



# Family Handbook

Created October 2010

Revised June 2013

## Our Mission Statement

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry seeks to serve as an extension of the Church in ministry and outreach to the community by providing exceptional quality childcare and education in a caring, loving, and nurturing environment; working in partnership with families and the Church.

## Our Vision

Our Vision is to be the leader in childcare, education and ministry within our community, where all children, families, and team members reach their fullest potential in a safe and nurturing environment.

## Our Philosophy of Child Care

We believe that quality child care is based on a partnership established between families and the child care program that they choose. All of our interactions are based on the idea of open communication between families and the staff at our program. Our goal is to partner with families to encourage growth and development in their child/ren. All of our principles, policies and interactions seek to strengthen and uphold this partnership.

## Our Philosophy of Education

Our program is geared towards experiential based learning. We believe that children are learning throughout the entire day, not just during designated “learning” or “circle” times. Children are forming knowledge and ideas when the teachers interact with students and families, in the way the day and activities are sequenced out, and how the learning spaces are planned.

Our rooms strive to provide learning “centers” that break down learning into individual domains such as math, science, art, writing, construction, dramatic play, literacy and music. With that said, we also are of the belief that learning happens at all times, during all activities and across all domains. When children sing “5 Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed”, they are not only learning music skills, but are also learning math, social and fine motor skills. Teachers support children’s learning by modeling, guiding, scaffolding, observing, and assessing children’s activities and play.

Because we believe that learning happens at all times, we prefer not to use the term “play” to refer to children’s activities. Instead we choose to use the terms “explore,” “experience,” “investigate,” “manipulate” and “discover.” We feel this conveys the deep respect we have for children as their activities lead them on the path of discovery and learning. In the same vein, we prefer not to label “toys” as such, instead choosing to refer to them by their individual names (such as “Dinosaurs,” “Wooden blocks,” or “Food Items”) or the terms “manipulatives” or “materials.”

## NHLTCM Core Values

Our Core Values are based upon Matthew 22 v. 37 which says, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.” All of our essential elements, goals and desires correspond to this ideal to form the NHLTCM Core Values, in the following way:

### Love the Lord Your God with all your...

- **Heart (Relate)**
  - Accountability
  - Teamwork and Team Spirit
  - Diverse Experiences and Perspectives
  - Honesty, Integrity and Kindness
  - Ministry to Children, Families and Community
  - Open and Honest Communication
  
- **Soul (Mind-set)**
  - Pursuing Growth and Learning
  - Earth Consciousness
  - Embracing Change / Adaptability
  - Innovation / Envisioning New and Creative Solutions
  - Being Adventurous, Creative and Open-minded
  - Being Open to New Vision
  
- **Mind (Teach)**
  - Learning Through Play
  - Learning Through Nature
  - Spiritual Education
  - School Preparation
  - Healthy Habits
  
- **Strength (Work)**
  - Continuous Improvement
  - Pursuing Excellence
  - Consistently Meeting or Exceeding Expectations
  - Enthusiastic in Work
  - Maintaining High Levels of Safety and Cleanliness
  - Being the Best We Can Be with What Resources We Have
  - A Fun Place to Work

# Contents

Enrollment .....	6
Hours/Days of Operation.....	6
Registration and Enrollment.....	6
Fees and Billing .....	7
Returned Checks.....	8
Accommodations for Children with Special Needs.....	8
Arrival and Departure.....	9
Withdrawal Policy.....	10
Non-Discrimination Policy .....	10
Health and Safety .....	10
General Health .....	10
Illness Policy .....	11
Minor Accident/Incident Policy .....	12
Medication Policy .....	12
Safe Sleeping Policy .....	13
Emergency Preparedness Plans.....	13
Class Sizes and Ratios .....	16
Food Services.....	16
Nap/Rest Periods.....	16
Tooth Brushing Policy.....	17
Behavior Guidance Policy .....	17
Court Orders.....	19
Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention .....	19
Controlled Substances Policy.....	20
Daily Practices .....	20
Early Learning and Curriculum.....	20
Developmental Tracking Program .....	21
Staff Qualifications .....	21
Primary Caregiving .....	21
Teacher Communication .....	22
Visitor/Volunteer Policies.....	22
Age groups and Transitioning.....	22
Daily Schedule .....	23
Indoor and Outdoor Exploration .....	23
Television Policy .....	23
Field Trips and Enrichment Activities .....	23
Dress Policy .....	24
Supplies Policy.....	24
Diapering and Toilet Training .....	25
Birthdays and Holidays .....	25
Open Door Policy.....	25
Absence/Illness of a Teacher.....	25
Confidentiality Commitment .....	26
Babysitting.....	26
Family Responsibilities .....	26
Family Concerns .....	27

# Enrollment

## Hours/Days of Operation

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry (NHLTCM) is open 6:30 – 6:00, Monday thru Friday, all twelve months of the year.

We are closed for all major holidays. In the event of a holiday closing we will issue a reminder no later than one week ahead of time. The following are the holidays we observe by closing:

- New Year's Eve and New Year's Day\*
- Good Friday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day\*
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving and the Friday after
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day\*

\*If Christmas Day, New Year's Day, or Independence Day falls on a Saturday or Sunday, we will observe the same day off for that holiday that the state and federal employees observe – usually observed on Monday (if the holiday falls on Sunday) or Friday (if the holiday falls on Saturday). Example: If July 4th is on Sunday, we will be closed on Monday. If it falls on Saturday we will close on Friday. If Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fall on Saturday and Sunday, we will be closed on Monday. If Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fall on Friday and Saturday or Sunday and Monday, we will close on those days.

Because of the nature of child to staff ratios and fluctuations in the childcare market, full payment of your agreed upon tuition is due each week, regardless of holidays, sickness or your child's attendance. This ensures that we are able to pay our teachers for their availability in caring for your child.

