

MIDDLEBURY COOPERATIVE NURSERY SCHOOL

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THE FAMILY HANDBOOK

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***ENCLOSED: Family Handbook Agreement – Please Sign and Return ***

Middlebury Cooperative Nursery School

The Middlebury Cooperative Nursery School is one of the oldest early childhood programs in the state of Vermont. Incorporated as a non-profit in 1965, MCNS had operated informally as a neighborhood playgroup and nursery school since the 1930's. MCNS moved into its current location after the two-room schoolhouse became available following the consolidation of the Middlebury elementary schools into what is now Mary Hogan School. With the growing demands of operating a licensed early childhood program, and changing community needs, the parent-run MCNS, turned over operations of the program to Mary Johnson Children's Center in 2007. MCNS strives to maintain its tradition of meaningful parent involvement in all aspects of the program.

The curriculum at the MCNS is not conventional or fixed but supports the importance of play. Curriculum evolves depending on the interests of children, teachers and families. We believe that all parents are the experts on their children and want what is best for them. We believe that teachers are collaborators, researchers, and nurturers who are dedicated to supporting children and parents. We believe in the extraordinary capability and intelligence of children. We believe in children's ability to construct their own knowledge. As a school, we believe in making visible and giving voice to the rich potential and talent of children, and in the right of all children to have an environment where this talent and potential is respected and nourished.



A Negotiated Curriculum

Our approach to curriculum is a way of perceiving children, a way of working with each child, taking into consideration each child's unique self, beliefs, skills and interests. This approach— child initiated and teacher framed—demands a high level of teacher understanding, involvement and commitment. Teachers respond to children's interests and needs by providing an environment that is rich in materials and activities that specifically support those interests and needs.

Learning occurs when children are engaged in collaborative activity about something that deeply interests them...the teacher's role is to collaborate with the children in their exploration so [the teacher's] knowledge can scaffold (build upon) their understanding.

Lewin-Benham, NAEYC Beyond the Journal, March 2006

On a walk a teacher may observe that a group of children is intrigued with watching the flowing water in the Middlebury River. This interest might provide for an in depth exploration of water. What floats? What sinks? What happens when water freezes? Melts? Where does water come from? Where does it go? What animals live in the water? The possibilities for exploration are endless and are constructed on the children's interests and then, through careful listening, extended by the teacher's use of questions and materials that are provocations to expand children's further exploration.

Often families are concerned, particularly as a child nears kindergarten, about "academics". The program at MCNS is built on the developmental principal that children are born learning, and that the learning that takes place in the first five years of life is greater than at any other time of life, including four years of college. Children are learning all day, from the time they get up until they fall asleep. They are learning to share, to make friends, to negotiate, to sooth themselves, to dress, to feed themselves. They are continually acquiring language and the understanding of complex concepts like family, community, neighborhood, space, time, and color. Their learning is never-ending.

Early childhood educators see learning from this perspective, and align the curriculum with the Vermont Early Learning Standards. We could teach very young children all the sounds and letters of the alphabet and to count from one to one thousand, but we don't believe that is the best use of their time. They will learn letters and numbers and how to read when they are developmentally ready, when those skills are the next logical step in their learning. Typically, but not always, children develop these interests when they are about four or five years old.

The Emotional Foundations of School Readiness

These were developed by the national organization, Zero to Three, reflect the Center's goals for each child leaving the Center and entering kindergarten. These characteristics are most closely associated with school readiness.

Confidence -- A sense of control and mastery of one's body, behavior and world; the child's sense that he is more likely than not to succeed at what he undertakes, and that adults will be helpful.

Curiosity -- The sense that finding out about things is positive and leads to pleasure.

Intentionality -- The wish and capacity to have an impact, and to act upon that with persistence. This is clearly related to a sense of competence, of being effective.

Self-Control -- The ability to modulate and control one's own actions in age-appropriate ways; a sense of inner control.

Relatedness -- The ability to engage with others based on the sense of being understood by and understanding others.

Capacity to Communicate -- The wish and ability to verbally exchange ideas, feelings and concepts with others. This is related to a sense of trust in others and of pleasure in engaging with others, including adults.

Cooperativeness -- The ability to balance one's own needs with those of others in a group activity.

Five Guiding Principles for Children, Families, and Staff

Be safe physically and emotionally. Be aware of boundaries, learn to regulate, control impulses, and practice self-awareness. Know when and how to help others and ask for help. Individualize supports, challenges, and expectations.

Be actively engaged with others, experiences, the environment, and the community. Be genuine, rise to challenges, and solve problems. Initiate and try new things. Make connections, contribute, and collaborate.

Be respectful of others, materials, and the environment. Use strong listening and communication skills, being aware of the messages sent verbally and non-verbally. Value differences.

Be responsible. Initiate, give your full attention, and follow through with expectations. Be proactive, responsive, and dependable. Take care of your needs and do your best. Communicate ideas and feelings. Contribute to a positive, healthy environment.

Extend kindness to others. Be friendly and care for others, going above and beyond. Empathize and show compassion. Offer support and show appreciation. Celebrate successes.



