to seven. When adults create a rich language and literacy environment, with specific responses to a child’s communication, it can boost that child’s emergent language and literacy development, increasing the likelihood of future academic success. Parents and caregivers have the greatest potential to contribute to a child’s language opportunities, and we can work together to consistently cultivate language opportunities at school and at home. This is one of the many reasons the AELC values family connections.

Social and Emotional Development

In the first five years of life, children rapidly develop the social and emotional capacities that prepare them to be self-confident, trusting, empathetic, intellectually inquisitive, competent in using language to
communicate, and capable of relating well to others. The AELC uses the Learning in Nurturing Communities (LINC) curriculum to teach children developmentally appropriate ways to handle emotions and to offer tools for first interactions in a social school setting.

The AELC recognizes that social and emotional development occurs in all of the children’s interactions, including free play, meal time, and structured group activities. The physical setting of the classroom maximizes possibilities for both small and large group interactions. Teachers utilize anti-bias curriculum activities and materials, and plan lessons that are relevant to the children as members of the AELC’s multi-cultural community.

**Self-Help Skills**

The AELC curriculum guides and encourages young children to become more independent as their skills develop. Staff encourage children to make positive choices and to become more self-directed in their play and interactions. Toddlers learn to take care of themselves by eating with utensils, putting on and taking off their own clothing, and toileting.

**Gross and Fine Motor Development**

Young children move; they clap, jump, swing, stomp, and sing. They love to be on the go. The AELC curriculum focuses on helping children learn to balance all areas of development with their gross and fine motor skills.

The “Let’s Move! Child Care” initiative launched by former First Lady Michelle Obama recognizes the AELC as a participating site. Teachers use creative movement activities and outdoor play to help children’s growing bodies.

Puzzles, writing, drawing, and other small motor activities enhance fine motor skills. Handwriting skills are introduced and developed at appropriate age levels. Each classroom’s curriculum is designed to be consistent with its children’s stages of motor development.

**Toddler Programs**

The toddler classrooms utilize all AELC curriculum standards and introduce developmentally appropriate programs as determined by the classroom teacher and AELC administration.
Preschool & Kindergarten Programs

The preschool and kindergarten classrooms introduce the following programs into their curriculums:

Phonics—Butterfly Park

This phonics program is a fun, active, and multi-sensory introduction to letter sounds, utilizing movement, visual stimulation, and listening activities. The 26 basic letter sounds, long and short vowel sounds, and three vowel teams are taught with colorful illustrations, creative dramatics, and cues and chants. The multi-sensory approach increases language retention for all children.

Everyday Math

"Everyday Math" integrates math skills across the school curriculum, rooting learning in real-life contexts and situations. It gives children the opportunity to explore math through long-term projects with an interactive approach to learning. Many of the "Everyday Math" activities maintain a nice balance between teacher-directed instruction and opportunities for open-ended, hands-on exploration.

Preschool and kindergarten programs follow Colorado State Standards and Goals. Visit [www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction](http://www.cde.state.co.us/standardsandinstruction) for more information.

Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS)

In an effort to strengthen and improve early childhood education programs, the Colorado Office of Early Childhood administers a statewide QRIS. The QRIS is a method to assess, enhance, and communicate the level of quality of all licensed providers in Colorado. The Next Generation QRIS replaces the Qualistar rating system. There are five elements of the Colorado Next Generation QRIS:

- **QRIS standards** are used to assign ratings to programs that participate in the QRIS, providing parents and the public with information about each program’s quality.

- **Accountability and monitoring processes** are used to determine how well programs meet the QRIS standards, assign ratings, and verify ongoing compliance.

- To promote participation and help programs achieve higher levels of quality, QRIS includes **support for providers**, such as training, mentoring, and technical assistance.
Financial incentives and awards help early care and education programs improve learning environments, attain higher ratings, and sustain long-term quality.

QRIS provides a framework for educating parents about the importance of quality in early care and education.

For more information, visit www.coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com

AELC Staff

Please visit www.ahec.edu/earlylearning for staff bios.

Administrative Staff

The AELC administrative team includes the director, assistant director, program coordinator, operations coordinator, and two part-time administrative assistants.

Teaching Staff

A supervising teacher, an assistant teacher, and teacher aides staff each classroom. They guide the development of social skills, independence, and a positive self-concept by arranging the classroom environment in ways that encourage children to discover, explore, imagine, express feelings, and most of all…enjoy!

Supervising Teachers

Supervising teachers are responsible for classroom management and instruction. All supervising teachers have earned a minimum of a bachelor’s degree in early childhood education, or a closely related field, and/or are director qualified through the State of Colorado. The supervising kindergarten teacher is fully licensed to teach kindergarten by the Colorado Department of Education.

Assistant Teachers

Assistant teachers support the supervising teachers in carrying out the classroom programs. They are Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) or Assistant Early Childhood Teacher (AECT) Certified. The assistant teachers help with instruction, maintaining a positive classroom environment, and guiding children’s behavior in a positive manner.
**Teacher Aides**

Teacher aides assist with classroom operations, supporting the supervising and assistant teachers with instructional activities, administrative duties, and operational tasks.

Most teacher aides and assistant teachers are students on the Auraria Campus. Their schedules may vary from semester-to-semester.

**Auraria Supports Kids (ASK)**

The AELC welcomes the opportunity to work as partners with families and other community resources to develop services for each child with special needs. Reasonable accommodations will be made to meet the individual needs of all children with an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

For a child with developmental concerns or an IFSP/IEP, a meeting is required with the ASK Team before enrollment to determine if the AELC can meet the child’s needs.

**ASK TEAM**

The ASK team includes an early childhood family support consultant, an early childhood education consultant, and an occupation therapist consultant.

AELC’s goal is to support classroom teachers, parents, and children so all children can be successful in the classroom. AELC staff does not diagnose, label, or make any child feel singled out at any time. One-on-one therapy is not provided on a regular basis; however, staff will occasionally work with a small group of children or with a child on an individual basis. The ASK Team observes in all of the classrooms on a regular basis.

Typically, a request will be made from a teacher or parent to have a specific child observed. An ASK team specialist will make classroom recommendations, and if necessary, a family meeting will be planned. If the team feels that a child needs additional testing and/or services, a referral to the appropriate community resource may be required.

If the AELC administration and the ASK team determine that a child cannot safely and adequately be educated and cared for at the center, before or after enrollment, they will provide comprehensive information to the parents so alternative care can be arranged.
The AELC is not a therapeutic setting, and does not provide one-on-one supervision. When the safety and education of the child and/or children in the classroom is compromised, parents will be asked to find alternative care.

Registration & Enrollment

**Registration Packets**

Families will receive a registration packet after paying a child’s registration fee and filling out the pre-registration form. The registration fee will hold a child’s spot for a period of two weeks, during which the family will need to fully complete the registration process. All paperwork must be completed and turned in 48 hours prior to the desired start day. Failure to turn in the completed paperwork within the two-week registration period will result in forfeiture of the child’s spot.

