

GENERAL INFORMATION

MISSION STATEMENT

The Cohoes Child Development Center strives to provide quality childcare for parents and children of the City of Cohoes and outlying communities. We believe that parents are the most significant adult in their child's life and strive to foster mutual respect and open roads of communication between parents and staff.

Our collective goals are to promote the value of education and create a love of learning; to promote positive social interactions and provide children with age appropriate conflict mediation skills; to foster individual self-esteem by creating opportunities for success for your child; to serve as an ally to and resource for the parents of the children in our programs; to promote the educational, social and developmental value of play and to promote healthy life long self help, recreational, nutritional practices to supplement the wellness of your child.

In partnership with our parents, we endeavor to provide a safe, clean, joyful, child oriented program to help prepare today's children for tomorrow's adult world.

MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

This handbook was developed not only to meet licensing requirements, but to also inform parents of the many policies we must follow that relate to our agreements with the Cohoes City Schools, city, county, state and federal programs. It is the School Age program's expectation that parents will observe all of the policies listed within this handbook. It is our intent to give parents the most concise, accurate, and thorough knowledge of the program, so that they may consult this handbook routinely to answer questions. We understand that each day you will place the very life of your child in our hands. Our expectation is that parents will aid in the overall safety, supervision and structure of the program, by observing all of the program's policies.

Together, we will forge a safe and wonderful school year for your child.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE/ELIGIBILITY

A volunteer Board of Director's manages the Cohoes Community Center, which in turn is led by an Executive Committee. The Executive Committee consists of a President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary. The remaining members of the Board of Directors are community representatives.

The School Age Care (SAC) Program is a division of the Cohoes Child Development Center that is sponsored by the Cohoes Community Center. Our programs are registered through New York state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), a division of the New York State Department of Social Services. As a registered program we are expected to conform to all of the regulations governing school age care as outlined in Part 141 of the NYS Social Services law. A copy of these regulations is available for review at each program site.

The SAC program is a non-discriminatory organization dedicated to the quality care of school age children grades Pre-k through 5, regardless of sex, race, religion or natural orientation.

PROGRAM EMPLOYEES

Each staff person is subject to an extensive background check through the State Central Registry Clearance System, fingerprinted through the State of New York Division of Criminal Justice Services and must complete 15 hours of child care related training per year to ensure your child will have a safe and quality environment. By nature of their work, each of the staff is a mandated reporter as required under NYS Department of Social Services regulations Part 419.

COMMUNICATION

Every month a SAC newsletter is sent to the program sites, informing you of the programs, holidays, vacations, early dismissals and days when the program will not be in session. Much of the information contained in these newsletters is time sensitive. Every effort is made to keep you, our parents, informed. It is the parent's obligation to stay informed. Finally, parents are encouraged to contact their Site Director or the School Age Coordinator at any time. Our goal is to handle small concerns before they become big problems.

SCHOOL AGE CARE PROGRAM POLICIES

MEDICATION

Medication may be dispensed to children during program hours at all of our program sites. The regulations governing school age child care provide that only **medication administration** certified (MAT) staff handle and dispense medication. Our M.A.T. staff are only certified to administer oral, inhalant, topical, medicated patches, eye, ear, and emergency injection of epinephrine. We are not authorized to administer any medication anally, vaginally, or injection based medication. **No children are allowed to carry their own medication.** Should your child require medication during program hours, a **medication consent form**, will need to be completed by both you and your child's physician. The consent forms are only valid for the dates listed by the physician on the form, but no longer than six months and need to be completed in full. In the event that no M.A. T. certified staff are available at the program sites (due to staff absenteeism) parents/guardians of children requiring medication will be notified by phone as early as possible. **For brevity of this handbook, it is suggested that you contact the School Age Coordinator for the full medication policy and protocol.**

SPECIAL NEEDS/INDIVIDUAL HEALTH CARE PLAN

The Cohoes Child Development Center SAC program has a successful record of making a "good fit" for special needs children. Parents are required to meet with the School Age Coordinator and their School Age Site Director prior to their child's start in program to assess our program's ability to care for their child.

In order to appropriately care for your child we ask for a full disclosure of all allergies and special needs. Should a child have a condition or allergy that may require a need for specialized supervision, discipline or medication you will be asked to complete an "Individual Health Care Plan". This form will ask for specific diagnosed conditions and behaviors/symptoms of the condition. Our plan of action/response will also be listed on the "Individual Health Care Plan" for easy reference for all staff. This form will need to be updated every 6 months or earlier if changes in the child's condition or medication occur.