Admissions

In the Mary Johnson Children's Center programs we are committed to creating a diverse community of children and families. Families are encouraged to be proactive in their search for an early childhood program, and if they are interested in enrolling their child at MCNS they should ensure that their child is on the MCNS waiting list. MCNS serves children from eighteen months until their entrance into kindergarten.

When enrolling children, we strive towards creating a balanced group of children and families. The following criteria are all considered:

- Age range
- Sibling status
- Gender
- Children and families with special needs
- Enrollment contracts
- Date of placement on waitlist

Rates are spelled out in the MCNS tuition contract that must be signed and returned at the time of enrollment. **If your child receives state tuition assistance, all paperwork must be processed before your child begins.**

If your child is 3 or older by the start of the school year, you may qualify for funding from your local school district via the Universal PreK Program. Before enrolling, eligible families will receive and must submit a school district form by mid-summer allowing Mary Johnson to access this funding for their child.

Mary Johnson Children's Center programs do not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, special need, medical condition, health insurance coverage, ancestry, sexual orientation, citizenship, place of birth, or association with a member of a protected category.

Waiting List

Families are encouraged to put their child's name on the waiting list as soon as is possible. It is not uncommon for expectant parents to have their unborn child on the waiting list. While most children begin their experience in the early fall with the start of the traditional academic year, MCNS may have unanticipated openings at any point during the year. Families move, jobs change, families' needs change and consequently some openings occur at unanticipated times.

A family can place their child's name on the waiting list by filling out a form on our website or by calling Mary Johnson Children's Center. You will be asked for your name, your child's name, your child's date or expected date of birth, your address and your telephone number. You will also be asked for what you think might be your child's attendance schedule. There is no fee or deposit for putting your child's name on the waiting list and there is no commitment on your part to enroll your child if an opening becomes available.

Visiting

Prior to enrolling a child at MCNS, all families are asked to tour the program, observe the classrooms and ask any questions they may have. While lunch, outdoor time and naptime are integral components of our day, morning visits are preferable as families can most easily see the program dynamic and meet teachers with the least disruption to the classrooms.

Once a family has determined that they would like to enroll their child, they will be scheduled for a Welcome Conference when they will sit down with their child's teachers and share information about their child and to ask any questions about the classroom and the program.

It is particularly important that children visit MCNS, see their classroom and meet their teachers prior to their first day.



First Day(s)

The first day can be stressful, not only for children but for parents as well. Our experience has also shown that occasionally a child will breeze through the first day's separation and then experience a difficult separation on the second or third day. It is important for parents to talk to their child about what to expect: that they will be with other children, who the teachers will be, and explain that you will be coming back later in the day. You may want to spend a little extra time with your child to help them settle into an activity before leaving. If the separation is difficult when you do leave, it is best to simply say goodbye and leave. More often than not, the child will be upset for a short time, then settle into the classroom and be fine. We will help in any way we can. You may also call and check on how your child is doing later. Teachers will call a parent if there are any significant concerns.

Arrival and Departure

- **Arrival:** We ask that children arrive at MCNS by 9:00. Our experience has shown that children who consistently arrive after the rest of the class have a more challenging time entering and joining in classroom activities.

Transitions can be hard and some children experience difficulty saying goodbye in the morning. Teachers will be ready to help families whose children are having difficulty transitioning, and families should always feel free to call to see how their child is doing.

- **Departure:** Just as it is important to consider arrival time, it is important to consider the end of the day. Late pick-ups are upsetting for children who are waiting. Children—and adults—can be tired and extra time and patience is required. For children who find it challenging to leave, it can be helpful to establish a routine with the help of the classroom teacher and stick with it.

- **Sign in/out:** Please be certain that your child's teacher is aware of when you are arriving or departing. It is very important that your child be signed in and out each day by you or an authorized adult.

- **Release of Children:** Children will not be released to an unauthorized person. Families should list those people who are authorized to pick up their child on the child's enrollment form. In a rare emergency situation, arrangements can be made verbally. If the person picking up the child is not known to the teacher, information about the person must be provided, including their name, phone number, and physical description. This person will be required to show a picture ID. If an unauthorized person arrives to pick up a child, they will be denied and staff will speak to the individual and explain the policy that no child will be released without authorization from the parent. Families are requested not to ask the Center to release their child to anyone who is under eighteen.

- **Emergency Contacts:** Families **must** provide MCNS with the name and telephone numbers of **TWO** people to contact in an emergency or illness if the family cannot be reached. The family provides this information on the child's enrollment form. Be sure to update as necessary.



Hours and Schedules

Families can choose a three, four or five day option. If a child has a part week schedule and a family has the occasional need for an additional day, the family should check with their child's classroom teacher to see if the schedule can accommodate the family's need for care. They must also notify the Mary Johnson office of any schedule changes.

When they enroll their child at MCNS, families will be given a calendar of MCNS dates including when the program is closed for holidays, in-service, as well as parent workdays and other important events. This schedule can also be found on the Mary Johnson Children's Center website at www.mjccvt.org.

MCNS is traditionally closed for five days at the end of the academic year in mid to late June, and for a week before the beginning of the academic year in late August. This time is spent for teacher in-service training and upkeep of the facilities.



