



Forge Early Learning Center

Parent Handbook

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1. Program Philosophy

Forge ELC provides a warm, caring, and educational environment for children. We are committed to providing high quality and reliable services, and to meeting the social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs of children enrolled in our programs.

Social and Emotional Needs

We provide an environment of acceptance and support in which children can develop a sense of self-worth as individuals. In this environment, children experience success and learn to accept, understand, and express their own feelings and to accept and understand the feelings of others. We seek to nurture a sense of self-esteem in each child, and to promote healthy development.

Cognitive Needs

Cognitive development refers to the intellectual growth of an individual. This process begins at birth and progresses through a number of stages. Cognitive development includes memory, skill, imagination, and problem-solving skills. Our age-appropriate programs are designed to stimulate cognitive development.

Physical Needs

We provide an environment with time, space, and equipment to encourage children to utilize their bodies freely and safely. We encourage development of gross and fine motor skills.

Program Content

Our daily schedule provides a variety of activities. The schedule includes child-initiated as well as teacher-directed activities, both indoor and outdoor. Lesson

plans are designed and implemented by the teachers. All of our activities are organized around a weekly theme. A report of your child's daily activities will be available at the end of each day through our Procure Parent Engagement app.

2. Enrollment

Forge ELC strictly adheres to a policy of non-discrimination in its admissions and the provision of services. All services are provided without regard to race, color, religious creed, disability, ancestry, age, sex, or national origin.

Program services are accessible to eligible persons with disabilities through the most practical and economically feasible methods available. These methods may include equipment redesign, the provision of aids, and the use of alternative service delivery locations.

If your child has an Individualized Education Plan, we ask that you provide a copy in advance of enrollment so we may provide the best care possible.

To secure a space in our program, parents must leave deposit equal to two weeks' tuition plus a \$50 registration fee. The tuition deposit will be applied to a child's first two weeks of care. The deposit is non-refundable.

Upon leaving the deposit, parents must provide a definitive start date. The deposit secures the child's enrollment for that specific date. If it is necessary to delay your child's start date, you will forfeit the unused tuition. If it is necessary to delay your child's start date by more than two weeks, a new deposit is necessary to secure a new start date.

3. Limited English Proficiency

Forge ELC strives to ensure that all children enrolled have meaningful and equal access to services, without regard to English proficiency. In order to ensure effective communication, Forge ELC staff will make every effort to ensure communication and understanding for those children or their immediate family members who are identified as having Limited English Proficiency. For example, Forge ELC's facility has been equipped with universal symbols for bathrooms, exits, and water fountains. In addition, once a child or family member has been identified as needing translative or interpretive services, Forge ELC staff will contact the corresponding appropriate agency.

4. School Hours

The center opens at 7:00 a.m. and closes at 6:00 p.m. We ask that you notify the center as early as possible if your child will be absent.

The center closes promptly at 6:00 p.m. You should arrive each day to pick up your child with sufficient time to gather your child's belongings and to speak with your child's teacher if necessary. If there is an emergency and you are unable to arrive by 6:00 p.m., please notify the center as soon as possible. There is a late fee of \$1 for every minute after 6:00 p.m.

5. Arrival and Departure

Parents or other individuals designated as emergency contacts must escort their children to and from Forge ELC. We ask that an adult picks ups and drops off each child. We cannot release a child to an older sibling.

When arriving at Forge ELC, parents will enter the first driveway entrance (if traveling west on Old Valley Forge Road) and stay to the right side of the driveway. Parents should park in the two rows of parking spaces along the front of the building (except for proper use of handicapped parking spaces) in the upper portion of the parking lot. Parents should not park on Old Valley Forge Road. When exiting back onto Old Valley Forge Road, parents should stay in the exit lane on the west side of the Forge Early Learning Center sign to ensure the protection of the children and parents and to maintain the flow of traffic. When entering and exiting the parking lot, please proceed slowly and with extreme caution.

For safety reasons, we ask that children not be permitted to cross the parking lot without an adult. Nor are they permitted to remain in the lobby unsupervised.