Information regarding emergency closings of the program can be found in the section marked Health and Safety: Emergency Response Plans.

## Registration and Enrollment

A tour of the facility and program is recommended prior to enrollment to familiarize your family with the program and ease your child into the transition of changing child care settings.

Once your family decides to enroll into our program, an enrollment meeting will be set up with the director during which we will review the parent handbook and sign all the necessary forms for enrollment.

A one-time registration fee of \$ 35 (per family) is required before your child/ren's spot is held. Any spot being held for longer than a period of one month may be subject to additional holding fees based on current enrollment and demand. Also, a twice-yearly supply fee of \$30 is required for toddlers and older. This fee may be prorated based upon your time of enrollment, but it may not be refunded. A new registration fee will be issued if a child's enrollment is withdrawn and then is re-enrolled again.

All families must request at least one keycard per family at enrollment, with the option to request more at any time. A separate keycard policy agreement must be signed with your enrollment packet. Each keycard requires a \$5 deposit, with reimbursement upon unenrollment from the program as long as your account is in good standing.

We ask that families provide a two week written notice before your child is withdrawn from our program. If less than a two week notice is given, you will be billed for the two weeks following your notice. If we do not receive a written notice, you will be billed for the two weeks after your child stops attending. If your child would like to re-enroll in the program, all past fees and tuition must be paid in full before re-admittance to the program.

### **Fees and Billing**

Tuition and fees are based on your child's age and your child's scheduled number of days in attendance each week. Upon enrollment, a Tuition Agreement will be signed, according to your needs. If your needs ever change, a new Tuition Agreement must be completed, signed and agreed upon.

Payment for each week is due in advance, the Friday *before* the week in attendance. Your contracted tuition is due regardless of any unplanned absences. If your child is not usually in attendance on Fridays, please plan to bring your tuition payment on the last scheduled day of attendance that week. Payment may be made in cash, check or money order, or paid online through our website. When making a payment, please note what week of tuition or what fee you are paying. Payments may be combined as long as they are made on time.

A \$5.00 late charge will be applied to your account if payment is not received by the following Monday. Payment must be made within one week for your child to remain in our program. If your bill reaches two weeks overdue, your child may not return until the bill is *paid in full*. We cannot guarantee your child's spot will remain open during this time.

We have several tuition discounts available including a Family Discount and a Church Discount. The family discount applies for families with more than one

child enrolled in the program. The Church discount applies for families who attend either New Horizons or Crossroads UMC. Each discount applies 10% off the total cost of the family's weekly tuition. Families who refer new families to our program receive a week at 50% regular tuition after the new enrolled family's 5<sup>th</sup> week of continuous enrollment.

After the first month of consecutive attendance, you are given one week of tuition free vacation or sick days, per year. These days must be used consecutively in one full week, during which your child is not in attendance. Please notify us in advance of using these days when possible.

If your family chooses to withdraw from our program and you currently owe a balance, you will be responsible to pay all collection fees, court costs, late fees, or lawyer fees associated with the collection of that balance. Upon unenrollment, if your account is in good standing, you will receive reimbursement for the return of your keycards.

### **Returned Checks**

Checks are always an acceptable form of payment; however, if a check has been rejected from the bank due to insufficient funds, you will be responsible for any reasonable fees as a result of that check not clearing. Your account will be charged \$25.00 for a check that has been returned, in addition to the childcare fees for the written amount on the returned check. This amount will be expected immediately and paid with guaranteed funds (cash, cashier's check or money order). If this occurs a second time, all future payments will be required to be paid with guaranteed funds (cash, cashier's check or money order).

### **Accommodations for Children with Special Needs**

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry shall accept only children who are at a stage of growth and development which enables them to benefit from its program, and for whose age level our program is staffed and equipped to provide care. We will not admit or maintain any child whose needs we obviously cannot meet or whose behavior would endanger other children or teachers in the center. In a situation such as this, explicit, documented reasons for refusal to admit or provide care to a child will be provided in written form to parents.

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry's enrollment policies do not discriminate against a child with special needs. We make an effort to work with parents to enroll children with special needs whenever possible. Any eligible applicant with special needs will be enrolled in the program after careful evaluation of the child's care needs and the program's capabilities to meet these needs. Please be sure that our program also evaluates whether we can make reasonable accommodations to provide safe care to this child as well as to the other children currently enrolled.

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry reserves the right to request the withdrawal of a child if one or more of the following conditions exists: 1) the child is not participating in or not benefiting from the program; 2) there are no reasonable accommodations the program can make to provide adequate or safe care for the child; 3) there are no reasonable accommodations the program can make to provide adequate or safe care to other enrolled children or teachers due to the care/need of this child. This statement is in regard to all children, not just children with special needs.

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry will not discriminate against a child or parent on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or handicap in any of its policies, services or practices.

### **Arrival and Departure**

An adult or licensed driver must escort a child at all times. Upon arrival, please escort your child/ren to their respective classrooms. The sign-in procedure requires the adult escort to sign in each child on his/her sign-in page in the sign-in/out binder. Please fill in the time of drop-off and sign your name. At pick-up, please follow the same sign-in procedure before retrieving your child/ren.

All children must be dropped off NO LATER than 10:30 am. This allows them to be included in our lunch count, and allows us to make staff changes based on ratios if needed. Any child needing to arrive after 10:30 will need to have previously discussed and made arrangements with the Director or member of the Management Team.

Children will be released only to a guardian or a person named by the primary guardian. Guardians or persons named by the guardian must make sure that a team member is aware of the child's arrival and departure. Escorts shall sign the child in and out by name and note the time of arrival and departure. Any escort may be asked to show proof of identification at any time, especially those who do not pick up on a regular basis. Guardians may change their approved escorts list at any time by speaking to the director and filling out a new Authorized Escorts form. If someone other than the regular drop-off or pick-up person will be coming, please let your child's teacher know beforehand.