TOILETING

All children must be toilet trained to enroll in program (No diapers). Due to lack of appropriate space for diapering children and the need to maintain School Age ratio the SAC staff are not able to diaper children. The occasional "accident" is to be expected when working with children. However, chronic/daily wetting and/or soiling poses an infection control issue for the other children in care and our staff. Since all of our programs are located in the cafeterias of each elementary school, the sanitation concern becomes magnified. If a child has an "accident" while in care and no change of clothes has been provided by the parent/guardian for the child, the parent/guardian will be notified to pick-up the child from care. The Cohoes Child Development Center reserves the right to terminate care, should a prolonged bout of soiling/wetting occur without treatment by a physician.

ACTIVELY ILL POLICY

Because of our concerns for the health of your child and all other children, we have established the following guidelines. ***In all cases, the School Age Program reserves the right to send home any child with suspicious or pro-longed symptoms.*** It will be the responsibility of the Site Supervisor (and in his/her absence, the Program Coordinator) to make that determination based on his/her best judgment. When a child is absent due to illness, the parent is asked to contact the Community Center as early as possible. If your child becomes "actively ill" (fever, vomiting, etc) while in our care, the parent/guardian will be notified ASAP and will be expected to pick up the child immediately. Failure to remove an actively ill child promptly from program will jeopardize continuing care. We appreciate your cooperation in complying with these guidelines.

LIST OF POSSIBLE EXCLUSIONS

- Illness that prevents the child from participating in activities
- An illness resulting in a greater need for care than the SAC staff can provide
- Fever of 101 degrees or higher
- Signs and symptoms of possible serious illness including: lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, persistent crying/irritability, difficulty breathing or wheezing
- Diarrhea or bloody stools
- Vomiting
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Mouth sores with drooling
- Skin rashes
- Earache or draining of ear & eyes
- Sore throat
- Head lice and/or nits
- Red runny or matted eyes
- **Any suspected communicable disease**

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline is not a “dirty word” nor is it punishment. Carried out consistently, fairly and appropriately, discipline will provide necessary structure, SAFETY and order to the School Age Care program sites. The role of discipline is to teach children limits and to provide appropriate/logical consequences to actions and hopefully prevent future similar misbehavior. The SAC program relies heavily on logical consequences and conflict mediation to solve conflicts amongst the children.

Children learn limits, empathy, basic values and socialization through play. Playing is their “job” right now. Inherently, in that job children will make mistakes. In regards to discipline, the School Age Care program attempts to seize teachable moments to rectify problems within the program.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

STEP # 1-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Each day the SAC staff will attempt to share with you the multiple parts of your child’s day sharing our concerns or delights.

STEP # 2-DOCUMENTATION

When concerns arise multiple times the SAC staff will document the situation on a “**Behavior Memo**” form. This form is used to convey the situation to the parent/guardian in hopes that they will discuss the situation with their child and then communicate their findings to the SAC staff.

When serious incidents of behavior occur, whether the SAC staff have a chronic issue with a child’s behavior, the child is creating serious incidents in which they have the propensity to cause harm to the child’s self, friends, staff or property or the child becomes a supervision concern an “**Incident Report**” form will be completed. Incident report forms must be signed by a parent or guardian and do become part of the child’s record with our agency.

STEP # 3-PARENT CONFERENCES

Children whose behaviors or frequency and intensity of behaviors cause staff to spend an inordinate amount of time disciplining the child will lead to a parent conference. The goal of a parent conference is to make the parent aware of the child’s behaviors, how those behaviors impact on the safety and/or flow of the program, as well as secure help and input from the parent as to how to deal more effectively with the child.

Upon completion of a parent conference a definitive strategy of intervention and corrective behavior, along with a time line will be established by the Cohoes Child Development Center and the parent. A narrative of this meeting will be generated and a copy will be made part of the child’s permanent record and a copy will be given to the parent and the Director of Daycare.

Intervention strategies designed to modify the child’s behavior will be monitored by the site staff and site directors with daily reports to the School Age Coordinator, who will also report to the Daycare Director. Parents will also be advised daily as to the progress of the plan. The Director of Daycare may be asked to be part of any Parent Conference or disciplinary process.

STEP # 4-SUSPENSION/ EXPULSION FROM PROGRAM

The Cohoes Child Development Center reserves the right to issue a suspension from program for any child who becomes an extreme safety concern through leaving supervision or injuring other children in care or School Age Care staff. The suspension will remain in effect until a conference is held with the parent of the child, the School Age Coordinator and the School Age Site Director. The Daycare Director will be made privy of all suspensions/ conferences.