Late Policy

We all have times when everything seems to conspire against us. The flat tire, the car that won't start, the traffic accident that leaves us stuck in traffic; all are realities of life. For these reasons, families are expected to arrange for a backup person to pick up their child in the event of an emergency. While it happens rarely, families should be assured that in a family emergency, the family's emergency contacts will be called and MCNS will make sure that a staff member stays with their child until arrangements can be made.

However, these highly unusual circumstances are the exception and families must leave sufficient time to get to MCNS to pick up their child in a timely way. **We ask that families plan for at least 15 minutes in the building at the end of the day for pick-up. Families who are still in the building past the closing times will be assessed a fee of \$20.00 incrementally for each 15 minutes past closing time.** Families will be billed for this charge.

Daily Schedule

Each classroom has its own unique schedule that will be posted in each classroom. Activities and schedules change according to the curriculum and the seasons, as well as group needs.

The schedule will provide free play in the morning, giving the children time to settle in, explore their interests, and connect with peers. A morning breakfast is also provided. There will be a group meeting or circle time, and small group work. The children will have time outside, on the playground or in the community. Midday the group will enjoy lunch together, followed by quiet choices and rest time. Following rest time, they will have an afternoon snack and return to the great outdoors.



Tuition - Vacation Policy - Withdrawal

MCNS, as part of Mary Johnson Children's Center, is a nonprofit organization that is dependent upon tuition for its operation. Tuition rates are set by the Center's Board of Directors and take effect at the start of the fall academic year. Tuition is calculated on a yearly basis, but, for the convenience of families, is broken down into a weekly payment. Every family must complete a Tuition Contract before their child enrolls at MCNS. If your child receives state tuition assistance, all paperwork **MUST** be processed and approved before your child begins.

Tuition does not vary on partial weeks that include holidays or in-service days, and the full weekly tuition is due on those weeks. In addition, the Center has calculated into the fee structure two tuition-free weeks, one over the Thanksgiving week and the other during the December holiday break.

Vacation / Tuition-free week: Parents are also given the option of taking one "tuition-free" week during the program year when their child does not attend MCNS. To qualify for this tuition reduction, the family must notify the Center's bookkeeper and their child's classroom teachers in advance of the vacation week that their child will not be attending the program. Vacation weeks must be five consecutive days.

Discounts:

1. Universal PreK Program

MCNS participates in the Universal PreK Program with area supervisory districts. Families whose children qualify (children must be 3 years old by September 1 of the new school year and live in one of the districts that participate) will have their tuition reduced for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks of their early childhood education, the first week of school through mid-May.

2. Second Child Discount

Families with two or more children attending MCNS can receive a 20% discount on the child(ren) with the lowest tuition rate. This does not apply to children participating in the Universal PreK Program.

Summers: There is a 3-day minimum enrollment for the summer months. If you choose not to attend in the summer and return in the fall there will be a flat fee of \$1500 with two \$750 payments due at the beginning of July and August respectively.

Withdrawal: If a family decides to withdraw their child from the Center, they are responsible for giving two weeks' notice. Families wishing to withdraw their child, but who fail to provide a two-week notice, will still be liable for the last weeks' tuition.

Tax / Payment Receipts: Many families require a receipt for childcare for tax or employer reimbursement purposes. If you require one, please contact the business office at Mary Johnson Children's Center. **Please allow up to two weeks for processing, especially during tax season.**

Employer Federal ID#: 03-0224359

Snow Days and Emergency Information

If the Center is to be closed due to weather conditions, this information will be posted on Procare, www.mjccvt.org, and on local television stations and their websites.

If there is an emergency during the school day that requires that we leave its East Middlebury location, the Center will evacuate and go to one of our evacuation sites in its emergency plan. For travel to a distant evacuation site, children will be evacuated via cars, with or without car seats. Parents will be called once the evacuation and relocation is complete and will be directed to the appropriate evacuation site. While every effort will be made to put this information on the website, there is no guarantee that this will be possible to achieve.



Safe Transportation Policy

If an obviously intoxicated/impaired parent or caregiver comes to retrieve a child, program staff will ask that the parent to find someone else to pick up the child. If the parent's behaviors do not seem to be impaired, the staff will ask the parent if they are okay to drive or if they would like help calling a ride. If the impaired individual insists on retrieving the child and drives away with the child in the car, the police will be called immediately.

If the program has any reason to believe a driver or parent is breaking the law, including public knowledge that an individual should not be driving, staff will call the police. Likewise, if any child (served by MJCC or not) does not have or is not exercising appropriate car safety seating, program staff will not allow the adult to leave with the child or call authorities.

Children's Belongings

Clothing and Extra Clothing:

We encourage lots of active play, so children should be dressed comfortably in clothing that can be washed and will not cause alarm if splattered with paint, mud or other potentially staining substances. We also play in water tables, with hoses and in other water related activities and although we encourage the use of smocks, children often need a change (or two) of clothing during the day. Families are asked to keep adequate changes in their child's cubby. Parents are also asked to provide diapering supplies, as needed.

Families should remember that children are taken outdoors daily, weather permitting, and should be dressed accordingly: a light jacket, hat, good walking shoes and rain boots for damp days in fall and spring; a heavy winter jacket, snow pants, mittens, scarf, hat and snow boots in winter. When there is snow, children must have snow pants and boots to go outside. During warm weather families should provide a bathing suit and towel daily.

