



Family Handbook

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*At Little Sprouts, we have always been innovators and advocates of early childhood education. And now, more than ever, **we're onto something big.***

- **Big** on raising your expectations around early childhood education by using child-centered approaches that support individual development.
- **Big** on creating the ideal environment for your child to learn, laugh, play, and grow.
- **Big** on establishing a genuine connection between home and school to maintain an environment grounded in consistency, trust, and comfort.

Every element of the Little Sprouts experience is part of our joyful mission to make children feel happy and parents feel confident.



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PLEASE NOTE: Information in the Little Sprouts Family Handbook is subject to change and interpretation at Little Sprouts’ discretion.

Welcome to Little Sprouts

Welcome to Little Sprouts! Little Sprouts is an award-winning network of early education schools in New England. Every element of the Little Sprouts experience is part of our joyful mission to make children feel happy and parents feel confident. When we first opened Little Sprouts in 1982, we realized the importance of offering children an early start in play-based early education and the remarkable impact it can have on their lifelong development. Each day, children engage in an array of activities designed to inspire learning, curiosity, and joy.

Within our Family Handbook, you will discover general approaches and guidelines across our organization. Please note that the Family Handbook is subject to change at any time per Little Sprouts discretion and is not a legally binding document.

At our core, Little Sprouts offers a child-centric environment that will allow children to grow and develop safely, while surrounded by love, with an emphasis on family connection and relationships. We are delighted that you have selected Little Sprouts for your child's early education and we look forward to creating a meaningful and memorable learning journey together!



Approach to Early Education

Budding Scholars™

Our Budding Scholars™ approach to learning guides your child towards becoming a budding scholar across a variety of dimensions and sets the stage for a lifelong love of learning. At Little Sprouts, our educators inspire children’s curiosity, creativity and ingenuity through a combination of play-based and guided activities. Grounded in age-appropriate teaching methodologies, our approach to learning is individualized for each child across four key areas: Citizen, Scholar, Mind, and Body.



Citizen: Your child’s social-emotional development and ability to share and communicate with others is just as important as learning their ABC’s and 123’s. Based on NAEYC’s developmentally appropriate practices, Little Sprouts focuses on teaching the value and meaning of community. Your child and his or her classmates will join in collaborative activities such as dramatic play, team games, and daily job ownership in order to build a confident self-image and enriching relationships.

Scholar: When it comes to language and literacy, research tells us there is no such thing as starting too soon. Our teachers encourage your child’s joy of expression and give them plenty to talk about by introducing a new theme every month. Teachers plan intentional, individualized lessons to ensure your child’s oral and aural comprehension sets the stage for all future content learning. Through our award-winning, research-based literacy program, your child will gain the early literacy skills to inspire a lifelong love of learning.

Mind: Our teachers plan an array of science, math, and artistic activities to build your child’s cognitive development, challenge their minds, and keep them engaged for the whole day. Your child has a natural sense of curiosity, which our teachers cultivate through inquiry-based learning.

Body: As children learn to use and control their little bodies, we encourage age-appropriate physical activities important to developmental milestones. Whether your child is an infant learning to crawl, a toddler practicing putting on their own coat, or a preschooler writing their name, teachers will steadily encourage children to push themselves to the next level. With outdoor playtime and gross motor development, your child will be active throughout the day as they shake their sillies out and learn habits for healthy living. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(h)]

Educator Selection and Training

Educator Hiring and Screening

At Little Sprouts, we hire passionate educators, dedicated to making a difference in the lives of children and families. All eligible candidates are phone screened and then may be invited to a specific school for a face-to-face interview. Interviews are thorough, including in-depth time with school administrators and in-classroom interactions.

All staff undergo a series of assessments prior to hiring, including a Background Record Check (BRC), a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check, a DCF (formerly DSS) background check, and fingerprinting. After careful consideration with reference checks, the new educator will attend a Welcome Session that reviews company policies, child abuse prevention, and other Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) required training. Once a new educator arrives at the school, he or she will be thoroughly trained in school operations and safety policies, curriculum expectations and implementation best practices, and Little Sprouts family and teamwork values. An extensive onboarding program along with ongoing training promote an environment of constant learning, collaboration and excellence.

Educator Training and Development

We recognize that a strong foundation in early education begins with our educators. As such, we are committed to continuing our team’s professional development and training. Little Sprouts’ comprehensive professional development model provides tiers of training for entry-level staff through degreed professionals. Our in-house trainers share hands-on, one-on-one demonstrations of new practices to ensure authentic learning. Annually, each of our educators has access to over 100 hours of professional development.

Education Coaches

The Education Coach is a resource designed to support teachers within the classrooms. Our Education Coaches have demonstrated an exceptional comprehension of Little Sprouts and industry best practices. They offer ongoing development support to teachers through observations, modeling, and engaging in goal-directed conversations. Together, coaches and teachers plan teaching strategies to enhance children’s learning experiences. Education Coaches ensure teaching excellence and a personal approach to learning for every child.

Age Groups and Classrooms

Each Little Sprouts school offers various classroom and scheduling options depending upon the individual community and facility. Each school is designed to support your child as they learn and grow throughout their early education journey.

Infant

Little Sprouts infant classrooms foster an environment of safety, comfort, and security. In classrooms filled with nurturing teachers, sensory discoveries, and new friends, we help babies thrive through age-appropriate and individualized interactions.

Research tells us that the brain develops more in the first three years of life than at any other point in human development. Each moment is intentionally planned in Little Sprouts’ infant program to ensure your baby will make the most of this period of rapid cognitive, emotional, and physical growth.

We recognize creating a supportive partnership as you leave your baby in our care is a priority. Our infant programs are designed to make the transition between home and school smooth and enjoyable for the whole



family. Individualized schedules, nurturing primary caregivers, and thoughtfully designed classrooms will ensure your infant’s days are enriching and safe.

Toddler



Your toddler will begin to gain and assert independence through milestones such as first words, drinking out of a cup, and potty-training. Through a combination of personalized instruction and small group time, teachers advance toddlers’ resourcefulness, critical thinking skills, and capacity for compassion. Hands-on learning and play keep toddlers actively engaged and continuously interested in understanding more about themselves, their friends and family, and the world around them.

Our passionate and energetic teachers will provide your toddler with a consistent routine and schedule, filled with exploration and introduction to new experiences. Our toddler program nurtures the “I can do it!” mindset, while also helping toddlers understand their relationship to the environment and peers around them. Regardless of their developmental stage, each day will be filled with laughter, learning to balance independence and collaboration, reading, singing, and hands-on learning.

Preschool / Pre-Kindergarten

Little Sprouts preschool and pre-kindergarten classrooms honor and inspire the incredible connections that children infer about the objects, actions, and people in the world around them. Our preschool and pre-k classrooms harness the energy of learning to create a focused, engaged environment in which children are poised to thrive. Through play and interactive dialogue, children are encouraged to express their own individuality, as well as appreciate the unique traits of others.

Little Sprouts’ preschool and pre-k classrooms will prepare your child to enter kindergarten ready to learn and contribute. We nurture inquisitive minds and refine core skills as children prepare to enter kindergarten. With a variety of learning labs throughout the room, children are encouraged to explore at their own pace and experiment with new concepts and skills. Our enhanced literacy program enables children to advance their verbal, written, and aural language aptitude. Activities are individualized for each child’s learning pace as we explore concepts related to language, reading, writing, math, science, social studies, creative arts, motor skills, and social development in preparation for Kindergarten.



Kindergarten

Our kindergarten classrooms are exceptional centers of learning dedicated to formal kindergarten lesson plans as we expertly prepare your child for first grade. Children enjoy lively and full days of discovery, questions, and skill development. Every day, students explore learning with purpose as they begin to comprehend their own thought processes and the underpinnings of critical thinking. In a fun and motivating environment, children become eager, active learners that are well-equipped for their learning journey ahead.

School Age

Our “Big Sprouts” classrooms are cheerful spaces that promote social and emotional development, while supporting continued learning before and after school. With respect and integrity, our school age students practice cooperation, explore creativity, and continue their studies. With a balance of individual and group time, children may complete homework, play games, create crafts, read books, and more. In our mixed-age classrooms, students have an opportunity to learn from and mentor peers with kindness and respect.

In addition to offering dedicated time for homework, our Big Sprouts classrooms enhance children’s education through weekly learning plans. Every week, activities are designed around writing, math, science, art, team building, and exercise to engage growing, active minds.

Musical Sprouts



Musical Sprouts is our hallmark music program developed specifically for Little Sprouts. A distinct blend of music therapy and educational techniques help students achieve developmental milestones through song, sign language, instruments, and movement.

Our music therapy team focuses primarily on advancing children’s cognitive, physical, social, emotional, and language development through activities that support the weekly curriculum. Through

playful fun with purpose, our Musical Sprouts program hums, whirrs, clicks, and rattles with excitement!

Because we fundamentally believe in music therapy as an enhanced learning technique, this program is accessible to all infant, toddler, preschool and pre-kindergarten classrooms and is included in the cost of tuition. Certified music therapists are shared between our schools and visit each classroom on a rotating basis several times per month.

Outdoor Play

Daily outdoor play is very important for young children and is an important component of our program. Per the Department of Early Education and Care regulations, children will receive at least 60 minutes of physical activity daily, though Little Sprouts strives for more. This is usually divided into 30-minute intervals: 30 minutes in the morning and 30 minutes in the afternoon. The children will spend time outside every day unless the outdoor temperature is not permitted by state guidelines or it is raining. It is our philosophy and policy that if a child is well enough to attend the program, he/she is well enough to play outdoors. If children are properly dressed, weather conditions should not pose a health risk. Please provide appropriate clothing to allow for weather extremes. Every family must also provide their own sunscreen.