There will be a \$1.00 per minute charge for picking your child up after 6:00. If this becomes a reoccurring problem (i.e.: after 2 days in one week) the charge will be \$5.00 per minute, with the total added to your account balance, to be paid with the next billing. Parents who consistently pick up their children late will be asked to leave the program. If any child is not picked up 30 minutes after closing time and no contact with a guardian has been made, Child Protective Services will be contacted to pick up your child.

If a parent or other approved person arrives at the center to pick-up a child while under the influence of alcohol or drugs, we will call the next person on the emergency transportation list to pick-up the child. Child Protective Services and/or the Police Department will be notified if the child is transported by a person that is impaired.

### **Withdrawal Policy**

While we strive to offer individualized and responsive care for each enrolled family, we recognize that child care is a deeply personal choice for each family and that we may not be able to meet all your needs. If at any time your family makes the choice to withdraw from our program, we require that you give a two week notice in writing to the director. We also request that you complete a withdrawal survey so that we can receive feedback and reflect on your family's individual decision. Regretfully, registration fees and supply fees are not able to be refunded. NHLTCM reserves the right to withdraw any child without a two week notice if it is decided that the program is no longer meeting the needs of any specific child or family.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

NHLTCM is an equal opportunity institution and does not discriminate in its teaching, enrollment or hiring practices, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, marital status, national origin, disability, or status as a disabled Vietnam-era veteran. The Constitution and Bylaws of NHLTCM afford equal treatment regardless of political views or affiliation and sexual orientation.

## **Health and Safety**

### **General Health**

A Child Physical and Record of Immunizations is required for each child within 12 months prior to admission to the child care program or within one month after admission on the forms provided. Children whose immunizations are not kept current are subject to disenrollment if a health form is not returned within the above stated time period. Health examinations shall be repeated annually for children two years of age and younger.

You will be notified of any significant occurrences or problems which affect your child, including exposure to communicable diseases.

It is the guardian's responsibility to relay any pertinent health concerns regarding his/her child upon drop-off each day. This includes poor diet or sleeping habits, a change in routine, developing illness symptoms or minor injuries. These

seemingly small details can help a teacher tremendously when providing a safe and stimulating environment for your child.

Children are expected to follow all health and safety policies and procedures. If at any time a child repeatedly engages in unsafe behavior or commits a highly unsafe action, a disciplinary meeting will be held with the Director and/or Classroom Teacher, as well as at least one child guardian. A specific behavior management plan will be agreed upon, with a time limit for behavior changes decided. If during this behavior plan, the child or family shows no effort or signs of improvement, the child and family will be asked to leave the program. Any child that seriously injures a teacher or another child may be subject to immediate removal from the program.

### **Illness Policy**

Children who are ill will not be allowed to attend the program. If your child becomes ill while at the center, you will be contacted to pick up your child. If you cannot be reached, someone from your emergency contacts will be contacted. Your child must be picked up within one hour. Your child may not return to the center until he/she is symptom free for 24 hours. For the protection of your child and the other children attending, we ask that you find alternative care for your child if he/she is experiencing any of the following symptoms:

- A fever of 101.0 deg. or higher.
- Diarrhea or vomiting.
- A rash of any kind.
- Nasal discharge other than clear.
- Green/yellow discharge from eyes or nose.
- A persistent cough for 10 days or more.
- Communicable Disease or symptom of

If your child exhibits any of the previous symptoms or any other suspicious symptom, your child's teacher will notify you by phone. If the symptom warrants, you may be asked to pick up your child early from care. If this happens, your child may not return to the program until he/she is seen by a doctor and deemed non-contagious, or is symptom free for 24 hours – without the aid of fever reducers or medications. If your doctor does release your child to return to the program, you will need to bring a doctor's note stating the symptom, medical reason for the symptom, and giving permission for your child to return. For the protection of your child and the other children attending, we ask that you find alternative care for your child during the duration of the illness and/or symptoms. Regular payment is due during this time. We believe it is extremely important to notify families about the risk and exposure to communicable and infectious diseases so their children can receive preventive treatment if available. Please inform management in the event your child displays symptoms of, develops or is exposed to a communicable disease or illness.

### **Minor Accident/Incident Policy**

If at any time a child is involved in a behavioral or physical incident, an incident or accident report will be completed by the supervising teacher. If the situation warrants, an additional phone call may be made immediately to inform the parents of one or more involved children of the situation that has occurred.

An accident report form will be completed for all situations involving a physical injury. This form will be used to relay critical information about the circumstances surrounding the accident. This form will be relayed in person to the guardian on the phone or in person at pick up. An incident report will be completed for behavioral issues that warrant documentation. Such issues include overly aggressive behavior toward another child, biting, use of foul language, or any reoccurring negative behavior. This form will be relayed using the same methods as an accident report.

While teachers make every effort to provide a safe environment and monitor all children at all times, occasionally a child will receive a minor injury while a teacher is otherwise engaged. If the child is non-verbal or unable to give an accurate account of the incident, this can sometimes be worrisome to parents. Please be assured that we are always making every effort to meet the needs of every child. If this happens, an accident report will be completed with as much information that can be given. Families can help teachers by relaying any and all pertinent health information, including scratches, bruises and bumps, upon dropping their child off for the day.

### **Medication Policy**

It is our policy that families make every effort to administer all medicines before and after your child's childcare hours. If a medicine must be administered during your child's attendance in our program, all policies and procedures must be followed before NHLTCM is able to meet your needs.