**All Parents—Required Registration Forms**

1) Child Emergency Information and Agreement
2) Schedule Request Form
3) Statement of Authorization
4) Medical Statement (filled out by the child’s physician)
5) Immunization Record (filled out by the child’s physician)
6) USDA Income Eligibility Form (participation in the program and the form are both required)
7) Child’s Current Photo
8) Handbook Acknowledgement (last page of this handbook)
9) Medical Release Form
10) IEP and IFSP Plan, if applicable
11) Allergy Forms, if applicable
12) Getting to Know You Form

**Student Families—Additional Requirements**

1) Prior year tax information (determines qualification for category A, B, or C)
2) Current class schedule

**Staff and Faculty Families—Additional Requirements**

1) Prior year tax information (determines qualification for category A, B, or C)
2) Copy of your ID or other proof of employment with CCD, MSU Denver, CU Denver, or AHEC
**Up-To-Date Information**

Complete and accurate information is very important. Information concerning who is authorized to pick up a child is critical. Families must keep parent contact phone numbers, emergency numbers, and parent schedules current. Contact change forms are available at the AELC front desk. **Possible disenrollment can occur if the center is unable to reach a parent or emergency contact while a child is in the center’s care.**

All other registration information must be updated annually, and physicals are required at 12 months, 15 months, and 18 months for children under two years old.

The AELC is required to keep all information in a child’s file for three years. This information will be kept locked in storage.

**Enrollment Process**

The AELC operates on the Auraria Campus calendar. Current parents are required to enroll their children each semester. Then, enrollment is opened exclusively to Auraria Campus students. After the student enrollment period has passed, enrollment is opened to Auraria Campus faculty and staff. Enrollment is opened to the Denver community on a space-available basis.

**Student Classification**

To be classified as a student, one must be enrolled on the Auraria Campus at CCD, CU Denver, or MSU Denver for at least six credit hours every semester, including the summer semester. Students are required to submit class schedules one month before each semester begins, or the community tuition rate will apply.

**Staff Classification**

Proof of campus affiliation will be required every January in order to maintain discounted category rates. Staff will be required to show a current copy of their staff ID card or a verification letter on letterhead issued by their institution.

If a parent’s position is vacated at an institution, AELC requires immediate notification so necessary tuition adjustments can be made.
**Enrollment Dates**

The AELC will notify parents of semester sign-up dates in the newsletter and in monthly statements. Schedule and room changes can be requested during this time. The AELC will do its best to accommodate changes; however, children are only guaranteed their most current schedule.

**Transitions to the Next Age Group**

A child will be moved to the next age group based on space availability, individual readiness, classroom dynamics, and birth dates. Conferences will be held with the child’s teacher before transitions to prepare for moving to the next age group, school, or different center. Information about age groups is shared at the beginning of each school year during a back-to-school information session. An AELC specialist is available to help facilitate with all transitions. Please check with a teacher or an administrator for additional support and resources for transition assistance.

**siblings**

Siblings of children currently attending the AELC are given first priority for enrollment. When an additional child is enrolled, the currently enrolled child’s tuition will be reduced by 10 percent. Please see the assistant director if interested in enrolling a sibling.

**Student Families Only**

The AELC offers three optional sessions for student families: Winter Break, Summer Break, and Fall Break. These sessions occur between semesters, and families will need to sign up at the front desk. Families will be notified of the sign-up periods for each session in the AELC newsletter and in monthly statements. Families may sign up for all, part, or none of these sessions, and the family will be charged accordingly. Changes cannot be made to a child’s schedule once the sign-up period has ended.

Student families are encouraged to schedule vacations during these optional sessions. The AELC does not offer optional enrollment at any other point during the year, and the center does not issue vacation credit.

Page 13 of this handbook contains student classification requirements.
Staff, Faculty, and Community Families Only

The AELC offers **two optional sessions** for staff, faculty, and community families: **Fall Break and Summer Break**. These sessions occur between semesters and families will need to sign up at the front desk. Families may sign up for all, part, or none of these sessions, and the family will be charged accordingly. Changes cannot be made to a child’s schedule once the sign-up period has ended.

Staff, faculty, and community families are encouraged to schedule vacations during these optional sessions. The AELC does not offer optional enrollment for staff, faculty, and community families at any other point during the year, and the center does not issue vacation credit.

Schedules

Schedule Requirements

The AELC offers a choice between three pre-determined schedules.

Options

- 🕒 Monday, Wednesday, and Friday (full-day)
- 🕒 Tuesday and Thursday (full-day)
- 🕒 Monday through Friday (full-day)

Substitutions

Hours or days cannot be substituted or accumulated to be used later.

Schedule Changes

If a family needs to change a child’s schedule mid-semester, they must check with the Assistant Director to see if space is available. Changes will be made on a space-available basis only. It is not guaranteed that the center will be able to accommodate all schedule change requests. Retroactive schedule changes will not be accepted. A schedule change fee applies. Schedule changes cannot be made during breaks.

Priority Waitlist

There is a waitlist for only currently enrolled families that would like a different schedule. This is also for siblings not currently enrolled at the AELC.
Use of Drop-In Hours

“Drop-ins” are the addition of hours to a child’s regular schedule. They are billed at an hourly rate and are added to the next month’s bill. The schedule of fees listed on the website (www.ahec.edu/earlylearning) includes current rates. Arrangements can be made with the classroom teacher for the days and times of the child’s “drop-in” in advance. “Drop-ins” are allowed on a space-available basis.

Campus Holidays & In-Service Dates

The Auraria Early Learning Center is closed the following days:

- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve through New Year’s Day
- Three teacher in-service days per year (typically the day before each semester begins)

A fee will be included for all teacher in-service days. Please see current fee schedule. All families are charged the daily rate for holidays when the center is closed (except for the week between Christmas Eve and New Year’s Day), despite the child’s schedule for that semester.

Tuition, Fees, & Billing

Fee Schedule

The AELC current fee schedule can be found at www.ahec.edu/earlylearning. There are separate fees for summer camp that vary depending on field trips.

Faculty and staff are charged a bond fee each semester. Please see the assistant director with any questions.

All families are also charged an Annual Registration fee in August.

In-Service/Professional Development Days

School closures due to in-service/professional development days are valuable aspects of the AELC program. The center closes for three
scheduled in-service/professional development days annually. These usually fall on the business day before the beginning of each semester. Professional development builds the foundation for highly qualified and well-trained teaching personnel. All families are charged for in-service days. Please see the fee schedule on the AHEC website.

**Monthly Statements**

Tuition statements are posted on the first business day of each month. If a family would like to know the child’s tuition in advance of receiving the tuition bill, they may inquire at the front desk.

**Payment**

Cash, check, or credit card are accepted for payment at the front desk. Credit cards must be charged in person, not by phone.

Payment is due on the first business day of the month. It is considered late after the 10th of the month and a late fee will be charged. If payment is not received by the 15th, the child will be disenrolled from the center.

For children who start after the 10th of the month, payment is due their first day.