When entering and exiting the building, please use the Main Entrance, which is the ground floor entrance on the east side of the building. The front door that enters into the Second Level is primarily used as an emergency exit and is locked from the outside during the day.

Prior to your child's first day, you will be issued an access key fob that permits you to enter the secured door from the lobby into center. For security reasons, we ask that you not give this fob to anyone. If you misplace your fob, please let us know right away. We will issue a new fob for a fee and deactivate the missing fob. All fobs must be returned on your child's last day at Forge ELC. There is a \$25 fee for each fob not returned.

Please be sure to walk your child, regardless of age, all the way into the classroom. Dropping children off in the lobby is not permitted. Once in the classroom, feel free

to greet the teacher and discuss any questions or concerns you may have.

If it is necessary for someone other than a parent to pick up a child from the center, we require you to contact us in advance via telephone, through our app, or email. If we are not familiar with the person, we will require the person to present photo identification before we release your child. *This policy is for your child's protection and will be strictly enforced.*

If there is a custody agreement that impacts a child's drop off and pick up procedures, an official copy must be submitted to the director as soon as possible.

6. What to Bring to the Center

Please bring the following items for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers:

Infants

- A day's supply of formula or breast milk prepared in bottles, including an extra in case of a spill; please label all bottles *and* lids.
- A week's supply of baby food;
- Disposable diapers, wipes, and cream as needed;
- All necessary linens and other accessories desired for children using cribs;
- 2-3 complete outfits, including onesies;
- Bibs that will be returned to you for laundering;
- Sunscreen for children over 6 months of age.

Toddlers and Preschoolers

- Complete change of clothes (1 pair of shoes, five extra pairs of underwear and pants if in the process of toilet training);

- Sleeping bag or quilted nap mat (some children may also choose to bring a stuffed animal or special blanket for nap time);
- If the child is not toilet trained, diapers and wipes should be provided on an as-needed basis;
- Lunch and beverage;
- Sunscreen;
- Masks (if required by regulatory authorities.)

All items *must be labeled* with your child's name or initials. They may be left at the center in your child's cubby.

7. Meals and Snack

Parents are required to provide lunch for their children.

For infants, please have formula prepared and in bottles. Also, an infant daily schedule is to be completed by each parent before each new infant begins his or her first day. Teachers should be given any special instructions about feeding. Bottles and other baby food containers *must be labeled* with the child's name.

For toddlers and preschoolers, we recommend sandwiches, pasta, fruit, cheese, etc. Please include water, milk or juice as a beverage. Toddlers and preschoolers are to be able to feed themselves. We will encourage/assist them in eating but we are not able to feed them their meals.

Teachers will heat food if there is no preparation needed. In addition, it is important that all food items are cut, sliced, and prepared the way your child enjoys. To prevent choking, hot dogs should be cut the long way, and grapes should be cut in half. Other than to heat food as necessary,

teachers *cannot* prepare lunch for the children.

Remember: *Please label* all lunch boxes, bags, cups, and other containers.

The center will provide morning and afternoon snack for toddlers and preschoolers. This may include crackers, cheese, fresh fruit, Cheerios, etc. Water is also served daily. Please advise the center if your child is allergic or sensitive to any particular snack foods, or if there are any dietary restrictions.

We welcome the celebration of children's birthdays. Parents may provide birthday snacks if they wish.

8. Illness

Please do not bring your child to Forge ELC if he or she is ill.

A child is not permitted in the center if he or she does not feel well enough to participate comfortably in the usual activities of the program, or if the staff cannot care for the sick child without interfering with the care of the other children.

In addition, a child will not be permitted in the center if there is any evidence of the following:

- Temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher;
- Diarrhea;
- Vomiting;
- The contagious stage of any communicable disease;
- Severe nasal or chest congestion;
- Rash of undetermined origin; or
- Behavior indicating pain or distress.

If a child appears to be ill upon arrival, a member of the staff will determine whether

the child will be accepted for care. Children who become ill during the day must be picked up immediately. If you cannot be reached, we will call your emergency contact person. The Director or senior staff member on site has final authority to determine whether a child may remain at the center. When parents arrive to pick up a child who is ill, they will be asked to sign an Illness Exclusion note. The note will specifically state the earliest time your child may return to the center.

