

# People's Institute



## Preschool & Pre-Kindergarten Handbook

07/2014

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

We believe that children learn best in an environment that respects their unique pattern of growth and development. Careful observations, evaluations, and positive, individual attention are important components of our program.

We believe that the environment must be physically and emotionally safe if children are to develop trust in their world. We remain alert to potential dangers, guide children in safe behaviors, and treat both children and adults with care.

We believe that children enjoy and benefit from the company of others. We encourage the development of social skills by arranging opportunities for small and large group activities, and allowing time for conversation and play between adults and children.

We believe that children desire independence. We provide an environment rich with success and help children develop a positive self-concept. We teach problem solving and self-help skills. Children learn to care for materials and equipment. They take responsibility for many aspects of their classroom.

We believe in a democratic classroom. The children are active participants in the program's structure. They have much input into the development of classroom rules and procedures. The teachers guide the children in establishing fairness and rationality within their own rules and consequences.

We believe that children are naturally creative. Through guided activities in art, music, dance, and dramatic play, we encourage children to explore their own potential. Each person's creative expression is unique and valued.

We believe that children develop their own ability to move by moving. We plan time for large and small muscle activities. Our playground is spacious, and our classroom is filled with a variety of materials for

We believe in families. We see ourselves as a part of an extended family, working with parents to provide the very best care for their children. We are responsive to the concerns and ideas of parents, and we encourage parent involvement in all aspects of our school.

## **STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

People's Institute Preschool is licensed to provide education and care to children 2.9-4.9 years of age and above. Within these licensing constraints, we prohibit discrimination against any employee, applicant for employment, parent, child, or any other person because of race, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs or existence of handicap.

## **PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM**

Our program here at the People's Institute is designed to enhance the child's emotional, social, intellectual, and physical development within an environment designed specifically for preschool age children. The curriculum offers a balance between planned teacher-initiated activities and supervised child-initiated activities. Because children master and integrate information through hands-on experiences with a wide variety of materials, "free play" is an important part of each day. At these times, the teacher serves as a resource by preparing an environment conducive to learning and exploring.

Children are encouraged to experiment and are given a choice of materials that expand their thinking. Children gain the ability to use the materials available to them and develop confidence in their level of competence. The teacher also works to help children define the limits of their behavior and guides them in forming their interpersonal and group skills. Through an integrated curriculum, children learn to work comfortably both with others and by themselves.

By providing a secure and nurturing environment, the school assists each child in achieving the following goals:

- Developing feelings of positive self-esteem
- Developing a curiosity for the world around them
- Learning routines and habits
- Positive interaction with other children and adults
- Self expression through dramatic play, art, music, and movement
- Developing a range of gross and fine motor skills
- Learning basic academic skills, i.e. letters, numbers, colors, etc.

In addition, parents and teachers identify specific goals for individual children. Plans are then made to assist each child in the development of these goals.

## **SCHEDULE OF THE DAY**

Children need a dependable routine in order to feel a sense of security and sureness about their surroundings. The classroom schedules a variety of self directed and teacher directed activities, individual, small and large group activities, high energy and quiet activities, planned and spontaneous activities. The classroom routine will include the following components:

- **Morning Greeting and Free Play Time:** A classroom teacher greets each child and parent as they enter the classroom. The children are free to choose the center they would like to use. The teachers help the children to learn how to use the materials correctly and deal with social interactions.
- **Clean-Up Time:** Everyone helps to put toys and materials away and to learn where things belong. This time helps the children change gradually from one activity to another.

- **Group/Circle Time:** Children and teachers gather to discuss the activities of the day, the weather, sing songs, share a special toy from home, or listen to stories.
- **Toileting and Wash Up:** Children learn how to care for themselves by using positive hygiene practices within a relaxed non-pressured atmosphere. A relaxed non-pressured atmosphere is best for learning to be a positive experience.
- **Snack:** A nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack will be provided by the People's Institute.
- **Small Group/Planned Activity Time:** During this time, teachers lead small groups (4-8 children) in activities planned according to the children's developmental level. The activities enable children to develop skills related to intellectual and language development.
- **Outside Time:** Children exercise their large muscles and learn coordination through climbing, running, games, and walks around the neighborhood. The children learn outdoor safety from the teachers' example and guidance.
- **Lunch Time:** Meal time provides an opportunity for children to learn appropriate meal behavior in family style setting. Lunch is brought from home.
- **Rest Time:** This is the time of day when our busy preschoolers are able to relax and experience some down time. Children who do not sleep are encouraged to rest quietly on their cots where they are able to look at books, use puzzles and spend their time doing other quiet independent activities.
- **End of Day Clean-Up and Farewells:** During the last fifteen minutes of the day, the children help the teachers clean up the classroom and get ready to go home. The teachers share news of the children's day with their parents.