*\*Any over the counter or prescription drug used to medicate your child will require a guardian's signature on a medicine release form before a NHLTCM team member can administer it. Your child's teacher may administer over-the-counter topical medicines such as diaper creams, lotions, first aid creams, sunscreens and bug repellents that prevent and treat any condition without a doctor's note.*

*\*Any other medications, including Over-the-Counter, must have a doctor's note or script with the following information clearly stated: your child's name, medicine, dosage and doctor's contact information. We recommend completing a Record of Medication Order upon enrollment. In this form, your child's physician can sign permission for as many over-the-counter medicines as he thinks might be necessary – all in one trip. This form is good for one year for children 2 years and younger, and is good for 2 years for children older than 2 years.*

Guardians must give the child's medicine to his/her caregiver in the original container. A team member must receive the medication – at no time should a medication be left unattended – over-the-counter or prescription. All prescribed and over-the-counter medications are kept in a secure locked box. Your child's teacher will document the application and/or administration of each medication on the medication release form and on your child's daily experience report. All medicines will be administered by your child's primary teacher when possible, and only for the prescribed amounts and times.

### **Safe Sleeping Policy**

Placing infants to sleep on their backs instead of their stomachs has been associated with dramatic decrease in deaths from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Infants have been found dead on their stomachs with their faces, noses and mouths covered by soft bedding, such as pillows, quilts, comforters and sheepskins. However, some infants have been found dead with their heads covered by soft bedding even while sleeping on their backs. This is why we follow Safe Sleeping Procedures that include:

- Caregivers placing infants on their backs in their cribs for sleeping.
- Keeping each crib free of any items other than the child, including blankets.
- Using sleep sacks and commercial swaddling products to swaddle infants while sleeping
- Caregivers carefully monitoring sleeping children during rest times.
- Keeping all children's heads uncovered while resting.

Parents may not request a waiver for this requirement unless there is a documented medical reason signed by a physician. When infants turn over on their own, it is permissible to leave them on their stomachs rather than awakening. Once a child is toddling, he/she may bring a personal blanket from home to use during nap time.

### **Emergency Preparedness Plans**

NHLTCM maintains comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plans that are reviewed bi-annually and are available to personnel and families upon request. Team Members have Emergency Preparedness Procedures posted in every classroom and work space. Emergency exit procedures are posted in each classroom. Upon initial employment, team members will be trained in all emergency procedures. It is each team member's responsibility to review emergency procedures and routes for each room. In every emergency situation, team members are responsible for assessing the situation, notifying the appropriate personnel, and following all emergency procedures. Attendance tracking procedures will be followed at all times. The following bulleted points

are the primary situations covered and steps involved in the NHLTCM Emergency Preparedness Plans.

- Medical Emergency: Every child must have an up-to-date, required Emergency Contact Information and Medical Release Form completed and on file before attending the program. In the case of any minor injuries, the supervising teacher will be responsible for giving basic first aid to any injured children. If any situation is deemed a major medical emergency, local medical responders (911) will be called immediately and the director will be informed. Your child will be transported to the hospital designated on your Medical Release Form. Once medical help has been sought, the director or the child's primary caregiver will be responsible for calling the child's family and informing them of the situation. The director will personally supervise the injured party/ies until the medical responders arrive. In the event of the absence of the director, the next team member in the chain of command will assume relevant leadership responsibilities. If an ambulance is called, the cost of the ambulance will be the responsibility of the child's family.
- Program Closure (Winter Weather, Utility Failure): In the case of inclement weather, we will post any closings or delays on the television station WISH-TV, Channel 8. \*Primary Guardians may also receive a one-call automated phone message from New Horizons' Phone line. In the event of environmental circumstances beyond our control (broken pipes, power outages etc.), we will contact you by phone and ask you to make alternative care plans or pick up your child/ren as soon as possible, if such a situation occurs during working hours. Indiana State Law prohibits us from operating without electricity, heat or water. In the event of such a mishap, your tuition will be adjusted accordingly.
- Dealing with the Media: In the case of any situation warranting media interest, the only person who may speak on behalf of NHLTCM shall be designated by the United Methodist Church's Bishop. Children's families or NHLTCM Team members shall decline and defer all questions relating to any incidents accordingly.
- Shelter in Place (Severe Weather, Lockdown, Earthquake): Team members and children will shelter within the building in the appropriate location (classroom, hallway, etc.). No persons will be allowed in or out of the building during this time.
- Building Evacuation (Fire, Hazardous Material Spill): Team members and children will follow all attendance procedures and exit the building in a quickly manner, convening by the parking lot flowerbeds or at the

basketball hoops if needed. No one will be permitted to enter the building until emergency personnel have deemed it safe to enter. Once the situation is stabilized, families may pick up their children.

An evacuation may occur due in part or in whole to the following circumstances: Smoke or fire detection, full pull alarm, trouble or panic alarm, bomb threat, utility failure, disorderly adult, and/or other issues that make the building inhabitable: chemical release, severe weather, off-site emergency. Each classroom is supplied with an evacuation bag and first aid kit that is always available and accessible in the event of an emergency. This kit also contains emergency contact info and medical release forms for all children and team members. Teachers will use this information in an emergency to contact families as soon as possible.

- Site Evacuation Level 1 (bomb threat, fire, flood, other major building problem): NHLTCM Team Members and children will evacuate to Brown, Butz and Diedring Funeral Home. Once the situation is stabilized, families will be notified and may be asked to pick up their children.
- Site Evacuation Level 2 (NHUMC evacuation, chemical spill, widespread fire): NHLTCM Team members and children will evacuate to Crossroads United Methodist Church using emergency transportation, public transportation when available, or private transportation up to or including team member or church member vehicles, only when absolutely necessary. Once the situation is stabilized, families will be notified and may be asked to pick up their children.
- Mass Ordered Evacuation (declared state of emergency): NHLTCM Team Members and Children will leave the building and evacuate to a mass shelter as determined by the Red Cross. Transportation will be coordinated with emergency personnel. All attendance tracking procedures will be maintained at all times. Once the situation is stabilized, families will be notified and may be asked to pick up their children.