Children must be free of all symptoms for 24 hours before returning to the center. They must be fever free without the use of fever-reducing medication such as Tylenol or Motrin. If your physician approves the child's return to the center before the 24-hour period, a doctor's note and explanation are required.

In order to minimize disruption, we encourage all parents to make alternative arrangements in advance for those occasions when a child must remain at home or must be picked up early due to illness.

9. Medical Care

It is Forge's policy to refrain from dispensing any medication to children, even non-prescription medication. We will consider exceptions to this policy in the event of a chronic condition, extraordinary necessity, or to comply with applicable law. Non-prescription medication, such as Tylenol or Motrin will only be administered in an emergency situation unless a doctor's note instructs otherwise.

If it is necessary for Forge ELC staff to administer a prescription or over-the-counter medication, the medication log must be completed by parents first. Please request the medication log form from a staff member.

A prescription medication *must* be in the original box with the pharmacy label attached showing it has been prescribed to your child. We can only administer medication as prescribed by a physician. We cannot administer expired medications, and we cannot administer pain relievers without a valid reason.

You can assist in keeping all of the children and staff healthy by notifying the center promptly if your child or other family members have been exposed to an infectious illness.

In case of a medical emergency, the Director or senior staff member will call 9-1-1 as well as the child's parent or guardian. When necessary, the Director or senior staff member will accompany the child to a local physician's office or emergency room.

For minor injuries, the staff will call the parent and prepare an incident report.

10. Physical Examinations

Pennsylvania law requires Forge ELC to maintain a current medical file for each child receiving care. We have a Forge ELC specific health form and can only accept this form. You can obtain a copy of the form from the Director. The form must be completed by the child's physician and submitted within thirty (30) days of the child's start date. (A schedule of required physical examinations and immunizations is attached.)

It is the parent's responsibility to update each child's medical records regularly (every 6 months for children under 2 years of age and every 12 months for children ages 2 and over). A child may not receive

care at Forge ELC if his or her medical records are not current.

11. Other Health Issues

We strive to provide a healthful and safe environment for children and staff. Other practices include:

- Notification of any infectious diseases contracted by children or center personnel;
- Use of public health agencies and other resources as needed;
- Good hygiene practices regarding toileting and eating;
- Monthly pest control;
- Required health appraisals of all staff and children.

Our safety practices include:

- Adequate staff to supervise all activities;
- Staff members certified in Standard First Aid and Infant/Child CPR;
- Careful storage of hazardous materials, out of reach of children or in child-proof cabinets;
- Age-appropriate supplies and equipment in good repair;
- Prompt reporting to parents of all injuries to children.

You can help us by:

- Dressing your child appropriately for active play;
- Leaving toys at home unless for show and tell or otherwise instructed;
- Reinforcing appropriate play behavior;
- Keeping your child home if he or she is not feeling well.

12. Biting

Biting is an issue in virtually any young toddler group setting. It typically does not reflect a disciplinary problem. Rather, most biting is pain-related, resulting from teething, an ear infection, or some other discomfort. Biting also results from frustration. Because toddlers are unable to communicate verbally, they sometimes bite instead.

At Forge ELC we address the issue of biting in several ways, and our policy was developed in accordance with recommendations from experts in Early Childhood Development. We encourage parents to contact us for more information about biting and appropriate methods to address this common concern.

13. Quiet Time

Infants sleep according to their own individual schedules. Children ages 18 months and older nap from approximately 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Children who do not sleep may rest for a period of time and then play quietly on their beds. If your child does not nap, we may ask that you provide a special toy or other activity from home for quiet play.

14. Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Children need a safe, nurturing environment to grow and learn. If a child's minimum needs – good nutrition, shelter, medical care, bathing, clean clothing, intellectual stimulation, discipline, and love – are not met, the child will have trouble growing and learning. Any parent who is having difficulty providing for his or her child's emotional or physical needs is encouraged to ask for help. The Director will also help parents find appropriate community resources that may offer assistance.