Mixed-Age Groupings

Little Sprouts provides mixed-age groups in classrooms, acknowledging that children develop at different rates, especially when they are very young. Mixed-age groups enable children to learn from others who are at more advanced stages, as well as support and be sympathetic to children in less advanced stages, much like in a family setting.

Our philosophy of building self-mastery in a non-competitive atmosphere supports a mixed-age approach, which creates a warm, nurturing, stimulating environment in which children are aware of individual differences among their peers.

Transitions

It is the goal of Little Sprouts to ensure that all children are transitioned into new classrooms in a systematic way. Little Sprouts also understands that these times are transitioning periods for parents as well. When your child is ready to transition to a new classroom, you will receive a transition packet that includes a letter outlining the transition process at least one week prior to the start of your child's transition. The Executive Director or Education Coach will notify and review the transition approach with both classrooms' teaching teams so the educators are prepared to answer any questions you may have.

Please be aware that the transition process may vary from child to child, depending upon their individual needs. Some children thrive with shorter transitions while others might need a longer period of time to become accustomed to a new classroom. Transitions can be challenging times for children and parents alike, and we do everything possible to support your family by answering any questions you may have and providing an extra level of support and attention to the transitioning child.

Learning Guidance Tools

Our learning guidance tools help customize each child's approach to learning and facilitate conversations between educators and families. Based on each child's individual learning journey, appropriate and attainable goals are set with children's teachers and school administrators to help children achieve the next milestone. Learning guidance tools and strategies may include:

Curriculum Modifications

Within the Budding Scholars™ framework, all activities can be modified to adapt to the developmental needs of each child. If a child has already mastered a skill, a modified version will increase the challenge of an activity to help keep the child engaged; as a child is introduced to or honing a new skill, a modification may help make the activity more approachable for the child. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(h)]

Development Benchmarks

Honoring each child's individual abilities, our benchmark assessments offer teachers and families an opportunity to reflect upon learning objectives. Teachers observe children's behaviors and interactions to develop a comprehensive understanding of each child's skills on a quarterly basis. With an appreciation for age-appropriate milestones, our educators use this benchmarking tool as a

way to support the learning journey for the whole group and each child within. Assessments are reviewed annually during parent-teacher conferences.

Ages & Stages Questionnaire®

The ASQ-3 leverages specific questions designed to observe progress and monitor opportunities for continued development. Families respond to the questionnaire at home and discuss results with the child’s classroom teacher. The ASQ-3 may be performed as an entry point assessment across all age groups to better understand each child’s developmental level.

Environmental Rating Scales (ERS)

To assess process quality within a classroom, ITERS (“Infant Toddler”) and ECERS (“Early Childhood” for Preschool/Pre-K) checklists are used to evaluate best practices around the physical environment, basic care, curriculum, interactions, schedule and program structure, and parent and staff education.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Little Sprouts welcomes private parent-teacher conferences upon request at any time. Formal conferences are scheduled annually to review progress with families. [606 CMR 7.08 (7)]

Anti-Bias Philosophy

Little Sprouts organization emphasizes a social anti-bias philosophy. More information on this subject appears in NAEYC’s Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children. Our goal is to empower children, so they can determine what is fair, feel loved and respected, demonstrate love and respect for others, question injustice, and stand up for themselves and others. We believe that everyone deserves love and respect and that it is wrong to make assumptions about individuals based on their age, socioeconomic status, ethnic background, race, physical features, disabilities, religious background, family structure, gender, size, or academic ability.

Little Sprouts celebrates differences and celebrates sameness. We believe that all feelings should be



valued and that there is an appropriate way to express them. We practice the use of taking responsibility for our feelings with our children as well as in our organization between adults. We endeavor to build character that empowers each individual to engage in relationships that support their well-being. Little Sprouts does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, cultural heritage, national origin, marital status, religion, political beliefs, disability, sexual orientation, color, sex, gender identity, age, veteran status, or ancestry.

In order to promote each child’s uniqueness, we must appreciate and celebrate each family. Therefore, Little Sprouts is a non-political, non-religious organization. Our educators and staff do not initiate the celebration of any holiday, nor do we initiate the decoration of our rooms with items of this nature. Little Sprouts feels that celebrating any one

religious or political holiday in our program isolates children of minority faiths or political backgrounds, while contributing to the development of ethnocentrism in majority children. Since educators do not have complete information about how each family celebrates its holidays, the practice of “celebrating diverse beliefs” can lead children and their families to feel like guests in their own country. Celebrating holidays may guide children in minority groups to be involved in traditions that their families may not observe which can cause them to feel that their differences are only superficially acknowledged and respected by the school. Likewise, the practice of celebrating holidays guides children in majority groups toward ethnocentrism and insensitivity, as they observe the imposition of their traditions on children in minority groups.

While the practice of initiating holiday celebrations within the curriculum does not support Little Sprouts’ philosophy of building individual self-esteem in a social anti-bias environment, we do acknowledge and discuss each child’s unique family celebrations. We invite each of our families to share their unique traditions by participating in the experience in their child’s classroom. For example, a family may celebrate a specific holiday in their family with special traditional foods or observations. We invite families to bring this food in and share among their child’s class while sharing stories, pictures, books, and songs that help the children embrace the significance of this tradition. (Please make sure that any foods shared are respectful of those in your child’s classroom with regard to food allergies and sensitivities.) In this way, the experience is meaningful and connected to a family, an experience instead of a generalized set of standards and beliefs about the holiday.

We encourage educators to celebrate the differences in our children’s families, while also supporting multicultural, multi-religious, multi-political sensitivity. We urge our educators to involve families and to use them as a resource to share their special customs and traditions with the class.

Birthdays

In recognition of each child as a special individual, we invite your family to share their unique cultural birthday traditions with your child’s class. However, in accordance with our anti-bias philosophy, we do not initiate birthday celebrations.

Please check with your child’s classroom’s primary educator and a school director before bringing food or any other item in to celebrate your child’s birthday to ensure compliance with our food allergy and sensitivity policy. This will prevent disappointment or any other problem (for example, balloons are dangerous to infants and toddlers and are not permitted in the school). The educators will do their best to meet your needs as we support our commitment to celebrating special events in the life of your child.

Child Guidance Philosophy

One of the most important areas in which we put our philosophies into practice is in the area of discipline. When corrective guidance is used, it is positive and consistent. The age and individual needs of the child are considered. At Little Sprouts, children are never hit, slapped, spanked, withheld food or withheld bathroom privileges - even at the family’s request. Children are not ridiculed, teased, humiliated, threatened, or embarrassed.

Positive Guidance

Our goal with positive guidance is to develop a child's sense of self-discipline and self-mastery rather than the process for punishment. We encourage your child to learn from challenges and develop a sense of resiliency with the desire to grow. We also encourage a method of encouragement versus praise. Research shows that, when you praise a child for intelligence or talent, he or she sees failure as something undermining it and becomes so afraid of making mistakes that motivation is stunted. But, if you put the emphasis on the process or the effort the child makes, the child learns to be resilient in the face of setbacks and is more open to seeking challenges.

Our approach to positive child guidance includes techniques such as:

- Acknowledge the child's feelings and redirect
- Approach calmly
- Gather information
- Restate the problem
- Ask for ideas and solutions and choose one together
- Collaborate on conflict resolution
- Give follow-up support
- Teach by example
- Explain logical consequences
- Help strengthen self-concept by separating actions from self
- Respect the child's boundaries and needs
- Prepare for challenges in advance



Learning to express emotions verbally and honestly is a normal part of childhood. At Little Sprouts, educators encourage children to "use their words" to express their feelings. In many cases, the educator will provide the child with words to use (e.g., "I don't like it when you hit me. It hurts."). Overall, behavior guidance and the use of positive guidance at Little Sprouts maximizes growth and development, protects the group and individuals, sets reasonable and positive expectations, offers choices, provides opportunity to verbalize feelings, and encourages self-control through understanding. When appropriate, children participate in their own behavior plans and the creation of classroom rules.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even preschoolers. It is something that almost all children will try at least once. When it happens, it can be scary, frustrating and stressful for everyone involved. It is a natural phenomenon and not something to blame on children, families or educators.

Brief episodes of biting do not mean that a child is having a social or emotional problem. It also does not mean that the family is to blame. It does mean that your child is going through a stage in his/her development. As with all developmental stages, biting will end.

Biting may occur for any of the following reasons:

- Oral exploration
- Teething
- Hunger
- Fatigue
- Lack of awareness that biting hurts

- Frustration, anxiety
- Inability to express feelings or needs verbally
- Mimicking behavior
- Inexperienced peer interactions
- A way of showing affection
- Exploring cause-and-effect
- Exploring holding on and letting go
- Impulsiveness and lack of self-control
- Excitement and over stimulation

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more appropriate behavior. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective techniques that address the specific reason for biting. Delayed punishment at home will not be understood by the child.

An injury report will be written for the child who was bitten. The family of the biter will be notified by the child's educator. We will work together with the families of the biter and the bitten child to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change. We will make every effort to modify the behavior quickly. The name of the child who has bitten will remain confidential.

Children Developing Unacceptable Behavior Challenges

It is the ultimate goal of all Little Sprouts employees to support children and families. All children and families deserve love and respect. Some children and families will require more of our attention and support, which neither increases nor diminishes their value. Little Sprouts is committed to working with families and children to the best of our ability. This commitment requires us to have a high degree of tolerance with children who exhibit developing unacceptable behavior challenges. Such behavior includes, but is not limited to, kicking, throwing or damaging school property, hitting, spitting, biting, and disrespectful language or actions. While some early education centers will terminate a child after the first incident of unacceptable behavior, Little Sprouts believes that behaviors can change and will take every possible step to help a child self-regulate. We will make every effort to find a solution that enables the child to stay. Every situation is different, and we address behavior challenges on a case-by-case basis. Any suspension/termination will be consistent with the appropriate state laws and regulations.

