



AFCS Forest Explorers Family Handbook

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Welcome to the Andrew Fleck Children's Services, Forest Explorers program!

The land on which Ottawa Forest and Nature School operates is on the traditional, unceded territory of the Algonquin Nation. We are grateful to be offering Forest and Nature School learning and play on this land, inspired by those that go before us. As part of our work towards Truth and Reconciliation, we commit to acknowledging and respecting the First Nations, Inuit and Metis people as stewards of the land on which we play, learn and live

We are a multi-service/multi-site charity, established in 1911, to serve children and families in the Ottawa area.

We consider the needs of the children and respect that each child will have their own unique skills and attributes which we foster and nurture by having the children contribute to their learning.

This handbook is designed to assist you in understanding the procedures, policies, and regulations involved with the operation of our Centre. Our Program Supervisor is Tammy Potter. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with any of our employees or with Tammy at any time; she can be reached at 613-736-5355 Ext 356 or at tpotter@afchildrensservices.ca.

Alternatively, you can also connect with our Program Director Lisa Belton, lbelton@afchildrensservices.ca or Executive Director Kim Hiscott khiscott@afchildrensservices.ca.

Children are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious, and rich in potential. They grow up in families with diverse social, cultural, and linguistic perspectives.

Every child should feel that he or she belongs, is a valuable contributor to his or her surroundings, and deserves the opportunity to succeed.

When we recognize children as capable and curious, we are more likely to deliver programs and services that value and build on their strengths and abilities.

LICENSING/REGULATIONS

Our Centre is licensed under the *Child Care and Early Years Act* of the Ontario Ministry of Education Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Office. We must participate in an annual licensing review process and are required to meet all regulations in the Act as well as Health, Safety and Fire regulations dictated by the Department of Public Health, the City of Ottawa, the Ontario Fire Marshall, and the Ottawa Fire Services. The Program Advisor, from the Ministry of Education, monitors standards for safety, employee training, program quality and compliance, our License and Summary of License are posted in the Centre for your information.

Teaching a child not step on a caterpillar is as valuable to the child as it is the caterpillar

Bradley Miller

We are licensed to provide early learning and care for up to 73 children:

10 infants (12 weeks to 18 months)

15 Toddlers (18 months – 2.5 years)

24 Preschoolers (2.5 to 5 years)

24 Preschoolers (2.5 to 5 years)

HOURS OF OPERATION

The Centre is open Monday to Friday; from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM– except during Magic of Lights – when our operating hours shift to 7:00 AM to 4:45 PM.

It is beneficial for the children to arrive by 9:30 AM, so they can actively participate in the many morning program activities offered prior to lunch and rest time. Our days are active for little ones who expend an amazing amount of physical and emotional energy while they are with us.

Keeping your child's day to a maximum of 8.5 – 9 hours is ideal for their optimal learning, development and enjoyment.

Please call us if your child is going to be absent, otherwise we wonder if they are joining us. This is especially important if your child is unwell so we can monitor others for signs of illness.

Wesley Clover Parks hosts its Magic of Lights drive-through feature each year from mid-November until the first week of January. This very popular activity results in a lot of traffic, with line ups starting before they open. Entering and exiting the campground is complicated once the gates open because traffic flows in one direction only – through the campground. After 5:00 PM exiting directly from our lot onto Corkstown will not be an option. For the weeks that Magic of Lights operates we shift our operating hours to accommodate; we will open at 7:00 AM and close at 4:45 PM so all families and employees can be out of the parking lot before the gates open at 5:00 PM.

ARRIVAL AND PICK UP

The transitions from home to child care & from child care to home can set the tone for a child's day or evening, their reactions and responses may be different from day to day. For some children a quick good-bye is best, for others a bit more time might be needed. Between you and the Educator a comfortable routine for these important transitions will be established that meets the needs of your child.

ARRIVAL

- As you walk towards the centre perhaps share an observation about the forest, or a guess of where their friends might be
- Accompany your children to the space (inside or outside) where their group is spending time
 - If inside assist your child in undressing
- Greet the Educators so they are aware your child has arrived and can sign them in
- **Say good-bye to your child** either immediately or after a brief cuddle/play

Some tips based on our experience:

- Some children are initially sad when their parents leave, this is often short-lived. Reassurances from you that you will return are important as is confidently saying good-bye and that you know they will have lots to share when you return
- Some children don't acknowledge when their parents say good-bye – don't feel bad, this just means they are already plotting and planning their play and wish to get started

PICK UP

- We are likely outside, hopefully you too are dressed for the weather
 - If we are inside, please remove your outer footwear before entering the program room
- Greet the Educators so they are aware you have arrived and can sign your child out
- Your child will not be released to anyone else without written permission given in advance.
 - Alternate individuals will be required to show photo I.D.

Some tips based on our experience:

- Be prepared that there may be some clothes needing attention hanging in your child's cubby depending on what happened that day – at a minimum you will know that your child was actively engaged in play and learning
- Ideally arrive at least 15 minutes before you want to leave the centre (if you have a somewhere else you need to be) and by 5:15 PM at the latest
 - This ensures an unrushed transition from playing to home and gives you a moment to connect with the Educator

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE PROCEDURES

Families are requested to inform the centre/their provider when their child will be absent from the program by 10 am at the latest.

Procedures for Safe Arrival actions

When a family has not confirmed a child's absence, an educator will, at their first opportunity, communicate via email, text, phone call or other means, with a family to confirm the absence. This communication will be the one and only notification that the centre will send, regardless of whether a family responds.

Responsibility of parent(s): When a parent/guardian arrives to drop off a child in the morning, they are expected to connect with an educator and communicate any pertinent information such as: their arrival, the well-being of the child/health concerns, new medication, any changes in pick up times or new person picking up or any other pertinent details that the educator should be aware of.