**Checks**

- The child’s name and room number must be included in the notes section.
- If a check is returned, a $20 returned check fee will be assessed (per State of Colorado fiscal rules). The family must immediately cover the amount of the check and the $20.
- After two returned checks, the AELC will accept payment by cash or credit card only.

**Credit Cards**

If a credit card is charged an incorrect amount or if both parents pay by mistake, a credit can be left on the account or a family may request a refund check from the accounting department (refund checks may take up to two weeks to process).
Unpaid Bills

Unpaid bills accrue interest at a rate of 18 percent per annum. Children of families with unpaid bills will be disenrolled from the center on the 15th of the month. If the AELC does not receive payment two weeks after the 15th of the month, the account will be turned over to Central Collections Services for the State of Colorado. The account will also be reported to TRW Credit Bureau as a “collection” account. If payment is still not forthcoming, the account may be subject to litigation, with the parent or guardian being responsible for payment of debt, plus any court costs, interests, and penalties associated with the account. Families sent to collections will not be allowed to re-enroll in the center.

Absence Credits

The AELC does not give absence credits. Families are required to pay for all registered days whether they use them or not.

Vacation Credits

The AELC does not give credits for vacation during any time of year.

Withdrawals

The AELC must receive written notification of a child’s withdrawal from the center. A Total Withdrawal Form is required at least two weeks before a child’s last day at the center; otherwise, the child’s account will be charged two weeks’ tuition. If a family fails to submit a Total Withdrawal Form, the account will be charged for all unused registered care. Once a kindergarten session starts, any family that withdraws their child from kindergarten will be charged tuition through the end of the semester.

Financial Assistance

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

CCAP is accepted from only Jefferson County and Denver County. Auraria Campus students registered for at least six credit hours per semester, including summer semester, are eligible to receive CCAP. The guidelines below must be followed:

- It is the parent’s responsibility to have their caseworker send all contract information to the AELC.
The AELC must receive a Certificate of Authorization from the County Department of Human Services before a child can attend the center.

It is the parent’s responsibility to use the ATS (Attendance Tracking System) every day their child attends the center.

As per the CCAP contract, if a child is absent more than three days in a month the family must contact their caseworker. The family will be charged for any times/days for which CCAP does not pay. All parental fees must be received by the 10th of each month or a late fee applies. Families must pay the parental fee assigned by their caseworker.

**Denver Preschool Program (DPP)**

Families who live in Denver County and have a preschooler four years of age in their last year before kindergarten may apply to receive funding toward tuition from the DPP. Information: [www.dpp.org](http://www.dpp.org).

**MSU Denver Grant Subsidy**

The MSU Denver Student Affairs Board offers a childcare subsidy program. Student parents enrolled for at least six credit hours at MSU Denver are eligible. Parents enrolled in online classes are not eligible.

The subsidy is generally 5–30 percent of reimbursed AELC tuition each semester. This amount may be adjusted if funds are not available for this level of subsidy.

**Meals/Snacks**

A full-service kitchen operates on the premises and provides breakfast, lunch, and an afternoon snack. All meals are homemade, nutritious, and served family style. Daily menus are posted on our website, in each classroom, and on the kitchen window.

**Allergies**

If a child has any food allergies or special needs, the teacher needs to be made aware of the situation upon enrollment. There is additional paperwork required for food allergies or preferences. **Families must provide the center with medication for use in the event of an allergic reaction.**
**Substitutions**

Outside food brought in by families is generally not allowed. Food substitutions may only be made if a child is unable to consume center-provided foods because of a disability, medical reason, or religious reason. Substitutions shall be made only when supported by a “special diet” statement from a recognized medical authority that includes recommended alternate foods. Parents will be required to provide the recommended food substitute.

**USDA Food Program—Mandatory Participation**

The AELC participates in the USDA Food Program, which enables the center to serve nutritious meals while keeping fees as low as possible.

Families are required to fill out an Income Eligibility Form regardless of income. This form is confidential, and is necessary so the center may receive reimbursement for the meals it serves. Administrators can answer any family questions about this form.

In the operation of food service programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, color, sex, age, disability, or national origin. If a family believes their child has been the subject of discrimination, they may write to the Secretary of Agriculture, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, D.C. 20250.

**Center Policies**

**Center Anti-Discrimination Policy**

The AELC shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status in any of its activities or operations.

**Center Hours**

The AELC is open Monday through Friday from 7 a.m. until 6 p.m. Under no circumstances is care provided before 7 a.m. or after 6 p.m.

The center closes at 6 p.m. If a parent fails to pick up their child by 6 p.m. and has not notified the Center that they are running late, we will make two attempts to call, text, and email each parent. If we are unable to contact a parent, we will then try to reach their emergency contacts. Families will be charged $2 per minute if their child is picked up after
6 p.m. This payment will be added to the next month’s bill and needs to be paid by the 10th. Families are required to call the center ahead of time in case of an emergency. Alternate arrangements should be made if a child will be picked up more than five minutes late. Late pickups can result in immediate disenrollment. Three late pickups will result in the disenrollment of a child. The center asks that families be respectful of their employees’ time, as they also have family obligations.

If a child has not been picked up by 7 p.m. and we are unable to contact a parent, guardian or emergency contact we will then notify the Auraria Campus Police Department (ACPD) for assistance. The ACPD will utilize their resources to try to locate a parent. If they are unable to locate or contact a parent directly they will notify Denver Human Services.

**Two-Week Trial Period**

All children will be enrolled on a trial basis for the first two weeks. At the end of this period (or anytime thereafter) if there are any concerns about whether or not the program can meet the needs of the child, his or her family will be asked to meet with the teacher, the ASK Team, and the classroom team leader. Staff will make every effort to ensure continued enrollment for a child who is having difficulties. Ultimately, however, the center has to take into consideration the best interests of the child, current staffing patterns, and all enrolled children. If the AELC is unable to meet the needs of a child, staff will attempt to help the family find a program that is more suitable for the child's needs.

**Center Expectations**

- Children must stay with their parents at all times during drop off and pickup.
- Walking and quiet voices are required in the hallways.
- Children are not allowed to run toys along the hallway walls or on the ledge in the building entryway.
- Parents must supervise their children when they are in their presence.
- Parents must watch children carefully in the parking circle; taking care to prevent children from walking in the street.
- Parking is not allowed on the inside of the parking circle.
Parents and teachers must make contact with each other during drop off and pickup daily.

Cell phones are not allowed in classrooms. All calls must be completed outside before entering classrooms.

The AELC respects a parent’s right to discipline in the fashion they feel is appropriate, but AELC policies must be followed in the center: no physical punishment, no shaming, and no restriction of food at mealtimes.

**Disruptive Behavior**

It is not unusual for a child who is having difficulty controlling his/her emotions to also be highly disruptive. When this occurs, teachers often spend considerable time with individual children, while others receive only minimal attention. If a child’s behavior management issues reach such a point, the parent will be called to pick up the child for the rest of the day (parents are normally forewarned that this may occur).