Behavior Plans

Behavior plans are developed to help support the families and the educators when a child is continually presenting challenging behaviors in the classroom. Behavior plans are written after teachers have gathered at least two weeks of documentation, describing negative, unsafe behaviors in a classroom. A behavior plan will have expectations that will need support and follow through by the educators, parents, specialists, and directors. An example of an expectation that would be in a behavior plan is that parents may need to contact their pediatrician to seek a referral for additional services (i.e., speech, occupational therapy, etc.). Educators and parents will keep an open line of communication daily about child's behavior. Behavior plans are reviewed monthly to review progress or make modifications.

Referral Services

Our goal is to work with families to meet the unique needs of each individual child. Little Sprouts administrators often make referrals to community resources, in response to individual child needs for assistance with social behavior, mental health, educational development, and medical services (including dental and vision). A referral most often begins with a concern voiced by an educator, an administrator, or a parent. Educators and families should bring these concerns to the school's Executive Director.

While the process for referrals varies on a case-by-case basis, the Executive Director will typically review the child's record and schedule a time for an administrator to observe the child. When the observation(s) is complete, the Executive Director will then arrange a meeting with the child's family to discuss the observations and create a Positive Guidance Plan. If the Executive Director wishes to make a referral, he or she will ask the family to sign a "Consent for Referral" form. If a referral is made, the Executive Director will follow up with the family on a periodic basis.

Little Sprouts remains committed to working with children who are experiencing educational delays, difficult social behaviors, illnesses, and other disabilities. However, there may be cases in which Little Sprouts determines that a child's presence would pose a significant distraction or direct threat to the health and safety of others.

In compliance with Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act and pursuant to individual state codes, an individualized assessment of each child will be requested, reviewed or commissioned to determine whether Little Sprouts can meet the particular needs of the child. If Little Sprouts determines that any necessary accommodations required to serve the child would cause an undue burden to the program or that the child should be suspended or terminated, then such actions and decision will be made consistent with state regulations. The parents and child will be afforded all rights consistent with state regulations and/or other appropriate state or federal law. [606 CMR 7.04 (17)(i)]

Observing and Communicating Child Developmental Concerns or Behavior

- 1) In response to a concern voiced by a staff member, a parent, or other authorized party, the Executive Director will review the child's record and schedule a time for an administrator to observe the child.
- 2) The observing administrator should record the child's behaviors on the Observation Narrative Form. The observer will record facts in the briefest and clearest possible language.
- 3) If the administrator is not the Executive Director, then the administrator should review the Observation Narrative Form with the Executive Director and discuss next steps prior to contacting the family.
- 4) After reviewing the observations with and receiving approval from the Executive Director, the administrator will arrange a meeting with the child's family to discuss the observations and create a Positive Guidance Plan.
- 5) During the meeting, the administrator must obtain written parent/guardian consent on the Consent for Referral Form.
- 6) When applicable, the administrator will give the family copies of:
 - (a) Positive Guidance Plan
 - (b) Consent for Referral Form
- 7) The administrator will offer the parent/guardian(s) guidance around current regional resources, which may include the current list of the referral resources in the community,

including a public school early intervention program (if available). When applicable, the administrator will assist the family in making and following up on the referral – for example, providing phone numbers and contact information, participating in any observations, and responding to requests from specialists.

- 8) Upon completion of the referral, the Executive Director will complete the Referral Follow-Up Form to assist families in implementation of referral plan, decide on any accommodations to be made to serve child's needs, obtain a signed copy from a parent/guardian, and give the parent/guardian a copy. If necessary, the Executive Director will schedule a follow-up meeting to discuss results and update the Positive Guidance Plan in person.
- 9) All information must be filed in both the child's main file and in the Child Service Log.
- 10) If services are determined to be unnecessary, or if the child is determined to be ineligible for services, the Executive Director must review the need for referral every three months.

Termination and Suspension

Little Sprouts may occasionally terminate families for children's behavior when challenges are persistent, or when they are threatening or harmful to other children, other families, or Little Sprouts staff. It is our desire to work with challenges rather than reject them, but every behavioral situation is different and complex, so each issue is handled on a case-by-case basis and consistent with appropriate state and federal laws and regulations. If this occurs, Little Sprouts administrators will assist the family with recommendations to help make the child's transition away from the program as gentle as possible.

Little Sprouts may occasionally terminate families at our discretion for adults' unacceptable behavior. We must consider the safety and happiness of all of our stakeholders, and we will ask families to leave when we believe that their behavior is disruptive within the Little Sprouts community.

Children's Belongings

Clothing

By regulation, the state requires that all children always have at least one extra change of clothes within the school. Oftentimes, particularly for infants or potty-training children, we request multiple sets of clothing. Please label all clothing clearly with your child's first and last name. If your items are not labeled, Little Sprouts educators may label the items for you.

Toys & Gear

Little Sprouts classrooms are filled with toys and activities for the development and enjoyment of your child. We ask that families leave their child's personal toys at home. It is a natural desire for a child to bring personal items to school, and we encourage children to bring items such as a favorite blanket or soft item for rest time (except infants). Please label all items clearly. Little Sprouts provides cubbies, but we cannot assume responsibility for items brought from home. A lost and found box is available in the school. Articles not claimed may be donated or discarded.

Some schools may offer storage space for strollers, car seats, or other child gear. You are welcome to leave your belongings in this common space at your own discretion. Little Sprouts is not

responsible for any lost, stolen, or damaged goods and no reimbursement for personal items is offered.

Non-Violent Toys

Little Sprouts supports a loving, peaceful, non-violent environment. We do not allow toys or books that could be interpreted as violent on school premises. This includes any toy that appears to be a gun, sword, knife, or any other weapon, as well as war-related or violent items, stories, actions or images. Little Sprouts requests that all families leave the personal toys of children at home. Our educators will ask families to remove such items from the school.

Body Basics

Quality care for each child starts with making sure that they feel safe, comfortable and nurtured throughout the day. From sleep policies and procedures to food handling, educators recognize the importance of supporting every child's basic needs as a critical foundation to early learning.

Sleep

Nap and Rest

State regulations require a rest period, the duration of which varies by state. Naptime is generally 1 to 2 hours long. Children who do not sleep will be given a quiet activity, such as coloring or reading, while other children sleep. A restful naptime gives all children the boost of energy necessary for a successful afternoon.

During naptime, we give each child his or her own crib, mat or cot. All children, except infants, are required to bring a sheet and blanket and may bring a small pillow or soft item. For infant sleep safety, only a crib sheet, pacifier, and sleep sack are allowed in the crib.

Infant Sleep Safe Policies

Infants nap according to their individual schedules. Every infant 12 months of age or younger will be put to sleep on their backs to reduce the chance of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). No child under 12 months of age will nap in a crib containing pillows, comforters, stuffed animals or other soft, padded materials. Swaddling is not permitted; sleep sacks are permissible. We recommend training your baby to use sleep sacks prior to arrival to ease the transition between home and school. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(j) and 606 CMR 7.11(13)(e)]

Feeding

Infant Feeding Guidelines

In order to maintain consistency between home and school, and to meet the individual needs of each child, infants will be fed according to their individual feeding schedules or needs.

A current feeding schedule must be maintained, documenting either the use of breast milk or formula and, if applicable, new foods introduced and food intolerances and preferences. You will need to supply enough prepared, pre-made formula or breast milk bottles and baby food daily.

Please bring them to the school daily and ensure that all bottles and caps are clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. Your infant's bottles should be plastic and capped.



Bottles can be stored by bringing in an insulated lunch bag with ice packs to keep either in your child's cubby or in the classroom. Parents may also store bottles in the classroom refrigerator when available. Bottles may be warmed by running warm water over the pre-made bottle.

Once a formula bottle feeding has begun, the formula must be used within 1 hour. Any formula remaining after 1 hour must be discarded. Once a breast milk bottle feeding has begun, the breast milk can "safely stand for 6 to 8 hours and need not be discarded if the first feeding attempt is incomplete."

(Breastfeeding, A Guide for the Medical Profession by Ruth Lawrence, MD p.438) If you request that the partially consumed breast milk bottle be refrigerated, it "can be used for one more feeding no more than 4 hours later." (Jan Barger, RN, MA, IBCLC) Educators will record the infant's feeding times and amounts on their daily note. Feeding time is always recorded as when the baby begins to eat. All remaining bottles will be sent home at the end of the day.

Breastfeeding

If you are a nursing mother, Little Sprouts is more than happy to make arrangements for you to visit your infant at any time. If the school is not convenient to your workplace for nursing visits, please feel free to supply us with expressed milk to feed your baby.

Frozen Milk Storage

Depending upon available space at the school, we may be able to store one frozen serving for up to one month from the date expressed. Frozen breast milk that is kept at the school does not have to be returned at the end of each day. This frozen package must be clearly labeled with the date of expression and the child's first and last name.

Meals and Snacks

Little Sprouts believes that meals and snacks are critical to a child's health and development. Snacks and breakfast, along with beverages (milk, juice or water), are provided by Little Sprouts for children in toddler classrooms or older. This rotating 4-week menu follows the USDA guidelines for food groups and portion sizes for both toddlers, preschoolers, and school age children. Children are offered breakfast if they arrive in the classroom before 8:30am, and two snacks (AM/PM) throughout the day. Where applicable, menus are posted in school common areas.

We have found that children eat more consistently and completely when their lunches are provided by their families, who are familiar with their customs and preferences. Please make lunches nutritious and enjoyable. All food should be cut into bite-size pieces that are easy to swallow. Please make sure that all lunch boxes, bags and containers are labeled with your child's full first and last name. Lunches are kept in your child's cubby. We suggest that you use ice packs to keep food cool and thermoses to keep food warm. We prefer you pack lunch options that do not require heat for ease of teacher preparation since they educators will be helping children unpack their lunches,

preparing beverages, and hurrying to sit down with children during mealtime for teachable moments. However, if your classroom has a microwave, we do allow heating of food for up to, but not to exceed, 30 seconds per child.