If families want MCNS to help keep track of their child's clothes, please label everything. Even with labeling, clothing can go astray, so families are asked to make sure that their child's clothing does not have particular sentimental or monetary value.



Toys from Home:

For many children, something from home helps during transitions. These special objects are used for comfort, and to keep children connected with their home. Comfort items brought from home will be respected as a particular child's and the child will be given the choice of keeping the item safely in their cubby or sharing it with other children. The program does not take responsibility for lost or broken items brought from home, so please keep all toys at home.

Holidays, Birthdays and Special Occasions

Celebrating holidays offers many opportunities for fun, excitement and camaraderie, and for meaningful learning about similarities and differences. We want to deepen, broaden and enrich children's experiences of holidays, yet we know that young children are easily overwhelmed by the excitement and pressure of holidays. Therefore, we emphasize calm, understated expressions of celebration. We also look to economic and material simplicity to give children (and their parents some respite from the commercialism which has grown around the major holidays. We know that many cultures celebrate similar milestones at similar times of the year, and focusing on the celebrations of non-dominant traditions enriches and balances children's awareness of the world.

Birthday party celebrations are exciting for young children. MCNS celebrates a child's birthday through a variety of ways including: making banners, signs and crowns, giving of birthday books, and with sharing of snacks and food. Birthdays may include cakes and cupcakes that are served after a healthy snack. Parents may provide a birthday treat or the children in the class may prepare a treat for the special child's day. Families should let their child's teacher know in advance that they will be bringing a treat.

MCNS is an inclusive environment and we request that unless a family is inviting the entire class to a party, that invitations be mailed and not distributed at MCNS. A MCNS directory with families' addresses and phone numbers is distributed in the fall, listing all families who wish to be included.



Field Trips

MCNS is fortunate to be within walking distance of many features that are fascinating to young children. Classes take full advantage of the library, the Middlebury River, playgrounds and other places of interest. This proximity allows the program walk throughout the community and explore both man-made and natural environments. A family's permission for their child to leave the MCNS property is included in the enrollment packet.

Trips that require transportation are much less frequent, both for financial and logistical reasons. Families will always be notified before such an outing to ensure that arrangements are made for the drop off of car seats. Families are always welcome to participate in these adventures.

Food

Food and meals are significant and integral components of the MCNS culture and curriculum. While they offer an opportunity for children to learn concepts in areas such as nutrition and language, their greatest value, beside the nutrition they provide, comes from the social interactions and cultural competencies that result from the shared experience of sitting with others and sharing a meal.



MCNS offers children a light breakfast and an afternoon snack. Families provide their child's lunch, which needs to be labelled. MCNS tries to emphasize fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy food choices. A list of ideas for good lunch choices is available upon request or on our website. (Please note that **MCNS is a Tree and Ground Nut-Free Program.**)

MCNS participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program and families are required to fill out the Child Care Food Program Eligibility form each year as part of their child's ongoing enrollment at the program.

Staff members encourage children to try new foods, but never force, coax, or bribe children to eat. This also means that we will not dictate what your child eats and when, from their lunchboxes. Experience has shown that children will often try a new food after they have been exposed to it on previous occasions. Staff members do not praise children for finishing food or cleaning their plates. Mealtime is never used to discipline or scold children.

Families are always welcome to join their child for lunch.

Lead Testing in Drinking Water

Lead exposure poses a special risk to young children because they absorb lead into their systems more easily than adults do. Lead can slow down growth, impair development and learning, and can cause behavior problems. Act 66 (2019) requires all Vermont schools and licensed or registered child care providers to test their drinking and cooking water for lead. Individual program results may be found here:

<https://leadresults.vermont.gov/>

Special Diets/Food Allergies

Special Diets: If a family observes certain dietary practices, MCNS will work with them to make sure that these practices are observed. If the Center does not have the capacity to prepare meals for special diets, families are welcome to send in food on those days that the Center's breakfast and snack menu does not conform to their practices.

Food Allergies: MCNS follows state and federal requirements for accommodating children with a food allergy or intolerance. Families are asked to provide MCNS with a statement from their physician stating the nature of that food allergy and suggested alternatives to that food before we can make any dietary accommodations. Medical statements are available in the office or from the CACFP food program coordinator. If the allergy is severe, classroom staff will meet with the family to construct a plan for the child. Warnings of the food allergy will be shared with all staff and all those who may work with the child. An emergency plan will be readily available in the in the child's classroom. In extreme circumstances the knowledge of this allergy, but not the name of the child, will be shared with the parents of other children in the child's classroom so they may be aware of foods that are restricted in the classroom. **Families MUST provide classroom staff with an unexpired EPI pen, Benadryl, and emergency plan if the allergy requires such intervention.**

***MCNS is a tree nut and peanut free program.**

Health Policy

Immunizations

The State of Vermont requires that each enrolled child have a completed immunization record listing types and dates of immunizations on file at MCNS. The record must attest that the child has been immunized in accordance with the schedule of immunization determined by the Vermont Department of Health. We can obtain your child's immunization record on the VT Department of Health database if you give your permission on your enrollment form. Families who relocate from out-of-state, should have their physician fax their child's updated immunization record to us at (802) 388-3063.