## LUNCH AND SNACK

People's Institute will provide a nutritious mid-morning and mid-afternoon snack. Parents are responsible for providing lunch. Some guidelines to keep in mind when preparing your child's lunch are:

- Feel free to pack food within your child's lunch that requires heating up. All of our pre-school rooms are equipped with microwaves.
- Should you pack microwaveable food, please send the items in microwave-safe containers.
- Please include an ice pack within your child's lunch container if you pack perishable foods.
- Please send milk or juice in a thermos or prepackaged container. Water will be provided for those who do not bring a beverage.
- Please cut food into pieces that the child can manage without assistance.
- Please provide small portions
- Please keep desserts other than fruits to a minimum.
- PLEASE—NO CANDY, GUM OR SODA.
- Children will never be forced or threatened to eat.

**LUNCH BOX SUGGESTIONS:** Try peanut butter, cheese, luncheon meats, cream cheese, or butter combined with crackers, pita bread, bagels or sliced bread to make delicious sandwiches. Chicken or pasta is always a favorite. Fruits and vegetables are a nutritious and important part of any lunch. Other favorites include yogurt, cottage cheese, applesauce, raisins, and yogurt covered pretzels.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Because of our central location, we will frequently take walking trips to points of interest in the town. A permission slip for these excursions is part of the admission packet. We will inform parents, in writing, prior to field trips that require transportation.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are special days in our Preschool, and we enjoy celebrating them with the children. All birthday celebrations are held at snack time. Parents are welcome to join the children. Parents may send in a special treat for the snack. Low sugar cookies, quick breads, or muffins are recommended instead of frosted cupcakes. Please check with your child's teachers at least one week in advance to plan a "party" which will be fun and not overwhelming for the children.

## **HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS**

The Preschool does integrate the celebration of a diversity of holidays as part of the curriculum. Our goal is to explore the seasonal, historical, and cultural traditions of the holidays rather than their religious significance. We support and encourage families to share their traditions and celebrations with the children. This may be achieved by coming in to do a cooking project, reading a story, or doing an appropriate activity. You may also wish to share information with the teaching staff and allow them to implement the activity.

## **TOYS FROM HOME**

Quite often children want to bring a toy from home to school. These serve as transitional objects, which make the separation from home easier for the child. A rest time companion such as a stuffed animal, soft doll or special blanket is always welcome and often used during rest time. Books, records, and audiocassettes to share with the group are also welcome at any time. Other toys, games or miscellaneous objects that a child brings to school will be kept safely in his/her cubby during the day (the use of toys from home in the classroom is ultimately at the teacher's discretion).

\*Teachers are not responsible for lost or broken objects.

## **CLOTHING**

Because children often play with paints, clay, dirt, and other materials that might stain "good" clothing, they should dress comfortably in clothing that may get dirty. The school provides smocks for such activities to protect clothing, but accidents do happen. We request that parents

follow the guidelines below:

**Indoor Wear:** Children should be dressed in clothing that is comfortable and washable so that spills do not matter.

**Outdoor Wear:** Each class goes outside daily, weather permitting. Please dress your child for outside play every day. A coat, snow pants, boots, a hat and mittens should be brought daily in the winter. A heavy sweater or jacket and hat are needed in the autumn and spring. A bathing suit and towel are needed for water play in the summer.

**Footwear:** For safety reasons, parents are asked to dress their children in shoes with non-slippery soles. In the summer, children should wear sneakers while at school. Sandals, dress shoes, "jellies," and flip-flops are not acceptable. In the winter, children need outdoor boots and indoor shoes or slippers.

**Extra Clothing:** Parents are asked to keep an extra set of clothes (plenty of underwear, socks, pants, shirts, and sweater/sweatshirts) at the school. These are stored in a box within the child's cubby. When the extra clothes are used, parents will need to replace them. Please change these extra clothes as the season changes and as your child grows.

**Bedding:** Parents provide a blanket, pillow and pillowcase for their child's daily use at rest time. Please bring a small blanket and a small pillow, as our storage space is limited. These will be sent home weekly for washing.

**Labels:** Please label all items of your child's clothing. This will make it much easier for the teachers to keep track of what belongs to whom and will prevent mix-ups. Each child is provided with an individually labeled rest cot. Cots are sanitized weekly.