Allergy Awareness

All of our schools and classrooms are allergy aware. It is very important that you respect our allergy aware environment because allergic children can have a reaction not only from a nut product that they ingest or touch, but also from a nut product that is opened by another child in another part of the room. Please refrain from bringing nut products of any kind into the school.

Diapers & Toilets

Diaper Policy

Educators will turn this frequently occurring routine into a fun-filled learning activity. Educators can build an infant or toddler's skill of listening and communicating by playing simple word and movement games as part of diaper changing. It can be something as simple as having the educator describe what they are doing and responding to the child's vocalizations, or by turning diapering into a sing-along. Diaper changes will occur every 2 hours or sooner if the child's diaper is soiled, or based on parent preference. Diaper changes will be recorded on your child's daily note.

Toilet Training Policy

Toilet training will begin when appropriate for each child's age and stage of development. Families will be consulted on the method used at home. Educators and administrators will provide feedback on each child's progress at the school. Children will be offered frequent opportunities to use the toilet, especially after meals and before naps. If the child has soiled or wet clothing, normal diapering procedures will be used. Please provide at least three (3) changes of clothing for each day's use, in case of accidents. If an accident occurs, soiled clothing will be placed in a bag, labeled with the child's name, and sent home at the end of the day. Furthermore, Little Sprouts does not require children to be toilet trained as an eligibility requirement for admission.

Wellness Policy

Little Sprouts Wellness Policy has been created in collaboration with our Health Care Consultant and Massachusetts EEC Regulations. Adhering to Little Sprouts Wellness Policy is the best way families and schools can partner together to ensure we create a healthy environment for all.

Hand Washing Policy

Little Sprouts recognizes the importance of hand washing as the first line of defense against infectious disease. Why, how, and how often you wash are all important in an effort to maintain the school's collective well-being. To promote a healthy and safe environment for children and staff, we observe the following approach:

- 1) Use running water that drains out, not stopped-up water.
- 2) Avoid common containers of water, to reduce spreading of germs.
- 3) Use liquid soap, not bar soap.

- 4) Use friction (rub hands together).
- 5) Clean under fingernails.

Infection Control

All Little Sprouts educators are trained with regard to proper hygiene practices. Little Sprouts sanitizes and performs the following duties on a regular basis:

- Cribs and infant toys are washed and sanitized daily or after they have been mouthed (to the best of the teacher's ability).
- Classroom furniture and equipment is washed and sanitized daily or more often as needed.
- Machine-washable fabric toys are washed on a weekly basis or more as needed.
- Sheets, blankets and washable toys that belong to children are sent home at the end of each week for washing.
- Toilets, toilet seats, flushing handles, containers/lids used to hold soiled diapers/ papers, water tables and water play equipment, play tables and smooth, nonporous floors are cleaned daily or whenever there is visible contamination.

Across all schools, Little Sprouts retains professional cleaning services several times per week to augment daily cleaning routines performed by staff.

Sick Policy

Little Sprouts understands that it is challenging for a parent/guardian to leave or miss work. Therefore, it is suggested that alternative arrangements be made for occasions when your children must remain at home or be picked up due to illness. Exclusion from Little Sprouts is sometimes necessary to reduce the transmission of illness. Mild illnesses are common among young children and infections are often spread before the onset of any symptoms.



If any of the symptoms or behaviors listed below occur, we ask families to keep children home. For your child's comfort and to reduce the risk of infection, if symptoms or behaviors manifest themselves at school, we ask that for children are to be picked up within 1.5 hours of notification.

Symptoms and behaviors that are grounds for dismissal or temporary program exclusion may include but are not limited to:

- Illness that prevents the child from participating comfortably in program activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than our educators can provide without compromising the health and safety of other children.
- Fever (equal to or higher than 101°, or 100° under the arm) accompanied by unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, or other signs of illness.
- Diarrhea, stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting once at school.
- Mouth sore associated with drooling.
- Rash or fever or behavioral changes, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.

- Conjunctivitis (pink eye with eye discharge) until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice until there are no nits in the hair.
- Chickenpox until all lesions have dried and crusted.

Children may return to school when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea for a full 24 hours without medication.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for a full 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual program activities, including outdoor time.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's health-care provider signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious; AND,
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If your child is excluded from the program because of a communicable disease, a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return is required. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(i)]



Medication Administration

Prescription or non-prescription medication will be administered to a child only if it meets the following criteria:

- 1) Written consent of the family's authorization;
- 2) Written order of a physician that indicates the medication is for the specific child; and,
- 3) The medication must be brought to the program in a new/sealed unopened container and the pills should be counted. The official prescription label on the container may be counted as the physician's written order.
- 4) The original label must carry the following basic information:
 - The name of the child who will be receiving the medication.*
 - The name of the child's doctor.*
 - The name of the medicine.
 - The issue date of the medicine.*
 - The dosage.
 - How often to give the dosage.
 - The route of the administration (i.e. Oral).
 - Storage requirements (i.e. refrigerator).

*Prescription medication only

Non-prescription medication will be given only with written consent of the child's physician. The school will accept a signed statement from the physician listing the medication(s), the dosage and criteria for its administration. This statement will be valid for one year from the date that it was signed. Along with the written consent of the physician, the school will also need written parental authorization. The parent must fill out the Authorization for Medication form, which allows the school to administer the non-prescription medication in accordance with the written order of the physician.

The parent statement will be valid for one week from the date it was signed and will need to be reauthorized weekly as needed. The non-prescription medication must be brought to the program in a new/sealed unopened container and the pills should be counted

For non-prescription medicines, the following must be adhered to:

- The family must provide all non-prescription medication, including but not limited to Tylenol. No medication may be administered to a child if the family does not provide it.
- An attempt must be made to notify the family before administering medication.
- The child's name must be labeled on the medication.
- Directions for safe use must be in writing on the container along with a list of active ingredients.
- All families with children under 15 months of age will strive to have their consent updated every three months to ensure proper dosage.

Staff will not administer:

- Any over-the-counter medication without a doctor's note.
- Any first dose of medication. This must be given by the parent/guardian at home in case of an allergic reaction.
- Any prescription medication that is not in the pharmacy's bottle with the prescription label.
- Any medication for which the family's instructions differ from those on the prescription label. [If the family request the medication to be given by a different method (i.e., fluid medication be put in a bottle or a tablet crushed into food), a doctor's note would have to be provided stating that the alternative method of administering the medication has been authorized. The child would need to be directly supervised until all the medication is consumed, to ensure the medication was not accidentally consumed by another child.]
- Sippy cups or bottles containing medication added by the parent at home.

General medication policies include:

- The first dose must be administered by the parent at home in case of an allergic reaction.
- All medications must be provided to the educator or director by the parent.
- Medication is kept in the Director's office or in a lock box located in the refrigerator in the kitchen. Medications that may be needed immediately are kept secure and out of reach of children in the classroom, or carried outside when the child is outside. (i.e., inhaler, epi-pen)
- The lead educator in the classroom will be responsible for the administration of medication. In his/her absence, the Director will be responsible.
- Every child receiving medication will be directly supervised during each administration/dose to ensure that the medication is not accidentally consumed by another child.
- All staff administering medication will be trained via the EEC Medication Authorization Training and must demonstrate competency in medication administration. Staff that have not taken this training will not administer medication.
- All administered medications (excluding topical ointments and sprays applied to normal skin) will be logged on the EEC Medical Consent Form and the school will maintain a written record. The form must be completed, signed and dated by the family member. The form will include the child's name, the time and date of each administration, the dosage, and the name of the staff person that administered the medication.
- Any unused medication is returned to the family.
- Upon completion of the medication, the consent form is kept in the child's file. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(c) and 606 CMR 7.11(2)(a)]

Medication Administration Chart

Type of Medication	Written Parental Consent Required	Health Care Practitioner Authorization Required	Logging Required
<i>All Prescription</i>	Yes	Yes. Must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature, missed doses must also be noted along with the reason(s) why the dose was missed.
<i>Oral Non-Prescription</i>	Yes, renewed weekly with dosage times, days and purpose	Yes. Must be in an original, sealed container with original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature, missed doses must also be noted along with the reason(s) why the dose was missed.
<i>Unanticipated Non-Prescription for Mild Symptoms (e.g. acetaminophen, ibuprofen, antihistamines)</i>	Yes, renewed annually	Yes. Must be in an original, sealed container with original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature.
<i>Topical, Non-Prescription (when applied to open wounds or broken skin)</i>	Yes, renewed annually	Yes. Must be in original container with original label containing the name of the child affixed.	Yes, name of child, dosage, date, time, staff signature.
<i>Topical Non-Prescription (not applied to open wounds or broken skin)</i>	Yes, renewed annually	No. Staff may apply product with parental permission or parents may supply their own preferred brand.	No, for items used solely for prevention, such as sunscreen or insect repellent.

Physicals & Immunization Records

All children attending Little Sprouts are required to have a recent physical and must have up-to-date immunizations, including HIB and lead screening unless waived by Little Sprouts in compliance with our immunization policy. All of this information must be included on the School Health Form, signed and dated by a physician. Health Forms must be updated annually for all children.

Injury Prevention

Educators for each age group are responsible for daily safety inspections of their assigned area and equipment. Defective equipment will be removed or repaired as soon as possible to prevent injury.

Playground safety is a major concern. As such, we encourage all parents/ guardians to be aware of the potential strangulation hazards of drawstrings on clothing. Please check your child's clothing carefully and remove all drawstrings. Footwear, such as sneakers, appropriate for active, outdoor playing, climbing, running and jumping is strongly recommended. As infant sleep safe guidelines are in practice, bibs or blankets will not be left on infants when they are placed in cribs.

