Family Home Child Care Society

FHCC Policy Handbook for Parents

Updated February 2021

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**Welcome and Introduction**

Welcome to our Family Home Child-Care Agency. This Parent Handbook has been designed to provide you with information about our programs and policies, and to address issues that my affect you as a parent. Please read it and keep it for future reference. Open two-way communication is important to our success in delivering a quality Family Home Child-Care Program. If you have any questions, concerns, ideas, comments, suggestions, or other matters regarding the program, please feel free to speak to us or to put your thoughts in writing. These policies will be updated as needed.

**Family Home Child Care Society**

281 Foord St,

PO Box 351, Stellarton, NS

B0K 1S0

Phone: **(902) 928-2211**

Fax: **(902) 928-2253**

Webpage: **www.FamilyHomeChildCare.com**

**Hours of the Agency Operation**

Executive Director/Consultant: Monday to Friday 7:45 – 3:45

Family Home Consultant: Monday to Friday 9:30 – 2:30

Bookkeeper: Monday to Friday 9:00 – 5:00

FHCC Agency Summer Hours: Monday to Friday 9:00 – 5:00

**Agency Staff Contact Information**

Melissa MacInnis – Executive Director/Home Consultant Email: melissa.j.m@eastlink.ca

Kirsten Smees – Family Home Consultant Email: k.smees@eastlink.ca

Melissa (Mel) Boucher – Bookkeeper Email: m.b@eastlink.ca

**Areas Served**

New Glasgow, Trenton, Westville, Pictou, Stellarton, and throughout Pictou County

**Philosophy and Mission Statement: Family Home Child Care Society**

**Philosophy**: Family home child-care is a unique family orientated child care program. It offers care to children and infants from six weeks of age and up to 12 years. The program seeks out care providers who have a high level of commitment to the care of young children. They are expected to provide a safe, nurturing and stimulating environment conducive to the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of the children in their care.

Our family home child-care agency believes that children learn through play and exploration of their environment, and are entitled to opportunities that support all areas of their development. We believe in encouraging active learning, multiculturalism, inclusivity, creativity, independence, and parent involvement. This is accomplished when our care providers provide opportunities for positive interactions between and among children, staff, parents, the agency, and the community.

Initial and ongoing training sessions and consultations with related professionals are conducted by the agency centre with assistance from various community agencies. Parents of young children are offered full or part-time care at an inspected and approved home in the community. The selection and matching of children with care providers who are best suited to their needs, inherently small groups of children, ongoing consultation from the family home consultant regarding any aspect of the program, special activities and playgroups, trusting and communicative relationships, and professional support are all important elements of the program.

**Mission Statement**: The role of the Family Home Child Care Society (agency) is to provide quality child care from the perspective of the child, family, and community.

**Board-Operated Agency Administrative Structure**

Our Agency is a registered nonprofit organization which is governed by a Board of Directors.

**Organizational Chart**

Board

Executive Director

All other agency staff (executive assistant,
family home consultant, bookkeeper,
facility educators, summer students, etc.)

**Board of Directors**

The Board of Directors consists of parents, interested community members, and professionals in the field. Election to the board occurs annually at the Annual General Meeting. Parents and Care Providers are welcome to become board members and/or members of the committees, however there is a limit of two each of these. The Board ensures that the agency meets all legal requirements and maintains the agency’s structures and properties.

**Agency Personnel**

The staff at the Family Home Child Care Society consists of an Executive Director, an Executive Assistant (when position is filled), a Family Home Consultant, and a Bookkeeper. They also occasionally work with volunteers, community support service members and students. Agency staff are responsible for operating the agency and for screening, training, monitoring and supporting the care providers approved with their agency.

**Care Providers**In compliance with the Early Learning and Child Care Act, Early Learning and Child Care Regulations, and the Ministerial Requirements for Regulated Child Care Settings our care providers offer quality child care in their inspected/approved family child-care homes with the support and monitoring of a licenced agency (the Family Home Child Care Society), under direction from the Board. Care providers will complete a family home child-care training course approved by the Minister no later than 1 year after the date their family child-care home is approved and complete at least 5 hours of annual professional development.

**WHAT IS YOUR CHILD LEARNING in a Family Home Child-Care Program?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Puzzles, Beads, Pegs** | **1. Eye-hand coordination****2. Small muscle development, dexterity****3. Colors, size, space relationships** |
| **Clay, Finger Paint, Play Dough** | **1. Sensory experience****2. Small muscle development****3. Creativity and tension release** |
| **Creative Arts:****Cutting, Pasting, Colouring, Painting, etc.** | **1. Small muscle development 2. Left, right orientation****3. Color discrimination 4. Shapes exploration** |
| **Building Blocks:****Various Shapes & Sizes****Wooden, Foam, and Plastic** | **1. Eye-hand coordination 2. Balance****3. Number concepts 4. Dramatic play** |
| **Climbing, Jumping, Skipping** | **1. Large muscle development 2. Coordination****3. Self-confidence 4. To be active** |
| **Texture Play:****Sand, Water, Rice, etc.** | **1. Sensory experimentation****2. Number - volume concepts****3. Solitary play & parallel play** |
| **Storytelling:****Books, Flannel Stories, Puppet Theatre** | **1. Language development 2. Speech development****3. Listening skills 4. Appreciation of books****5. Morals and empathy** |
| **Music & Movement Activities:****Instruments and Singing****Dancing and Body Movement** | **1. Sound and rhythm 2. Speech development****3. Body part awareness 4. Right/left awareness** |
| **Science:****Nature, Animals, Planting Seeds** | **1. Learn about their world****2. Enhances observation skills****3. Develops appreciation about nature/food, etc.** |
| **Math and Math Games** | **1. Numbers & number concepts****2. Learning sorting & measuring****3. Learn classifying, categorizing** |
| **Nutrition:****Food, Snacks, Mealtimes, etc.** | **1. Categories of food 2. Healthy food choices****3. Relationships between food & growth** |
| **Health & Hygiene:****Washing Hands, Brushing Teeth, etc.** | **1. Experience caring for themselves****2. Sense of competence** |
| **Rules and Expectations** | **1. Manners****2. Develops orderliness****3. Sense of security** |

**\*Interacting with their peers will help each child in developing their social skills while they explore and learn about the world around them.**

**The Family Home Child-Care Program**

Care providers work with the Executive Director (or Executive Assistant) to develop a program that incorporates full participation of all children, including those with diverse abilities.
The program must meet the following requirements:

* must be developmentally & culturally appropriate practice;
* must enhance cognitive, physical, emotional, social, and language development;
* must meet individual and group needs;
* must provide a safe and nurturing environment;
* must include a rest/nap/quiet time for infants, toddlers, & preschoolers;
* must provide opportunities for physical development;
* must provide an approved outdoor play space and opportunities for physical activity;
* and must provide interaction with other children through play groups and other services offered by the Agency whenever possible.