If children are not ready to accept the limits that are necessary to protect themselves and others, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) may be completed to determine the function of the challenging behavior. The assessment may include observations by an administrator and/or a member of the ASK Team, as well as developmental checklists and/or a functional behavior assessment. Once the function of the behavior has been determined, a Behavior Support Plan will be developed.

The ASK Team and an administrator will be consulted to provide the classroom with new strategies. A Family Support Consultant (FSC) who has a master’s degree in social work trains all staff on the Pyramid Plus approach (www.pyramidplus.org) and the LINC Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (www.relationshiproots.org). The FSC also facilitates friendship groups for specific children.

Chronic aggression against other children will not be tolerated. If a child is chronically aggressive, a family conference will be scheduled to discuss possible triggers for the aggression, and to develop techniques to eliminate the behavior. If a behavior problem continues after the implementation of several strategies, parents will need to obtain outside intervention. If outside intervention is refused, or does not result in a positive change in the child, the AELC may determine that its resources cannot support the child with being successful at the center. At that time, staff will help the family find other care.
**Disenrollment Policy**

The AELC reserves the right to cancel enrollment of a child for any of the following reasons:

- Tuition is more than two weeks late.
- A family does not observe the policies, procedures, financial agreement, or payment policies described in this handbook.
- Failure to provide or renew child’s medical statement and immunization record.
- Physical, verbal, or written abuse by a parent or guardian directed at AELC employees. (If a parent or guardian has a complaint about the AELC’s staff or administration, all parties must conduct themselves in a professional and respectful manner.)
- Behavior by a parent or guardian that is disruptive in the classroom.
- Outside intervention for a behavior problem is refused, or does not result in a positive change in a child.
- A child is a danger to himself/herself.
- A child is a danger to classmates.
- A child is a danger to teachers.
- A child is disruptive to the learning of others in the classroom.
- A child is requiring too much one-on-one attention.
- The AELC cannot meet the needs of a child with current staff and/or staffing patterns.
- The family has been late three times for pickup.

**Admission of Children with Special Needs**

The AELC complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA mandates that equal access be given to all children with disabilities in childcare programs, and that children with disabilities be fully integrated into regular activities. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines the legal rights of private school students to publicly funded special education services. Specifically, it states that a private institution student DOES NOT have the same legal rights to special education services as a special education student in public school. Childcare programs are required to make an assessment about whether it can meet the needs of the child without fundamentally changing the program. The AELC incorporates this mandate within its purpose, philosophy, and daily practice. The AELC staff works with families to include their child in programs and activities.
Reasonable accommodations are made for all children with documented disabilities. “Reasonable accommodations” is defined as the ability to provide services for a child without fundamentally changing the nature of a program. Enrollment is based on individual assessment of each child and the ability of AELC to meet the child’s specific needs. Reasonable accommodations will be also be made to meet the individual needs of all children with or without an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

For a child with developmental concerns or an IFSP/IEP, a meeting is required with the ASK Team before enrollment to determine if the AELC can meet the child’s needs.

**Classroom Closing Procedures**

The closing procedures list is available at the front desk. Each staff member assigned to close a classroom will make sure all children are picked up when the center closes. This will be verified by an administrator.

If a child is left past 7 p.m., and the child’s emergency contacts are unreachable, he or she will be taken to the Auraria Campus Police Department and reported as an abandoned child.

**Center Closings—Inclement Weather**

The center closes due to inclement weather only if the Auraria Campus officially closes. Families of the center will receive a text message or email alert about closures. Information will also be available on the AHEC website (www.ahec.edu), with local media outlets, and recorded on the campus information line (1-877-556-EMER (3637). Families will need to pick up children as soon as possible if the campus closes midday. The center does not make refunds for snow/weather-related closures.

**Disaster Emergency Evacuation Plan**

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation of the building, occupants of the AELC will meet at the Confluence Building and wait for direction from the Auraria Campus Police Department. Supervising teachers (or their delegates) will account for all children by taking role using the sign-in/sign-out sheets. **It is important that families sign-in/sign-out their child every day.**

The center uses emergency cards and/or the RAVE system to contact parents. These emergency contact numbers must be kept updated with the front desk to ensure families receive announcements.
Emergency and Security Procedures

Fire, tornado, and lockdown drills are performed on a monthly basis. Each classroom has a map posted by the door showing the proper exits and emergency destinations. There are two emergency buttons located at each end of the building. These buttons immediately alert Auraria Campus Police. Each classroom and playground has an emergency box that directly communicates with the Auraria Campus Police Department. The front desk is always staffed during hours of operation with someone who monitors the doors. The front doors are locked between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. The intercom outside the double doors will be used to communicate with people we do not recognize during this time. Front doors will be locked at anytime we deem necessary for center security.

Licensing Rules and Regulations

All licensing rules and regulations are followed by the center. A copy of the rules can be found at www.coloradoofficeofearlychildhood.com.

Parking

Parking areas in front of the AELC and along 9th Street are 20-minute loading zones only, meant for dropping off and picking up children. Parking is not permitted in the island directly in front of the AELC. Children are frequently in this area, so extra caution and slow speeds are required. Parents and children need to be mindful and careful when leaving vehicles. Families should be patient and courteous with other children and families who are parking and entering the building.

Primary Caregiving and Continuity of Care

Research supports primary teaching and continuity of care as a strong foundation for optimal development and learning. Primary caregiving assigns a child and family to one supervising teacher who gets acquainted with the child, the child’s family, family culture, temperament, cues, and personality to enable the teacher to be responsive to the child’s developmental needs. Primary caregiving, combined with continuity of care, create strong home-school partnerships, foster communication between teachers and families, help develop strong friendships, and pave the way for a responsive, child-centered curriculum. The AELC fosters these relationships by assigning children to one classroom with a supervising teacher for at least one year and longer, when feasible (contingent on enrollment date/age). When children move to a new classroom, parents and children are notified in advance.
Introductions to the new teacher are made, and a transition period takes place with frequent visits to the next room. Information regarding the transition is sent home, and a transition meeting is scheduled if deemed necessary.

When children transition to kindergarten, teachers prepare families with expectations during a conference. Children also participate in a variety of enrichment activities designed to prepare them for the kindergarten experience. A kindergarten open house is held for the children planning to attend kindergarten at the AELC.

**Transitions**

**Toddlers (One year old and walking independently until the day before the child’s 3rd birthday):** There are two toddler rooms for 1-year-olds and two toddler rooms for 2-year-olds. Children moving up from the toddler classroom to young preschool must be three and potty trained. This means that they are out of diapers completely, are able to pull their pants up and down, potty independently, and attempt to change themselves when they have accidents. While this is the main milestone, there are several other factors, including social-emotional readiness and the accomplishment of other developmental milestones. Once children turn three, they are required to move up to the next classroom, according to licensing regulations. Parents or guardians will receive a letter stating when the child is eligible to advance.