In the event that your child does sustain a minor injury, you will receive an Injury Report outlining the incident and course of action taken by the educator. You will be contacted immediately if the injury is to your child's head, produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, accompanied by a Little Sprouts educator, while the school's directors or educators contact you or a designated emergency contact.

Individual Health Care Plans

An Individual Health Care Plan (IHCP) must be maintained for each child with a chronic medical condition, which has been diagnosed by a licensed health care practitioner. The plan must describe the chronic condition, its symptoms, any medical treatment that may be necessary while the child is in care, the potential side effects of that treatment and the potential consequences to the child's health if the treatment is not administered. All staff working with the child will have access to and will familiarize themselves with the IHCP to ensure their understanding of the child's needs.

Quality Standards

Little Sprouts believes that a high-quality experience for children and families is of paramount importance. That is why we have made ongoing self-assessment an integral part of our program.

Quality 360° Checklists

As a privately-owned company, offering the best early education and child care experience to families is of paramount importance at Little Sprouts. To ensure consistent, high-quality standards across all schools, members of the Little Sprouts senior management team evaluate program practices firsthand on a quarterly basis. The results of these assessments support and strengthen the program experience for Little Sprouts families and children. This collaboration between school teams and management contributes directly to Little Sprouts' distinguished reputation as a respected institution for the best early education and child care.



Quality Standards for School Operations

Operations evaluations assess standards pertaining to items such as regulatory compliance, required documentation, health and safety, classroom routines, kitchen and food preparation, playgrounds, common spaces, and other functions that help our schools run smoothly and safely.

Quality Standards for Early Education

Education evaluations consider standards pertaining to curriculum fidelity and implementation, lesson plans, evidence of learning, atmosphere and ambiance, teacher-child interactions, displays and postings, teacher training hours, coaching plans, curriculum results (e.g., alphabet knowledge), and other education-related activities that help make our schools thrive.

NAEYC Accreditation

Many Little Sprouts schools have obtained the distinguished accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). NAEYC has developed standards to define and recognize high-quality early education. To become accredited, a child care program must undergo a rigorous process of self-study involving children, families and faculty. A variety of strict criteria related to providing a developmentally appropriate program must be met. These criteria include a well-qualified and trained faculty, appropriate staff-child ratios and group sizes, and a comprehensive curriculum, as well as meeting stringent health and safety standards. In addition, the program must provide meaningful opportunities for family involvement.

Family Engagement

Communication

At Little Sprouts, we believe that our connection to your family is critical to your child's development. We strive to create deep, caring connections with each and every family and child in our care.

Daily Communication

Information is available to families every day to offer you a sense of your child's day and keep you informed about their experiences. Infant and Toddler families are provided with an individual "Daily Note" to track activities, feedings, diaper changes, naps, and more. Preschool and Kindergarten families may read the curriculum postings outside of children's classroom to discover daily learning initiatives. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(b)]

Kaymbu iPad Program

Kaymbu (rhymes with "Bamboo") is an innovative iPad program committed to helping parents remain connected to their child through images, videos and captions. With a click of a button, teachers can "tag" children and securely share memorable moments with you through email and text messaging. Up to eight (8) email addresses for distribution of these moments can be included per enrolled child.



Social Media

Social media enables schools to share information with a large group of families. Families are invited to join our private Facebook groups, peruse our blog, our access other Little Sprouts social media platforms. We request that you not share or allow others to access this private Facebook group.

Mailboxes

When the directors of your school or your child’s educators have information to share with you, they may leave the notices in your child’s mailbox. The mailbox could be your child’s cubby, a mail slot, or fabric pockets. Locations of each classroom’s mailboxes vary. Please ask your child’s Educator where your mailbox is located and please be sure to check your mailbox daily.

Information Boards and Binders

Bulletin boards or binders are located throughout the school and classrooms to communicate curriculum, news, upcoming events, health alerts, center visitors, and more. Please take a moment to explore and observe these boards when you are in the building.

Family Involvement & Participation

We provide many opportunities for families to become actively involved within our school community. We invite families to participate at any level. Your child’s school schedules fun family events such as family breakfasts, cook-outs, art fairs, graduation, classroom readings, and more. Please watch for these upcoming events at your child’s school. Engaging in these activities offers your family the opportunity to hear the language educators’ use with the children to support active learning and appropriate development of social skills. Getting involved and participating in community activities also creates a valuable bridge between home and school.



Family Visits

Little Sprouts has an open-door policy, enabling you to visit your child’s school at any time. We encourage you to come and observe your child’s classroom. However, if your child is experiencing separation anxiety, having family members come and go during the day may be more disruptive than beneficial. If we notice that your child is experiencing this problem, we may kindly ask that you limit your time spent in the classroom until your child has successfully passed through this phase. We look forward to working together during this transitional time in your family’s life. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(a)]

Field Trips

There may be occasional opportunities for your child to take educational field trips. You will be notified at least two weeks in advance of the trip and asked to sign a permission slip for your child. You will also be notified of any additional fees before the trip. We encourage family members to volunteer to chaperone field trips (please note, chaperones are ultimately selected by Little Sprouts’

administrators). This is a great way to get to know other families and share an educational experience with your child. In addition to field trips, special activities (i.e. an animal show, a gym program, etc.) may be brought to the school to supplement the curriculum. You will be notified in advance and be made aware of any additional fees.

Educator/Family Relationships

Little Sprouts is aware that our educators often live in the same community as the families we serve. Often times, our educators may have personal relationships with our families in addition to their professional connections at Little Sprouts. All Little Sprouts staff members are committed to the confidentiality of our families and children. Educators and administrators are not to discuss family or child information of any kind with anyone other than their co-educator(s) or administrators. A strong educator/family relationship at Little Sprouts provides the supportive environment in which your child and family will thrive, which includes privacy and a distinction between personal and professional boundaries.

Babysitting Policy

Some parents may wish to engage a Little Sprouts employee for the purpose of babysitting outside of the school. Educators may decide to do so at their own discretion, but we assume no responsibility for any individual who cares for a child outside the school program. Babysitting should not interfere with the employee's work schedule. Specifically, if a staff member has already committed to a shift, they should not be expected to modify their schedule to accommodate a babysitting request. Little Sprouts is not responsible for the care of your child while he/she is not in attendance at the school, nor are we responsible for the actions of any staff member during the employee's non-work hours.

Non-Solicitation Policy

Families that tour or enroll at Little Sprouts agree to not solicit, employ or enter into any contract with any employee of Little Sprouts to perform child care or similar services under any circumstances that might interfere with their role or employment at Little Sprouts. If a family employs or contracts with any employee of Little Sprouts or person who was employed or under contract with Little Sprouts within one year of the date of such employing or contracting, that family is responsible for paying Little Sprouts a placement fee of \$2,500.

Refer-a-Friend Program

Little Sprouts recognizes the importance of offering children an early start in education, and the amazing impact it can have on their lifelong development. We invite you to share the gift of early education with your friends and family. We have created our referral program to thank you for referring your friends. Ask your school's director for more information about how to start sharing the gift of early education today!



Enrollment Process

School Visit

In order to enroll, you will need to make an appointment with a school director to tour the facility. After the tour, the director will meet with you to discuss the program’s philosophy, policies and procedures, and the specific program amenities as outlined in this Family Handbook. This meeting is the best time to ask questions about the program and the organization, but you can feel free to call the school at any time if more questions arise. We encourage you to bring your child so that he/she can visit the classrooms and observe and participate with the group. A complete tour helps you and your child feel comfortable with the school and enthusiastic about your first day at Little Sprouts.



Enrollment Application & Forms

During the registration process, you must complete all registration forms required by the school and the state of service, including an updated medical history and, if applicable, relevant food program forms. A recent physical and immunization record (see Immunization Requirements section below) is required for your child prior to his or her start date. All forms in your child’s file must be updated each year during the annual re-registration process. Please remember to provide your child’s school with additional updates as needed (e.g., change of emergency contact information, new allergies, etc.).

Immunization Requirements

Prior to enrollment, a written immunization record must be submitted for each child in order to be admitted into the program. Acceptable forms of medical records include certification by a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant that states that the child has been successfully immunized in accordance with the current Department of Public Health’s recommended schedules. This record must contain the complete date (preferably month, day and year, but at a minimum, month and year) of each immunization and be signed by the child’s health care provider. As the child progresses through the program, ongoing records should be updated to include documentation of annual physical examinations, updated immunizations, and lead screenings.

No unimmunized or partially immunized child shall be admitted to, or allowed to remain in, the program unless they satisfy these requirements:

- A true medical exemption is allowed if a health care provider (child’s physician, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant) submits written documentation that an immunization is medically contraindicated;
- A true religious exemption is allowed if a parent submits a signed statement that immunizations are contrary to their sincere religious beliefs; or,

- Unimmunized or partially immunized homeless children, who cannot be excluded from school (or early education and care programs) for this reason per the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001.

For school age children, copies of the child’s immunization, physical examination, and lead screening records should also be submitted. Alternatively, a written parental statement that the required information is on file with the child’s school is also acceptable.

Tuition & Fees

Enrollment Fees

Little Sprouts will collect a registration fee and tuition deposit at the time of your child’s enrollment. This payment reserves your child’s enrollment at Little Sprouts. The deposit will be applied to your last week(s) of childcare. At the time of enrollment, the director will be able to share more information about the deposit amount based on your schedule and payment frequency. Enrollment is not guaranteed until registration and deposit fees are received. All fees are non-refundable.

Annual Re-Registration

During the annual re-registration process, additional fees may apply including an annual tuition increase and a re-registration assessment. New enrollment paperwork must be renewed annually to keep each child’s file up to date.