Responsibility of educators: The educators will do a brief visual health check and also communicate any pertinent information to the parent (e.g. schedule changes). They will note any pertinent information shared by the parent in the daily log book and sign the child in the attendance record tracking form.

SAFE DISMISSAL

Families are responsible for informing the centre every time their child will be picked from the program by someone other than the parents or authorized adults.

1. Children will not be released to anyone who is not on the authorized person's list to pick up. When a new person is added to the list, they will need to provide photo identification to confirm their identity.
2. Children will not be released without supervision unless a release form has been signed and mutually agreed upon by the parent(s) and the program supervisor or assistant program coordinator.
3. Should a child not be picked up by an authorized person by closing time, the educator team will communicate by phone with the parents to notify them. Should they not be able to reach the parent(s)/guardian(s) within 15 minutes, then the emergency contacts would be notified and asked to pick up the child.
4. If they still have not been able to connect with either the parents/guardians or the emergency contacts within 30 minutes, they will contact their immediate supervisor/designate to determine the next steps which could include calling Children's Aid Services or the Police.
5. Policies regarding late pick-ups still apply.

No child will be released to a person other than the parents/guardians without written permission given to the centre in advance. When dropping off and picking up your children, please:

- Ensure that you are parking in the parking lot or the designated drop off zone area
- Anyone who picks up or drops off a child must be identified as an alternative pick up in the child's file.
- All alternate individuals will be requested to show I.D.

If an AFCS employee suspects that the individual picking up the child is visibly unfit to drive, and/or that the child may be in danger, they are obliged to report their concern to the authorities (Police /CAS) immediately. Alternate travel arrangements will be offered to the parent.

Employees cannot withhold a child from their biological parent unless a court order is on file.

LATE PICK UP

We encourage you to **arrive by 5:15 pm to pick up your child**; this ensures you have an opportunity to

connect with your child's educator and the time for an unrushed ending to your child's day.

It is recognized that due to exceptional circumstances, parents might occasionally be late in picking up their children. When this occurs, parents/guardians must notify the Centre, at the earliest opportunity. However, **late pick-ups cause difficulties both to the team and the children waiting to be picked up.**

Every person, who is responsible for picking up a child, and arrives after 5:30 PM, (based upon the Centres clocks) will be required to sign the late fee book.

If a parent/guardian is late they will be charged a late fee as follows:

\$2.00 for the first 5 minutes

\$1.00 for every consecutive minute thereafter

If a parent/guardian is late more than 3 times, the late fee will double.

Reoccurring instances of late pick up may result in the family being discharged.

Late pick up occurrences are based per family.

Late fees are part of Non-Child Care Fee Accounts. This account is for the payment of any applicable fees due and payable to AFCS that are Non-Child Care Fees, i.e. late fees, payment for an extra door fobs, parking pass fees (if needed at your location), etc.

This account does not include your regular daily childcare fee or any daily subsidized fee paid to the City of Ottawa, for our childcare services. If you are a full fee client, any Non-Child Care Fees invoiced within any given month, will be added to your regular by-monthly payment the following month that the fee was incurred. If you are a subsidize client, the payment of any Non-Child Care Fees will be processed according to the Non-Child Care Fee schedule following the month the fee was incurred. Any late fees not paid may result in discharge from the program

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Occasionally, when extreme weather conditions can create dangerous traveling conditions, we may contact parents/guardians to request that they depart earlier than their routine to ensure timely pick up. This is to ensure the safety of children and families as well as our employees who also need to travel home.

Our policies addressing late pick-ups will not be altered due to poor weather and travel conditions.

Many factors are taken into consideration including the age of the children, availability of protection from the elements: *is there shade, does the building provide wind shelter so it is not as cold as in other areas, how long will we stay outside? Can we access shelter quickly if the weather changes?* We monitor the weather, temperature and the air quality index.

While temperature and weather elements can often be managed by layers of clothing when it is wet or cold or by adding sun shirts and water play when it is hot along with shortened amount of time outside, air quality cannot be mitigated. We refer to the Current Air Quality Health Index, part of the Weather Network, for guidance when planning for our time outside.

The descriptions of the Air Quality Index and additional information can also be found here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/air-quality-health-index/understanding-messages.html>

- Low Risk (Air Quality Index of 1-3): *This is the ideal air quality for outdoor and physical activities. All outdoor programs will take place as usual.*
- Moderate Risk (Air Quality Index of 4-6): *We will shorten our typical amount of time outside by at least 50% and encourage activities that do not promote running, high energy movements. Infant programs will not be outside at all.*
- High Risk or Very High Risk (Air Quality of 7+): *Indoor programming only.*

Even though we prioritize outdoor time for all children in all seasons, there are times when we make the decision to remain indoors

EMERGENCY CLOSURES

Due to unforeseen circumstances (fire, flood, loss of electricity, and/or property damage); our program may close if the Centre is deemed unsafe or non-operational. Parents will be notified of the closure and required to make alternative arrangements until official notice is given of the Centre reopening. The Centre may also need to close during significant events, for example extreme weather, particularly in situations where staffing will be limited.

No rebate of fees will be given due to emergency closures.

WAITING LIST POLICY

All families seeking childcare must register with the centralized City of Ottawa Child Care Registry and Wait List tool (CCRAW). <https://onehsn.com/Ottawa>

There is no fee for using the Child Care Registry and Wait List tool and we do not collect a fee or a deposit for placing a child on a waiting list.

If interested, families can contact our Parent Navigator – PN@afchildrensservices.ca to obtain an estimate of when a space may become available. Your application date, child's birthdate, date care is needed, fee subsidy priority* (if applicable) as well as employer or sibling priority** (if applicable) are all factors that influence when a start-date and space may be available.