**Young Preschool (Three and potty trained to four or older, dependent on when the child's birthday falls):** This program is for children ages three and four. Children will remain in this program until they are selected to progress to older preschool. In order for a child to be eligible to progress, staff look at several factors, including social-emotional readiness and the accomplishment of other developmental milestones. Children will not progress to older preschool based only on reaching age four. Families will receive a letter stating when a child is eligible to advance.

**Older Preschool (The year before the child enters kindergarten; children must turn four by October 1st of the current school year):** The AELC’s older preschool program is the year prior to kindergarten. The older preschool program starts in August and runs through a full school year and summer semester.
Junior Kindergarten: This is a combined junior kindergarten/kindergarten class designed for children who miss the October 1st kindergarten age cut-off, but are ready for a kindergarten experience. In order for a child to be eligible to move to junior kindergarten, the AELC looks at several factors, including social-emotional readiness and the accomplishment of other developmental milestones. Parents or guardians will receive a letter if the child is eligible to advance.

Kindergarten: A child must turn five before the October 1st cut-off date in order to attend the AELC kindergarten program.

In an effort to keep continuity and structure children will not be able to move laterally, to another classroom of the same age, children will remain in the classroom assigned until you are notified by the assistant director that they will be moving to the next age group.

Release of Children

The center will release children only to adult(s) who have written authorization. In an emergency, the child may also be released to an adult for whom the child's parent or guardian has given verbal authorization. If a staff member who releases the child does not know the adult, identification is required.

Auraria Early Learning Center respects the rights of parents to access their child. However, if AELC staff feels a parent is in an unsafe condition to drive or leave with their child (such as under the influence of drugs or alcohol), the AELC staff may suggest that the parent call the other parent, a friend or relative, or a cab. Your child’s safety is of the utmost importance to us, so if you refuse assistance the AELC staff may also call campus police for assistance or to report the incident.

Unauthorized individuals will not be allowed to pick up a child. If an attempt is made, the individual will be asked to leave the premises. If the individual refuses, the police will be called. The custodial parent will also be notified.

Divorced/Separated/Guardians

Until custody has been established by a court action, one parent may not limit the other from picking the child up from the Early Learning Center. It is not within the AELC's legal right to withhold a child from a parent unless there has been court action that limits one parent's right to the child. The AELC requests that a complete copy of the judge's order establishing custody is on file to prevent a non-custodial parent from accessing the child.
Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

At all times, the safety and well-being of the children at the AELC is paramount. Communication is very important. Parents will be kept informed as the situation allows.

It is required by law that any and all incidences of suspected child abuse and/or neglect of a child be reported to the Colorado Department of Human Services for investigation. It is the responsibility of the Department of Human Services/Police to determine what abuse/neglect (if any) has occurred in such a case. These laws apply to both staff and parents, and any staff member under investigation for suspected child abuse or neglect will immediately be put on leave.

Examples of incidents the AELC is required to report include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Marks or bruises on a child that are unexplained or seem unlikely to have occurred as a result of the explanation given
- Marks or bruises on a child caused by disciplining a child
- Reports by the child of abusive/neglectful treatment, or observations by staff members of harsh, abusive, or neglectful treatment of a child
- Failure of the parent to obtain appropriate medical care for a child
- Observations by staff of inappropriate sexual behavior by a child
- Observations by staff of possible neglect of appropriate hygiene and/or provision of appropriate clothing, food, and shelter

Child Abuse Hotline: 720-944-3000

To make a complaint: 303-866-5958

Visitors/Volunteers

Students, early childhood professionals, family members, and others may visit the AELC. A log of visitors/volunteers is kept at the front desk. No visitors/volunteers are admitted without an approved purpose.

All volunteers are required to complete the same staff licensing requirements as permanent staff members.
**Denver Public Library Read Aloud Program**

Volunteers from the Denver Public Library (DPL) visit the AELC classrooms to read books to the children and promote use of the public library system. The College Living Experience, a program that has been providing post-secondary support to students with autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, ADHD, and other varying exceptionalities, partners with the DPL for the Read Aloud Program.

**Colorado Center for the Blind**

In the summer, two interns from Colorado Center for the Blind work for the Early Learning Center to gain experience and confidence in the workforce.

**Foster Grandparent Program**

The Volunteers of America Foster Grandparent Program is a fun, cross-generational program where seniors volunteer at the AELC to help care for the children. The program offers seniors the opportunity to use their experience to improve the lives of children. Because many children do not live close to their biological grandparents, foster grandparents serve as a proxy for the traditional child-grandparent relationship, benefiting all involved.

**Auraria Campus Student Use of the Center**

The AELC welcomes students on the Auraria Campus to utilize the AELC for course-required observation, research, documentation, and activities. Students in early childhood education courses will complete their lab/field experiences at the AELC. All Auraria Campus students will be supervised by the classroom teacher or an administrator.

**Classroom Policies**

**Identifying Children’s Whereabouts**

The AELC uses sign-in/sign-out sheets at all times to identify the location of children in the center and classrooms. **It is extremely important that families use the classroom sign-in/sign-out sheets.** Full names are required for signatures. These sheets affect children’s safety, emergency situations, attendance records, and reimbursement for the food program. Sign-in/sign-out sheets will be with the class at all times. **Families that continually neglect to sign children in or out are subject to disenrollment.**
**Birthdays**
In-class birthday celebrations are encouraged. Please give the child’s supervising teacher a few days notice for a birthday celebration. The teacher will inform parents about the number of children attending and the best time to visit the class for a celebration. If parents plan on bringing treats, they should check with the classroom teacher regarding allergies. Food with peanuts must be avoided. Homemade food is not allowed due to Human Services regulations.

**Blankets and Cuddlies**
Children may bring a special blanket or cuddly from home if it fits in the nap box.

**Clothing**
Children should be dressed in sturdy, comfortable clothing that is suitable for play. It is best if the clothing is child manageable. Please mark all clothing with the child’s name using a permanent marker. Although teachers work hard to keep track of children’s clothing, sometimes items are misplaced. The AELC will not be responsible for misplaced items.

Children spend time outdoors each day and should have appropriate outdoor wear. It’s important to understand the normal wear and tear that occurs to kids’ clothes in an activity-based program. Children may return home with sand, dirt, and occasionally paint on their clothes. The AELC is not responsible for replacing or reimbursing the cost of any ruined clothing. Smocks are used, but active children sometimes get dirty!

**Outdoor Play/Extreme Weather**
All children in care for more than five hours at the AELC must be provided with at least 60 minutes of daily gross motor activities. This will take place outdoors when the weather permits. When the weather is above 20 degrees and below 90 degrees, children will go outside, unless the weather is determined to be too inclement. Therefore, it is important that all children dress appropriately for the predicted weather each day. If children are too ill to participate in outdoor play, they are considered too ill to come to school. The AELC requires sunscreen unless a doctor’s note is provided. ALEC staff apply sunscreen before each period of outdoor play.