Payment Frequency

Little Sprouts’ tuition is a pro-rated annual charge. Depending upon the school, families may have the option to pay their tuition weekly or monthly – please discuss these options with your director. Because the annual tuition is pro-rated, we do not reduce the tuition charge in weeks that include closures, even though you will need to arrange alternate care on those days. The same policy applies if you must miss a scheduled day for any reason. We cannot provide make-up days and we do not reduce the tuition charge if your child is absent. We do not provide unpaid “vacation weeks.” Families who do not attend are required to pay their regular tuition in order to retain their day and time slots. If a child is absent for two weeks without notice to a director and without payment, the child may be dropped from the enrollment list and the vacancy may be filled. If the family wishes to return, they must wait for an available day and time slot and must pay a new registration fee. Please understand that if you terminate your child’s enrollment for the summer months or any period of time, you do so at risk of losing your child’s spot. Even if there is not a wait list when you leave for vacation, all spots may be filled upon your return.

Tuition Variances

Tuition rates vary for each school and may even vary within an age group or classroom, depending upon factors specific to each family’s enrollment (e.g., date of enrollment, corporate or military discounts, etc.). When you enroll at Little Sprouts, you agree to the pricing structure specific to your family and any tuition changes associated with rate increases or transition policies. While we will make every effort to provide ample notice of tuition increases, all fees and tuition are subject to change. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(g)]

Transition Pricing Policy

When transitioning between age groups, it is important to note that the market price of Little Sprouts tuition is always subject to change (e.g., annual rate increase, changing market demand, etc.). The market rate of the next age group may not be the same as it was at the time your child or a child's sibling joined the program. As such, our policy is that families will pay the lesser of the current price of the two age groups when families transition:

- If the market price of the next age group rate is LESS than the rate currently paid for the child, the child will move to that lower rate.
- If the market price of the next age group rate is MORE than the rate currently paid for the child, the child will remain at the current rate.

Prices will not necessarily drop when families move to the next age group. Siblings are not guaranteed the same starting rate as an older child that went through the program at a time before.

Waitlist Tuition Quotes

We cannot guarantee prices will be the same when families join the waitlist versus when they are accepted from the waitlist. If a waitlist spot becomes available, families will be offered the current market price and an opportunity to join or decline the program.

Registration Fees

- First-time registration: \$75.00 per child
- Annual re-registration: \$50.00 per child

If registration fees were waived during initial enrollment due to a corporate partnership or special promotion, please note that future annual re-registration fees are not included in this arrangement. Re-registration fees support school initiatives and must be paid by currently enrolled families on an annual basis.

Tuition Discounts

Little Sprouts may offer a tuition or registration benefit if a family meets criteria such as, but not limited to [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(g)]:

- Corporate partnership (visit littlesprouts.com for more information)
- Military discount
- Sibling discount
 - 10% off the less expensive tuition rate (typically the rate of the older child)

Late Pickup Policy

It is important that children be picked up at their scheduled time of departure. If a child is left in the school after closing time, we will call the numbers listed on the child's release form after trying to reach you. Please make sure these numbers are up to date. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute will be charged for



every minute a child is picked up after closing time. This payment is due in cash at the time of the late pick-up and should be paid directly to the teacher who stayed late to care for the child. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(g)]

Delinquent Payment Policy & Fees

While it is our desire to embrace all families, Little Sprouts reserves the right to refuse service. We will terminate families for non-payment at our discretion. Families whose payments are delinquent will receive notice by telephone or in writing and will be terminated if they do not bring their account current. Families with tuition payments that are more than two weeks overdue will be considered to



be working off their deposit and their child will no longer be enrolled in the school after four weeks. Upon receiving written notification of delinquency, you must contact Little Sprouts Finance and Account Relations immediately at (781) 451-0100. Upon termination for non-payment, families will lose their priority placement and will move to the end of the wait list.

There is a \$10.00 fee per week for any balance and/or tuition payment that is not paid while you remain enrolled at Little Sprouts. If you leave Little Sprouts with a delinquent balance, a 1.5% interest charge will be added to your total bill each month

your account is left unpaid. The first charge of 1.5% will be incurred your last day of enrollment and each month thereafter, even when it is sent to collections. (These fees do not apply to MA state subsidies.) After two weeks without payment, your account will be sent to collections whereby you will be responsible for any attorney fees and/or interest charges incurred by them. Please note that, when your account is sent to collections, it will affect your credit.

There is a \$35.00 service charge for each check returned and/or insufficient funds. You may also be assessed fees by your bank for this incomplete transaction. (For families paying with MA state subsidies, the charge will be \$12.00 for a bounced check and \$3.50 for ACH insufficient funds.) These charges will automatically be charged to your account.

Attendance and Scheduling

Scheduling options and available days/hours for care vary by location and age group. Little Sprouts offers a variety of full-time and part-time enrollment options. Please inquire for more details.

Hours Served

Hours of operation vary by school. Unless otherwise specified, the maximum full-time hours offered per day consists of 10 hours. Tuition rates vary by full-time and part-time options, as available and agreed upon at the time of enrollment. Families must communicate precise daily schedules/times of attendance to Executive Directors to guarantee desired hours and ensure appropriate staff coverage. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(f)]

Sample Daily Schedule

Little Sprouts schools' opening times vary. Each room has an individual daily schedule depending on the curriculum and age of children, but a sample daily schedule may include:

6:00-8:30	Breakfast
9:00-12:00	Morning curriculum and gross motor activities (e.g., playground)
10:00	AM Snack
12:00	Lunch (provided by families)
12:30	Pre-nap story time
1:00-3:00	Naptime
3:00	PM Snack
3:30-6:00	Afternoon curriculum and gross motor activities (e.g., playground)

The vast majority of explicit instruction in toddler and preschool classrooms occurs between 9:00am-12:00pm. This time is sacred to the learning and development of our young students. If you are enrolled to attend at this time, we ask that you please arrive by at least 9:00am to ensure your child receives the instruction that will positively impact their learning journey and so the classroom can follow the daily lesson plan with minimal interruptions.

Schedule Changes

In order to provide appropriate supervision for children and to appropriately schedule educators, families are asked to follow the schedule they set for their child. Schedule changes should be made at least 4 weeks in advance, in writing, to the school Director. If you have an emergency and need to change your schedule, please do not hesitate to contact your school director.



Unconventional Schedules

At Little Sprouts, we know that parents want the best for their children, as do we. We strive to encourage and inspire little minds as children develop over the course of their educational journey with us. Deciding which schedule will best suit a family's needs truly depends upon the individual requisites and goals of the family.

As an educational institution, Little Sprouts' conventional schedule is a 5-day, full-day program that endeavors to provide consistency, routine and repetition for our young friends. Our curriculum builds upon learning from previous days in the week. Independent research asserts that children often react with interest and excitement when they can recognize and practice concepts progressively each day. Conventional scheduling allows our teachers to consistently implement our curriculum and build strong relationships with families and children. Most importantly, it enables children and families to derive maximum value and results from the program.

Certain schools may offer part-time availability, which we deem an unconventional schedule. For this reason, if another family seeks a conventional schedule in the space your child occupies, you will be first be given the option to modify your schedule, or risk losing your space in the program. We will make every effort to accommodate the original schedule requested but may need to adjust your schedule depending upon the needs of the community. Although this circumstance is extremely rare, Little Sprouts would provide at least four (4) weeks written notice of any proposed schedule change.

Whether a family selects a part-time or full-time program, Little Sprouts believes that early education is a lasting gift a family can bestow upon a child. Both types of programs offer children an array of new experiences, a social environment, a playful atmosphere, and an opportunity for children to grow inspired by a love of learning.

Children's Arrival and Departure

To ensure that each child is safe and supervised at all times and to foster daily communication between families and educators, a parent or guardian must accompany each child into the school each morning to help him/her settle into the classroom. Your child's educator has a specific attendance procedure, so please be certain that the educator is aware of your child's arrival before leaving the school. If you will not be available at your usual contact numbers for the day, please leave a phone number where you can be reached in case you are needed for an emergency.

Children will only be released to a parent/legal guardian or to persons whose names are listed on the authorized pick up list. Families should advise the school directors in advance, in writing, if a person not listed on the original form is to pick up their child. For the safety of each child, official photo identification will be required of all authorized persons picking up children.

In the event that your child has not been picked up by closing time, we will take the following steps (in order):

- 1) Attempt to reach you at the contact numbers you have provided.
- 2) Call the persons listed on the Emergency Contact and Authorization form as persons to contact in the event that we cannot reach you.
- 3) Call the authorities.

As mandated reporters, all Little Sprouts staff members are required to question any family member or authorized pick-up person who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or another substance that could impair that person's ability to drive or otherwise safely care for a child. In the best interest of the child, we will attempt to arrive at an alternative transportation solution, such as calling another person or calling a cab. If the pick-up person refuses these options, we are required to inform the proper authorities.



As mandated reporters, all Little Sprouts staff members are required to question any family member or authorized pick-up person who appears to be under the influence of alcohol or another substance that could impair that person's ability to drive or otherwise safely care for a child. In the best interest of the child, we will attempt to arrive at an alternative transportation solution, such as calling another person or calling a cab. If the pick-up person refuses these options, we are required to inform the proper authorities.

Holidays & Closures

For your convenience, Little Sprouts schools are open 52 weeks per year. School closure dates may vary by school and year. Please refer to your particular school's page on littlesprouts.com for specific closure details. Schools are closed on these days and alternate care should be arranged. Neither substitution nor compensation will be granted. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(f)]

Little Sprouts does not provide reimbursement for holidays or unplanned closures, including but not limited to inclement weather, power/HVAC outages, construction, etc. Schools are closed on these days and alternate care should be arranged. Neither substitution nor compensation will be granted.

Holidays & Planned Closures

When a holiday falls on a Sunday, we will be closed on the following Monday. Please note that holiday closures may vary by school and year. Annual calendars are available at each school specifying exact closure dates and major holidays are listed on each school's website. This calendar may be amended at any time at Little Sprouts discretion.