## TOILETING

Children entering the preschool classroom should be potty trained, though it is not required.\*Cloth diapers are not permitted. Children are free to use the toilet throughout the day. There are also scheduled toileting times for the entire group. These occur before snack time and lunchtime and before and after rest time.

- No child is punished, verbally abused, or humiliated for soiling, wetting or not using the toilet.
- Children are supervised at all times while toileting.
- Children wash their hands with soap and running water after toileting/diaper changes and before snacks and meals or handling any food.
- Staff members wash their hands with soap and running water after assisting children with toileting or toileting themselves. Individual paper towels are used to dry hands.
- Clothing soiled by feces, urine, vomit or blood is wrapped in a double plastic bag and stored in the child's cubby to be taken home.
- Parents must provide a change of clothing for their child to be kept at school. A limited supply of school-owned clothing is available for emergencies. School-owned clothing must be laundered and returned to school as soon as possible so it will be available when needed again.

## **BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT**

The People's Institute has a respectful attitude toward children. When a child's behavior is inappropriate, the staff used a variety of techniques to change the behavior of the child. We never yell at, hit, physically mishandle or humiliate a child, nor do we withhold food as a disciplinary measure. Consequently, we firmly insist that no parent ever hit, physically mishandle, humiliate or yell at their own or any other child while on the school's property or while on an outing with the school. The school is a safe place for children. We will not let their trust in us or in our school be broken.

Our goal is to develop children's ability to discipline and control themselves. We help children learn to solve minor disagreements by themselves. If another child is physically or verbally overwhelming a child, a teacher will step in. The teacher helps by offering a choice of solutions or by helping both children talk about what has happened. The teacher asks the children to explain the situation and their feelings to one another. Children learn to talk about what is bothering them rather than to just hurt the other person.

Often a dispute among children involves the possession of playthings. In this case, it is usually possible to offer one child another choice and help that child decide which choice to make. This allows the child to have some control over the situation and requires him/her to think about what she/her wants. When a choice is unavailable, at rest time for instance, we firmly and calmly explain that there is no other choice. We do not threaten the children, but rather explain the consequences for doing or not doing whatever has been requested.

Occasionally, we find that a child needs a cool down period. The child is brought to a quiet part of the classroom until he/she regains control and is ready to rejoin the group. A teacher talks with the child about the misbehavior and the reason for being sat out. When the child is ready to return to the classroom activity, the teacher reassures the child that teachers will help him/her learn to control his/her behavior. A cool down period will not exceed one minute for every year of the child's age and never lasts more than three minutes.

There may be times when a child's behavior may endanger him/herself or another person. In such cases the child will be removed from the group and supervised individually until the behavior causing his isolation subsides. If it appears that the episode is to be of long duration and significant time will be required to calm the child, the child's parents may be contacted to come and take the child home for the remainder of the day. Teachers will report recurring behavioral problems to the Director. A parent-teacher conference will be arranged to discuss the reasons for the exhibited behavior and to develop affirmative and effective strategies to deal with the behavior.

In all cases, the school will attempt to manage behavior difficulties in a non-threatening, positive manner so that the degree of difficulty will be diminished rather than increased. We strive to relate to each child in a manner that will promote his/her self-esteem and social growth.

## **INCIDENT REPORTS**

In extreme behavior management situations of which parents need to be informed, i.e. self-destructive actions, injury to another child or property damage, the staff will issue an incident

report. The incident report will contain a detailed description of the child's behavior and the steps taken by the staff person to rectify the situation. A copy of the incident report will be placed in both the child's file and the parent's mailbox.

An excessive number of incident reports (more than four) are grounds for termination (see Termination Policy.) However, the staff will first work closely with the child and family in hopes that this policy need not be instituted.

## **ARRIVING TO SCHOOL**

The People's Institute is open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m. We expect your child to be at school by 9:30 a.m. to ensure that he/she has more than 2 hours to play and interact with friends and teachers before lunch and rest time. It is important to our curriculum and your child's education that he/she arrives to school on time. If for any reason your child will be arriving late, please phone the office before 9:30a.m. so that the teachers may be notified.

Parents accompany their child into the classroom and help their child put their coat and "special things" into their cubby. Children may not be left off outside the building or in the front hall. A teacher will greet the parent and child in the classroom. Please use this time to briefly let the teacher know of any relevant information about your child (i.e. medication, special needs or mood of that day, eating or sleeping irregularities.)