**Priority of fee subsidy is determined by the City of Ottawa Children's Services: these are based on vulnerability factors such as needs of children, income, families in schools/work programs etc.*

***Some of our sites have a contractual agreement to prioritize spaces for employees of that workplace. We also prioritize siblings of current currently attending, transfers between AFCS sites and AFCS employees.*

If any of these apply to you, please communicate with our parent navigator at pn@afchildrensservices.ca

ENROLLMENT and MOVING TO ANOTHER AGE GROUP

To fill available spaces, we contact families whose child is age-eligible for the space available, based on their registration application date and if we can successfully support the child's needs. The dynamics of the group and expected availability to move to the next age group is also considered.

To ensure we provide you and your child with the best possible early learning and care experience, you will be invited for a tour and conversation, before the space is offered and before a parent is expected to accept it. This is to ensure we can meet the needs of the child and expectations of the family.

Movement within the centre: when a space becomes vacant in an older age group, a conversation with the parents and Educator teams (both groups) determines if a child, currently attending in a younger age group, is chronologically and developmentally ready to move. An orientation to the new group is planned over a period of a week, or more starting with short visits that increase based on the child's comfort. This transition to the new program room is supported by the Educators, who will communicate consistently with the family and share updates.

Unfortunately, other than knowing when our preschool children will be 'graduating' to kindergarten, we cannot predict when we will have a vacancy.

Typically, we have very few spaces available during the year, summer & fall is when most of our new children start

WITHDRAWAL

When it is time to say good-bye to your child we respectfully request one month of written notice of pending withdrawal and require at a minimum two weeks' notice. If the required notice is not provided, fees will be charged in lieu of the notice period.

Parents who wish to temporarily withdraw their child from the program (e.g. for an extended holiday) may request to have their child's name placed on the waiting list for readmission. Regretfully, no guarantee can be given that a space will be available when needed. Please note this does not eliminate the notice period

MOVING TO KINDERGARTEN

We plan our overall site enrolment for each age group with the expectation that all children eligible for Junior Kindergarten will be leaving us by September. Our recommendation is that families plan their holidays so that their child says good bye to us and then starts in school. You will be asked to let us know your departure date as soon as possible so we can plan for moving children to the next age group and welcoming new children from our extensive wait list. Kindergarten registration typically occurs in January/February, we will send you a prompt. You may also want to be proactively thinking ahead about before and after school child care and placing your child on the waiting list of the schools that your child is eligible to attend. If your child is being supported by Children's Inclusion Support Services (CISS), then a transition to school plan will be discussed with you.

DISCHARGE

It is our intention to make every reasonable effort to ensure all children enrolled in our licensed programs can successfully remain in care. In partnership with families, we utilize additional resources and support when needed and available. However, and while this is rare, in some situations, if it is deemed that we can no longer meet a child's needs and/or that there is a safety risk to the child, other children and employees, the decision to discharge may be necessary.

The Program Director, Supervisor or Coordinator will discuss possible solutions and assist in finding alternatives.

The program also reserves the right to give notice of withdrawal of service if the family does not abide by all policies and procedures.

DAILY FEES FOR SERVICES

Program	Full Fee	CWELCC
<i>Infant</i>	\$83.24	\$39.33
<i>Toddler</i>	\$65.87	\$31.12
<i>Preschool</i>	\$55.76	\$26.35

We have been approved for the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program CWELCC and will be following all guidelines in regards to fee reductions.

Please note that there is a 2.2% + 30 cents charge on all CAD transactions made with a Canadian Visa and MasterCard credit cards and a 2.4% + 30 cents charge on all CAD transactions made with a Canadian AMEX credit cards and International credit cards.

We have a purchase of service agreement with the City of Ottawa to provide care for families eligible for fee subsidy as well as full fee families.

We have been approved for the Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program CWELCC and will be following all guidelines in regards to fee reductions. Our BASE FEES are indicated above. Our non-base fees, if applicable, include late fees, a transaction fee on all payments made by credit card, additional or lost fobs, and a \$10.00 fee for each returned payment from the bank.

Parents/guardians seeking a childcare subsidy will need to upload all required documents to the City of

Ottawa Child Care Waiting List to see if they qualify for the subsidy.

Please note: Families using a childcare subsidy are entitled to 36 absent days per calendar year; any extra absent days will be billed to the family at the full fee rate.

Please be advised that there are no refunds for sick days, holidays or closed days and all statutory holidays are invoiced at the daily rate.

The centre is closed on the following days:

New Year's Day	Jan. 1 or following work day
Family Day	Third Monday in February
Good Friday	Variable date between March 20 and April 23.
Easter Monday	Variable date between March 23 and April 26.
Victoria Day	Monday before May 25
Canada Day	July 1 st or
August Civic Holiday	First Monday in August
Labour Day	First Monday in September
Truth and Reconciliation Day	September 30 or Monday following
Thanksgiving	Second Monday in October
Remembrance Day (for professional learning – employees are working)	November 11
Christmas Day	December 25 or following work day
Boxing Day	December 26 or following work day
in lieu our agency-wide professional learning day on November 11 th)	One day between Christmas and New Years
Two days between Christmas and New Year	In addition to the stats we are also closed 2 days – these dates fluctuate each year and are communicated in September.

Prolonged Time Away

While we respect that time away with family is something to treasure, knowing that other families are waiting for spaces, it would not be appropriate for us to leave spaces vacant, even though they are being paid

- Families may be absent for up to an accumulation of 36 days, but no more than 4 consecutive weeks, as a reportable absence, pro-rated in a calendar year.
 - When this occurs (or is being planned), please speak with the Director/Consultant
- Absences greater than the above may result in a child's space being terminated so we can offer care to someone on our waiting list
 - This is based on the CWELCC Provincial policy and mirrors the eligible paid days away for families in receipt of fee subsidy
 - There may be exceptions to this depending on unique circumstances, these are to be brought to the Director for consultation
- E.g. child has a pending surgery, health and safety issues etc.