It is imperative that in an emergency, family members remain calm and allow these Emergency Response Plans to function as they were created, to protect and ensure the safety of all children. It is also equally important to remember that in an emergency, our first priority is to stabilize the situation and ensure the safety of the children. Also, there may be limited to no telephone communication. Every reasonable effort will be made to establish appropriate communication with you during and after any emergency situation involving your child.

## **Class Sizes and Ratios**

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry follows the ratio guidelines set forth by the State of Indiana for Licensed Child Care Centers. The ratios of children to team members are as follows: Infants 4:1, Toddlers 5:1, Two and a half Year Olds 7:1, Three Year Olds 10:1, Four Year Olds 12:1, School-Age 15:1. If a team member is ever over the ratio in the classroom, specific guidelines and procedures will be followed to quickly resolve the situation. Every team member is responsible for following the State Ratios and for following the corrective procedures including notifying a member of management ASAP.

## **Food Services**

We serve breakfast, lunch and two snacks, prepared on site daily. Morning Snack is served from 6:45 to 7:15, Breakfast from 9:00-9:30, Lunch is served at 11:30, 11:40, 11:50, and 12:00 dependent upon each classroom, and Afternoon Snack is served after the class is up from nap, usually from 3-3:15. Menus are posted on Monday on the Parent Bulletin Board and are available by request from your child's teacher. Any alterations from the menu will be posted and documented in our records. The food served meets or exceeds the standards set by the United States Department of Agriculture, local and state health departments, and licensing guidelines. Children on special diets for medical reasons must provide a detailed physician's statement. Children with dietary restrictions due to religious or personal dietary preference must have a written statement from parents indicating the food products that are restricted. Any child with restrictions that are not life-threatening will need to provide his/her own substitutions, as closely following our nutritional guidelines as possible. Children will be encouraged, but not forced to try new foods. No child is denied food at mealtime for disciplinary reasons. Food is also not given as a positive reward in our program.

All foods eaten at the childcare facility must be foods provided by the program or have gained previous approval by your child's primary caregiver. CHILDREN MAY NOT BRING IN THEIR OWN BREAKFAST FOODS IN THE MORNING. This is disruptive to our program and we cannot be responsible for children eating foods that do not abide by our Food and Nutrition Program. Any families wishing to bring in a special food treats shall follow all guidelines set forth in the section DAILY PRACTICES: **Birthdays and Holidays**.

## **Nap/Rest Periods**

In order to support healthy practices for our families and children, we provide a scheduled rest period for all children not currently enrolled in our infant or school-age programs. Nap time is preceded by lunch, personal needs care and a quiet calming down period. We allow all children the opportunity to have their own nap cot and rest quietly on it. Cots are provided, but parents should bring in one nap blanket, one soft comfort item and an optional small pillow (All nap items will be sent home on the last day in attendance to be washed and returned

for the next week). After a designated period of time, children who have not fallen asleep are provided with quiet, alone activities on their cots so as not to disturb the other napping children. Nap time is generally 2 ½ hours long, but we do allow children to wake up on their own, per state recommendations. Any specific napping needs your child may have should be discussed with your child's primary caregiver.

### **Tooth Brushing Policy**

As part of our commitment to healthy living, we help children brush their teeth once daily while in our care. Parents provide each child with a sanitary and age-appropriate toothbrush, as well as age-appropriate toothpaste. Teachers provide children with the time and assistance to brush their teeth. We talk about methods to brushing, as well as discussing the length of time we brush. We do all this in cooperation with our Food and Nutrition Education. Any parent wishing to opt out of toothbrushing for their child/ren must provide a doctor's order with reason for denial. Toothbrushes are replaced every 3 months according to recommended guidelines.

### **Behavior Guidance Policy**

We employ positive methods and guidance to encourage the development of children's self-control and appropriate social skills. Our goal is to teach children to respect themselves and others. Caregivers achieve this goal by demonstrating the following behaviors:

- communicating to children using positive statements,
- encouraging children, with adult support and/or modeling, to use their own words and solutions to resolve conflicts,
- speaking with children at eye level and talking to them in a calm manner about what behavior is expected,
- help children understand that all children are good, and can makes good or bad choices, and that all choices have consequences,

Occasionally, the use of additional behavior management techniques is more appropriate. In these instances, the following techniques may be used:

- Distracting the child
- Redirecting the child
- Ignoring the child or behavior
- Shadowing the child, done by a teacher or support staff
- Separating the child from the group
- Using appropriate, natural consequences reflective of the behavior

NHLTCM does not condone the use of harsh or abusive disciplinary practices by any person, at any time, while on the child care facility premises or engaged in

child-care related job tasks for NHLTCM. Family members are asked to refrain from any form of physical or harsh punishment while on daycare grounds. In accordance with the State of Indiana’s Childcare Regulations, the following actions shall pertain to this ruling:

- Inflict corporal punishment in any manner upon a child’s body. (70.a.1)
- Hit, spank, beat, shake, pinch, or any other measure that produces physical discomfort. Cruel, harsh, unusual, humiliating, or frightening methods of discipline, including threatening the use of physical punishment. (70.a.2)
- Placement in a locked or dark room. (70.a.3)
- Public or private humiliation, yelling, or abusive or profane language. (70.a.4) Caregivers shall not associate disciplinary action or rewards with rest. (70.a.4a)
- Caregivers shall not associate disciplinary action with food or use food as a reward. Caregivers shall not associate disciplinary action or humiliate a child in regard to toileting. (70.a.5)

Caregivers shall not:

- use time out for any child less than three (3) years of age; use time out for any purpose other than to enable the child to regain control; (70.b.1)
- physically restrain children except: (70.b.2)
  - when it is necessary to ensure their own safety or that of others; (70.b.2.a) and
  - only for as long as is necessary for control of the situation; and use punishment to correct unacceptable behavior. (70.b.2.b)

At no time will food, rest or toileting be associated with positive or negative behavioral consequences. “Time-outs” will not be used for any child, but rather, a quiet corner/area will be provided in each class room where any child may choose to rest or be alone, especially when a child needs to calm down or is not following safety rules. A child will be physically restrained only when it is necessary to protect the safety and health of the child, or others. Appropriate, trained physical restraint methods will be used, and only for as long as it is necessary for control of the situation. Removal of a child from the group for disciplinary or health reasons shall be to a location where visual supervision by team members will be maintained.