After the parent conference and intensive documentation and recorded observations the child’s behaviors will be regularly evaluated. If the behavior is not minimized, corrected, or showing signs of improvement and the child is unable to be a successful participant in the program, the School Age Coordinator will meet with the child’s parent to terminate the child’s enrollment. Documentation of this meeting will be given to the Daycare Director and placed in the child’s folder.

GUIDELINES TO BEHAVIOR FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

- Following directions and showing respect to all SAC staff, children and families.
- Using appropriate voices and language at all times.
- Respecting program property and the property of others.
- Keeping hands, feet and other objects to themselves.

ROUGH-HOUSING OR HORSEPLAY

Rough-housing is defined as excessive physical contact that promotes or mimics violence or play actions that may lead a child to being lifted off of their feet. Rough-housing/horseplay is not permitted in the SAC program.

VISITOR CONTROL POLICY

A visitor in the program is defined as any person not employed by the Cohoes Child Development Center or not a parent/ guardian of a child enrolled in program. Visitors arriving in the program must be granted permission by the SAC Site Director or Coordinator. All visitors MUST sign in listing their name, the date of their visit, the time of their visit, the purpose of their visit and the time that they are departing from program. Visitors include, but are not limited to, professional speakers, guests, clinicians or delivery personnel. Visitors at no time can be left alone with the children in care.

TRANSPORTATION

Any time that the children will need to be transported from their SAC program site to the Cohoes Community Center (Ex. Half Days of Care, enhancement programs) the children will be transported by CDTA. CDTA is also used to transport the children for any local field trips or special events. Parents are responsible for transportation costs unless otherwise noted.

- **DRESS CODE**

Playing is a dirty job! If you are concerned about a particular outfit please send your child with a change of clothes. Parents are also encouraged to make sure that their child has sneakers to wear to promote safe outdoor/gym play.

- **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

Toys from home, especially ones that are regularly borrowed or traded are discouraged from being brought to program. All personal belongings MUST be clearly marked with the child's name.

The School Age Care Program cannot accept liability for lost, stolen or damaged personal property.

REGISTRATION POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

WHERE CARE IS AVAILABLE AND HOURS OF OPERATION

The School Age Care program operates three sites within the Cohoes area. Morning care is offered at each of the elementary schools; Harmony Hill, Abram Lansing, and Van Schaick. Even though all of our programs operate within elementary schools, **it is important to note that the Cohoes City School District, its staff and administrators are not affiliated with our program.** The school district provides space for our program to operate and has shown tremendous flexibility and support to our program. **Please direct all program issues to School Age staff or employees of the Cohoes Community Center.**

Morning care begins as early as 7:00 AM and concludes at 8:30 AM. The afternoon program begins at dismissal time at the child's school and concludes at 5:30 PM.

Care is also available on a full day basis. The SAC program provides care for many single holidays, week long vacations and early dismissals by pre-registration. Snow day care is also provided.

The School Age Program is closed on the following days: New Year's Day, Martin' Luther King Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, July 4, the Friday before Labor Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving and Christmas Day.

SCHOOL AGE CARE RATES

<u>Weekly Program Rates</u>		<u>Full Day/Snow Day/Early Dismissal "Add On" Fees</u>	
<u>Service</u>	<u>Fees</u>	<u>Service</u>	<u>Fees</u>
AM/PM Care	\$80 a week	AM Only	\$21.00 per day enrolled (in addition to weekly parent fee)
PM only	\$80 a week	AM/PM & PM Only	\$12.00 per day enrolled (in addition to weekly parent fee)
AM care only	\$35.00a week	Week Long Vacations	\$28.00 per day enrolled (during week long vacations the weekly fee is waived)
* FEES LISTED ARE PER CHILD AND DO NOT FACTOR A 10% DISCOUNT FOR A SECOND CHILD.			

REGISTRATION PROCEDURES

In order to enroll in the School Age Care program a parent/guardian must submit a completed registration packet which includes a current physical and immunization records for each child enrolled, a USDA meal plan form per family enrolled, a signed "parent Handbook" page and a signed parent fee agreement per family enrolled. The registration packet must be filled out in its entirety. There may be NO blanks! Families must also adhere to the parent fee policy listed below.