As these are publicly funded programs, this is our ethical accountability as we may be asked by our funders about our enrolment.

POLICY FOR PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS

All parent fees are payable on a bi-monthly basis
As a not-for-profit agency we do not have the means to tolerate unpaid accounts. If an account is more than two (2) months in arrears, parents/guardians can receive a notice of termination and the account will be forwarded to a collection agency.

There is a \$10.00 charge for all returned cheques.

Any late fees will be withdrawn from the method of payment indicated on file.

We offer 3 methods of fee payment

Direct Debit is set up by submitting:

- a signed Direct Debit Authorization Agreement
- a VOID CHEQUE to provide bank account information

Post-Dated Cheques:

- submit a series of cheques as per finance schedule
- Cheques should be made payable to Andrew Fleck Children's Services.

Credit Card is set up by submitting:

- a signed PRE-AUTHORIZED CREDIT CARD (PACC) Agreement form

NOTE: There is a 2-3% (depending on your card) fee added to your invoice to cover our costs

We request one-month of notice for withdrawal, but require two-weeks the appropriate notice required must be given when withdrawing your child(ren) or payment in lieu of notice will be invoiced.

You may call 613-736-1913 ext. 225 or email finance@afchildrensservices.ca at any time for questions or information concerning your account

GIFT GIVING

While it can be traditional for children to give Educators gifts during the holiday season, end of the year etc., as RECEs we are professionally bound, by the College of ECEs, from accepting any gifts of benefits, advantages, fees, honoraria, or favors, including items, money, or gift cards. This is to preserve our integrity as professionals and to protect parents/guardians from any expectation of undue influence. Homemade gifts would be an exception and are most appreciated; small gestures such as a consumable item (box of chocolates for example), that can be shared with the team onsite are also welcomed.

Your appreciation and opportunity to develop a relationship with your child is thanks enough!

NUTRITION

This centre provides a menu that meets the recommendations of Canada's Food Guide. A balanced mid-day meal plus a morning and afternoon snack are provided. Natural wholesome foods are served. This food is prepared by an onsite chef who is versed in all types cooking and knowledgeable of Canada's Food Guide for children. Our weekly menus for the current and following week are posted in each

cooking and serving area of the Centre, along with any dietary restrictions, allergies and / or anaphylaxis. All programs will keep the menus for 30 days after the last day for which they are applicable. Substitutions and specific food choices are noted on the posted menus.

Sometimes snack or lunch will be offered while we are playing on the land, we follow a *Leave No Trace* approach, meaning anything brought to the land is also brought out.

These are our practices:

- Prior to eating children will wash their hands with soap and water and / or use hand sanitizer
- A space will be designated to be the food service area – typically an elevated location (e.g. on a rock) covered by a table cloth
- Snack will be available for children to choose to access when they are hungry
 - We are supporting the development of self-regulation
 - Children will be reminded of the option and encouraged to pause their play to take the time to eat
- Food will be served as individual labelled portions

All menu planning follows the recommendations set out in Health Canada documents. Special dietary and feeding arrangements are to be carried out in

accordance with the written instructions provided by the parents/guardians of the child. Careful menu planning is essential to meet children's nutritional needs and to expose them to a wide variety of foods.

Providing a calm eating area with low lighting, background nature music, and engaging conversations where we eat meals family style supports a positive approach to meal times.

We offer water and milk at all meals; we do not serve juice or other food items that contain high sugar and sodium levels. Nutritious between-meal snacks are

provided for each child, that promotes good dental health and to not interfere with a child's appetite for meal time.

We support children's self- help skills by offering utensils for self-serving such as small tongs and using small containers to pour milk and water. Please feel free to provide input into our menu planning at any time. Parents are required to label all food and drink brought to the centre, with their child's name on it. Infant feeding requirements will be discussed at the time of admission.

SIGNS of ILLNESS

We are committed to the health and well-being of the children and employees at all our centres. Therefore, our health policies have been developed based on the guidelines from Ottawa Public Health (OPH) Department and the Child Care and Early Years Act. We strictly adhere to these policies and guidelines to ensure a safe and healthy environment for all.

Educators perform a daily well-being visual check to ensure children are well enough to participate in the program. If signs of illness are observed or your child becomes ill during the day, your child will not be able to attend the centre that day or will be notified to come and pick up your child as soon as possible.

Should your child show signs of an unknown rash, eye infection or other communicable diseases while present at the centre, we may ask you to consult with a health practitioner to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases to others.

To prevent outbreaks, the City of Ottawa Health Department requests that children with certain communicable diseases be excluded until specific criteria are met.

Your child may not attend the program if they are experiencing any of the following:

- A fever of 38 degrees Celsius or higher (100.3 Fahrenheit)
- Vomiting
- Watery Diarrhea (at least two episodes)
- Deep, persistent cough or pain
- Any unexplained rash or skin irritation
- Headache or sore throat
- Eyes/ears that are oozing any form of discharge (may require the child to be on antibiotics for 24 hours prior to readmission if a viral infection)
- Strep Throat (must be on antibiotics for 24 hours prior to readmission)

If your child develops any of the above symptoms, we ask that you keep your child at home until they are **symptom improving for 24 hours without any fever reducing medication.**

In the case of vomiting or diarrhea children can return once they have gone 48 hours symptom free after the last occurrence.

On occasion the Centre may be in an Outbreak; this is when more than 15% of children and/or employees are ill with the same symptoms. When this happens, we consult Ottawa Public Health for guidance, including for exclusion and re-entry in the program.

The program must be notified immediately if your child is hospitalized for more than 24 hours at any time.

HEADLICE

When your child is found to have head lice or nits while attending the program, you will be given a withdrawal notice for Head lice, requiring a 24-hour exclusion as well as a form to fill out indicating that the head lice treatment was completed. This form will need to be returned to the program after each treatment. This decision is made by the agency in order to prevent the spreading of head lice and live nits at the Centre.