While we are always willing to assist parents, please be advised that Forge ELC's Director and staff are "mandated reporters" under Pennsylvania law. This means we are legally obligated to report suspected child abuse or neglect based on reasonable cause. We take this obligation seriously for the protection of the children in our care.

15. Parent Participation

Parents are welcome to visit the center at all times. If you wish to spend some time in your child's classroom, please discuss this with your child's teacher.

Occasionally we will ask parents to sign up for Holiday and Special Occasion events. We may request snack or craft items. Teachers will post sign-up sheets in each room.

If you have any questions regarding your child's progress, the group program, the center's operating policies, or any other concern, please feel free to request a conference with your child's teacher or the Director. If parents desire, they are free to call during the day to see how their child is doing.

Please check the lobby each day for reports, special announcements, and requests. Newsletters, messages via our Procare Parent Engagement app, emails and other bulletins will be distributed to parents as needed to keep you aware of current events at Forge ELC.

16. Visitors

Visitors other than parents of children attending the center are not permitted on the premises without the permission of the Director. Those interested in seeing the

center are welcome to take a tour, which will be conducted by the Director.

17. Inclement Weather

On occasion, Forge ELC may be forced to change opening or closing times or remain closed. This occurs typically during the winter season. However, you should also be aware that the center will need to close in the event of an extended power outage.

Although we regret any inconvenience this may cause, this is sometimes necessary to ensure the safety of children, parents, and staff. Please enroll with our Procure Parent Engagement app to receive any Forge ELC weather related closings or delays. The outgoing voicemail message will also report any changes in operating hours.

18. Holidays

The center will be closed for the following twelve holidays each year:

New Year's Day
Good Friday
Spring Inservice Day (TBD)
Memorial Day
Independence Day
Fall Inservice Day (TBD)
Labor Day
Thanksgiving Day
Friday After Thanksgiving
Christmas Eve
Christmas Day
New Year's Eve

Although these dates are subject to change at the discretion of the Director, you will be notified promptly of any changes so that you may plan accordingly.

There are no tuition credits for holiday or inclement weather closings.

19. Tuition Payment

Tuition rates are adjusted on an annual basis and typically become effective beginning January 1 of each year.

Tuition at Forge ELC is paid on a monthly basis and is due the first day of the month, or the first day your child is in attendance. Payment can be made either via personal check, money order or via ACH bank-to-bank electronic transfer (see Director for enrollment form).

If payment is not received by the 5th day of the month, parents will be charged a late payment fee of \$50. A \$25 fee will also be assessed to parents for returned payments due to insufficient funds or declined electronic payment.

There will be no substitution days or credit given due to absence, illness, holidays, or snow days. Once a child has been enrolled for six months, the family is entitled to a one week vacation credit per child per calendar year. The entire credit must be used during one calendar week. If you intend to take a vacation and would like credit, you must notify the Director in writing at least two weeks in advance of your vacation. If you plan on taking an extended absence of three weeks or more, please see the Director for details on retaining your child's enrollment during the absence.

Two weeks written notice is also required to withdraw for any reason or for any other schedule change. If two weeks advanced notice is not given, you will be charged for that period.

Families with two or more children enrolled at Forge ELC will receive a 10% discount applicable to the least expensive tuition.

However, this discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other discounts, and it does not apply to drop-in services or for extra days.

When a child transitions to a new room, the new tuition rate will take effect in the first month following the transition. We will make every effort to complete transitions toward the end of the month, but this cannot be guaranteed.

20. Licensing

Forge ELC is licensed and governed by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services. The Department establishes guidelines to ensure the safe and healthful care of a child in a child day care setting and to support families by providing care that promotes the emotional, cognitive, communicative, perceptual-motor, physical and social development of the child.

To view these guidelines, parents may visit the following:

<http://www.pacodeandbulletin.gov/Display/pacode?file=/secure/pacode/data/055/chapter3270/chap3270toc.html&d=reduce>

21. Amendments

As circumstances warrant, Forge ELC will amend its policies and procedures or add additional policies. Any amended or new policy will be distributed to parents and should be kept with this handbook for easy reference.