## **SEPARATING FROM PARENT**

Leaving your child at the school may be difficult at first – for your child and you. Some children adjust easily and will quickly join in an activity. Others may have difficulty saying good-bye. It is entirely normal and natural for children and parents to have some anxiety or concerns about separating. Parents are welcome to stay with their children as long as they feel they need to. However, it is important to understand that your child's anxiety is heightened by ambivalence. Once you have decided to go, carry through with this and leave.

Before arriving to school in the morning, talk with your child about whom he/she will see and what he/she will do with friends there. Sometimes it is helpful to make a "good-bye plan" in advance with your child. For example, "We will read one story together and then I will go," or "When the big hand is on the ten, I will leave," or "You can wave good-bye to me from the front hall window." Be firm but reassuring. Tell your child about where you are going and when you will return.

It is easy to feel that you are giving added support to your child when you agree to "one more story" or a "little bit longer." Your child, however, may misunderstand your ambivalence to mean the school is not a safe place to be left. Please ask the teachers for assistance when you need help in saying good-bye.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation of children in the preschool or toddler programs at people's institute will be arranged and carried out by the parents or guardians of the children. In the case of a

medical emergency requiring transportation, an ambulance will transport the child to the appropriate facility. During field trips to the performing arts center in which children walk to the center, additional supervision will be provided. Children will use a buddy system during the trip and will wear field trip tags including the address and phone number of people's institute.

### **AUTHORIZATION TO PICK-UP CHILD**

Only those persons whom you have listed on the Pick up List are authorized to pick up your child from the school. **WE WILL NOT RELEASE YOUR CHILD TO ANY OTHER PERSONS.** Please notify the administrative staff, in writing of any changes in the list.

Your child and her/his classroom teacher must be notified if someone other than yourself will be picking up your child. Tell your child and the teacher in the morning during drop-off. The person picking up your child may be asked to present identification.

If there is restraining order to prohibit contact between your child and a specific person, please tell your child's teacher, and leave a copy of this order to be placed in your child's file. If this person comes to the school, you will be called. We cannot disallow a parental pick-up unless we have a court order (restraining order, custody settlement) which specifically states that the parent may not have access to the child.

### **LATE POLICY**

The People's Institute Preschool is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. We also offer before care from 7:30-8:30 and extended care from 5:30-6:00 for an additional fee. All children must arrive no later than 9:30 a.m. if your child will be arriving later than 9:30 due to an appointment, please inform the staff. While there are no set departure hours for full-time children, please notify staff if there is a change in normal departure time.

If a child is picked up after 5:30 p.m., an overtime fee will be charged. An overtime fee of \$10.00 will be charged for 1-10 minutes overtime. A rate of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for every minute after 10 minutes. Overtime fees are paid directly to the teacher who must stay late. Childcare services may be withdrawn if 5:30 pick up is consistently abused.

## **PARKING**

When you park in front of the building, leave your hazard lights blinking. Otherwise, it is likely that you will be ticketed. You must park facing the right way on the right side of Gothic Street (facing Main Street). We have an arrangement with the city for this purpose.

## **CALENDAR**

The People's Institute provides services from 7:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. All programs will begin and end in accordance with the Northampton Public School System.

The Full-day Preschool and Pre-K programs runs from 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. daily. There is also a part-time morning option for preschool students that runs from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. If parents desire before school care or after school care, they may ask the Director for more details.

THERE WILL BE NO CHILD CARE OR VACATION PROGRAMS DURING THE DECEMBER SCHOOL VACATION OR FOR THE WEEK BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS IN SEPTEMBER.

## **HOLIDAYS (paid by parents)**

Labor Day	New Year's Eve
Columbus Day	New Years Day
Veteran's Day	Martin Luther King Day
Thanksgiving Day	President's Day
Friday after Thanksgiving Day	Good Friday
Christmas	Patriot's Day
Christmas Eve	Memorial Day
	Fourth of July
2 Professional Development Days (required by EEC)	

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

Snow Days: In the event of severe winter weather, the Executive Director will determine if the school should open. Should The People's Institute cancel all programs, experience a delay or have to close early, a bulletin will be running as early as 6:30 a.m. on television stations and online. Cancellations etc. can be viewed on WWLP 22 News (channel 5) [wwlp.com](http://wwlp.com) and WGGB News 40 (channel 4) [wggb.com](http://wggb.com).

## **CONSULTING PHYSICIAN**

The consulting physician for People's Institute is Peter Kenny M.D., Northampton, Massachusetts. Dr. Kenny advises the school on all health-related issues.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL HYGIENE AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL**

Studies have documented that the primary way disease is transmitted in a school setting is by contaminated hands. Children sneeze or cough into their hands, rub their noses, and then handle objects and each other. The best way to break this cycle is through a rigorous hand-washing program.