**Program Planning**

Care providers will document their Programming daily, detailing the ongoing activities and planned and emergent experiences for each group of children. Program plans are: (a) posted in each activity room, or readily available for review by staff and parents; and (b) retained for one year. Program plans indicate that, for both indoor and outdoor play, care providers will facilitate:

* Child-initiated play experiences. For example, children have opportunities to play with loose parts, open-ended materials and to make their own choices for play.
* Adult-initiated experiences. For example, adults lead small and large group experiences where they engage children in meaningful discussion, stories, games, and movement activities.

Routine-based plans are developed for children who require additional support to participate in the program.

**Daily Routine**

The daily routine provides a general overview of how the day will be structured, recognizing that there will be flexibility and that the focus of the day is on supporting children’s development and well-being through meaningful play-based activities, both indoors and outside. The daily routine is visibly posted in the children’s activity room.
Children are allowed and encouraged to engage in free play for the majority of the day, ensuring at least a minimum of 45 minutes of uninterrupted free play occurs in the morning (when the majority of children have arrived) and a minimum of 45 minutes of uninterrupted free play occurs in the afternoon (before the majority of children have left). The daily routine should also provide for a minimum of 60 minutes outdoor play when the majority of children are in attendance. On occasion, care providers may adjust these times to support the interests and well-being of the children, especially in the case of extreme weather conditions.

**Items from Home**

Our agency’s programs are designed to encourage and facilitate active learning and development through exploration and play. To ensure that children get the most out of the programs and are safe, comfortable, and happy throughout the day, we have developed the following guidelines:

* Each child will need the following personal items, which should be kept at the Family Day Care home (and replaced with clean items when required): a small blanket, a pillow and sheet for rest period, a toothbrush, indoor shoes, and a complete change of clothes.
* Each child’s possessions will be stored in a storage bin/bag marked with his or her name. The bin/bag will also be in a place where you will find notices, artwork, soiled clothing, etc. Parents will be informed regarding the location of the bins/bags, and allowed to check daily so they can ensure that they collect any items which need to be taken home, and to ensure that spare clothing and bedding are clean and in good condition.
* If a child is being toilet trained, the parents are responsible for providing approximately 20 diapers per week, and any special toileting supplies that the child needs (care providers will keep parents updated on their child’s diapering needs).
* Each child may bring a safe, soft plush comfort toy for rest period, such as a stuffed toy, a doll, or a favorite blanket.
* Children should wear inexpensive, comfortable clothing so that they can participate in all aspects of the program. Following are lists of seasonal outerwear that each child will require:

**Summer:**

* Sun hat and sunglasses
* Summer/rain jacket
* Water-proof rain boots
* Outdoor sneakers
* Swim suit
* Sun screen
* Light sweater
* Shorts
* Comfortable indoor shoes

**Winter:**

* Warm hat,
or winter head band,
or earmuffs
* Snowsuit
 or snow pants & jacket
* Scarf
* Winter boots
* 2 pairs of mittens/gloves
* Comfortable indoor shoes

**Fall/Spring**

* Sun hat
* Warm hat
* Rain jacket
* Rain pants
* Water-proof rain boots
* Outdoor sneakers
* Sun screen
* Mittens or gloves
* Comfortable indoor shoe

It is important to note that while every effort is made to protect your child’s clothing and possessions from loss or damage, we cannot guarantee that this will not happen. All items of clothing should be clearly labelled with each child’s name or initials.
Any items unnecessary to the child’s success and enjoyment of the family home child-care program should be left at home.

**A Child’s First Day**

We recognize that the child’s first day is a very important day for the child and their family. Children who are introduced to a family home child-care setting with the support and involvement of their parents tend to find the transition easier. A gentle introduction helps to facilitate open communication between parents, child, and care provider. In addition, this allows the parents and child to become familiar with the environment, care provider, daily routine, and the activities at the family child-care home. A match meeting between the parent & the care provider must take place before child starts care, but if there is any additional transition supports that you think would be helpful for your child/family then please don’t hesitate to share these.

**Arrival**

Care providers and parents must follow these guidelines when children arrive at the family child-care home:

* Parents must bring the child into the home and be greeted by care provider. The care provider’s responsibility for the child does not begin until the child is in their care. Children are not to be left at the door or in an unsupervised area.
* The person arriving with the child must sign-in on the attendance form, noting the date and time of arrival. This ensures accountability of which children are on the premises during fire drills/emergencies and helps to maintain accurate records.
* For infants and toddlers, parents are asked to advise care providers on arrival of any special circumstances that may affect your child’s behavior or wellbeing that day. These are noted on the daily records form.
* Parents are asked to notify care providers if your child will be late or will not be attending. This notice must be given within one hour of the agreed-upon arrival time. The care provider may leave the family child-care home if they had plans to do so and they have not heard from the parent within this timeframe.
* Care providers are not responsible for school age children while they are walking to/from school or travelling on a bus to/from the care provider’s home. The care provider will sign-out children when they depart and sign-in when they arrive.