If a child is not, or only partially, immunized for medical or religious reasons, you must give us a Vermont Department of Health Exemption Form. These forms are available online at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/disease-control/immunizations/immunization-information-child-care-and-school-providers>.

In the event of an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable disease present at the Center, all susceptible children—including **those with medical or religious exemptions**—are subject to the exclusion guidelines as described in the Vermont's Early Childhood Program Licensing Regulations.

When is it best to keep your child at home?

There is no doubt that a child in an early childhood program is exposed to contagious illnesses. Colds, ear infections and the latest sore throat can quickly work their way through an early childhood classroom. We understand how challenging it can be for a parent who needs to leave work or miss work because a child is ill. However, it is beyond our ability to care for a sick child within the program.

Generally, if your child does not feel well, please do not send your child to the Center. Please send a message on Procure or call the Center at 802-388-7338 to let the program know your child will not attend that day.

In an effort to keep the spread of contagious illnesses to a minimum, it is Center policy that a child who has the following symptoms remain at home until symptoms subside:

- Temperature of 100 or higher under the armpit (must be **fever free for 24 hours without medication** to return to school)
- Vomiting, or diarrhea (must **wait 24 hours after symptoms subside** to return to school)
- Persistent loose cough
- Unusual skin rashes
- Flu type symptoms (muscle aches, headache, sore throat)
- Red eyes with drainage

****** The guidelines on the following pages are also provided, but they cover only the most common of childhood illnesses and we ask that you call the Center if you have any questions. When in doubt, call your child's health care provider or MJCC's main office.

Illness/Infection/Symptom	Should You Stay Home?	When Can You Come Back?
	Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No:	
Cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Difficulty breathing • Severe cough • Blood red or purple rash • Unable to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Coxsackie (hand mouth and foot disease)	Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Difficulty breathing • Blood red or purple rash • Unable to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Chicken pox	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For conditions that require application of antibiotics to lesions or taking of antibiotics by mouth, the period of treatment to reduce the risk of spread to others is usually 24 hours. • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Earache / Infection	Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever with behavior change • Unable to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Fever Temperatures considered meaningfully elevated above normal are: 100° axillary (armpit) 101° oral 102° rectal Aural (ear) equal to oral or rectal	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate / normal energy level • Exclusion criteria are resolved • 24 hours fever free
Fifth Disease Roseola	Yes, if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rash with behavior change or fever • Has oozing/open wound • Has bruising not associated with injury • Has joint pain and rash • Tender, red area of skin especially if it is increasing in size or tenderness • Unable to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to participate • On antibiotic medication at least 24 hours if indicated. • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Itching	<i>For Chickenpox, Scabies and Impetigo:</i> Yes <i>For ringworm and head lice: Yes, at the end of the day</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families should consult a health professional at the end of the day for treatment. <i>For pinworm allergic or irritant reactions, and eczema: NO, unless:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears infected as a weeping or crusty sore 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For conditions that require application of antibiotics to lesions or taking of antibiotics by mouth, the period of treatment to reduce the risk of spread to others is usually 24 hours. For most individuals with insect infestations or parasites, the readmission as soon as the treatment has been given is acceptable. • Exclusion criteria are resolved
Illness/Infection/Symptom	Should You Stay Home?	When Can You Come Back?

Lice	Yes , if live lice found. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families should consult a health professional for treatment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On medication or treated as recommended by a health professional if indicated for the condition and for the time required to be readmitted. For most individuals with insect infestations, readmission can be as soon as a complete treatment has been given Able to participate Exclusion criteria are resolved
Strep Throat	Yes , if any symptoms below are present; otherwise, No : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to swallow. Excessive drooling with breathing difficulty. Fever with behavior change. The child meets other exclusion criteria Unable to participate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to swallow Able to participate On medication at least 24 hours Exclusion criteria are resolved
Whooping Cough	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 days after antibiotics are started or 3 weeks after onset of cough

Medications

Prescription and Non-Prescription

If a child requires a prescription or non-prescription medication while they are at the Center, families must sign a permission form, which are in each classroom. The medication should be given to the classroom teacher who will place the medication in a childproof medicine box, or in the kitchen refrigerator if necessary.

- The medication **must be in its original container** from the pharmacy and must have the child's name and date of birth, the prescription name and date, the physician's name, and the dosage amount and time.
- There also must include the reason for the medication, how and when it is administered, any medical allergies and any other special instructions.
- **EPI Pens: Families MUST provide classroom staff with an unexpired EPI pen for allergies that requires such intervention.**
- **Unexpired emergency meds must be on site for a child to attend the program.**

Medical Emergencies

In the event of a medical emergency or of an accident, the Center will contact the family or emergency contacts. If it is impossible to reach either and emergency treatment is required, the child will be transported to Porter Medical Center. The family's authorization for MCNS to contact your child's physician and take whatever emergency medical measures are deemed necessary is part of your application. **It is critically important that families keep MCNS updated in any changes in any of their telephone numbers, including cell phones and work place numbers.**



Behavior Guidance

The goal of MCNS is for each child to develop a sense of respect for themselves and others. Teachers strive to create an environment that encourages children to make positive choices, to enter and exit peer groups with increasing skill and satisfaction, and to learn to live in a respectful and cooperative manner.