In order to prevent illness of teachers and children in our school, we engage in the following recommended hygiene practices:

- Children are taught proper hand washing technique (use running water, soap front and back of hands, wrists and between fingers, rinse well, dry with a disposable towel).
- Teachers assist children with nose blowing in order to reduce contamination of the child's hands. If children sneeze or cough into their hands, they will be asked to wash their hands.
- Children wash their hands after toileting and before meals.
- Teachers wash hands upon entering and leaving the school, after assisting children with nose blowing and toileting, after toileting and before handling food.
- Tables are sprayed with a bleach solution disinfectant before eating.
- Cots are disinfected weekly. Each child has his/her own mat. Parents are responsible for weekly washing of their child's blanket or pillow cover.

## **ILLNESS**

Since we have no separate facilities for long-term care of a sick child, we ask that you be especially aware of impending illness. Because the children go outside in all but extreme weather conditions, we ask that you send your child to school only when he/she is healthy enough to participate in outdoor activity.

## **MILD ILLNESS**

In case of mild illness, when the child becomes ill during the course of a school day, the following procedures will occur. The child will be placed on a mat in a quiet area of the room to rest. Teachers will provide the child with food and water as requested by the child. The child will be provided with quiet activities, i.e. books and puzzles. The parents of a mildly ill child will be contacted. Together, the parents and the teachers will make a decision whether the child should remain at school or not. Some of the common conditions for which a child should not be sent to school, or will be sent home are:

**Temperature:** A child will be sent home if he/she is unable to participate in the classroom activities and has a temperature of 100.5 degrees or above. **The child needs to stay home fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to school.** His or her activity level and appetite should be back to normal.

**Diarrhea:** A child who has watery stools will be sent home. Children may return to school once the diarrhea is under control. If your child has an allergy or condition which regularly causes diarrhea, please alert teachers of this.

**Vomiting:** A child who is vomiting will be sent home and should remain home until vomiting has stopped for **24 hours**. Stomach viruses are highly contagious and can spread through a classroom rapidly.

**Impetigo:** This skin infection is characterized by crusted sores, which usually appear first in the facial area. Children with this condition must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours, and all lesions should be dry before returning to school.

**Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye):** This is contagious infection of the eye characterized by a yellow discharge and tearing. The eye may be reddish in color and itchy. Children with this condition must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school and all discharge must be gone.

**Strep Throat:** Strep throat is often indicated by a rash and a temperature, combined with a sore throat. This condition requires antibiotics, and your child should not return to the school until he/she has been on medication for 24 hours. A child may not attend the school while waiting for the results of a strep test.

**Chicken Pox:** When a child has chicken pox, he/she may not attend until all sores are dry and healed over. Children may attend school after exposure and during the incubation period. Please notify the school when your child has the chicken pox so that we may notify other parents of the exposure.

**Head Lice:** Head lice are very small, light brown insects (less than 1/8 inch long) which live only in people's hair. They crawl and jump from head to head or from a personal item like a pillow or hat to a head. Head lice can cause intense itching and may make a person very uncomfortable. Because shampoos used to treat head lice do not always kill all the nits (eggs), the school has a "no nit" policy. A child may not return to the classroom until all the nits have been removed. You will be asked to have your child's head checked in an administrative office after being treated for head lice, and before returning to the classroom. Although nit removal can be a long and tedious process, it is necessary to prevent head lice from spreading throughout the school repeatedly.

## **ABSENCES**

If your child is absent on a given day, please call the school at (413) 584-8313 by 9:30am to let us know. If your child is ill with a contagious disease, please notify the school so that we may alert the other parents of exposure and take the necessary precautions. Payment is required for all scheduled days, even if your child should be absent for any reason.

## **MEDICATIONS**

Any medications to be administered at school must be prescribed by your child's doctor and contained in a bottle labeled by a pharmacy. Parents must complete a Medication Authorization from before a staff member may administer the medication to the child. Ask the classroom teacher for this form. Medications need to be stored in the safe in the main office.

\*Please do not leave medication in your child's cubby. Give it to the teacher so that it may be stored safely during the day. Medications requiring refrigeration are brought to the kitchen in the morning and picked up from the kitchen at the end of the day by the parent.

## **PHYSICAL EXAMS**

A yearly physical examination and completed medical form is required for each child in the school. The Executive Director should be informed of any changes concerning your child's medical records or health needs.