**Departure**

Care providers and parents must follow these guidelines when children leave the family child-care home:

* Children must be signed-out on the attendance form, noting the date and time of departure.
* Children must be picked up by the designated closing time that your care provider has specified in your Child Care Contract. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a parent will be late picking up their child, the parent must call the care provider in advance. Note: a late pick-up fee, due immediately, may be charged.
* Children must be picked up by an authorized parent/guardian. In the event that a parent is unable to pick up their child, they must notify the care provider in advance regarding who will be coming for the child, and an approximate pick-up time. Care providers will ask for picture identification if it is their first time meeting and releasing the child to this person.
* Care providers must only release the child to those authorized persons listed on the application form at the time of enrollment. Parents should regularly update this information, as necessary.
* If a parent asks someone not authorized on the application form to pick up their child, the parent must inform the care provider in writing. If this is not possible, the care provider must be able to contact the parent for authorization or they will not be permitted to release the child.
* Care providers must not release the child to a person less than 16 years of age.

**Custody**

Custody issues must be explained when the Child Care Contract is signed. When special circumstances apply, such as denial of access to one parent, then written legal documentation of custody and access must be in the child’s file. When parents are in the process of determining custody in the courts, care providers cannot legally deny access to either parent until court documentation is received. Periodically a situation may arise in which a custodial parent requests the care provider to inform them of a pick-up or visit of the parent with access, but care providers are not obligated to do this. If a parent fears abduction by the other parent then they have the option of obtaining a peace bond or removing the child from care until the matter is resolved legally.

**Family Home Child-Care Policies**

**Ratios and Ages of Children**

Our agency serves children from 6 weeks to 12 years. Each care provider may serve a slightly different age group of children. By law, each approved family child-care home care provider is permitted to care for a maximum of 7 children physically at a time, including their own children, and must not have any other children in their care, subject to the following restrictions:

* No more than 3 children under the age of three and no more than two of those may be infants (under 18 months old), with the exception that a care provider may care for a maximum of 3 infants at a time, including their own infants, if they do not have any other children in their care.
* If a care provider has only school-age children (including Pre-Primary), they may care for a maximum of 9 school-age children at a time, including their own children (they must not have any other age group of children in their care).
* Parents will be informed of the age range of children within the family child-care home prior to their child starting.

**Child’s Files**

A File for each child enrolled in the family child-care home, will be kept which includes:

* + A signed application for enrollment, including: the child’s name and date of birth; parents’ names, home addresses, phone numbers, and email contact information; the name, address, and phone number of the child’s physician and the person to be notified in the case of an emergency; the names of persons to whom the child may be released; written confirmation that you have received the Family Home Child-Care Parent Handbook and Behaviour Guidance Policy.
	+ The admission date, daily attendance, and withdrawal date for each child (as applicable).
	+ The child's immunization record and health questionnaire, any Medication Administration Authorization forms as well as written instructions concerning any special requirements for medications, medical conditions, allergies, feeding, diet, rest, or exercise (as applicable).
	+ Custody documentation if applicable.
	+ Any completed notable situation/incident reports affecting health, safety or well-being.
	+ Other signed consent forms, i.e.: play equipment authorization, emergencies, outings/field trips, permissions to walk between school and the family child-care home, etc as may be required.
	+ These records will be kept for two years following the date your child leaves the family child-care home.

Additional record-keeping will be completed as required by the Act, Regulations and Requirements:

* Care providers must keep a daily log to record information about any unusual or special events in the family child-care home as is required by Regulations.
* Care providers must keep a daily record of attendance for each child enrolled in a child-care program, including the child’s arrival and departure times and reasons for any absence.
* The care provider will maintain daily records for infants and toddlers (under age 3) regarding any general information about the child’s day and any unusual occurrences. There will be space in the daily records for you to write special instructions or information in respect to your child and daily infant and toddler records will be available to you at the end of each day. These records will be kept in a secure manner for 6 months.
* For an infant, toddler, or preschool child there will be semi-annual reports re: the child's development.

All information will be stored in a safe and secure manner and is to be kept confidential, complete, and organized. These records will be kept for at least two years following the date your child withdraws from enrollment in the family child-care home.

**Play Groups**

The agency ensures that care providers and children have access to regular play groups each month at an agency approved play space or community venue to allow the care providers and the children to come together to be involved in age appropriate activities. In the case of inclement weather, dangerous road conditions, or other situations which may affect the health and safety of the children, a play group organized by the agency may meet at the home of a care provider. The agency keeps records of the monthly play groups on file at the office.

* **Play Dates -** Another option for care provider networking and child interaction is play dates between two care providers. For reasons of safety and numbers, care provider play dates must not exceed 2-3 hours per day/2 days per week.

**Supervision**

Care providers ensure that every child is accounted for at all times during operating hours, including during outings and field trips, and that no child leaves the indoor or outdoor play space or family home without the knowledge of the care provider.

**Substitutes**

Children will never be left in the family child-care home alone or in the care of an unapproved provider. Substitute

Care Providers are designated by the care provider or the agency and approved by the agency. They must be at least 18 years of age, have completed and submitted a Vulnerable Sector Check, a Child Abuse Registry Check, and have a current First Aid & infant CPR (level C) certificate. Care providers must give notice by submitting a signed Substitute Form & ensuring all paper work is on-file at the agency office at least two weeks in advance. Substitutes should only be used in the event of emergencies, vacations, or appointments that can only be done during the day, i.e. doctor's appointment. Substitutes can only be used for up to 20 times/days per year. Parents will have the option to use the substitute’s services or make other arrangements.

* The agency may be able to offer substitute care in another family child-care home approved by the agency if the staff-to-children ratios in that family child-care home will continue to comply with the requirements of Section 34 (1) of the Regulations. Files for any children receiving substitute care must be temporarily moved to the substitute family child-care home, with advance notice to parents/guardians that the files will be temporally moved.

**Closure of a Family Home Child-Care Program/Critical Notifications**

If your child is enrolled in a family child-care home that is being sold or closed, or has its approval cancelled by the agency, then you will receive at least 2 weeks’ notice from the agency detailing the significant changes in the family home child-care program and any applicable change, including effective date, to subsidy funding. Parents will be required to sign a form acknowledging the changes and the confidential storage of child’s files (2 years from the closure date). You may also receive critical issue notifications from the agency if there are conditions imposed upon the agency’s license or if the police or an Agency established under the Children and Family Services Act are investigating a matter involving a care provider or other person associated with the family child-care home.