Unplanned Closures

In the event of an unplanned event, including inclement weather or other emergencies, Little Sprouts may be forced to close for safety reasons. We will make every effort to remain open, provided that doing so does not compromise the safety of our educators, administrators, or families. Little Sprouts does not provide reimbursement for these closures. Schools are closed on these days and alternate care should be arranged. Neither substitution nor compensation will be granted.

Inclement Weather

We realize that our families depend on us to be open on a consistent basis. Therefore, we work very hard to remain open every day, regardless of weather conditions. We will remain open on inclement weather days unless there are extreme conditions and Little Sprouts' management determines the school should not open (e.g., we are unable to operate the school due to the loss of power, the storm is so strong that our educators cannot get to the school, etc.). Our closings are not tied to local school systems so, if there is an announcement of local schools being delayed or closed, that does not mean that Little Sprouts will do the same. The exception to this is that Little Sprouts at Northern Essex Community College will be closed whenever the college is closed and will be delayed when college hours are delayed.

We do expect the cooperation of our families on inclement weather days. It is especially important that families leave work early enough to pick up their children by school closing time. This is so that educators can leave the school in time to begin their commute. The late fee remains consistent with the general policy: \$1.00 for every minute.

When a major storm hits, our educators may be unable to attend work, causing us to combine classrooms for the day. If we are forced to close early due to extreme conditions, we will contact all families through a variety of tools as specified by your individual school. Service interruptions will also be posted on www.littlesprouts.com.

An important reminder: closures for inclement weather will not reduce your tuition charge. Schools are closed on these days and alternate care should be arranged. Neither substitution nor compensation will be granted.

Absences

Please call the school as soon as possible if your child is going to be absent. If we do not hear from you, we will be concerned about your child. If your child is absent due to a contagious illness, please let your school directors know so that they can alert other families in the school.

Extended Leave of Absence Policy

To provide flexibility to our families, Little Sprouts offers a limited leave of absence payment and attendance option. This option allows families to pay a reduced tuition rate to guarantee returning to their normal schedule after an extended leave of absence. Families may use this benefit only once within each 12 month timeframe.



Families may only request a reduced rate for time-off periods that equal or exceed 4 weeks of consecutive leave. During this leave, families may temporarily adjust their schedules and payment amount down to a minimum of 2 full days of care per child per week. The price of 2 full days of care will be the current market value in each child's age group. If a family's current tuition is less than this amount, the family will continue to pay their current tuition rate to retain their spot during the leave of absence. This discount may not be combined with any other discounts. Regardless of the length of time-off, reduced payment adjustments will last for no more than 8 consecutive weeks. By week 9, normal tuition fees will resume to secure your child's spot upon return.

By continuing to pay a reduced tuition during your family's leave of absence, Little Sprouts guarantees that your child will have access to the same schedule and previous rate upon your return (unless a child has transitioned age groups, an annual tuition increase has been implemented, or a child's schedule changes upon return).

If you elect to reduce your schedule during this timeframe but send your child to school for the number of days for which you pay, you are required to maintain a consistent weekly schedule and notify your Executive Director of your specific requested weekdays of attendance.

Withdrawal Policy

Little Sprouts requires a four-week (two weeks for families using state subsidies) written notice to drop a day in your child's schedule or to voluntarily terminate your child's enrollment. This policy is by no means intended to be punitive, but is necessary to ensure program continuity, especially for educators, whose hours may be affected by terminations. This written notice must be given to the Director of your school. It will not be honored if given to your child's teacher. You are required to pay for four weeks of tuition following the date of your termination notice. The deposit will be applied to cover part, but not all, of these final payment terms.

Please understand that if you terminate your child's enrollment for the summer months or any period of time, you do so at risk of losing your child's spot. Even if there is not a wait list when you leave, all spots may be filled upon your return.

Transportation

Transportation services are offered at some of our locations. Little Sprouts contracts with transportation providers. A family can request transportation services by informing the director of their interested school and completing a "Transportation Emergency Card" and a "Transportation Schedule Information Form." Little Sprouts will forward the card to the transportation provider specific to the Little Sprouts School and the provider will then determine if the pick-up and/or drop-off address can be included in a route. The approval process may take about 5 business days. The transportation provider and Little Sprouts may not be able to serve all of the family's needs if an address does not integrate into an existing route or if transportation slots have been filled by other families.

If the transportation request has been accepted, the director will inform the family of a start date, driver name, bus number, and transportation provider contact number. All transportation provider drivers will utilize cell phones and two-way radios as their means of communication during transport. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(e) and 606 CMR 7.13(1)]

Emergency Procedures

Our most important program goal is to create and maintain a safe environment for the children in our care and the educators that accompany them every day. In case of emergency or crisis, each Little Sprouts school will enact a response plan that includes, but is not limited to:

- 1) Obtaining information from local authorities to determine whether to evacuate or shelter in place in the event of a natural disaster;
- 2) Following escape routes from each floor level approved for child care;
- 3) Assembling at a designated meeting place outside and away from the child care home or facility;
- 4) Contacting the fire department or other appropriate authorities after the home or facility has been evacuated; and,
- 5) Communicating with parents in the event of an emergency evacuation (after all children are safely secured and communication with authorities is complete).

Depending upon the nature of the emergency, Little Sprouts schools may employ a response procedure that local leadership or individual educators deem appropriate for the situation.

Natural Disasters

In case of snow storm, tornado, earthquake, hurricane, flood, or other event that affects the power, heat, or water to a degree that Little Sprouts cannot offer complete or comparable early education services, families will be notified of the schools' closing, or alternate plan.

Shelter in Place

In some emergency situations, it may be safer to remain inside the school until the emergency has ended. In the event of severe weather, environmental, man-made or other emergencies creating a power outage, loss of heat or water, the Little Sprouts administrator in charge will communicate with staff and families regarding the status of heat, telephone service, fire and smoke detection alarms,

electricity/lighting, hot and cold water for food prep, hand washing, dishwashing, diapering and toileting, and preparation and storage of food. This communication will occur at a time deemed appropriate by Little Sprouts administrators after there is a certain understanding of the situation, the response plan, and next steps.

If any of the above items are compromised/not available due to the emergency, Little Sprouts administrators will respond to address the provision of or access to the above items by making the determination if the group should move to its secondary or tertiary evacuation locations, which would provide access to the above items. If it is necessary to move to an interior area of the building, away from windows (such as in the event of a hurricane or tornado), each classroom has an area where they can gather; if there are windows in the area where the group has gathered, it will be barricaded as effectively as possible with the use of upturned tables or other classroom furniture.

If it is necessary for the electricity, gas and water service to be shut off, this will be determined by and managed in collaboration by Little Sprouts management and respective building maintenance.

ALICE Approach for Violent Intruders

As part of our ongoing training and commitment to safe school environments, our organization has adopted the ALICE response model to violent intruders and regularly engages in training for school leadership. While training is only available on an intermittent basis, it is our goal to engage school leadership in training at least once every 2 years.

The ALICE (Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate) approach prepares individuals to handle the threat of a violent intruder. ALICE empowers individuals to participate in their own survival, while leading others to safety. This set of skills is intended to greatly increase the odds of survival should anyone face this form of disaster. ALICE is not a linear, progressive response. Instead, it is a collection of different techniques that can be used as the situation demands and simultaneously. For more information, please visit www.alicetraining.com.

Evacuation Procedures

Whether faced with an intruder or any other type of crisis, if at any time staff members question the children's safety inside the building, they must evacuate the children immediately. The evacuation plan is posted near each classroom's exit. Drills are conducted every month, with date and time recorded in the school's log. In addition to an attendance sheet, the classroom staff will maintain a sign in/sign out sheet, which records the time of arrival and departure for each child. In case of evacuation, the educator will use the sign in/sign out sheet in order to conduct an accurate attendance count. It is the responsibility of the director on site to check for children that may have been left behind in empty classrooms.

The Executive Director will understand which classrooms will need support during the evacuation process due to physical limitations, handicaps, or otherwise. The director will plan accordingly for the evacuation of those classrooms.

In the event of a temporary evacuation, the Director on site will consult with Little Sprouts management and local officials in person or by cell phone to determine whether it is safe for the children to re-enter the facility. In the event that the school must be closed, the school directors will contact the families and inform the emergency contact that the child will need to be picked up. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(d) and 606 CMR 7.11(7)(f)]

Assembly (away from the school)

At the direction and sound discretion of the Executive Director, assembly may be required as a location off-campus. If the entire school must be evacuated, the staff and children shall evacuate to a pre-determined location. No children shall be removed from the Assembly Area without a Little Sprouts staff member's approval.

Assembly (at the school)

If the circumstances are appropriate and safe, the first choice alternative location shall be another section of the school. The location of assembly is at the direction of the Executive Director. Staff will assist the Executive Director with the orderly movement of the children to locations of assembly.

Supervision

Supervision will be provided to a secure location as required by the specific emergency. The Assembly Area is for accountability and control of children and staff unless directed differently by the Executive Director. No children shall be removed from the Assembly Area without a Little Sprouts staff member's approval.

Missing Child Procedure

It is our intent that all children are accounted for during classroom time and especially during transitional periods between classrooms or play spaces. We use a "name-to-face" attendance approach to help accurately count and identify each child within our care. Staff and children review the expectations for supervision and the physical boundaries of our indoor classrooms and spaces, our outdoor play yards, and when traveling offsite for a field trip. In this regard, our aim is to prevent a child ever going missing. As it is important, however, to have a procedure regarding our response *should* a child go missing, we adhere to the following approach, outlined below.



If a child is not accounted for at any time, the staff member responsible for the child will search the premises for the child. Any area in which a child could potentially hide will be searched, in both the indoor and outdoor premises of the school and the surrounding area of the field trip.