## **IMMUNIZATIONS**

Before a child's first day of attendance, the parents must provide the school with a physician's certificate that the child has been successfully immunized in accordance with the Department of Public Health. The recommended schedule of immunizations are: against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, measles, mumps, HIB (hemophilus Influenza Type B), varicella (chicken pox), and rubella. Evidence of lead screening is also required.

Parents are responsible for maintaining the proper immunization schedule, and for notifying the Executive Director of any new immunizations.

## **ALLERGIES**

Parents are responsible for informing the school, in writing, of any allergies their child has. Please keep the school informed if this situation changes in any way.

## **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBERS**

FIRE DEPARTMENT	911
POLICE DEPARTMENT	911
AMBULANCE	911
POISON PREVENTION	1-800-682-9211
COOLEY DICKINSON HOSPITAL	582-2000

## **INJURIES**

In case of minor injury, the staff will administer basic first aid, and will notify the parent (using an accident report) the same day the injury occurred. For more serious injuries requiring medical attention, the staff will call the parents immediately. If neither parent can be reached, the staff will try to reach an emergency contact person specified on the Emergency Form. (Please be certain to keep these telephone numbers current!) We will also continue trying to contact the child's parent. If none of the above parties can be reached and medical attention is imperative, the child's pediatrician will be contacted, and if the child requires professional assistance, an ambulance will be called. The Executive Director or Early Childhood Director will accompany the child to the hospital. The signed release for emergency treatment from the child's file will be brought to the hospital so that the treatment may begin upon arrival. All staff of the People's Institute are certified in Basic First Aid and CPR.

## **LOCATION OF FIRST AID KITS**

A first aid kit is located in the preschool classroom. Another first aid kit, as well as a field trip kit, is located in the main office. Kits are clearly marked with the symbol of a red cross for easy identification.

## **PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW IN CASE OF FIRE**

The smoke detectors will sound automatically. When the alarm sounds, the primary concern is getting all of the children out safely. Immediately upon hearing the alarm, the teachers are to assess the situation, and evacuate the children by the nearest exit. In case of fire, the teachers will:

1. Pull alarm.
2. Evacuate children.
3. Take roll book.

The last teacher out of the building will:

1. Shut windows and doors.
2. Turn out lights.
3. Check for hiding children.

## **EXITS**

Normal exit: east doors, down left front stairwell. Exit northern side door, down left front stairs of building. Gather at Public Parking Lot to the left of building.

Emergency exit- west doors, down right front stairwell. Exit northern side door, down right front stairs of building. Gather in the Police parking lot.

## **MISSING CHILD**

In the event that a child goes missing, a teacher will alert the office immediately. The office will inform all staff of the situation and will conduct a search of the building and grounds to ensure that the child is not on the premises. If the child is not located, the police department will be notified and the parents will be contacted.

## **PARENT COMMUNICATION**

The staff at The People's Institute understands that most parents today lead busy lives. They have full-time jobs; go to school, or both! With this in mind, we are respectful of their time, and try to arrange our communications and contacts in ways that will fit into their schedules. It is important that we develop close communication with each parent whose child attends People's Institute. We encourage parents to help us make decisions in all matters concerning the education and well being of their children at the school. We respect and welcome parent input. We encourage parents to visit and share their comments.

Daily Communications: Parents are encouraged to share information about their children on a daily basis with the teachers. If any changes occur in a child's health or home environment, please alert his/her teachers so that they may work in coordination with your family's goals. Since teachers are often busy greeting or saying goodbye to children and parents at arrival and departure times, it is best to schedule time outside the classroom for in-depth discussions about your child's growth and development. If your child's teacher is unavailable, and you have a concern that you feel requires immediate attention, please seek out a director who will be happy to help you.

Parent Information Board: Notices are posted on the Parent Information Board in the classroom. Please check this board daily for information about the activities of each day and special events.

Parent Mailboxes: In the main hallway there is a set of parent mailboxes. Each box is labeled with the child's last name. Please check your box each day for important messages, bills, permission slips, etc.

## **PARENT VISITS**

Parents are welcome to visit their children and to join in their daily activities. Parents are encouraged to bring activities to the classroom to share with the children; something related to a hobby, your work or anything! Your child's teachers will be happy to guide you in participating in the children's activities.

\*Teachers are always available to schedule a conference/meeting at any time during the school year.

## **ADMISSION TO SCHOOL**

An initial application form and proof of immunizations must be submitted before your child can be accepted into the program. Proof of a physical examination must follow within two weeks and must be renewed annually. A \$20.00 registration fee is required. The People's Institute shall not discriminate service to children and their families on the basis of race, religion, sexual preference, cultural heritage, political beliefs, handicap, or marital status.