**Health and Safety Information**

At our family home child-care agency we are concerned about the health and safety of all children, staff and care providers. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, agency staff and care providers are strict about enforcing health regulations. We recognize that infections can spread rapidly within a family home, so universal precautionary measures are taken at all times. All approved family child-care homes were inspected by Licensing Officers in 2021. All newly approved homes and 25% of existing homes will be inspected yearly. The agency will also conduct an inspection on an annual basis to ensure that the premises are safe for children and that all health Regulations and Requirements are being followed.

**Illness**

Care providers monitor the health of the children being cared for and when symptoms of ill health are reported by or observed in the children they will act immediately and appropriately, including:

* Safely removing any child with a communicable illness from the play space and not permitting that child to associate with other children in the program until the child is symptom-free and/or is seen by a qualified medical practitioner.
* Immediately securing any necessary medical assistance and notifying families when an accident, serious illness, or communicable illness occurs.

If a child is going to be absent due to illness, parents must notify the care provider of the condition of the child (including symptoms and whether there is a medical diagnosis) to be reported to Public Health, if required.

* Please DO NOT send your child if there is any question of illness as care providers are not equipped or expected to accommodate sick children.
* Parents must inform the care provider of any contagious condition which has been diagnosed by a doctor. Once diagnosed with a contagious condition, a child is not permitted to return to the family child-care home without a letter from his/her doctor stating that s/he is past the contagious period of the condition and able to participate in the daily routine.
* Parents will be informed of any contagious conditions their child may have been exposed to while in care.
* In the event that your child has been hospitalized for any reason, they may require a note from the doctor stating the child is ready to return to the family child-care home.

Children who exhibit the following will not be accepted for care:

* Conditions of illness which make him/her unable to cope with the regular activities of the program.
* Symptoms of a contagious or transmittable illness (fever, diarrhea, vomiting, infection, persistent coughing, unidentified rash, chicken pox).

If your child becomes ill while attending the family child-care home, you will be notified immediately and will be expected to have an authorized person pick up the child within a reasonable amount of time.

**Medication**

* The care providers are only permitted to give prescription medication authorized by a doctor or parent.
* Over-the-counter medication will not be given by the care provider unless a Medication Authorization form is filled out and signed by the parent.
* Parents will be asked to complete a Record of Medication Administration & Authorization form for each medication, which includes:
	+ The child’s name
	+ The date and time the dose should be administered (which will be initialed by the care provider after the dose is administered to confirm that it was given as instructed)
	+ Nature of and reason for the drug
	+ Complete instructions on administration and dosage amounts, and any other special instructions
* Record of Medication Administration & Authorization forms must be kept in the child’s file for one year.
* All medication must be in the original container, with a readable label stating the child’s name, dosage and date.
* Parents are asked to send all measuring utensils along with child’s medication.
* All medications are to be given directly to care provider, for safety reasons must not be left with the child’s belongings.
* It is recommended that a child who has been prescribed an antibiotic take it for 24 hours before returning to the family child-care home.
* Certain medical procedures can only be done with special training. If a child has special medical needs, these cases will be covered by your child’s Individual Care Plan.

**HIV Policy**

HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus that leads to Aids (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome), is not transmitted through every day contact. No confirmed case of transmission through casual contact or biting has been reported. HIV is transmitted from one person to another by sperm, vaginal secretions, breast milk, blood, and from mother to child during pregnancy. HIV is considered a disability, and by law discrimination on the basis of disability is illegal. Parents have no obligation to tell the agency or the care provider if they are aware that their child is HIV positive. If such information is disclosed to a member of the agency staff or care provider, they have an ethical obligation to keep the information confidential.

**Pandemic (COVID-19, etc.) Policy**

In certain circumstances, especially in times of extreme global disease emergencies (pandemic), there may be additional health measures taken. You will be advised of the family child-care home’s site plan to deal with these if and when they occur, and any guidance delivered from the offices of the Department of Health and Wellness (Public Health) or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development will be followed.

**Nutrition**

Families and care providers should discuss the child’s diet and preferences prior to the child starting in the family child-care home. Parents will be responsible for providing any special food, as well as any infant formula/milk and baby food. Care providers must:

* Ensure proper food handling.
* Monitor water safety. Water must be available for children at all times, including outside and on outings.
* Develop Menus a week in advance. Meals must have servings from each of the four food groups. Snacks must have a serving of fruits or vegetables and one other food group.
* Record any substitution that is made, ensuring it has equal nutritional value to the original Menu item.
* Keep Menus on file for 12 months.
* Ensure that all foods/formula or special dietary products are dated, labeled with child's name, kept refrigerated (4C or lower), and are not kept or used beyond the expiry date.
* Prepare Infant Feeding Plans; to be available for review and kept in files for children under 18 months old.
* An infant who cannot hold a bottle must be held by the care provider during bottle feeding.
* An infant must not be fed in a crib or by bottle-propping.
* Provide a clean, comfortable space in a quiet area where moms are welcome to breastfeed in the family home.
* Allow infants to explore their food, feed themselves, and respond to hunger and fullness cues. Infants will be fed iron-rich foods starting at 6 months of age.
* Create a relaxing and enjoyable meal environment. Children will not be forced to finish food that has been served.
* Post, in the food preparation area, any allergies with protocols on how to respond to an allergic reaction.
* Ensure that honey, or products made with honey, are not given to children less than 12 months of age.
* Encourage and support children to eat from a regular Menu by age 2, unless there are special dietary/feeding requirements on file. Children under the age of 2 must be given full fat milk.
* Check that any food purchased for or donated to the program follows the Standards & Guidelines.

**Smoking and Vaping**

Any individual in a family child-care home shall comply with the Smoke Free Places Act which prohibits smoking in a building or space where child care is provided. No one shall use, smoke or vape tobacco or cannabis in the presence of children or at a family child-care home while children are in care at the home, whether indoors or outdoors.

**Hygiene and Safety**

It is the direct responsibility of the care provider to ensure that a safe environment is provided for children in the approved home, outdoors, and any vehicle. The care provider must supervise the children at all times. The agency has developed guidelines to assist care providers with creating a safe, sanitary, and appropriate space for the children. Care providers are responsible to keep homes, equipment, and children’s play areas in a clean, safe, and sanitary condition.