If it is determined that a child is missing, the following steps are taken:

- Immediate notification to 911, followed by
- Immediate notification to local Police and Security (if available), followed by
- Immediate notification to the Little Sprouts Administrator, who will take responsibility for
- Immediate notification the child's parent

A missing child "**Command Center**" will be established at the child care center where the child is enrolled and all concerned parties will be directed to meet in this location where a land line phone and fax, as well as drinking water and restrooms, will be available.

When the police arrive, the Little Sprouts administrator or his/her designee assumes all responsibility for communication with police and security, such as the child's full name, detailed physical description, where and at what time they were last seen. If an electronically transmittable photo of the missing child is available, the Little Sprouts administrator or his/her designee shall furnish police and security with, or with access to, the photo. The Little Sprouts administrator or his/her designee stays with the police and security for the remainder of the search.

Missing Child on an Off-Site Field Trip

If children are off-site, the appropriate notification steps (listed above) are followed and, when notifying each party listed above, the exact field trip location is provided. The staff and group of children will remain together in one location until the police arrive.

When police arrive to the field trip location, one staff member assumes all responsibility for communication with the police, providing information such as the child's full name, detailed physical description and where they were last seen. If an electronically transmittable photo of the missing child is available, the staff member shall furnish police with access to the photo via a telephone call to the Little Sprouts Administrator or his/her designee.

The staff member responsible for communication with the police will consult with the police on the approach for the remaining children and staff (e.g., do they remain at the field trip site or do they go back to the School and, if so, when and by what method) and will then notify the Little Sprouts administrator of the plan. The staff member who has assumed communications responsibility with the police then remains with the police for the remainder of the search or until dismissed by the police to return to their Little Sprouts location.

Following a Missing Child Incident

Little Sprouts will follow notification procedures as outlined by State licensing regulation 606 CMR 7.04 (15) [i] and will conduct an investigation with appropriate authorities to determine what course of action will be necessary to minimize the possibility of a child going missing in the future.

Reporting Abuse and Neglect

All staff members are mandated reporters according to Massachusetts General Law c.119, § 51A. This means that if a staff member has a reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering from abuse or neglect, on or off Little Sprouts property, the staff member must immediately bring it to the attention of a Little Sprouts supervisor or director who then becomes responsible for filing the report with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). However, should the supervisor or director advise against filing, the staff member retains the right to contact the DCF directly.

The process for responding to suspected abuse or neglect is as follows:

- 1) By definition of state law, all Little Sprouts administrators and any person employed by Little Sprouts to work with children such as teachers, assistants, medical staff, managers, etc. are "mandated reporters," meaning that if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been the victim of abuse or neglect, they are required to report their concern to an

administrator within Little Sprouts who will contact the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at (800) 792-5200 to make the report.

- 2) It is not the responsibility of Little Sprouts to conduct investigations into the veracity of the suspected abuse or neglect; instead Little Sprouts' role is to gather information about the child in order to file an appropriate report with DCF.
- 3) If a Little Sprouts employee suspects that a child has been a victim of abuse or neglect, he or she should immediately notify an administrator.
- 4) Once notified about a suspicion of abuse or neglect, the administrator will gather information as quickly as possible. In cases when a staff member observed an incident or injury, the report should be made without delay. However, some situations, such as allegations based on hearsay, may require additional information prior to determining "reasonable cause" such as reviewing records and interviews with children and staff. Once the determination is made the oral report should be made as well. An oral report should be followed up with a written report within 48 hours.
- 5) Any report of suspected abuse or neglect of a child while the child is in the school's care will be immediately reported to DCF and the EEC. A meeting will be held with the staff member in question to inform him/ her of the filed report. The staff member in question will immediately be placed on an unpaid leave of absence from the school pending the outcome of the DCF and EEC investigations.

Little Sprouts will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of abuse or neglect. Our foremost concern is always the protection of the child. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(l)]

Department of Children and Families (DCF) Telephone Number: (800) 792-5300.

Court Orders, Custody and Restraining Orders

Little Sprouts cannot legally deny child access to a parent/guardian unless copies of legal documents have been provided to the school's directors. Therefore, parents must immediately provide the program with copies of any restraining orders involving any child participating in the program at Little Sprouts and, if available, a photo of the restrained individual.

If the program receives a court order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a subpoena for records, Little Sprouts will notify the parent immediately. All record requests would need to comply with the court order or subpoena.



Confidentiality

Little Sprouts programs are designed to support children’s growth and to challenge them to learn. Little Sprouts views each child as an individual with a unique learning style and way of interacting with the world. Given the diversity of the communities we serve, Little Sprouts recognizes and appreciates the characteristics and behaviors that each child, family and employee brings to our program. Our hope is to build programs that are responsive to the wide range of individual learning styles and needs – programs that truly celebrate and value the individuality of all involved in the program.

Little Sprouts’ confidentiality policy and those of our licensors are intended to demonstrate the utmost respect for every child and family we serve, as well as our employees. We place a high value on the confidentiality of members of our Little Sprouts community.

Consequently, we will not reveal the identity of a child or employee who has engaged in an aggressive act against another, even at the request of the family whose child has been the target of that aggressive incident. We understand the concerns of families in this situation. However, knowledge of the identity of the aggressor is not significant to families’ understanding of the incident or of actions taken by school staff to ensure the well-being of the child who has been hurt. Knowledge of the aggressor’s identity can stigmatize the aggressive child. The inter-family conflicts that could result from sharing the aggressive child’s identity may hinder a speedy and natural resolution. The policy of maintaining confidentiality in such cases is consistent with what we know to be the standard for excellence in early childhood education.

It is Little Sprouts’ policy that any information regarding a child, a child’s family, staff member, or other matters discussed with school management will be held in the strictest confidence.

Records and Data Privacy

The information in your child’s file is considered privileged and confidential. Only those staff directly related to the care of your child, school management, or part of the Department of Early Education and Care will have access to your child’s file.

Others will not have access to the record without your written permission. It is important to note that there may be legal circumstances under which we are required to provide access to records (e.g., subpoena, 51B investigation, etc.). The Director and staff will work to ensure compliance with all the appropriate federal and state records regulations (e.g., FERPA, HIPPA, 603 CMR 23.00, etc.). As a parent/guardian, you may have access to your child’s record unless there is a legal restriction associated with access. You have the right to add information, comments, or other relevant material to your child’s record. [606 CMR 7.08 (6) (k) and 606 CMR 7.04 (7-10)]



Complaint Procedure

Little Sprouts values every child, every family, and every employee. We feel that the most positive emotional environment exists when families and staff collaborate together as partners. Over the years, families have offered valuable input that we have used to consistently improve and strengthen our program. We solicit this feedback with periodic questionnaires and we hope that you will take the time to fill them out and return them so that we may learn from you.

In the event that you are displeased with a specific issue related to our service, please raise your concern directly and respectfully with your school's Executive Director who can address the challenge personally. Our administrators are trained to welcome feedback and will make their best effort to respond to your concerns in a fair, reasonable, and timely manner.

If, after speaking with the Executive Director, you believe there is a concern that is in conflict with Little Sprouts' philosophies, or you allege that there is a violation of state or federal laws and regulations, please follow Little Sprouts' complaint procedure below. Even if you believe that Little Sprouts has violated a state or federal law or regulation, provided that the health or safety of a person is not at immediate risk, we ask that you follow the complaint procedure before taking other action. You may not be fully aware of the comprehensive details or circumstances of the situation, and we would like to have an opportunity to address your concern directly and quickly.

- 1) Submit a written complaint to the Executive Director at your school.
 - In your written complaint, please include the name and address of the person filing the complaint, a description of the complaint or the alleged action prohibited by laws and regulations, and the date on which the concern allegedly occurred. The written complaint should be filed no more than 30 days after you become aware of the concern or the action alleged to be prohibited.
 - If you do not feel comfortable approaching the Executive Director, you may contact the Regional Director by calling (877) 977-7688.
- 2) A senior administrator or a member of the Senior Management Team will investigate the complaint. The investigation will be informal but thorough, affording all parties and their representatives, if any, an opportunity to submit information relevant to the complaint.
- 3) The investigator will issue a written decision.
- 4) The decision will determine the validity of the complaint and will be returned to the complainant no later than 30 days after the date on the written complaint. When necessary, the written decision will include a corrective action plan.
- 5) Little Sprouts will maintain files and records.

Written complaints, information gathered, and written decisions will be filed in Little Sprouts schools' offices. The Senior Management Team may assist persons in the preparation and filing of written complaints.

Little Sprouts maintains strict adherence to privacy protection parameters. As such, you may not receive a fully inclusive explanation as to why or how an incident occurred or the rationale behind a corrective action plan to protect the privacy of parties involved. We ask that you please respect these boundaries and find assurance in the fact that we abide by state and federal regulations, as well as involve third-party counsel (e.g., licensing bodies, legal aid, etc.) when necessary.

Licensing Authority

Each Little Sprouts school is licensed by the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) within the relevant state where the school is located. Contact information for each department may be found on the state's website. [606 CMR 7.08 (6)(m)]

Massachusetts

Department of Early Education and Care Northeast Office
360 Merrimack St., Building 9, 3rd Floor, Lawrence, MA 01843
(978) 681-9684

Department of Early Education and Care Metro Boston Office
1250 Hancock St., Suite 605N, Quincy, MA 02169
(617) 472-2881

Department of Early Education and Care Central MA Office
10 Austin St., Worcester, MA 01609
(508) 798-5180

Department of Early Education and Care Main Office
51 Sleeper St., 4th Floor, Boston, MA 02210
Main Office (617) 988-6600

New Hampshire

Department of Health & Human Services
Office of Operations Support
Licensing & Regulation Services
Child Care Licensing Unit
129 Pleasant St.
Concord, NH 03301
(603) 271-0925
(800) 852-3345 x 9025