TICKS

Ticks are present at Forest Child and Nature School through the Spring, Summer and Fall. To limit exposure, we require that all participants wear:

- Long pants
- Long sleeved shirt
- Long socks
- Closed toed shoes
- Hat

We suggest that participants tuck their pant legs into their socks and shirts into their pants to also limit possible tick exposure. We recommend using insect repellent to deter ticks. Employees always carry insect repellent that contains DEET, as well as essential oils alternatives, to offer families at drop off and to re-apply as required throughout the day – for more information:

<https://off.ca/en-ca/product/family-care/familycare-insect-repellent-for-use-on-kids-tropical-fresh>.

At the end of each day, remember to remove outerwear and do a tick check, then to do a more thorough all-body check upon arriving at home perhaps while in the bath.

If a tick is noticed, it is brushed off. If a tick is attached, we will remove the tick using a tick key or tweezers and save it in a small bag. Parents/guardians will be informed by a call as soon as possible.

For more information about ticks in Ottawa we recommend visiting the City of Ottawa public health website:

<https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/index.aspx> -

This site also shows how to remove ticks and shares information about the risks of Lyme disease:

[https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/lyme-](https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/lyme-disease.aspx?utm_medium=Cludo_Quicklink)

[disease.aspx?utm_medium=Cludo_Quicklink](https://www.ottawapublichealth.ca/en/public-health-topics/lyme-disease.aspx?utm_medium=Cludo_Quicklink)

For more information about supporting children’s play during tick season: <http://childnature.ca/what-can-we-do-about-ticks/>

POISON IVY

Poison ivy is present in the woodlands at Ottawa Forest and Nature School through the Spring, Summer and Fall. To limit exposure, we require that children have 1 pair of long pants, socks and closed toe shoes on site at all times. Washing affected skin within 15-60 minutes of exposure is likely to remove the oil that can lead to a reaction, so Educators carry potable water and soap at all times. In the event of a participant coming in contact with poison ivy, we are able to wash the affected area immediately.



IMMUNIZATION

It is recommended by the Local Medical Officer of Health, that all children be immunized. Parents of children who object to immunization due to religious/conscience or medical reasons must complete a standardized ministry approved form. Ministry approved forms for religious/conscience objections must be completed by a “commissioner for taking affidavits” (i.e. notarized). Any medical exemptions forms must be completed by a doctor or nurse practitioner. These forms are available upon request. All immunization records and/or records of parental objections will be kept as part of the children’s files.

IMPORTANT!

Ottawa Public Health requires that parents register and update their child’s immunizations online <https://www.canimmunize.ca/en/registration?phu=28>

ALLERGIES AND ANAPHYLAXIS

To provide a safe environment and protect your child **we must be aware of any allergies or potential allergies that your child may have**. All allergies must be documented on the appropriate registration and medical forms.

For children who may have an Anaphylaxis allergy, there is a detailed Ministry Policy which must be adhered to and parents/guardians must fill out all appropriate papers which includes authorization from a medical professional. If your child requires an Epinephrine auto injector (EpiPen), the team must be made aware of this and be given the auto injector when you drop your child off. Should you and your child arrive at the program without the auto injector you will not be able to drop them off until their auto injector is onsite. We strive to be a **nut safe & scent free** environment and will do everything that we can to protect your child while at the centre, but we cannot guarantee that your child may not come in to contact with an allergic substance. This policy and all forms required will be reviewed with you at

Some children in our programs have life-threatening food allergies (Anaphylaxis) and, for this reason, it is imperative that you **DO NOT bring any food into the centre**, unless otherwise arranged with the program Coordinator. Any food coming into the Centre or home child care premises must not contain any nuts or nut products and must be labeled with the child’s name. Please note that should there be any other anaphylactic allergies (other than nut or nuts products), a communication will be shared with that information and any directives to follow. Anaphylaxis is a medical condition that causes severe reaction to specific agents and can be fatal in seconds. All employees are trained in the use of an Epinephrine auto injector.

time of the tour and prior to your child’s first day at the Centre. Children attending our infant, toddler and preschool programs are provided with 2 snacks and a lunch daily. We attempt to accommodate a variety of dietary restrictions and allergies. **Food from home is not necessary unless agreed to in advance with the program supervisor**. Should food from home be necessary, each container / item must be clearly labeled with the child’s full name and any parental written instructions (if applicable).

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

If your child requires medication while in the program, you are required to complete and sign a *Medication Authorization Form* which provides details about the medication, including the time and amount of the dosage. Should your child be prescribed antibiotics, they must have been taking the

antibiotics for 24 hours prior to returning to the Centre.

Due to the frequency and their longer-term daily usage, **sunscreen, diaper creams, and lip balms, hand sanitizer can have a blanket authorization from a parent** on the enrolment form and can be administered without a medication form as long as they are non-prescription and/or they are not for acute (symptomatic) treatment and are **labelled with your child's name**, whether they have a drug administration number (DIN) or not.

All medication no longer needed or expired is to be taken home.

We request that all medication be hand-delivered to us to be stored in the appropriate manner. The Centre must store all medication in a locked container in the fridge or cupboard except for emergency medication. A designated employee will be responsible for all medications.

We can only accept medication which is in its original container and the container or package must be clearly labelled with the following:

- Child's name
- Name of drug/medication
Dosage
- Date of purchase
- Expiration date
- Instructions for storage & administration
- Possible side effects

SAFE SLEEP

Each family is advised of our **Safe Sleep Policy** at the time of enrolment.

Each child will be assigned their own cot /mat/crib and it will be labelled with their name. All cots/mats/cribs are disinfected weekly. Educators performs visual checks on all children 4 times throughout rest time and these are documented in the daily log book. Any changes in the child's sleeping patterns or behaviors will be communicated with parents. Educators will consult with parents/guardians with respect to a child's sleeping arrangements. We will embrace opportunities for children to nap outdoors on the deck or maybe even under the trees when this feels like the right experience to introduce to the group and of course when the weather cooperates.