* Care providers do not use playpens, jolly jumpers, or walkers for children.
* Each child under school age who attends for more than half a day has an assigned sleeping mat/cot, with washable and moisture resistant covers for naps/quiet time. A blanket will be provided (or can be sent in from home) for warmth.
* There is adequate storage for beds, play equipment, program supplies, etc.
* Cleaning and medical supplies/medications are out of reach of the children in a locked cabinet.
* Fireplaces, wood stoves, and space heaters should have a protective barrier. Electrical outlets need covers.
* Care providers must wash their hands before & after diapering, outside play, administering first aid, toileting, and preparing meals.
* High chairs, mats, diaper pads, etc. must be sanitized after use and toys sanitized weekly. May use a diluted bleach solution, prepared daily, of 250ml water to 5ml bleach (1000ppm) or other approved disinfectant.
* Safety gates should be used securely where necessary.
* Any firearms & ammunition in the home will be properly and securely stored per the Firearms Act of Canada (specifically the “*Storage, Display, Transportation and Handling of Firearms by Individuals Regulations*”).
* Ensure safety belts are being used on high chairs, booster seats, infant chairs, and strollers.
* Strollers must have a sun shade (available at Agency).
* Infants must sleep in a crib that meets standards and Regulations (available at Agency).
* The family child-care home must be accessible.
* Ensure no poisonous plants are accessible to children. http://www.iwkpoisoncentre.ca/pub\_contact.html
* Take precautions with children around pets and other animals. (see Guidelines for Communicable Disease)
* Outdoor area is enclosed by 4 ft. fence or there is an alternate safe & appropriate outdoor play space approved by the agency.
* Sandboxes maintained as per the Guidelines for Communicable Disease Prevention and Control. http:www.novascotia.ca/coms/families/provider/documents/guidelines\_for\_communicable\_disease\_prevention.pdf

**Insurance and Transportation**

Care providers must have written permission from the parent(s) authorizing transportation for any individualized field trips, playgroups, or extracurricular activities or between the family child-care home and school, if applicable.

Agency staff & care providers who transport children are responsible for purchasing and maintaining, in full force and effect, insurance to protect the care provider and/or agency from liability. They must:

* Carry adequate general liability insurance to cover the family child-care home and/or agency
* Ensure that every vehicle operated by the family child-care home and/or agency for the purpose of transporting children meets the requirements of the Motor Vehicle Act.
* Ensure that every person who is the driver of a vehicle operated by or for the family child-care home for the purpose of transporting children is a responsible person, licensed under the Motor Vehicle Act to transport children, and ensures the safety of the children in transit.
* Ensure that infants and children being transported in vehicles are seated in child restraint systems certified by Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS).

**Fire Safety**

A family child-care home must be free from fire hazards and are governed by the same fire prevention guidelines as any family dwelling unit. These fire safety guidelines, developed by the agency, assist care providers in creating a safe environment:

* Care providers must establish and post rules and procedures respecting evacuation from fire or other emergencies. An evacuation plan should be devised indicating all rooms in the house, their exits, and the role of the care provider. It must include a current list of emergency phone numbers including 911, the local hospital, & poison control. These must be posted at exits to playroom and exits from the home.
* In the event that the family child-care home is evacuated due to fire or other emergency, and the home is not fit for immediate habitation, parents or another authorized person will be contacted so they can pick up the child immediately. They are expected to pick up the child at the designated emergency location.
* Fire drills must be carried out monthly with the children in care and recorded on the Fire Drill Form.
* Fire extinguishers should be located in kitchen, on every level of the home (available at Agency).
* Working smoke detectors should be located in every level of the home and tested twice annually.

**First Aid and Emergency Medical Treatments**

All agency staff and care providers must be trained in First Aid and infant CPR and keep certification current and on file with the agency (paid for by Agency). Family child-care homes are equipped with two first aid kits. One first aid kit must include a Registry of Children in Care which includes the children’s emergency contact information and is to be taken with the children on all outings & on fire/emergency monthly drills.

Emergency medical treatment will only be provided by the agency staff or care provider if their first aid training gives them the skills required to do so. If a child requires emergency medical treatment that cannot be safely provided by the care provider then a parent will be called to take the child for professional medical attention. If the parents cannot be reached then an authorized person (emergency contact) will be called to fulfill this responsibility and efforts to contact the parent(s) will continue. Any extraordinary cost associated with transporting the child for medical care (i.e. ambulance) will be paid by the parents of the child.

**Child Abuse Registry Screening**

All care providers and people living in the family child-care home over age 13 (as well as any staff, students, or volunteers that will have direct contact with children, or with the children’s records) must be screened through the Child Abuse Register before approval and have their check repeated every three years.

**Vulnerable Sector Check**

 A Vulnerable Sector Check must be completed on any care provider, as well as anyone in the family child-care home 18 years of age or older, including all staff persons, volunteers etc. who will have contact with the children or their records. The agency requires this be done before hiring or approval, and then must be repeated every three years. These forms can be obtained from your local Police/RCMP office. The agency will reimburse any costs associated with this upon submission of receipt. Any person who is refused a vulnerable records check by an authorized body in accordance with the criteria required by the *Criminal Records Act*(Canada) must provide: evidence of the refusal AND the results of a Criminal Records Check in place of the Vulnerable Sector.

* Anyone whose vulnerable sector check and/or child abuse registry check is not in compliance with these regulations will not be permitted to care for children.
* The agency must maintain confidentiality with respect to police record information and child abuse registry results. The Agency will only use this information for the purpose of assessing the person's ability to provide child care.

**Behaviour Guidance Policy**

The Agency has a written behaviour policy with respect to permitted and prohibited behaviour practices. The policy applies to all agency staff, volunteers, and care providers. Staff, volunteers, and care providers are required to understand and apply the agency’s behavior policy at all times. The written behaviour guidance policy must be reviewed with the family of each child when they are first enrolled in the family home child-care program. The following provisions are included in the Early Learning and Child Care Regulations and must be followed by every agency and included in the agency’s Behaviour Guidance policy.