FEES AND PAYMENTS

- **All parent fees are due in advance of service.**
- **Weekly parent fees are billed according to the number of Monday's within that month**
- Upon enrollment all families are required to pay a two week security deposit, a minimum of one week in advance and a \$10 registration fee (Registration fee applicable to new clients only)
- Families must choose a payment schedule of weekly, bi-weekly or monthly. The advanced payment must reflect the chosen payment schedule. **(Example: If your weekly parent fee is \$100 per week and you choose the bi-weekly payment schedule you must submit an initial payment of \$400. A \$200 two week security deposit and \$200 for two weeks of care).**
- A childcare slot will not be made available until the Cohoes Child Development Center has received a two week security deposit, a minimum of one week in advance and a \$10 registration fee along with a completed enrollment packet. Families will be allotted 5 business days to pay required advanced parent fees after the security deposit and registration fee has been paid.

FAMILIES RECEIVING SUBSIDIES: A childcare slot will not be held until we receive a voucher from your caseworker. Once the voucher is received, families will then be given 5 business days to pay the two week security deposit, a minimum of one week in advance and a \$10 registration fee.

- If advanced payment is not received within the 5 business days the childcare slot will no longer be held and your security deposit will be refunded.
- Parent fee statements are sent out at the beginning of each month.
- Payments must be received by the Thursday before the next billing week.
- Checks/money orders should be written to the "Cohoes Community Center" and please include the child's full name and program in the memo of the check. There is a \$30 fee for all returned checks. We reserve the right to request cash, money order or credit card payments after two returned checks.
- If parent fee is not paid by Thursday, a phone call will be made to you on Friday reminding you that a payment must be made.
- If no payment is received by 12 noon Monday, you will receive a letter stating that you must have two weeks paid by that Thursday.
- If the two week payment is not received by that Thursday, your child/children will be terminated from the program(s) effective that Friday, your security deposit will be applied to the outstanding balance and your account will be reviewed by our accounting office.
- The Cohoes Child Development Center will review accounts that are delinquent. Unpaid accounts will be turned over to a collection agency if not settled within 30 days of termination and are subject to small claims court.

PAYMENT SCENARIOS

In some cases the SAC parent fees are prorated to account for an amount of days that school will be closed and no care will be offered at the Cohoes Community Center. **A School Age week is defined as the program operating three or more days within a week. Example:** Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday care is offered in the schools and Thursday and Friday school is closed. In this instance parents are charged their regular weekly parent fee. **Exception:** Thanksgiving Week (typical). This week is prorated since regular care is offered Monday and Tuesday and full day care is only offered on

Wednesday (because the Cohoes Child Development Center is closed on Thursday and Friday). If your weekly parent fee is prorated that means that your regular weekly fee is divided by five (to get a per day rate) then you are charged for the days that it applies to you.

LATE PICK UP FEES AND POLICY

In order to compensate staff for additional time in the school age program, parents are charged a late fee of \$1.00 per minute a parent is late (after 5:30pm). The fee will be charged to your account if it is not paid at the time of the late pick up. In addition to this if a child is not picked up by 5:45pm and the SAC staff are not able to make contact with a parent/guardian or an authorized pick up, or if a parent/guardian refuses to pick a child up from program the Child Protective Services Hotline will be called and at 6pm the local police department will be notified.

WITH DRAWING FROM THE PROGRAM

In the event that you will be withdrawing your child from the program, a two week prior notice must be given in writing and submitted to the Coordinator. Upon receipt of this notice, your security deposit will be used for either the last two weeks of care for the child or to satisfy any portion of a remaining balance.

Please note that your security deposit will be forfeited if notice is not given.

REGISTERING FOR FULL AND HALF DAYS OF CARE

The School Age program offers care on the many days off the children have during the school year, with the exception of those days listed in the **Description of Services & Hours of Operation section**. Full days of care offered are determined by the Cohoes City School District calendar. Out of district families are welcome to utilize our full day holiday service.

Full days of care (7:00 AM – 5:30 PM) are offered only at the Cohoes Community Center site. During half days of care no after school program takes place within satellite sites. **Each month a letter from the Program Coordinator will be sent to the sites notifying parents of up and coming days off. Parents who wish to make use of these days are to pre-register using the sign up sheet provided in the letter.**

Pre-registration allows the School Age program to plan adequately for staff, activities, and meals. Children who are not pre-registered for full days of care are not accepted. Parents registering for full days of care are advised that if they register their child and the child does not attend, that they are still billed for the service. All add on fees **MUST** be paid prior to service or your child will not be accepted.

Snow day care is also held at the Cohoes Community Center. Children may be dropped off as early as 7am, but no later than 9am. Snow day enrollment is on a first come first serve basis. According to state law we may only take a maximum of 60 children at the Cohoes Community Center for full day, half day and snow day care. **Please note, breakfast and lunch are NOT served or provided to the children on snow days. Parents making use of snow day care MUST send a breakfast and lunch with their child.**

- **FEES AND ABSENTEEISM**

There is no credit for absenteeism in the SAC program! We do not offer part time care or “week by week” care. Please note that a credit may be applied to your account if your child was absent with an extended illness (five or more days) that is classified in our “Actively Ill” Policy. A credit may be applied if you supply a physician’s note, on letterhead, which lists the dates of the illness within 30 days of the child’s illness/absenteeism. Further, for such a credit the child must be absent for the entire week.