*The AELC monitors air quality throughout the day. If there is poor air quality children will remain inside until air quality improves.*
**Children’s Belongings**

Children’s personal belongings, including extra clothes, coats, shoes, etc. are kept in cubbies. Parents must check their child’s cubby each day and take home any clothes that need to be washed. All children must have a change of clothes at the center that includes a shirt, pants, underwear, and socks. No choking hazards, “keep out of reach items,” back packs with straps, plastic bags, money, medicine, or valuables should be left in cubbies.

**Remember that all items that are brought to school must fit in a small cubby.** This is a requirement to meet Health Department regulations.

**Discipline and Guidance**

The AELC uses several guidance techniques to help children internalize rules and become self-directed in their behavior. These include the following:

- Giving choices
- Problem solving
- Natural and logical consequences
- Ignoring
- Redirecting
- “Cooling off” periods

Parents may not spank their children in the center. AELC staff work with children to help them find alternatives to responding physically in stressful situations, and strive to make the center an environment where hitting is not acceptable. It would be confusing to the children to see that there are exceptions to the rules in school. The staff will not impose restrictions on a child’s behavior that are inconsistent with AELC rules.

Additional information on discipline is available from classroom teachers.

**Positive Guidance**

Positive guidance at the AELC includes:

- Cultivating positive child, staff, and family relationships
- Creating and maintaining a socially and emotionally respectful early learning and care environment
- Implementing teaching strategies supporting positive behavior, pro-social peer interaction, and overall social and emotional competence in young children
Providing individualized social and emotional intervention support
Providing access to an early childhood mental health consultant or other specialists

The AELC maintains the above ideals in the following ways:
Staff keep children actively engaged in order to decrease the frequency of behavior problems in the classroom. Transition activities help children move smoothly from one activity to another. Teachers use only positive guidance and redirection. Setting consistent, clear, understandable limits fostering the child’s ability to become self-disciplined is the ultimate goal. Staff try to ignore negative behavior as much as possible (since much of it is an effort for attention) and reinforce appropriate behavior.

Tactics for positive guidance include the following:
- Preparing the environment to avoid unnecessary conflicts for children
- Creating psychological safety through predictable routines, expectations, and schedules
- Helping children to know and understand the classroom rules
- Giving children positive verbal redirection, if necessary
- Helping children express their wants, needs, and feelings
- Helping children to understand the wants, needs, and feelings of others
- Supporting children in learning to resolve conflicts with others and giving opportunities for children to solve problems
- Protecting the safety of others by removing a child from a group, if necessary
- Keeping parents informed of their child’s behavior, and collaborating on strategies with parents

AELC staff are careful to model peaceful conflict resolution with each other and to teach children negotiating skills, when appropriate. The staff’s role is to help children modulate their extreme emotions and learn alternative ways of expressing emotion without harming others. This process takes time, and looks slightly different among age groups.

Field Trips and Transportation of Children
AELC staff often take children on walks around the Auraria Campus. Parents will be informed of any off-campus field trips. If a family arrives after the child’s class has left the center for a field trip, the child will join another class until his or her group returns. Parents are invited to participate in outings.
The AELC does not use vans or parent vehicles as means of transportation; only public transportation methods are used. In the event of an accident, emergency health care procedures will be followed.

**Naps**

All children enrolled during the early afternoon hours will have a nap or rest period. The length of the rest time is dependent on the age and needs of a child.

**Parent Donations**

The AELC welcomes donations of almost any kind! The child’s classroom teacher can provide parents with a list of needed materials.

**Toddler Requirements**

Toddlers are required to walk without assistance.

Parents must supply children’s disposable diapers. Cloth diapers are not allowed unless an allergy exists, and a doctor’s note will be required. If a child runs out of diapers, there will be a reminder when the parent picks up the child. Parents are expected to bring diapers the next day. Parents who continually forget diapers will be asked to bring diapers to the center immediately, or will be expected to pick up the child.

If a child is in the process of toilet training, enough changes of underwear and clothing will need to be available in the cubby. A washable bag for soiled clothes is also required. The AELC approach to toilet learning includes positive reinforcement and encouragement. Children are not pushed or shamed into using the toilet. Most children no longer require diapers and are using the toilet regularly by the age of two and a half to three years old.

To move up to young preschool, toddlers must be working on potty training and not in diapers or pull-ups. Children must independently recognize when they need to use the restroom and be able to dress themselves. Toddlers are required to move up when they turn three years old.

**Kindergarten Requirements**

Children must be five years old by October 1st to register for the AELC kindergarten program. Children must be signed up to attend five days a week in the morning. Full-day care is available. Registration for the next year starts in February. A non-refundable deposit is required. The assistant director can provide further information regarding enrollment.
Absences
If a child is going to be absent, parents must call the AELC front desk. If the absence is due to illness, parents should tell the AELC staff about the child’s symptoms and if the illness is contagious. Absence credit is not given.

Supervision of Children
Children are under the direct supervision of AELC staff at all times. Parents must sign their child in and make sure that the teacher is aware of arrival to the classroom. When parents pick up their child, they must sign the child out and be sure the teacher is aware that the child is leaving for the day. Parents are responsible for supervising their child in the center after the child has been signed out of the classroom. It is extremely important that parents are careful about accompanying children out of the center and into the car, bus, etc.

Television and Video Viewing
The AELC program does not include regular television viewing. Occasionally, a program or video specifically designed for the interest and benefit of children may be shown. Movies will not be shown at the center due to copyright laws.

Toys, Candy, Money, or Food From Home
Parents need to check with a child’s supervising teacher before bringing toys to school. Sharing personal toys is difficult for young children. The AELC is not responsible if a toy is lost or broken.

Children are prohibited from bringing candy, money, and food from home. Exceptions may be made when a child has special dietary requirements with parents providing all meals, or when a parent provides birthday or holiday treats for a group.

Cellphone Policy
In the interest of increasing teacher and parent communication we ask families to refrain from using your cellphone at drop off and pick up time.
Health & Safety

Illness

If a child develops signs of illness during the school day, AELC staff will contact the family immediately. If they are unable to reach a parent, they will notify the emergency contact. Sick children must be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Children need to remain out of the center until they recover from their symptoms. Children must be able to participate in all aspects of the program, and teachers will use their discretion to determine if a child is well enough to be at the center. AELC policies overrule a physician’s recommendations. Children may not return to school until they have been symptom free (without medication) for 24 hours.

Illness Policy

It is the family’s responsibility to notify the center that their child has a communicable disease, such as measles; mumps; meningitis; T.B.; hepatitis; lice; ring worm; chicken pox; salmonella; hand, foot and mouth disease; etc. Children may be readmitted without a statement from a health practitioner only if the they have been absent for a period of time equal to the longest incubation period of the disease as specified by the Children’s Hospital School Health Program guidelines.

Deciding whether to keep a child at home or whether AELC staff should send a child home can be difficult. It is important for parents and caregivers to discuss what symptoms they have observed and agree on a plan of action based on consensus about what symptoms require that children stay home.