**THE FOLLOWING FORMS OF DISCIPLINE SHALL NOT BE USED:**

1. Corporal Punishment, including but not limited to the following:
	* striking a child directly or with any physical object.
	* shaking, shoving, spanking or other forms of aggressive physical contact; and
	* requiring or forcing a child to repeat physical movements.
2. Harsh, humiliating, belittling or degrading responses of any form, including verbal, emotional or physical
3. Confine or isolate a child; OR
4. Deprive a child of basic needs, including food, shelter, clothing, or bedding and
5. Caregivers/Staff will not offer food to reinforce positive behaviors OR
6. Withhold food as a consequence for inappropriate behavior &
7. Food is not to be used as a reward for completing a task or finishing a meal.
8. There will be absolutely no tolerance for sexual abuse.

**THE FOLLOWING TECHNIQUES SHALL BE USED FOR GUIDING CHILDREN IN LEARNING APPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR:**

1. Staff and care providers will adopt a positive attitude towards children which includes enjoyment of and respect for the children as individuals.
2. Limits set shall be enforced consistently and fairly.
3. In a routine base plan, in rare cases, food could be part of the strategy; this will be well documented in the routine base plan made by outside professional.
4. If typical behavior guidance techniques are not effective, all parties and teachers must be given the opportunity for input and agree to the plan: interventions beyond those particularly practiced in child care facilities may then be implemented (e.g. gentle physical guidance or holding)
5. Discipline statements shall be expressed positively wherever possible. Staff and care providers should use positive reinforcement; tell a child what he/she can do, rather than what he/she cannot do. Sometimes redirecting a child’s behavior is all that is required.
6. When appropriate, staff/care providers shall continue interaction with the child and listen to him or her during periods of upset behavior.

**Notable Situations**

Care providers are required to complete a Notable Situation Report summarizing any incident or accident, communicable disease or other situation that affects or could affect the health, safety or well-being of a child in a family home child-care program which does not meet the criteria of a serious accident. It will be signed by the person who administered treatment, and by the parent, and placed in the files of the children who were affected. Parents are informed of any injuries at the appropriate time depending on the extent of the injury. Maintaining confidentiality regarding any concerned parties is a priority. Injuries that require treatment from a medical practitioner must be reported by the care provider to the agency.

**Serious Incidents**

Serious Incidents would include the death of a child, an injury which requires emergency medical attention, fire or other disaster on the premises, any occurrence that poses a risk to the children’s health, safety or well-being, or any time a child is not accounted for during any period of time. Any serious incident requires securing medical assistance, making all possible efforts to notify the parents, notifying the agency within 24 hours and providing a summary report no later than 7 days after, including a copy in the child's file. The agency must ensure that the Department is advised of the serious incident no later than 24 hours after it occurs.

**Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

As per protocols outlined by the Department of Community Services for the prevention and reporting of child abuse, care providers are legally required to report cases of suspected child abuse. If a situation arises where there is a reasonable belief that a child enrolled in a child-care program has been abused (within the meaning of the Children and Family Services Act) they are required to contact the Agency Director (or Executive Assistant) or Family Home Consultant to proceed.

**Care Provider and Parent Communication**

**Family Communication Plan**

To assist in effective communication, each care provider has an approved Family Communication Plan. Family Communication Plans outline the best methods by which care providers and families can share information with one another (i.e. phone, text, email, website, Facebook group/page, memos, handbooks, daily records, etc.).

* Please feel free to let your care provider know your preferred method of communication.

The agency and care providers want parents to feel comfortable sharing information, asking questions, making suggestions, discussing your child’s development, and being a part of your child’s learning by giving input, volunteering, and sharing your culture, traditions and community with us. Our family home child-care programs cannot be successful unless relationships between parents and the care provider are mutually respectful and supportive. Communication must be open, clear, honest, and ongoing. We want your family and your children to feel welcomed and have a sense of belonging while in our care. Parents and families will be notified of scheduled events, parent available resources, and provided with information regarding inspections and regulatory/ Ministerial requirements as part of the Family Communication Plan.

**Match Meeting**

A match meeting will take place between parents, care provider and child in the care provider’s family child-care home prior to the child starting care. This will give the parents and child an opportunity to view the care provider’s home and discuss beliefs, attitudes, values, policies, routines and programming so that the parent has clear expectations and can determine if the person who will be caring for their child is a good fit. This also gives the care provider time to learn about the child’s home environment, needs, preferences, typical routine, and development.

Parents and care providers will sign a Child Care Contract which will outline hours, days, and fees. A copy will be given to the parent and another copy will be kept in your child’s file with the care provider. This contract cannot be changed without two weeks’ notice and both parties must agree to any changes and execute a new contract.

**Grievance Procedure**

Although our family home child-care agency, through approved care providers, makes every attempt to offer the highest quality care to all children and families, there may be occasions when parents have concerns about particular issues. If that occurs:

* Parents are encouraged to talk to the care provider as the first point of contact. It is best to have this discussion after regular hours, one on one, when the care provider is not still looking after children.
* If the care provider is not able to address the concern satisfactorily, or if the concern is serious enough to warrant immediate review, parents are encouraged to contact the agency’s Executive Director or Family Home Consultant at the numbers listed in the front of the handbook.
* The agency staff will then investigate the concern/situation, will schedule meetings as necessary with the appropriate parties to gather relevant information, and will work with the care provider to resolve the issue.

Our goal is to provide quality child care. We encourage parents to bring their concerns to our care providers and the Director or the Family Home Consultant as soon as they arise, so that we can work together to resolve issues quickly without impacting the quality of the care provided. We also encourage our care providers to raise their concerns with the Director or Family Home Consultant as they arise, so that no issue continues without resolution.

* If a care provider has a concern regarding agency staff they may bring it to the Board either in person or in writing.