Educators will communicate, to parents/guardians, any significant changes in a child's sleeping patterns or behaviors. Any sleep preferences that are identified at intake or communicated by parents will be documented in daily log book.

BEHAVIOUR GUIDANCE

The emotional and physical well-being of children in our care is a priority Positive forms of Behavior Guidance with emphasis on discussion, encouragement and positive reinforcement comply with our philosophy to promote the healthy development of the children.

Please read our Program Statement for further information on Behavior Guidance Practices.

Prohibited Practices as defined by the *Child Care and Early Years Act*:

- Corporal punishment of the child (which may include but is not limited to, hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching)
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting them self or someone else, only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the premises for the purpose of confining the child or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.

- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth.
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORTS

If your child suffers a significant injury requiring more than basic comfort (soap, water, band-aid, ice, TLC) or that is more than would be expected in the normal course of play, Educators will administer first aid and also complete an accident report before the child is signed out (when possible) or by the next day that care is provided. A copy will be provided to the parents/guardians.

If the injury is severe enough to warrant medical assistance, parents/guardians will be notified immediately to come and pick up their child to seek medical attention. If emergency treatment at a hospital is required, parents will be contacted to either accompany or meet someone at the hospital. If parents cannot be contacted the designated employee will follow emergency procedures and call either ambulance services or 911, depending on the severity of the injury.

SERIOUS OCCURRENCES

As a licensed program we are responsible for delivering high quality services that promote the health, safety and well-being of all children. A part of our accountability requirements, under licensing, is to report incidents to the Ministry of Education Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Offices. The type of incidents that we must report include any life-threatening injury or illness or any time there is a disruption of service for example; a power outage which means the program is closed.

We are very proud at Andrew Fleck Children’s Services to offer a high-quality licensed program and take our accountability to parents and the public very seriously. We have consistently followed the requirements under the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, to report incidents to the Ministry. The Ministry believes that parents will benefit from information about the incidents that occur including the actions that we have taken to prevent and minimize a reoccurrence by posting non-identifying information when an incident has occurred.

Beside our license, you will find a serious occurrence notification form posted anytime an incident has been reported to the Ministry. The form identifies the date, the type of incident, a description and any action taken. There will be no identifying info included on the form. The notification form will remain posted for 10 business days; if the posting is related to an incident that involved your family, you will be personally informed.

CONCERNS OR ISSUES

All issues and concerns brought forward are taken seriously and every effort will be made to resolve issues and concerns to the satisfaction of all.

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

Everyone, including members of the public, and professionals who work closely with children, is required by law, to report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

Procedures to follow:

Examples of issues or concerns	Steps to report and issue or concern:	Steps for responding to issue or concern:
Program Related e.g.: General Program Delivery	Raise the issue or concern to the employee directly or the manager or designate	When an issue or concern is brought forward to an employee, it is their responsibility to: Inform the appropriate manager or designate of the situation within 24 hours.
Agency Related e.g.: General AFCS Operations Related	Raise the issue or concern to - the Manager or Designate.	Document the issues/concerns in detail. Documentation should include: the date and time the issue/concern was received; the name of the person who received the issue/concern;
Employees, students or volunteers	Raise the issue or concern to the individual directly or the manager or designate	the name of the person reporting the issue/concern; the details of the issue/concern; any steps taken to resolve the issue/concern information given to the person regarding next steps Provide the person expressing the concern with the contact information of the person being notified (if applicable) Explain that every effort will be made to provide an initial response or resolution to the concern or issue within 2 business days.

OUTINGS ON THE LAND

AFCS recognizes that all children are competent and capable individuals, therefore children will be offered opportunities within their age and developmental capabilities, within a reasonable set of parameters. Educators consider the individual child’s competency when making decisions that can appropriately support the child’s independence.

All children will participate in exploring and playing on the land. This may include walks and hikes through the forest at Wesley Clover site. Licensing ratios, as dictated by the Child Care and Early Years Act, will be maintained during the outdoor play. Employees supervising forest area outings will follow all procedures established by this policy.

Finding/Selecting the play on the land areas: (Safety checks)

There are three dedicated Zones (A, B & C) well-known by the Educators for children to access in the forest. All Zones and play areas are located north/west of the building (away from the road).

Each Zone may include multiple named play areas (e.g. rocky/mossy place, party mix etc.)

These names are very familiar to the Educators and the children and are used to define a play area

Before being identified as a Zone or a play area within a Zone, a site risk assessment and an activity risk assessment is completed.

No area is to be approved for play or accessed if there is a large body of water; puddles are welcome and to be expected, in addition:

- There are no ponds or creeks in the forest

- None of the play zones are to be close to or easily accessible to a road
- All zones are north of the main road

In addition to the initial site and activity risk assessment, there are two regular and ongoing safety checks completed as follows:

- Daily check: completed upon arrival at each play area
 - Educator conducts and documents the daily check before the children commence playing.
- Seasonally (quarterly) for all of the play areas within each Zone that the children access
 - Educator conducts and documents the seasonal check quarterly

Selecting play zone on a daily basis

It is recognized that each Zone, based on its distance from the licensed space, will require differing levels of preparation and planning before leaving the licensed space. The Zones are defined based on their distance from the licensed space

A number of factors are considered when selecting which Zone to explore on any given day influencing the choice of Zone/play area where Educators will explore and play on the land with the children.