Discipline is not considered punishment. Inner discipline is the goal and is the result of an evolving process occurring within the child. Through appropriate adult/child interaction, anticipatory guidance, well-established guidelines for appropriate behavior, and active listening to children's responses, teachers get to know each child and what additional limits and adjustments are necessary. Over a period of time children internalize the concept of self-control, and will acquire measures of inner discipline.

What This Looks Like

- Educators will try to foresee and prevent as much as possible. They will work to prevent the negative behavior and should it happen, they will connect their words with the child's actions.
- Educators will redirect behavior and provide an alternative that is acceptable and meets the child's needs.
- Educators will carefully time strategies and make suggestions when they will be the most effective. They will allow a child to rely on and build his or her own resources.
- They will prevent serious problems, when possible, through structuring a safe and cooperative environment and will provide ways to resolve conflict, and think about the impact of your own behavior.
- Educators will set clear expectations, keeping them brief and consistent. They will ensure they are understood, and followed through with. Children will be involved as much as possible when creating and setting expectations for the classroom.
- Teaching staff may never use physical punishment, psychological abuse or coercion when disciplining a child.
 - Examples of physical punishment: shaking, hitting, jerking, pinching, requiring a child to remain inactive for a long period of time, etc.
 - Examples of psychological abuse: shaming, name calling, humiliation, withholding affection, seclusion etc.
 - Examples of coercion: rough handling, physical restraint except when necessary to protect the child or others from harm
- Educators will be mindful regarding strategic body placement, and will be alert to the total situation and will move as needed, avoiding grouping with adults.
- Physical intervention may be used for the safety of the child and other students in the classroom setting from a staff person trained in Crisis Intervention.

Even with all the best intentions and interventions, there are times when a child might become frustrated or angry and strike out, perhaps hitting or biting a classmate or teacher. The Center does not use "time out" for many reasons based on child development and experience. If a child strikes out, is having difficulty with classmates, or is being disruptive in an unacceptable way, a teacher will work directly with that child until the situation is resolved and the child can be successful. This may mean that a child needs to be removed from a setting or classroom, but a teacher will remain with the child until the child is able to return to the classroom.

If a behavior is identified as an ongoing challenging behavior, as defined as any behavior that 1. Interferes with children's learning, development and success at play 2. Is harmful to the child, other children or adults, or 3. Puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure, the following procedures will be followed.



- The challenging behavior will be documented and patterns of the behavior will be assessed. It is MCNS's belief that behavior is communication. Educators will work in their teaching teams and when appropriate with the director or community resources, to identify the function of the behavior. (What is the child trying to communicate? What needs are not being met?)
- The teaching team will conference with families explaining what has been observed in the classroom. They will also gain insight regarding behaviors in environments outside of school, including the home. Additionally, the teaching team and family will work together to develop positive behavioral interventions and environments.
- If determined appropriate and necessary, educators will reach out to community resources, including behavioral and mental health consultants, with family consent.
- Exclusionary measures will be used as a last resort when all possible supports have been exhausted and there is a determination that MCNS is not the appropriate setting for a specific child. In such a case, staff will work with families to develop a seamless transition plan.

We are committed to implementing best practice in early childhood education by providing nurturing and responsive relationships within a supportive environment for all children and families. We do this in partnership with families, cultivating trusting relationships through open and caring communications. There may be times when experiences and circumstances in a child's life are such that we need to call on the support and expertise of local resources to help in problem-solving and developing strategies to support all working through the developmental need.

Expulsion Prevention Policy

In accordance with State and Federal Child Care Regulations, Mary Johnson Children's Center has developed an Expulsion Policy which ideally prevents the need to ask any child or family to leave our care. MCNS believes in eliminating or severely limiting expulsion, suspension, or other exclusionary discipline; these exclusionary measures may be used only as a last resort in extraordinary circumstances where there is a determination of a serious safety threat that cannot otherwise be reduced or eliminated by the provision of reasonable modifications. As early childhood professionals, we strive to provide nurturing and responsive care which supports each child's unique strengths and interests. In partnership with families, we cultivate nurturing, trusting relationships through open communication. We strive to create a caring community by promoting the Strengthening Families 5 Protective Factors: parental resilience, social connections, knowledge of parenting and child development, concrete support in times of need, and social and emotional competence of children.

In an effort to prevent expulsion and suspension of children, MCNS shall adopt the following, in policy and practice and in a consistent and non-discriminatory manner:

- As Educators, we will use developmentally appropriate practices that provide for stimulating and interactive learning environments, diversity, age-appropriate expectations, small group activities, teachable moments and knowledge of research-based evidence and best practices in child development, early learning and education.
- We ensure that educators are adequately supported and prepared to help all enrolled children excel by investing in professional development, training and education to ensure educators have the competencies to support children's social and emotional health.
- We will develop and implement classroom expectations that are developmentally appropriate, clear and consistent.
- We will cultivate supportive relationships with families and ensure that all are aware of program policies and community resources.
- Parents/guardians and staff will communicate regularly, as well as participate in individual parent conferences two times per year or when requested by either party.
- Exclusionary measures will be used as a last resort when there is a determination that MCNS is not the appropriate setting for a specific child. Prior to expulsion of any child from MCNS, the staff and director will:
 - Conference with parents to discuss positive behavior interventions and development of goals
 - Identify and engage mental and behavioral health consultants and community resources like Counseling Services of Addison County
 - Provide reasonable accommodations to class schedule, expectations and environment
 - Document efforts to prevent and reduce expulsion
 - In the case that it is determined that MCNS cannot meet the needs of a child, families and staff will work together to develop and implement a seamless transition plan. MCNS will assist the family in finding a suitable placement and will connect the family with further community resources as appropriate.