**Incident Procedures**

This procedure will be followed for any incident occurring in the agency or care provider’s family child-care home which the Executive Director or Board deems as a threat to health and safety, but which is not initially indicative of gross incompetence on the part of the staff/care provider. The incident will be recorded in a written report to be completed by both the care provider and the Executive Director. The Board will be informed as soon as possible. The written report must be presented at the next board meeting. The Board will then direct a letter of concern/warning to the staff person or care provider responsible in the incident, which will be kept in their file. If the care provider/staff is involved in a second incident within a reasonable amount of time, the Board may consider a probationary period, which may impact the annual performance evaluation/care provider’s approval.

**Fee Structure and Payment Policies**

Care providers set their own daily rates for the cost of childcare in their approved family child-care home. These will be written in the Child Care Contract between parent & care provider.

* Subsidy may be available to assist parents pay for their child's day care. Parents can contact the Truro Subsidy Office (Allura Fitzsimmons) at (toll free) 1-844-893-6167. Care providers will be notified by the agency office when a subsidy application has been approved, and until that time the parent is responsible for paying the care provider’s full fees.

**Child Attendance**

A full day should not exceed nine (9) hours. School age children must attend morning, lunch and after school to be considered a full day. Any two of these is a 2/3rds of a day. A parent must pay for whatever days/hours they have scheduled on their Child Care Contract with the exception of part time school age children who require a full day during school cancellations or in-service days, etc. Subsidized parents must notify the subsidy worker if they need full time care.

**Fee Payments**

Fees may be paid in the form(s) requested by the care provider (email money transfer, cash, cheque, or money order), and you should discuss their preferred fee collection methods as part of your Match Meeting. Receipts will be provided for all payments. We recommend care providers ask parents for pay a week or two weeks in advance of care taking place to ensure payment.

Fees are payable for each day that child care is available regardless of whether or not the child is in attendance. If the child is scheduled to be in care, the parent is required to pay. **Parents pay for every day their child is in care as well** **as all sick, absent, and vacation days and all holidays.** If the care provider is unavailable for care then the parent is not required to pay.

**Late Payments**

The agency recommends that a late payment fee (normally $5.00-10.00/day) is charged for child care fees that are not paid on time. This late payment fee must be paid at the same time as the regular fees in order to bring the account into balance.

The agency also advises parents that **child care services will not be provided to any family whose fees are two weeks in arrears**. In this situation, our care providers are instructed to NOT accept the child(ren) for care unless the parent has paid in full.

**Early Drop Off and/or Late Pick Up**

Our agency encourages care providers to provide flexible child care services that meet the needs of the families using our services. The daily/weekly fees set are based on child care being provided during the hours of operation of the parent/care provider Child Care Contract. If children are dropped off early or picked up late then this goes beyond your contract arrangement and the agency recommends that care providers charge an additional fee which should be paid the same day that the service is provided. We recommend that the hours of care provided to parents be ½ hour before and ½ hour after parents need to be at work, school, etc.

*\*As care providers set their own rates and hours, all fee payments and policies are recommendations to help care providers ensure the financial viability of their Family Home Child-Care Program.* If a care provider has an issue with prompt parent payment, they may contact the office for assistance. *Care providers must ensure that the parents are charged their portion for any subsidy days claimed and proof of payment may be requested.*

**Vacations**

**All parents must pay for their vacation days**. If the care provider is on vacation at the same time as the parent they are considered unavailable and unpaid. Care providers are self-employed and it is their discretion as to how much vacation time they take, however their vacation time is unpaid.

We strongly recommend to parents that all children take a one or two-week vacation per year. These vacations provide the child with a refreshing break from the program, as well as valuable time with family. Parents must advise the care provider at least two weeks in advance of their vacation dates.

* Subsidized parents may take up to three weeks (15) days’ vacation within the Government’s fiscal year (April 1 – Mar 31).

**Holidays**

The Agency and Family Child-Care Homes will be closed on all holidays. **Parents are required to pay for holidays** (if it is a day their child is normally scheduled to be in care). Parents with floating days are required to meet the minimum days per week or pay for the holiday.

These holidays are:

* New Year’s Eve Day (after 1pm)
* New Year’s Day
* NS Heritage Day (3rd Monday in February)
* Good Friday
* Easter Monday
* Victoria Day
* Canada Day
* Civic Holiday (1st Monday in August)
* Labour Day
* Thanksgiving Day
* Remembrance Day
* Christmas Eve Day (after 1pm)
* Christmas Day
* Boxing Day

Holidays in Lieu: If holidays fall on a non-scheduled workday, then a day will be granted the following scheduled workday. (I.e. If Canada Day falls on a Saturday then the following Monday will be considered the holiday in-lieu).

**Withdrawal**

We hope that the children in care will be part of our family for many years; however we understand that children will leave our care from time to time. If a parent plans to withdraw their child from the family child-care home, they are required to provide two weeks’ notice. If two weeks’ notice is not given, it is the responsibility of the parent to pay the full charge in lieu of notice. This amount cannot be collected from Dept. of Education and Early Childhood Development under the subsidy agreement.

* Note: There is an **initial two week trial period** where either party may end the match without notice and parent will only be charged for the days the child(ren) was in care. In the event that this should happen, the agency must be informed.

**Subsidy Time Sheets**

For parents receiving subsidy the care provider is required to record their attendance on a time sheet supplied by the agency. Time sheets must be completed daily and in accordance with the rules on the sheet. Time sheets are our authorization to pay care providers and the Provincial Auditor's resource.

The care provider must submit the time sheets biweekly and they must be signed by parents every second Friday (part-time children may sign on their last scheduled day in the period). Care providers will submit time sheets to the agency no later than 8:30am Monday. If time sheets are late, care providers will have to wait two weeks until the next submission for deposits.

* All financial records must be kept for a period of seven years.

**Monthly Monitoring and Annual Inspections**

Agencies and family child-care homes are subject to regular monitoring by Licensing Officers of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for compliance with these requirements and the Regulations.

A Licensing Officer will inspect a minimum of 25% of the family child-care homes managed by the agency on an annual basis, with the consent of the care providers. A Licensing Officer will also inspect every new family child-care home approved by an agency in the first year of the agency’s operation. The care provider must post a copy of any inspection report in a visible location in the family child-care home and the agency must keep a copy of any inspection report on file for as long as the family child-care home is managed by the agency.