There are three reasons to keep a child home due to illness:

- The child does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in usual activities.
- The child requires more care than the staff is able to provide without affecting the health and safety of the other children.
- The illness is on the following chart of symptoms, for which exclusion is recommended.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOM</th>
<th>CHILD MUST STAY HOME?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DIARRHEA:</strong> frequent, loose or watery stools compared to child’s normal pattern; not caused by diet or medication</td>
<td><strong>YES –</strong> if child looks or acts ill; if child has diarrhea with fever and behavior change; if child has diarrhea with vomiting; if child has diarrhea that is not contained in the diaper or toilet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEVER</strong> with behavior changes or illness</td>
<td><strong>YES –</strong> when fever is accompanied by behavior changes or other symptoms of illness such as rash, sore throat, vomiting, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FLU SYMPTOMS:</strong> fever over 100 degrees with a cough or sore throat. Other flu symptoms can include fatigue, body aches, vomiting, and diarrhea.</td>
<td><strong>YES –</strong> for at least 24 hours after there is no longer a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **COUGHING:** severe, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, rapid or difficulty breathing  
*Note: children with asthma may be cared for in school with a written health care plan and authorization for medication/treatment* | **YES –** medical treatment is necessary |
| **MILD RESPIRATORY OR COLD SYMPTOMS** such as stuffy nose, clear drainage, sneezing, mild cough | **NO –** may attend if able to participate in activities |
| **RASH WITH FEVER**  
*Note: Body rash without fever or behavior changes usually does not require exclusion from school; seek medical advice* | **YES –** seek medical advice. Any rash that spreads quickly, has open sores, and is not healing should be evaluated. |
| **FEVER** with behavior changes or illness | **YES –** when fever is accompanied by behavior changes or other symptoms of illness such as rash, sore throat, vomiting, listlessness, diarrhea, etc. |
| **VOMITING** (two or more episodes in 24 hours) | **YES –** until vomiting resolves or a health care practitioner decides it is not contagious. Observe for other signs of illness and for dehydration. |
| **CHICKEN POX** | **YES –** until blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days). If blister occurs after vaccination, refer to Health Dept. Guidelines. |
| **CONJUNCTIVITIS (Pink Eye):** pink color of eye and thick yellow/green discharge | **YES –** until 24 hours after treatment. If your health provider decides not to treat your child, a note is required to return to care. |
| **CROUP (see coughing)**  
*Note: May not need to be excluded unless child is not well enough to participate in usual activities* | Seek medical advice. |
<p>| <strong>FIFTH’S DISEASE</strong> | <strong>NO –</strong> child is no longer contagious once rash appears |
| <strong>HAND, FOOT, &amp; MOUTH DISEASE</strong> (Coxsackie virus) | <strong>NO –</strong> may attend if able to participate in usual activities, unless child has mouth sores and is drooling |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMPTOM</th>
<th>CHILD MUST STAY HOME?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HEAD LICE OR SCABIES</td>
<td>YES – may return after treatment starts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEPATITIS A</td>
<td>YES – until two weeks after onset of illness or jaundice and when able to participate in usual activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HERPES</td>
<td>YES – if area is oozing and cannot be covered, such as mouth sores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPETIGO</td>
<td>YES – for 24 hours after treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RINGWORM</td>
<td>May return after treatment starts. Keep area covered for the first 48 hours of treatment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROSEOLA</td>
<td>YES – seek medical advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: A child with rash and no fever may return to school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSV (Respiratory Syncytial Virus)</td>
<td>YES – seek medical advice. Once a child has been infected, spread of illness is rapid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note: Children do not always need to be excluded unless they are not well enough to participate in usual activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STREP THROAT</td>
<td>YES – for 24 hours after treatment and until the child is able to participate in usual activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VACCINE PREVENTABLE DISEASES</td>
<td>YES – until determined not infectious by health care provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measles, Mumps, Rubella (German Measles), Pertussis (Whooping Cough)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YEAST INFECTIONS</td>
<td>YES – may attend if able to participate in activities. Follow good hand washing and hygiene practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including thrush or candida diaper rash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This information is based upon the guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Childcare, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Communicable Disease Epidemiology Program, and Center for Disease Control.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Non-immunized children are admitted to the AELC.

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment does require reporting of certain illnesses. This is done by an administrator as soon as a parent notifies the center when a doctor has verified the diagnosis.
Medical Insurance
The AELC strongly encourages all families to maintain medical insurance and a physician for their child. The front desk can offer recommendations on how to obtain insurance or locate a local physician.

Health Check
Upon daily arrival, children will be observed for signs of illness or other evidence of being contagious. Any child with the following symptoms will not be admitted:

- A temperature over 100 degrees
- Discharge from ears
- Discharge from eyes or red eyes
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Any rash or skin lesion
- Signs of cold, tiredness, sore throat, runny nose, sneezes, or coughing

Contagious Diseases
Parents are required to notify the center if their child has contracted a contagious illness. The AELC is required to post notices of all contagious diseases on the classroom door. Children may not return to school until they have been symptom free for 24 hours.

Accidents/Injuries
An accident report will be filled out and given to parents during pick-up for all accidents or injuries that occur at the AELC. Parents will be called immediately if an accident or injury is severe. Emergency procedures will be implemented, if needed.

Emergency Procedures
Parents will be contacted immediately in the event of an emergency.

Families should keep emergency numbers up-to-date. In case of a serious emergency, 911 will be called and the paramedics will decide where to transport a child. The costs of emergency medical services are the family’s responsibility.

All supervising and assisting teachers are required to be certified in CPR and First Aid.
**Allergies**

Children with various allergies attend the AELC. It is extremely important that all staff members are aware of the allergies of any child under their care. A list of all children who have allergies, along with photos of those children, will be posted in the eating area.

A child's allergies should be provided on the enrollment paperwork. If the allergy involves a substance that the child could come into contact with at the AELC, parents must fill out a Severe Allergy Information Form. The Severe Allergy Information Form outlines the procedures for a child who has an allergic reaction at the center.

**Cloth Diapers**

If children need cloth diapers for a medical reason, the diaper needs to have an absorbent inner lining completely contained within an outer covering made of waterproof material that prevents the escape of feces and urine. Both the diaper and the outer covering should be able to be changed as a unit. Cloth diapers and clothing that are soiled by urine or feces are immediately placed in a plastic bag (without rinsing and avoidable handling) and sent home the same day for laundering.

**Handwashing**

Handwashing is the best way to prevent the spread of disease. Children and adults must wash their hands in these scenarios:

- Upon entering the classroom
- After using the toilet or diapering
- After blowing their noses or having contact with any bodily fluids
- Before and after meals and snacks
- Before preparing food, serving food, or eating
- After outside time
- After handling pets
- When hands are noticeably soiled

**Health and Immunization Requirements**

The AELC maintains updated health information for every child enrolled at the center. Colorado childcare regulations require that a health care form and immunization record, signed by a licensed doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant, must be submitted at the time of admission to the center.
Updated health care and immunization forms must be submitted according to the guidelines. For toddlers and preschoolers, updates are required at 12 months, 15 months, 18 months and 2 years, and then annually thereafter.