- **CHILD CARE AID & REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAMS**

The Cohoes Child Development Center accepts vouchers from the NYS Department of Social Services for child care assistance. Families receiving subsidies are cautioned that their child care assistance may be terminated due to excessive absenteeism. At that point in order to remain in care a family would have to sign an updated parent fee agreement listing themselves as a “Private Pay” family. (See “Fees and payments”). The SAC program also participates in most employer reimbursed child care tuition programs.

- **FEE INCREASES OR CHANGES**

The Cohoes Child Development Center reserves the right to change the tuition fee with a 30 day notice to parents.

OUT OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

In an effort to better supervise, monitor, and track the flow of children attending various extra-curricular activities we are asking all parents:

- To first verbally inform us if your child will be leaving program for any school related issue (ex. Tutoring, intramurals, play practice, etc.)
- All children should first report to program so that we are aware that the child is in attendance for that day and that we have an accurate count on all of our children.
- You must furnish our program with a schedule of times and dates of the activity.
- Parents/guardians also must complete written documentation which will be added to the children's site files who are participating in such events, so that we have written permission from you, the parent on file for regulatory and safety reasons.

The regulations governing the supervision of children while in care are very strict. This step will solidify our adherence to Section 414 of the NYS OCFS Regulations and enable the children to continue to participate in a variety of activities. Our goal is to be able to account for all of the children's whereabouts on any day of the week and be able to expect their return to program at a set time. Our greatest fear is a child leaving our program/supervision and not returning at their designated time.

The permission slips are solely for the use of school age staff. Completion of the slip has nothing to do with the signing up to an activity/club sponsored through the school. Also, please be diligent in always updating us to changes in activity schedules.

The Cohoes Child Development Center School Age Care program cannot be held liable for injuries or other claims arising out of time spent with the Cohoes City School District staff.

AUTHORIZED PICK UP POLICY

Children will only be released to those individuals listed on the initial enrollment package. Parents may add or delete "pick ups" as necessary. No child is allowed to walk home under any circumstances. Children leaving the program are to be signed out by an authorized adult listing the time of pick up and the pick ups initials. For the protection of all children in care, photo identification will be requested by SAC staff and crossed referenced to your authorized pick-up list. Please make sure that ALL authorized pick ups (including legal guardians) are carrying a photo ID. No child will be excused from program unless a parent supplies a written and dated note. The child may only leave directly after school ends, they may not attend program and leave early without an approved authorized pick-up. In the event that a court order custody agreement has been put in place the SAC program requires a signed copy of the order. When a signed copy is obtained the SAC program will honor the custody arrangement.

HOMEWORK POLICY

All children are **given the opportunity to do their homework with staff guidance**

each afternoon. This means that the children are provide with a dedicated homework space and the SAC staff will be available to answer any homework related questions the children may have, to the best of their ability. According to OCFS SAC Regulations the SAC staff are **not permitted** to "force" children to do their homework, we can simply encourage them and offer assistance.

There are situations that may cause our program to close, most notably:

- **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

If school is closed due to weather (typically snow) a determination will then be made by the Cohoes Child Development Center if we will be open and providing care. Parents are advised to monitor local T.V. and radio stations. If parents see that the "Cohoes Community Center-Daycare" is listed as closed then NO care will be available that day. Should there be a delay to the start of school; the School Age Care morning program will be cancelled. (Please see "registration procedures" on how to register for Snow Day Care).

- **ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS**

Our programs are prevented by state law from operating when one or all of our sites lose power, heat or have no running water. In any of these scenarios parents and/or emergency contacts will be notified to immediately pick up all children from program. Also, if the Superintendent of Cohoes City schools deem that there is a "cancellation of all afterschool activities" may necessitate the closure of our sites.

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I understand that the School Age Care Program's Parent Handbook may not cover every issue that arises and as a result creates the need for open communication between School Age staff and parents. By signing below, you have been given, read and agree to all of the terms and conditions set forth in the Cohoes Child Development enter School Age Care Program's Parent Handbook.

Child's Name_____ Parent/Guardian's Name_____

Parent/Guardian's Signature_____ Date_____

SAC Coordinator/Site Director Signature_____ Date_____