* All care providers also receive regular home visits (once every 30 days) from the agency’s Family Home Consultant, and some of these will be impromptu, unscheduled visits. The family home consultant is a resource and support person who will give guidance and information to each family child-care home. The family home consultant is also accountable for ensuring that care providers are following the requirements of the Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulations and relevant policies.
* On an annual basis, the Family Home Consultant will also do a more formal inspection which will be documented. During the annual inspection, the Family Home Consultant will:
	+ Confirm that all required regulations are met.
	+ Confirm that required documents are posted.
	+ Confirm that the number and ages of children in attendance are those for which the home is approved.
	+ Confirm the register is in the first aid kit (and that first aid kits and fire extinguishers are present).
	+ Address any follow up from previous visits.
	+ Address any aspect of the service that the provider or Family Home Agent wishes to discuss.
* All family home child-care programs will complete (and keep available on file) a yearly FHCC Programs Materials and Equipment Checklist (cover page to be filed at the agency office). There is an Equipment/Toy Lending Library available at the agency to further enhance available materials.
* The Agency has copies of the annual inspection forms to assist the care provider in meeting the requirements.

**Parent Committee and Information**

**Parent Bulletin Board**

To ensure information is easily accessible to parents and families, the following information must be posted in a visible place (i.e. on the Parent Bulletin Board or in the Parent Binder) in the agency office and each family child-care home:

* A copy of the Early Learning and Child Care Act and Regulations.
* A copy of the license for the agency.
* A copy of the parent handbook (including all key information with respect to agency policies)
* A list of the current members of the parent committee and a copy of most recent minutes of the parent committee.
* A copy of the report of the most recent inspection by the Department.
* A copy of the report of the most recent visit by the family home consultant to a family child-care home.
* A copy of the licensee’s behavior guidance policy.
* A copy of the current menu.
* A copy of the daily program plan and routine.
* Licensing sticker.
* Notification of funding provided to the licensee by the Department.
* Any additional information required by the Minister after written notice to the licensee.

Besides the required information, the bulletin board/parent binder should also include the any program information that may be of interest to parents, i.e. notices regarding upcoming meetings and activities, as well as parenting and community information that may assist parents.

**Parent Committee**

Another method used for communicating with parents is the Parent Committee. Each agency must establish a Parent Committee that is open and accessible to parents of all enrolled children, providing a forum for parents to have input into, and receive notice of, any matters of interest or concern to the parents. The Parent Committee is also a body that will be used by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development to communicate directly with the parents if there are any issues with the agency’s license. This communication may come from the Early Childhood Development Services (ECHS) Licensing Services office.

If you are interested in joining the Family Home Child Care Society’s Parent Committee please notify your care provider or reach out to the agency office at the contact information in the front of this Handbook.

An agency’s Parent Committee must be compiled of at least 5 members, as follows:

* + At least 3 parents of children currently enrolled in the agency’s family home child care program,
	+ AND at least 1 representative of the agency, who must attend every meeting of the committee
	+ AND at least 1 care provider who actively provides regular care in the agency’s family home child-care program.
* The majority of the voting members of the agency’s Parent Committee must be parents of children currently enrolled in the agency’s family home child-care program.

The agency must:

* Keep a current list of parent committee members and their positions.
* Provide the Minister with information about the composition of its parent committee and contact information for committee members upon request (including name, mailing address, email address and telephone number).
* Hold a parent committee meeting at least two times per year.
* Document discussion and action items from each parent committee meeting and post the minutes of the most recent meeting in the family child-care home.
* Notify the Minister of any changes in the composition of its Parent Committee or any changes in their information.
* Provide information about the agency to the Committee and give a copy of any notice or written information about the status of the agency’s license to each member of the agency’s Parent Committee at the same time that the Minister gives it to the agency.

**Parent Committee Meetings**

A Parent Committee must meet at least two times per year. At least two weeks before the date of the agency’s Parent Committee meeting, written notice of the meeting must be given to the parents of all children enrolled in the agency’s family home child-care programs and posted in a conspicuous location in each family child-care home managed by the agency.

A notice of a Parent Committee meeting must inform the parents that they may place items on the meeting’s agenda.

* An agency must ensure that the Parent Committee has an opportunity to discuss any matters of interest or concern to the parents, including all of the following:
	+ The safety, care and wellbeing of children.
	+ The agency’s license.
	+ The services provided.
	+ The equipment and materials available for children.
	+ Staffing patterns and staff qualifications.

A Parent Committee meeting may be conducted remotely using technology (such as Skype, Zoom, and social media sites) to bring the Parent Committee together. When using technology to support communication within the Parent Committee, the agency must also ensure there are opportunities and options for parents to meet in person, if possible.

**Parent Committee Meeting Minutes**

No later than two weeks after the date of an agency’s Parent Committee meeting, the agency must produce minutes of the meeting and post a copy of the minutes in a conspicuous location in each family child-care home managed by the agency

* A copy of the minutes from an Agency’s parent advisory committee meeting MUST:
	+ Remain posted until the minutes of the next meeting are posted, and
	+ Be kept on file by the agency for inspections by the Minister, as required.

**Required Forms in FHCC**

**Forms that parents must complete upon enrollment (to be kept in child’s file)**

1. Application
2. Confidentiality Form
3. Child Care Contract between Parent & Care Provider
4. Liability Release Form (and Electronics Liability Release Form, where applicable)
5. Play Equipment/Field Trip/Emergency Authorization Form
6. Infant Feeding Plan (when required)
7. Behavior Management Policy
8. Individual Care Plan (when required)

**Ongoing Forms**

1. Registry of Children in Care
2. Daily Log
3. Daily Programming Plan
4. Daily Checklists for High-Touch Surfaces/Bathroom Cleaning & Toys and Equipment Cleaning & Handwashing
5. Infant and Toddler Daily Records (“Special Occurrences”)
6. Sign In/Out Attendance Sheet
7. Notable Situation/Serious Incident forms
8. Record of Medication Administration & Authorizations
9. Menu
10. Subsidy Time Sheets
11. Record of Monthly Fire Drills
12. Semi-Annual Report Evaluations
* All forms are available at the Agency