*Failure to provide updated health and immunization information will result in suspension and possible disenrollment until the forms are submitted.*

**Immunizations**

The AELC enrolls children who are not immunized due to personal, medical, or religious beliefs. Any child not immunized per Colorado law faces exclusion from the AELC in the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease.

**Medication**

Due to regulations by the Colorado Department of Human Services, AELC staff are unable to administer any medications, except in the event of an emergency. However, parents may give children any needed medication at the center. Parents should NEVER leave medications in children’s bags or in the classroom.

In the case of life threatening allergies or medical conditions, emergency medication will be given by an administrator or supervising teacher. These medications should be given to the supervising teacher to be kept in a locked cabinet.

Additional paperwork will be required for allergies or medical conditions that require emergency medication. This paperwork is due before enrolling. Individualized Health Care Plans must be updated annually or as changes occur. Medication that has expired must be collected and a new set of medication that matches the Emergency Medication Plan must be provided. If the AELC does not have proper medication and documentation, the child will not be permitted to stay.

**Missing/Lost Children**

Staff members will notify the administrator in charge immediately when they suspect that a child is missing. Staff will look for the child for five minutes. If the child is not located, 911 will be called. After the police have been notified, the parents will be notified.
**Preschool Toileting Policy**

Requirements for children to be independently potty trained in AELC classrooms:

- Has two or less accidents per week
- Initiates using the toilet with little or no reminders
- Can pull own clothes up and down
- Can change themselves when they have an accident, including socks and shoes
- Stays dry at naptime
- Has the ability to reach around and wipe themselves after a BM

While it’s understood that children may have occasional accidents, there is a possibility of disenrollment if a child is not independently potty trained.

*Please note that children enrolled in the young preschool program who are not yet three years of age still need to meet the above requirements.*

**Preventing Sexual Abuse**

The AELC is proactive in preventing sexual abuse of children. Training workshops for parents and staff are provided.

**Staff Screening Process**

The AELC does an extensive screening for new employees:

- The application has a self-disclosure statement.
- The employment interview includes questions recommended by Feather Berkower of “Parenting Safe Children” (a sexual abuse workshop offered regularly to parents and staff).
- References are called and verified.
- A pre-employment background check is completed by AHEC.
- Central Registry checks if the applicant has ever been investigated for any crime against children.
- Fingerprint are submitted to the Colorado Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to check if the applicant has committed any crimes in Colorado or any other state.
- The AELC receives ongoing updates from all of the above agencies during a person’s employment in case any new crimes are committed.
**Children’s Bodies**

The AELC staff uses the anatomically correct names for children’s body parts. Children are in charge of their own bodies. They will be asked if it’s OK before affection is given. Appropriate discussions regarding children’s bodies are part of the curriculum.

**The AELC’s Body Safety Rules**

The curriculum regarding keeping one’s body safe is implemented in age-appropriate ways using books, puppets, and hands-on activities. Below are the “Body Safety Rules” for the AELC:

1) No one is allowed to touch your private body parts (including siblings), except to help you clean them or to examine them in a medical office.
2) You are not allowed to touch someone else’s private body parts.
3) It is okay to touch your own private body parts as long as you do it in private.
4) No one (adult or teenager) is allowed to take pictures of your private parts or show you pictures of naked people.
5) Play with your clothes on when playing with friends.
6) You and all your family members are allowed to have privacy when bathing, dressing, and using the toilet.
7) You are allowed to choose who you kiss and touch, and when you kiss and touch people.
8) You have permission to say NO and get away if anyone tries to touch your private body parts or breaks any of your body safety rules.
9) If someone tries to or does touch your private body parts, try to get away and go tell an adult.
10) If someone tells you to keep a secret about touching private body parts, tell a trusted adult. Children will be taught that we do not keep secrets.

**Parental Involvement**

It benefits children when parents and staff communicate regularly. By working together, AELC staff and families can effectively respond to the individual needs of a child. Parents are welcome to observe and participate in classroom activities. Teachers send weekly e-mails to keep parents up-to-date. The AELC also has a Facebook page with pictures and posts about daily activities.
**Auraria Parent Teacher Group (APTG)**

The AELC encourages all parents and staff to participate in the APTG. This group keeps parents and staff informed about the center, plans fundraising and special events, and advises on AELC program changes or enhancements. Parents are also invited to participate on the APTG Board. Please see the AELC program coordinator if you are interested in serving on the board.

**Back-to-School Night**

Back-to-School Night is held at the beginning of the fall semester. It includes activities to help parents become familiar with AELC staff, curriculum, and daily routines. Teachers also address parent questions or concerns. Back-to-School Night is also a great opportunity to get to know other families at the AELC.

**Conferences**

Although teachers are available to talk with parents informally, time is set aside each semester for formal parent/teacher conferences. Teachers will update parents on the child’s progress and development in school.

Additional conference times may also be arranged at a family’s convenience. Conferences may be mandatory if deemed necessary by the supervising teacher, administrators, or ASK team.

**Family Nights**

The AELC makes it a goal to host family nights at least once each semester. Parents, children, and staff have the opportunity to enjoy musicals, plays, and performances during family nights.

**Parent Education**

The AELC designs workshops to meet families’ interests. Topics are presented by a specialist, and may include child development, discipline, communication, sibling rivalry, etc.
**Parent Resources**
The AELC has many resources available for parents, including but not limited to, the following:

- Auraria Specials for Kids (ASK) Team—available to help parents connect with community resources. Please see the early childhood family support consultant for more information or to schedule a meeting.
- Take-home packets—available for checkout at the front desk
- Parent library—materials available for checkout
- Parent boards—located in the classroom and in the main lobby
- Parent articles—available at the resource area by the front desk and in classrooms
- Calendar of events posted at the front desk
- AELC Facebook page
- Community resource book

**Program Evaluations**
The AELC welcomes input, ideas, questions, or concerns at all times. The AELC asks families to evaluate how well the program has met their needs twice a year through a parent survey. AELC staff are interested in hearing families’ perspectives on the effectiveness of the program for both children and parents. The results of the parent survey are shared at the APTG meetings and are used to set center goals.

**Quality Improvement Plan**
The AELC is compiling feedback from family surveys, informal conversations, Colorado Shines Ratings, and staff meetings to create, and then annually update, the Quality Improvement Plan for the center.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received and will abide by the policies in the Family Handbook.

____________________________________________
PARENT SIGNATURE

____________________________________________
PRINT NAME

____________________________________________
CHILD/CHILDREN’S NAME(S)

____________________________________________
DATE

The Auraria Early Learning Center Family Handbook provides a general overview of the center’s policies and procedures. The AELC and its families must comply with health, licensing, accreditation, and other external agencies’ rules and regulations that may not be included in the handbook. Administrative staff can provide more extensive information regarding these rules, policies, procedures, etc. At times, or in particular circumstances, it may be necessary to revise and/or add certain policies and/or procedures to the handbook. Families will be notified of any changes.

REVISED 06/2019