At those times when enrollment is at full capacity, a waiting list is maintained for each classroom. Preference is given to full-time need. The waiting list operates on a first come-first serve basis. Upon acceptance into the program, a nonrefundable payment for the first week of tuition in the amount of \$225.00 must be made in order to secure your child's position in the classroom.

## **WITHDRAWAL POLICY**

It is the policy of the People's Institute that parents must give, in writing, a two week notice to withdraw their child from the preschool/pre-k program. You will be charged for the two week period.

## **TRIAL PERIOD AND TERMINATION POLICY**

The People's Institute has a 30-day trial period for all children entering the Preschool program. This is designed to allow the Head Teacher/Director to evaluate the child's needs, and the program's ability to meet the needs of the child. Parents will be kept informed of their child's progress. A child may be terminated in accordance with the following plan:

- Excessive absences.
- Non-payment of tuition.
- Reasonable accommodations cannot be made to meet the child's needs.
- Excessive, continual behavior problems that cannot be resolved using the school's behavior management plan.
- Parents and agency cannot agree on a behavior management plan.
- Parents refuse to meet for a conference.

When a child needs to be terminated from the school, the Head Teacher / Director will:

- Gather documented information
- Call and request parents to meet and discuss the reason for termination.
- Parents will be offered a written reason for termination.

In addition, classroom staff will prepare the child for termination in a manner consistent with the child's ability to understand.

## **PROGRESS REPORTS**

Progress reports will be completed for each child every six months (twice annually).

## **REFERRAL SERVICES**

The following procedures will be followed when referral to another agency may be indicated.

1. When staff members have concerns about a child's cognitive, social, emotional, speech/ language, or physical growth, they will put that concern in writing and bring it to the attention of the Director. Documentation s(including dates) of information that be helpful in meeting the child's needs will be provided.
2. The Director will review the information and observe the child. This observation will be documented also. The director and the teacher will determine if help from an outside agency is warranted.
3. If it is determined that the child will need referral to an outside agency, the director will meet with the child's parents of the staff member's concern. Together, the child's parents and the director will review options (as presented by the director.)
4. The director will help parents (if requested) contact appropriate services.
5. If it is determined that the child is not in need of services from an outside agency or is ineligible to receive services, the school will review the child's progress at the center every three months to determine if another referral is necessary. The above procedures will then be followed again.
6. Documentation of all referrals and meetings will be kept on file.

## **STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

All of this information on your child's registration forms, as well as, any other information added to your child's file during his/her enrollment at People's Institute Preschool shall be considered privileged and confidential. It will be made accessible only to the appropriate staff. Personnel from the Massachusetts Office for Children are required to have access to files for licensing purposes and shall maintain the confidentiality of individual records. If an outside agency should request information from your child's file, it will be released only after the parent has signed a Release of Information Form. A record of all such releases will be kept in your child's file.

## **FILE MAINTENANCE**

A parent may arrange with the administrative staff to see his or her child's file at any time. If copies of any of the information contained in this file are desired, these will be provided within two business days at no charge. If there is any information that a parent would like to have deleted from their child's file, they may arrange to meet with the director to make this request known. The Director will provide a decision within one week after the meeting. A parent

may add information to their child's file at any time. When a child leaves People's Institute Preschool, a parent may request, in writing, that a copy of the child's record be transferred to the parent or another agency.

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE**

Section 51A of Chapter 119 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires every child care worker in any public or private child care facility to report any suspected, physical or emotional abuse of any kind. Any staff member of the People's Institute who suspects such abuse or neglect of any child must be immediately report such concerns to the Director. The Director must then review the staff member's report of child abuse or neglect, consult with the staff member, and any other staff members involved. The director will immediately file a report with the Department of Social Services by telephone. A written report will then follow within forty-eight hours of the telephone report. The Director will follow the recommendations and guidelines of the Department of Social Services when filing all reports.

## **NOTIFICATION OF PARENTS**

The decision to notify the parents or guardian of a child that the People's Institute has made a report to the Department of Social Services regarding the welfare of such child shall be made by the Director on a case by case basis, in light of the best interest of the child.

## **PROCEDURE FOR SUSPECTED CENTER ABUSE/NEGLECT**

If you suspect a staff member of child abuse/neglect, it should immediately be brought to the attention of the program director or executive director. A report will filed immediately with the Department of Social Services, and the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services will be notified of the report. The accused staff member will be removed from the classroom and have no direct contact with the children until and investigation has been completed by the Department of Social Services. An internal investigation will be conducted. After the investigations are completed, a decision will be made as to whether or not the staff member may return to their position.