Because Family Partnership is important to us, we do communicate your child’s behavior daily. However, we recognize that certain behaviors occur naturally at specific stages of development. Your child’s teachers accommodate for this in their communication with you. Please make your child’s primary caregiver aware of any specific concerns or behavior management techniques that you are seeing or using at home. Recurring disciplinary problems will be addressed with parents

and a child-specific behavior management plan will be created and put into action. All reoccurring behavioral issues are documented in the child's record.

Some children become "stuck" for a while in a behavior pattern or syndrome and it is frustrating for the parents of victims that are unable to "fix" the child quickly or to terminate enrollment. We try to make every effort to extinguish the behavior quickly and to balance our commitment to the family of the aggressive or biting child to that of other families. Only after we feel we have made every effort to make the program work for the child, do we consider asking a family to choose other alternative care.

For more information on unsafe behavior, please refer to the section on Safety and Health.

### **Court Orders**

We comply with all court orders that prevent a particular individual from having contact with an enrolled child. Please inform your child's primary caregiver and also the director as soon as possible. We will need a copy of the official document on file in order to comply.

### **Child Abuse/Neglect Prevention**

The state of Indiana mandates that all individuals working with children must report all suspected cases of non-accidental injury, unexplainable failure to thrive, sexual abuse, and physical neglect to the Child Protection Services. Failure to report opens an individual to criminal or civil liability, while reporting frees that individual from any liability if the report is unfounded.

During the first two (2) weeks of employment, all team members shall receive documented training in recognizing and reporting child abuse and neglect. The United Methodist Church also requires every team member working with children to complete the United Methodist Safe Sanctuary Training. The director shall update these trainings annually. As part of the hiring process, NHLTCM shall complete a State Criminal History Check and a CPI Consent to Release Information Background check. NHLTCM will not employ or utilize the services of a person known by the division and reported to the program as a substantiated perpetrator of child abuse or neglect.

All Team Members shall immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect as follows:

- The team member shall contact the director, who must immediately contact the Church Liaison, who will then contact the Church Pastor, and follow the United Methodist Policy and Chain of Command. The team member, along with the appropriate team of administrators, will discuss the situation and gather all available information. If the abuse suspicion

is supported or confirmed, the team member with the administrative team will then call the institutional abuse hotline or a law enforcement agency and report the suspected abuse or neglect.

- Regardless if the alleged abuse or neglect occurred while the child was under the care of NHLTCM, NHLTCM receives a complaint from anyone regarding possible abuse or neglect of a child by a team member, or if the alleged abuse or neglect occurred while the child was not under the care of the child care center, staff shall immediately follow the appropriate procedure and chain of command in reporting the suspected abuse.
- Reporting suspicions to the director or other supervisory personnel does not relieve the individual team member of his/her responsibility to report directly to child protective services.

The center shall at all times maintain the confidentiality of all information obtained regarding the suspected abuse or neglect of a child. If the child protective services investigation substantiates the abuse or neglect at the hands of a team member or volunteer, NHLTCM shall immediately dismiss the team member or volunteer.

### **Controlled Substances Policy**

New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry strictly forbids the use of tobacco, unintended use of toxic substances, use or possession of alcohol and use or possession of illegal or toxic substances in the facility when child care is being provided. Also the use or possession of firearms or weapons of any kind, is strictly forbidden on daycare grounds while child care is being provided.

## **Daily Practices**

### **Early Learning and Curriculum**

Starting from birth to school –age, we offer individual developmentally-appropriate programs specifically designed to meet each child’s needs.

We follow the United Methodist’s beliefs and ideals. Our teachers share God’s love and Jesus’s teachings with students daily.

Each classroom provides materials or learning centers in each of the following domains: language, art, construction, dramatic play, music, math, science, sensory, manipulatives as well as large motor activities outside on our playgrounds and inside in our full-sized multipurpose room (Family Life Center).

Lesson Plans are created by each classroom teacher so that our program can be tailor-made to meet each child's individual developmental needs and interests. They are based on program-created forms that were developed to ensure that each developmental domain is being taught.

### **Developmental Tracking Program**

As part of our mission to provide a high quality program, we may document your child's growth and development through a developmental tracking program. If your child is included in this program, you will be given additional information at that time. Documenting children's progress and growth is an indicator of a quality program, as well as the results of that documentation. It is at the discretion of the childcare program to make decisions on inclusion of children into the documenting program.

### **Staff Qualifications**

Our teachers are professionals in the childcare field, selected for their love of children, learning and God. We put great emphasis on educational background and teaching experience. They also must pass a drug screen, T.B. test, Limited State Criminal History Check and a Central Registry Check in addition to our own program trainings. We feel confident in their ability to nurture and educate your child.