Each day, when selecting which Zone/area for the hike / play on the land the following are to be considered:

- Age group
- Number of children, number of adults
- Educator confidence
- Weather
- Necessary clothing, are all children suitably prepared for the weather?
- Length of walk/hike to the Zone / play area
- Estimated time of return
- Any medical conditions of the children to take into consideration
- Washroom access with Luggable loo option
- Who else may be exploring and / or playing on this land
- Likelihood of inclement weather

	Distance away from the Centre		
	Up to 300M	More than 300M but less than 1KM	More than 1KM but less than 2KM
	Zone A	Zone B	Zone C
Post which Zone / play area the group is exploring	x	x	x
Indicate departure and estimated time of return		x	x
Back pack (contents listed below)	x	x	x
Emergency bag (contents listed below)		x	x
Cellphone – fully charged	x	x	x
Water bottle labelled for each child	x	x	x
Luggable loo		x	x

Contents of our backpack and emergency bag:

- first aid kit
- children's emergency medical information
- Employee and volunteer emergency medical information
- list of children who are participating
- hand sanitizer
- trash bags
- foil safety blankets
- additional water
- emergency snacks

During outings on the land

Head Counts When the group lists are confirmed, one educator is formally assigned primary responsibility for ensuring proper head counts, these are to be done:

- before departing the licensed space
- at all transitions before moving to a new area
- upon arrival
- at any other times necessary to ensure the safety of the children.

Meeting Area Upon arrival to destination, the children will be instructed to stay within a parameter.

The size of the parameter will reflect the age and development of the group and the individual children. A designated meeting area shall be selected in the event a child becomes separated from the group and the children will be taught not to move from this area.

Supervision

Direct sight of all children by an Educator / responsible adult must be maintained at all times. The Educators are to designate which children are to be within the sight of which Educator and communicate if a child moves to the sight line of another Educator.

Educators position themselves at opposite end of play space on the land so that they can observe all of the children: watching, counting, and listening at all times.

Educators are actively moving throughout the play space while interacting with children and communicating with each other.

During transitions, educators account for all children with name-to-face recognition by visually identifying each child. Educators will discuss boundaries and play area with all children before play begins.

Eating in the forest

Sometimes snack or lunch will be offered while we are playing on the land, we follow a *Leave No Trace* approach, meaning anything brought to the land is also brought out.

These are our practices:

- Prior to eating children will wash their hands with soap and water and / or use hand sanitizer
- A space will be designated to be the food service area – this will often be an elevated location (e.g. on a rock) covered by a table cloth
- Snack will often be available for children to choose to access when they are hungry.
- We are supporting the development of self-regulation
- Children will be reminded of the option and encouraged to pause their play to take the time to eat if necessary
- Food will be served as individual labelled portions

Toileting

Educators will offer regular washroom breaks (approximately every hour). There are two porta-potties available nearby at most locations. If no porta-potties are available, an educator will help the child find a suitable place away from the play to relieve themselves. Educators follow a *Leave No Trace* philosophy to

If a child does not arrive on time to leave with the group it will be the responsibility of the parent to meet the group on the land in the forest. When the child joins the group in Zone B or Zone C, the lead Educator will communicate the Program Coordinator to update the total number of children participating.

A hazard is something a child does not see

A risk is a challenge that a child sees and can choose to undertake or not

Eliminating risk undermines a child's ability to assess danger

limit the impact on the environment. The Educator can set up an outdoor washroom area using a luggable loo and if necessary, set up a blue tarp for privacy. Children will follow proper hygiene by washing their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer once they've finished. Tissues and handwipes will also be provided.

For children wearing diapers, Educators will follow the same approach; most diaper changes will be stand-up but a changing station for diapering routine can also be set up. Educators have trash bags for when items need to be removed.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES – while on the land

In the event of a serious issue, the following steps should be taken:

Injury

- Assess the situation; give clear directions of what the next step will be
- Apply the necessary first aid.
- Call 911 if required
- Contact the Program Coordinator to identify the situation and get assistance
- Other Educators regroup the remaining children together to support supervision.
 - Conduct a head count.
 - If necessary, move to another location.
 - The objective is to keep the remaining children calm and distracted from what is occurring.
 - The remaining Educators and children continue their play, unless ratios cannot be met, then they are to return to the centre
- If the child is transported to the hospital, the Program Coordinator /Supervisor will accompany the child in the ambulance.
- The Educator or Program Coordinator will call the parent and advise them of the situation
- Fill out an accident report

In the event that an Educator becomes ill or injured and is transported to the hospital: the group will return to the licensed space as soon as possible unless appropriate ratios can be met.

Missing child:

Immediately do a preliminary search of the areas, call out the child's name with urgency, use the howl signal:

- Alert other Educators close by
- Contact the Program Coordinator
- Educators regroup the children at the designated meeting place – do a head count
- Program Coordinator meets with the group along with as many other available adults, designates one adult who is to coordinate from the licensed space
- While on route the Program Coordinator contacts Wesley Clover Parks for additional assistance
- Upon arrival at the site, Program Coordinator alerts the child's parents & determine if the police need to be called
- Others continue with the search.
- Reassure the other children and have someone try to engage them in an activity, if applicable.
- Refer to Serious Occurrence procedures for reporting.

APPROPRIATE CLOTHING

Children should wear comfortable clothing that you do not mind getting dirty. Shoes must always be worn. Well-fitted foot wear, such as running shoes, are required (no slippers/flip flop or croc sandals) so children can transverse the terrain with confidence.

We believe there is no such thing as bad weather when you have the right outdoor clothing!

There are usually two outdoor play periods a day (weather permitting) and we ask that the children be dressed accordingly: very warm, water-resistant clothing for winter; cool clothing with sun hats and sun screen for summer. It is extremely important that a complete change of clothing (mitts, hat, pants, shirt, socks, underclothes, and shoes) is provided to be kept at the Centre.

Please label all your child's belongings including clothing. We cannot be held responsible for lost/ missing items. Parents are responsible for bringing in diapers and wipes for their child. A helpful reminder note will be posted on your child's cubby, when diapers/wipes are running low.