\* Each family will receive a bill at the beginning of each month for their child's regularly scheduled days. It is your responsibility to pay weekly. Nonpayment may result in late fees and loss of slot.

## **MEDICATION DISPOSAL**

When possible, all unused, discontinued or outdated prescription medications shall be returned to the parent and such return shall be documented in the child's record. When return to the parent is not possible or practical, such prescription medications will be destroyed and the destruction recorded by a supervisor in accordance with policies of the Department of Public Health Drug Control Program (305 South Street, 2nd Floor, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, 617-983-

6700).

## **STAFF SUPERVISION**

Each classroom will be observed for at least thirty minutes every two months by a staff member with at least lead teacher qualifications. Following these observations, the supervisor conducting the observation will discuss children's individual need and parent communication with the teacher. These meetings will be documented as they occur.

## **STAFF MEETINGS**

Staff meetings will occur every other week during nap time. They will take place between 2 P.M. and 3 P.M. At least one representative from each classroom will be present. Planned topics will be discussed as well as issues that are brought up by educators.

## **VOLUNTEERS**

Volunteers will complete a CORI check either through People's Institute or through the organization with which People's Institute is collaborating. . Each volunteer will fill out a time card to document the dates and times that the volunteer was present at People's Institute. When a volunteer begins, they will be informed of the rules at people's institute. A staff member will be present with a volunteer at all times Volunteers will be assigned to a staff member who will act as a mentor to the volunteer. This staff member will be teacher or lead teacher certified and will have at least one year of teaching experience. The mentor will ensure that the volunteer follows the rules and regulations of People's Institute and the Department of Early Education and Care and has a good sense of how to care for and interact with young children.

## **STUDENT INTERNS**

Student interns will be assigned to a staff member who will act as a mentor to the intern. This staff member will be teacher or lead teacher certified and will have at least one year of teaching experience. The mentor will help the intern to learn the rules and regulations of People's Institute and the Department of Early Education and Care and will aid them in developing the skills necessary for working with young children.

## **STAFF ORIENTATION**

An orientation meeting will be held at the beginning of the year to review all of the information included on the Staff Orientation Checklist. All new staff will be required to attend this orientation meeting. Staff that enter the program after the orientation meeting occurs will attend a one on one meeting with an administrator during nap time in order to review the information on the orientation checklist.

## **LATE FEE POLICY**

At the beginning of the month, everyone receives an invoice in their mailbox.

1. Weekly payments are due by Monday of each week.
2. Monthly payments are due on the first Monday of the month.

A \$35 late fee is charged if your payment arrives after the due date. If this occurs, the late fee is expected to arrive with your payment. An additional \$35 late fee will be added each week that the payment is not made.

## **EXTREME WEATHER**

Outdoor play will not be permitted when the temperature falls below 20 degrees F. However, we will go outside in the winter months if it is warm enough. Make sure to send your child with weather appropriate clothing every day.

## **TRANSITION POLICY**

Throughout the year your child may transition within our program to another classroom.

<b>Age Group</b>	<b>Age of Transition</b>	<b>New Age Group</b>
Toddler	2 years 9 months	3 Year Old Room
3 Year Old Room	3 years 9 months	4 Year Old Room

\*Children will not transition from the 4 Year Old Room to Pre-K in the middle of a school year.

As a parent, you will be a part of this exciting process. You should begin talking to your child about moving to a new classroom when they are approaching a transition age. The child's current teachers and new teachers will collaborate to come up with a transition schedule. Some children may benefit from visiting their new class slowly over the week before they are set to start. Other children might get confused by visiting, and adjust better by starting in their new classroom for a full day. Please share with your child's teachers what transition style you think would best help them adjust. Your child's current teachers or administrative staff will introduce you to their new teachers. We also recommend visiting the new classroom with your child before the big day. Pick up can be a great time for this. Remember any change can come with an adjustment period, so do not be discouraged if your child's mood is affected in the beginning. We are here to support your family, so let us know if there is anything we can do to make this process easier!

## **REGULATORY COMPLIANCE**

Parents may contact the Department of Early Education and Care for information regarding the program's regulatory compliance history. The Western Mass Regional office is located at 95 Liberty Street, Springfield, MA 01103. They can be reached by telephone at (413) 788-8401.

# People's Institute

38 Gothic Street  
Northampton, MA 01060

Phone: (413) 584-8313  
Fax: (413) 584-2851

Website: [pichildcare.com](http://pichildcare.com)  
Email: [office@pichildcare.com](mailto:office@pichildcare.com)