Photographs

MCNS staff members are continually photographing the children and the work that they are doing. These photographs are used to display children's work and activities in the building, on Procure, and on MJCC's website and social media. They are also compiled for families as a record of their child's time at the program. Occasionally, the local newspaper photographer stops by to photograph children for the newspaper. A family's permission to use photographs of their child without compensation is part of the MCNS Enrollment Form. Families who do not wish for their child's photograph to be used in any out-of-program publicity should make that clear of their Enrollment Form.

Families should not share or post on social media any Procure photographs containing images of children other than their own without explicit permission from that child's family.

Parental Access

Families always have access to their child, their child's files and, within reason, to their child's teacher. The Center recognizes in many situations parents have a legal right to be a part of their child's life. We also recognize this may not be the case for all families. The Center denies a parent access to their child or their file only if there is a legal document on file that addresses that denial.



Parent Involvement

Families are always welcome at the program. The program's history and culture is one of parental involvement in their child's early learning and MCNS is dedicated to this tradition. MCNS encourages families who might have a particular talent, story or interest to share these with us. Skills such as sewing or carpentry are also always welcome. Families are welcome to spend a morning or afternoon at the program, either on a regular basis or when time allows.

In the fall and spring MCNS asks families to come on a Saturday morning from 9-noon to help with various tasks that need to be done, like refilling the sand area, raking gravel, planting the flower pots or putting away the out of season equipment. If families are unable to attend a scheduled workday, there are occasionally projects that can be completed at home. All help is greatly appreciated.

MCNS also has various evening events, dinners, classroom meetings and other times that families have the opportunity to help the program by giving important feedback on the direction of the curriculum and to share their ideas on their child's learning and MCNS experience.

Parent Communication

We strive to provide methods of open communication that works best for families. Procure is a communication app, which is used in all of our early childhood programs. Each classroom has its own account in which only invited, approved, and current families can learn about their child's day, classroom experiences, and program events. Using this app, MJCC staff may post pictures, videos, and sound clips of your child(ren, including their name, work, and experiences with your permission. Teachers will use the Procure app. to message families individually. These messages are only seen by the family, classroom teachers, and administrative team. Procure provides an option to select separate communication between parents/guardians. This means when this option is selected one parent/guardian will not be able to see the other's messages between teachers.



Assessments and Conferences

The program utilizes Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) twice a year in order to assess the children's development. As an assessment tool, TSG is developmentally appropriate, culturally and linguistically responsive, and tied directly to children's daily activities. Teachers remain properly trained in the use of this system, in order to use it to its fullest. Following the completion of observations and the assessment, parents will receive written reports that celebrate each child addressing their strengths, interests and needs.

Each family will have the opportunity to meet formally with their child's teachers to review their child's progress report twice annually. However, families should by no means feel that this is the only time when they can speak with the teacher about their child or any concern that they might have. Families should feel free to contact their child's teachers and set up a time to talk whenever they wish. Although families should always feel free to check in about their child's day when either picking up or dropping off, conversations that are more in depth or require confidentiality should happen away from the classroom.

Confidentiality and Release of Information

All staff sign a Statement of Confidentiality, which states that they will not discuss a child or family with anyone outside MCNS or with anyone within the program whose responsibilities do not require such knowledge. All employees are cautioned about using a child's name or a family's name when parents, children or other persons might overhear them.

We ask families to respect these same guidelines and to refrain from discussing—either at MCNS or in the community—what might be considered personal information about children and families that they acquire through their time at MCNS.

Children's files are confidential, yet are immediately available upon request to administrators, teachers, legal guardians, and VT regulatory authorities.

If children are receiving services from other community agencies, their families will be asked to sign a Release of Information form that will allow that a child's teachers work with the other agency or agencies involved to best coordinate services for that child.

Parents of children who will be entering kindergarten are also asked to sign a Release of Information so that teachers may share progress reports and other information with the receiving school. This release is included in most district Universal Pre-K applications.

Parking/Parking Lot

The MCNS parking lot is particularly busy at the beginning and end of the day. Although MCNS has no way of monitoring its parking lot, it is requested that for everyone's safety:

- Children may not be left unattended in cars in the parking lot.
- Cars are never left running.
- A child never leaves a car or the building unless they are holding the hand of an adult.
- Cars are driven slowly both in the parking lot and on the driveway.
- Children are not transported to or from MCNS without appropriate car seats or restraints.
- Paper, food or artwork that is mistakenly dropped in the parking lot is retrieved.
- Families should not ask MCNS to release their child to a sibling under 18, even if the parent is waiting in the car in the parking lot.

Smoking Policy

MCNS is a smoke free environment and no smoking is allowed within the building or on the MCNS property, including the parking lot.

Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

All staff in an early childhood program are mandated reporters. This means that they are obligated by law to report suspected child abuse, neglect, or maltreatment to the State of Vermont. Families should be aware that in reporting suspected child abuse, no definitive judgment is made by MCNS staff. Personnel from the State of Vermont Department of Children and Families decide whether evidence exists to determine whether or not a report is upheld.



Feedback, Suggestions, Grievances

The MCNS teachers are professionals and they welcome comments and suggestions. Over the years parents have provided the MCNS with valuable input that has assisted MCNS in evaluating and improving its program. Yearly, a parent questionnaire will be sent home. MCNS encourages families to answer the questions honestly and to share their perspective regarding how the program is working for them.

When areas of concern arise, a problem should be addressed with the child's classroom teacher who will work with the family and attempt to reach a solution. If additional communication is necessary, the family should address the problem with Mary Johnson Children's Center's director. If the family is still not satisfied, a written appeal may be made to the Center's Board of Directors who meets regularly.

Families have the further option of appealing at any point to the Child Care Consumer Concern Line at 1(800 540-7942.

Anti-Harassment Policy

Mary Johnson Children's Center Programs are committed to providing a safe environment for all, free from harassment of any kind. To that end, parents, caregivers or designees assigned to drop off and pick up children are expected to treat all employees, fellow parents, and children with dignity and respect through behavior and all written and verbal communications.

In the event that any adult behaves in a manner that disrupts the program (intimidates, harasses, disrespects others, or promotes fear, that individual will be asked to leave the facility and may be restricted in their access to the program and its premises in the future. All individuals must use respectful behavior, including written, verbal, and non-verbal communications, as well as social media posts.

We take all complaints seriously. Please contact Kristen Dunne, Executive Director, with any questions or concerns.

Child Care Licensing Regulations

Child Care Licensing Regulations govern child care programs in the State of Vermont. These rules are minimum requirements established to protect the health and safety of Vermont's children in out-of-home care and ensure that children in child care programs in Vermont are provided with wholesome growth and educational experiences. Child Care Licensing Regulations for Center Based Child Care and Preschool Programs may be found here:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/laws-rules/licensing>

Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the State or local Agency that administers the program or contact USDA through the Telecommunications Relay Service at 711 (voice and TTY). Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Mail Stop 9410, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

MJCC Programs Civil Rights Complaint Procedure

Individuals and groups are never discouraged from submitting a complaint of discrimination. Complaints may be written or verbal. Complaints may be anonymous. The Mary Johnson Children's Center instructs program participants to send complaints of discrimination directly to the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR). The complainant must file within 180 days of the alleged act of discrimination. The superintendent or appointed designee is responsible for implementing the Civil Rights Complaint Procedure. The complainant can file on their own directly with the USDA or report the complaint to the School Food Authority (SFA) or sponsor.

The contact information is found on the "And Justice for All" nondiscrimination posters which are prominently displayed in all required areas.

1. All complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), or disability will be forwarded to the USDA Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights immediately.

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442
email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

Complaints should be put into writing, by the complainant, using the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, (AD-3027) found online at: <https://www.usda.gov/oascr/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>. The complaint form is available in a number of languages on the same website as the translated nondiscrimination statements, in the column titled "AD-3027 Complaint Form" found online at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cr/fns-nondiscrimination-statement>.

2. In the event that a complainant makes the allegations verbally or in person and refuses or is not inclined to place such allegations in writing, the person to whom the allegations are made must record the details of the complaint for the complainant. Every effort will be made to have the complainant provide the following information:

- a) Name and contact information for the complainant.
- b) The date(s) during which the alleged discriminatory actions occurred or, if continuing, the duration of such actions.
- c) The specific location and name of the entity delivering the service or benefit.
- d) The nature of the incident or action that led the complainant to feel that discrimination was a factor.
- e) The basis on which the complainant feels discrimination exists within any of the protected classes.
- f) The names, titles, and business addresses of persons who may have knowledge of the discriminatory action.

3. If the USDA determines that a civil rights complaint warrants an investigation, it will occur based on established FNS policy and procedures, and then finalized into a report. They will investigate the complaint and this is the sole responsibility of the USDA.

4. In addition to submitting the complaint to the USDA, the SFA will keep a Civil Rights Complaint Log on site. Maintaining confidentiality is crucial. As much information as possible will be documented, including:

- Name and contact information of complainant
- Description of incident including date, time, location, and persons present
- Relevant Protected Base(s)
- Name of organization and individuals alleged to have engaged in discrimination
- Date of referral to USDA
- The findings of any investigation conducted
- Description of the final disposition of the complaint including any corrective action planned or taken

5. The SFA will also notify Child Nutrition Programs at Vermont Agency of Education of any complaints of discrimination. The State Agency maintains the information in a confidential database with limited access. Child Nutrition Programs does not investigate complaints of discrimination, but ensures complaints are received by the USDA and will cooperate in the tracking, processing, and resolving of complaints of discrimination.

6. The Vermont Agency of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, creed, marital status, sex, disability, age, gender identity, or sexual orientation in its programs and activities. Complaints alleging discrimination related to the Vermont Agency of Education protected bases of religion or marital/civil union status, will be sent to Emily Simmons, General Counsel, at emily.simmons@vermont.gov or (802)-828-1518. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.