Weather	Clothing*
Warm	Short or long-sleeved shirt – ideally one expected to provide sun protection Durable and breathable pants Sun hat Closed-toes shoes or boots An extra pair of socks in backpack
Cold	As temperatures drop children will require base layers & winter gear. Base layers – synthetic long underwear/top Mid layers – fleece pants, sweatshirt ovetop of base Snow pants and jacket or snowsuit 2+ pairs mittens (mitts are so much warmer than gloves) Warm hat Boots
Rainy	Long sleeved shirt Long pants Long socks- pull up over pant cuffs for bug protection* Running or hiking shoes (no sandals or open toed shoes, please) Sun Hat Rain gear (waterproof boots, pants, jacket) Bug Jacket (optional) 1 extra changes of clothes (including underwear and socks) Sunscreen on sunny days Bug spray in the Fall and Spring months

*We also have a supply of extra indoor and outdoor clothing to loan to children when necessary.

AFCS provides a Muddy Buddy for each child to wear over their regular clothing for days when the play on the land is anticipated to be wet / muddy or when additional layer is necessary. These remain onsite and are washed regularly.

AFCS also provides a long sleeve sun shirt for each child to wear over their regular clothing, this shirt is rated at UV protection SPF 50.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

To protect the health and safety of children and employees, Andrew Fleck Children’s Services has an emergency management policy and procedures that sets out the roles and responsibility of all employees. All programs conduct monthly fire drills and follow evacuation procedures. This ensures that all children become familiar with emergency procedures. In the event of a real emergency and that the children cannot return to the Centre they will be moved to our designated emergency shelter and parents will be contacted to pick up their children immediately. Our Emergency Shelter is the Ottawa Forest and Nature school office located at 411 Corkstown Road. As indicated in the AFCS Emergency Management policy, the Supervisor of the program or designate will notify parents/guardians of the emergency situation, evacuation and the location to pick up their children. Notification will be done by email or phone depending on the situation. Where possible, the Executive Director will update the agency’s website and the manager or designate will update the program or place of work voicemail box as soon as possible to inform parents/guardians that the program has been evacuated. The details of the evacuation, site location and contact information will be provided in this message.

EMPLOYEE QUALIFICATIONS, SCREENING MEASURES AND CRIMINAL REFERENCE CHECK – VULNERABLE SECTOR CHECKS

All our Early Childhood Educators (ECE) are registered with the College of ECE. Our ECE Assistants support the Early Childhood Educators (ECE) in providing a nurturing, developmentally appropriate, healthy and safe environment to meet the needs of all children.

All employees counted in ratio have Standard First Aid & Infant / Child CPR qualifications and must provide a Criminal Reference Check with the Vulnerable Sector prior to their employment and every 5 years after. Employees also sign a Declaration of Offense on an annual basis.

Additional qualifications:

The team members are either already Forest and Nature Practitioner Certified or are committed to completing this training!

All our programs support students from various Colleges as they complete their ECE placements. Volunteers are also often part of our programs.

SUPERVISION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STUDENTS

While we welcome community members, students and / or volunteers to our program they are never left alone with the children, left unsupervised or included in ratios. All students and volunteers receive a detailed orientation prior to beginning their placement and must abide by and sign off on our Program Statement and all policies and procedures as well as provide us with a criminal reference check with the vulnerable sector.

DUTY TO REPORT

In Ontario, under section 125 of the Child, Youth and Family Services Act, 2017, S.O. 2017, anyone who has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is, or may be, in need of protection must promptly report the suspicion and the information upon which it is based to the Children’s Aid Society. Our educators have been trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect. Any allegations or suspicion of child abuse and/or neglect is also deemed a Serious Occurrence under the Child Care and Early Years Act.

Visit [Report child abuse and neglect-It’s your duty](#)

Educators are required to report concerns where there are reasonable grounds to suspect one or more of the following with respect to a child:

- Physical abuse:* signs of physical harm or injury
- Sexual abuse:* inappropriate touching or involvement in a sexual activity or exploitation
- Emotional Harm:* Humiliation, insults, threats, and other behaviors that harm a child’s emotional state.
- Neglect:* Basic needs for food, clothing, shelter & safety are not met
- Exposure* to family violence

CANADIAN CENTRE FOR OUTDOOR PLAY (CCOP)

Andrew Fleck Children’s Services and the Forest Explorers program is part of a new 5-year initiative called the Canadian Centre for Outdoor Play (CCOP), a centre of excellence and demonstration site in outdoor play practice, research, and policy. This initiative is a collaboration between Andrew Fleck Children’s Services, Outdoor Play Canada, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the CHEO Research Institute, and Algonquin College (the “CCOP Collaborative”).

Part of the goal of this initiative is to measure the impact of the Forest Explorers program on the physical, mental, emotional, social and environmental health and wellbeing of the children in attendance, their parents/guardians, and the practitioners who care for them. To do so, the Healthy Active Living and Obesity Research Group at the CHEO Research Institute will reach out in the coming months to families to seek their interest in participating in various research initiatives.

Participation in research initiatives as part of the CCOP is completely voluntary – you are NOT required to participate in research. Your decision to participate or not in research at the CCOP will not affect your child’s participation in the Forest Explorers program. All information gathered from research will be kept strictly confidential. If we publish or present research results, we will not use any identifying information. We will keep all research data securely stored on CHEO servers.

You may or may not directly benefit from research at the Forest Explorers. However, you and your child’s input and perspective would be of tremendous value to us. There is no action for you to do at this time – we will circulate information about upcoming research studies and seek your participation within the coming months.

You can opt out of being contacted – to do so, and/or if you have any questions about research being planned as part of the CCOP, please contact Dr. Louise de Lannoy at info@outdoorplaycanada.ca.

Thank you!

Louise de Lannoy, Executive Director, Outdoor Play Canada
On behalf of the CCOP collaborative