### **Primary Caregiving**

After enrollment, your child will be given a primary caregiver who will be the primary contact and "special" person for your child. If a classroom has two primary teachers, the roster of children will be split so that each teacher is a primary caregiver to a specific half of the classroom. Jim Greenman and Anne Stonehouse in their book, *Prime Times*, list the responsibilities of a primary caregiver as follows: communicate, advocate, nurture, teach, observe, monitor and evaluate. Your child's primary caregiver is the lifeline of communication between your family, your child and the program. Your child's primary caregiver will be documenting and assessing your child's learning while in the program, through the Developmental Tracking Program. Your child's primary caregiver will be primarily responsible for communicating any pertinent developmental news concerning your child. This is done through the daily reports, family-teacher dialogue at drop-off and pick-up times, and any other methods deemed necessary. Due to the nature of our program, unfortunately your child's primary teacher may not always be present during drop-off or pick-up time. Please feel free to phone or schedule a conference if you would like additional time to talk to your child's primary caregiver.

### **Teacher Communication**

We encourage families to communicate daily with their child/ren's teachers through notes, daily reports, phone calls and pick-up/drop-off communication. The childcare phone is made available to teachers throughout the day for communicating with families concerning their child only. Teachers' cell phones are not to be used to communicate with families in or out of our program. Parent/Teacher Conferences will be held at least annually. An additional parent/teacher conference may be requested if there are immediate questions or concerns that are not able to be addressed during the normal times of communication.

We also do not allow teachers to communicate with children's family members through social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter. This policy is important in maintaining professionalism and confidentiality for all our families and team members. We appreciate your respect and cooperation regarding this policy.

We ask that families please inform their child's primary caregiver or the director as soon as possible, if any of the following will occur that day:

- Late arrival (anything after 11:00am must have prior approval)
- Early pick-up
- Another caregiver will be picking up your child
- Your child is sick and will not be attending for the day

### **Visitor/Volunteer Policies**

We have an open door policy which allows for any enrolled child's family to come into the program at any time. However, if you are planning a special visit in the classroom, we request that you follow our separate visitor guidelines and plan an appropriate time that does not disrupt the classroom teacher's plans. Any other visitors must be escorted into the building and check in at the director's office before being allowed into the childcare wing. Any family members wishing to volunteer in a classroom, must first read and agree to our separate Volunteer Policy and follow all procedures listed, including obtaining prior approval, signing in, and wearing a volunteer name badge. Any non-family members volunteering also follow these volunteer guidelines, and any other applicable requirements.

### **Age groups and Transitioning**

Classrooms and group sizes are determined based upon children's ages, needs and temperaments, our program enrollment, and also upon Indiana's state guidelines on child to staff ratios. We make all decisions on a case by case basis after much consideration by teachers, parents and management. If at any time you have any concerns with your child's classroom, developmental level or any other such issue, you are encouraged to talk to your child's primary caregiver or the director.

### **Daily Schedule**

Each age group and classroom has a specific daily schedule that the teacher has created, based upon children's needs, preferences and developmental levels.

Each schedule always includes the following types of activities:

- language,
- art,
- construction,
- dramatic play,
- music,
- math,
- science,
- sensory,
- manipulatives
- large motor activities outside on our playground and inside in our full-sized multipurpose room.

For a listing of meal times, please see under the section Food Services.

### **Indoor and Outdoor Exploration**

We provide indoor and outdoor exploration as part of our early learning curriculum. We believe children should be provided the opportunity to explore and learn in natural settings, which is why you will see trees, plants, gardens and various other items in our outside play space. We also understand that some children need large motor opportunities and space more than other children, which is why we provide alternative activities in both our indoor and outdoor spaces. Some of these activities might include art experiences, dramatic play areas and math and science opportunities. If your child has a specific health condition that will limit his/her outside or large motor experiences, a doctor's slip will be required as well as a plan of action prepared with your child's primary caregiver.

### **Television Policy**

We do not encourage the viewing of movies in our program, and do not allow live television to be shown. However, we do allow teachers to show short, educational videos as pertaining to the learning topic. Any videos shown will be educational in nature and will not exceed a PG rating. Summer Care classes are permitted to screen movies as long as they do not exceed 1 video a day and are within a G or PG rating. Any videos submitted from home will be approved by the director before being shown to a class. Television is prohibited in the infant and toddler-aged classrooms.

### **Field Trips and Enrichment Activities**

Occasionally, we may plan an off-site field trip. If this occurs, a permission slip will be issued no later than one week before the scheduled trip.

Although we strive to meet all your child's developmental needs, we realize that children benefit from more individualized and specific learning. This is why we make an effort to provide enrichment activities on site for families. These activities may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Private or group music lessons
- Physical Education or Movement Activities
- Art Experiences
- Science Experiments and Classes
- Reading Clubs

These opportunities will be optional and only upon parent's discretion. These classes may be led by university students, adults in the community or members of the New Horizons or Crossroads UMC congregation. Any volunteers in the program will be required to have a Statewide Background Check on file. Some enrichment classes will be at no cost to you, however, if a fee is requested, parents will be informed before enrollment into any specific classes. Your child's primary caregiver and/or the director will inform parents of upcoming and current enrichment opportunities.

### **Dress Policy**

We ask that children dress in comfortable attire which may become soiled. Our teachers take care to assist children in keeping a clean appearance, however, exploring outside, art activities, sensory activities and eating are all inherently "messy" activities during which your child's outfit may become soiled. Children are to have at least two extra, complete outfits in their cubby that they may change into in case of messy accidents. Additional outfits or pieces may be requested by your child's teacher due to personal circumstances such as toilet training, "enthusiastic" eating habits, or other specific child-related needs.

### **Supplies Policy**

A separate, age-appropriate supply list is given for a more specific listing, but in general, parents supply any personal care items such as tooth brushing needs, napping needs, diapering needs and extra clothes. The daycare is responsible for providing foods and snacks, art materials and learning materials. Any additional supplies needed, will be communicated to parents by your child's primary caregiver or by the director. Please refrain from bringing in personal toys. We have many learning materials on-site that are provided to the children to explore. If your child has a game or book he/she would like to share with the class, please discuss the issue with your child's primary caregiver in advance. Any personal items that are left after a child is no longer enrolled in the program are considered the property of the program if they are not claimed within 2 weeks of leaving.

### **Diapering and Toilet Training**

We follow all sanitation and diapering guidelines outlined by the State of Indiana's Health and Sanitation Regulations. Children's diapers may be changed on a sanitary changing table or standing up, according to age, size, and preferences. Families are asked to provide size-appropriate diapers, wipes and any necessary over-the-counter medications that might be necessary such as diaper creams or powder.

We happily work with parents in helping their child/ren succeed in toilet training. Your child's primary caregiver will discuss methods that will be used to maintain consistency between home and school. Teachers will use positive reinforcement to encourage children in their toilet training. We do not allow punishment, bribery or loss/gain of food privileges in association with toilet training, per state regulations. Your child's primary caregiver is a great resource in planning which methods will work best for your child and your family. Toilet training requires a lot of teamwork both at home and at school! You may be asked to bring in multiple sets of extra clothing, or specific types of clothing (such as easy-up pants, pull-ups, underwear, etc.) while toilet training occurs.

### **Birthdays and Holidays**

Birthday and holiday celebrations are scheduled at the discretion and preference of your child's primary caregiver and your family's interest. Any snacks or "treats" that are brought in must abide by the following guidelines:

- Be in an unopened, store bought package. (no homemade items)
- Be in good condition, not exceeding the expiration date.
- Be free of any choking hazards such as (but not limited to) grapes, hot dogs, nuts, hard candy and popcorn.
- Be considerate of any health concerns, such as food allergies, for all children in your child's classroom.
- Be moderately healthy. Obscene amounts of sugared treats or candy will not be permitted.

### **Open Door Policy**

We employ an open-door policy and encourage all parents and family members to visit and/or observe their children while in our care. You are welcome to visit at any time, however, if you are planning a special visit in the classroom, we request that you follow our separate visitor guidelines and plan an appropriate time that does not disrupt the classroom teacher's plans.

### **Absence/Illness of a Teacher**

In the event of an absence, illness or death of a teacher or team member, a substitute will be obtained by the director. At no time will any child be out of sight or sound of a team member. In the event of a teacher's absence, children may need to be moved to another classroom in the care of another teacher until

a substitute teacher may be found. We try to make every effort to inform families of any changes in teachers, schedules or routines before any changes occur.

### **Confidentiality Commitment**

All information pertaining to admission, health, family, or discharge of a child is confidential. While we occasionally may take pictures or video of enrolled children for developmental documentation, program documentation or advertising purposes, no personal information is released, and first names only are used.

All records regarding each child shall be kept in the control and care of the program as the Child Care Division requires and NHLTCM shall report to the division, upon request, the facts the division requires with reference to children. The division shall keep records regarding children and facts learned about children and their parents or relatives confidential. The following are permitted access to records regarding children and facts learned about children:

- (1) A state agency involved in the licensing of the child care center.
- (2) A legally mandated child protection agency.
- (3) A law enforcement agency.
- (4) An agency having the legal responsibility to care for a child placed at the child care center.
- (5) The parent, guardian, or custodian of the child at the child care center.

For any child needing or utilizing an IEP or similar plan, a guardian may be asked to sign a release, allowing the child's primary daily teachers access to pertinent developmental information contained within the plan or available through meetings or discussions with the child's therapists or health professionals.

### **Babysitting**

In the effort to maintain the professional status of our program and team members and prevent any possible conflicts of interest, NHLTCM discourages the use of team members for providing off-duty childcare for enrolled families. However, should you hire any NHLTCM team members, it must be outside of the program premises and with the understanding that such arrangements and payment for services are solely between the family and the team member. The arrangements are not sanctioned by NHLTCM, New Horizons UMC, or Crossroads UMC, and no such parties may be held liable for any issues arising from such an arrangement.

### **Family Responsibilities**

We are committed to partnering with families as we work together in helping your child/ren learn and grow. The following items will be asked of you while your child is enrolled in our program:

- Provide truthful, necessary information on registration forms.
- Keep medical and registration information records current.
- Ensure child's immunizations are kept up-to-date.
- Pay childcare promptly on the last scheduled day in attendance for the following week.
- Drop-off and Pick-up child/ren within estimated times listed on child care contract.
- Follow all sign-in and sign-out procedures daily.
- Follow all ill child policies, including exclusion of child displaying signs of illness.
- Arrange back-up care for your child/ren in case of illness or environmental emergencies.
- Notify the daycare if your child contracts, shows symptoms of or is exposed to a communicable disease.
- Communicate all pertinent information, questions, comments and concerns to your child's primary caregiver on a daily basis, including notifying staff of any occurrences that could affect the child's behavior or emotional state.

### **Family Concerns**

Just as caregivers are encouraged to discuss concerns with families, family input is encouraged in a collaborative partnership for the benefit of the children. You are the most important advocate for your child. The NHLTCM Team and families all share the goal of ensuring high quality care for the children. When you have questions or concerns regarding the care your child is receiving, please do the following:

1. Talk with your child's teacher. She is with your child during the day and can partner with you to understand your child's day and his/her progress. If your teacher is present at pickup and/or dropoff, she should be available for any quick questions or concerns. For a more in-depth conversation, a naptime phone call is a great time to talk or you may request a conference at any time.
2. Talk with the Director. She can answer any questions about our Program Policy, Developmentally Appropriate Practice and State Childcare Regulations.
3. Talk with the Parent Representative for the New Horizons Learning Tree Childcare Ministry Board. The Parent Bulletin Board by the childcare entrance has the contact information listed.

It is our hope and belief that with open and honest communication, all issues that might arise may be discussed and a conclusion agreed upon. More information regarding a formal grievance procedure is available upon request.