

Early Childhood Education

Parent/Family Handbook

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing the Malaika Early Learning Center (MELC) to care for your child/children. We are dedicated to providing a quality, nurturing experience for your child. We believe that childcare is a cooperative experience between staff and parents to provide stimulation for a lifetime of learning. Our programs are designed to accommodate family schedules and offer your child the opportunity to grow in a positive setting that is conducive to the development of essential skills and values.

Malaika is dedicated to working collaboratively with families and the community to establish a strong academic, social and emotional foundation for all children regardless of their socio-economic status and family structure. Malaika is licensed to serve children from 6 weeks through 12 years of age.

The purpose of this handbook is to share information and ideas with parents to promote an understanding of our programs and foster a spirit of cooperation between parents and our staff.

Thank you!

Tamara Johnson Executive Director

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MISSION

Malaika Early Learning Center works collaboratively with families to establish a strong, academic, social and emotional foundation in the lives of economically disadvantaged children, all of whom deserve opportunities for excellence in education regardless of their socio-economic situations or family structure. MELC will accomplish this mission by:

- Providing a physically safe and stimulating environment for the children.
- Maintaining a low child to teacher ratio.
- Implementing a variety of research-based practices to enhance all areas of development.
- Empowering parents through a variety of resources to support their families.
- Recruiting, hiring, and retaining staff that embrace the MELC mission and have the skills to support the optimal growth and development of children.
- Offering professional development opportunities to staff.

PHILOSOPHY and GOALS

MELC is a strength-based child-centered program that provides high quality early care and education for young children. Our goal is to strive for excellence by:

- Building effective relationships among staff and families.
- Building effective learning communities.
- Building effective and understandable assessments of child progress.
- Promoting positive health and wellness practices.
- Ensuring staff are knowledgeable and prepared for teaching young children.
- Ensuring that our families understand their role in early care and education.
- Build community partnerships to support early learning.
- Provide a safe and secure environment that supports learning.
- Ensuring that the organization is led with integrity.

EDUCATION

MELC's programs are based on each child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development needs. The children are provided with daily opportunities and experiences to succeed each day through:

- Consistent Daily Routines
- Teacher and Child Initiated Activities
- Developmentally Appropriate Materials
- Diverse Activities
- Weekly Director Approved Lesson Plans

To meet the developmental needs of the children, we have created several unique program options to continue optimal growth in each child:

Infants, Toddlers and Two-Year Old's

- Supports Development of Social Skills
- Encourages Self Help Skills and Language Development
- Provides Nurturing, Attention and Conversation
- Encourages Exploration
- Provides Safe Age-Appropriate Toys and Materials

Three/Four Year Old's

- Encourages Thinking Skills and Problem Solving
- Gains Appreciation for Books
- Promotes Social Skills
- Develops Self Help Skills
- Encourages Physical and Emotional Development

Before and After School (Four – Twelve Year Old's)

- Develops Social Skills and Emotional Maturity
- Provides Fun Equipment and Materials
- Stimulates Creativity and Self Expression
- Reinforces Reading, Math, Science and Writing Skills

*In addition to our Before and After School Program, we provide a private school option for kindergarten through third grade.

Classroom Transitions

Criteria including chronological age, social and emotional development and self-care skills have been established for each classroom. When your child is ready for an older group, you will be advised as to when your child can be expected to change rooms. Children will visit their new classroom prior to making the transition.

Staff Training

Our staff members must meet the state required courses to work for MELC. The Executive Director and Direct Support Teacher regularly observe and provide feedback to staff to ensure the competence of each employee and your child the best care possible. Teachers are required to maintain continuing education hours outside of work each year.

Classroom Environment

Your child will feel safe and secure in our clean, comfortable classrooms that are designed for learning and fun. Our child-sized furniture, equipment, toilets and sinks will help your child develop self-help skills in taking care of his/her personal needs. The infant and toddler rooms offer heated floors for a comfortable crawling experience and floor play. Learning centers offer block play, housekeeping, dramatic play, reading, quiet play, science, art and manipulative. While in our care, your child will be enriched with equipment such as books, toys, wooden and soft blocks, dolls, media equipment and games.

Outdoor Play

Our playground structures have been specifically selected for the total development of children. Your child will experience hours engaged in climbing, sliding, riding and playing with others. Our playground is fully padded with safety surfacing to absorb falls yet provides a sturdy surface for bike riding and other activities. Under the watchful eye of our trained staff, your child will be safe, secure and happy with friends of the same age in our private, enclosed play area. In accordance with state licensing requirements, each room's daily schedule includes at least two outdoor periods (weather permitting). If the weather prohibits outdoor play equivalent time for physical activity will be provided indoors.

Children who are well enough to be at the center must be well enough to participate in all activities including outdoor play. Please make sure your child has weather appropriate clothing. Children do not go outdoors if the weather/wind chill is lower than 20°F or above 90°F.

Accreditation

Malaika supports the accreditation principles of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and Cognia, the most comprehensive accrediting organization overseeing childcare, preschool and before and after learning programs as well as classroom environment, children's activities, staff qualifications, health and safety.

A childcare program meeting this quality criteria can be accredited. As part of our commitment to providing the highest possible quality childcare, we will pursue our goal of receiving accreditation.

GENERAL POLICIES

State Licensing Requirements

MELC complies with the Wisconsin Department of Children & Families licensing standards and regulations. These standards relate to our building, staff, nutrition, teacher/child ratios, recordkeeping, and health and safety procedures. Our center is subject to inspection by state and city health, fire and licensing officials.

Enrolling Your Child

Malaika provides safe, quality care for children ages 6 weeks to 12 years of age. To enroll your child, plan on spending approximately 20 minutes completing required enrollment forms prior to your child's first day of attendance at MELC. State approved medical forms (also known as a Child Health Report) must be signed by a physician and returned to the center within 60 days after enrollment begins.

Parents should update all information, including additional immunizations, change of address, telephone numbers or family situations as they occur. Please review your Family Information Form as needed and complete a new form every six months to ensure all information is current.

Payments/Fees

A non-refundable registration fee is required at the time of enrollment. All childcare payments will be due each Friday for the following week. If your child will be absent on Friday, please make payment in advance. All checks and money orders should be made payable to Malaika Early Learning Center. Unpaid balances will result in disenrollment. A returned check fee of \$25.00 will be charged to your account for all insufficient check funds and a money order/cash payment will be necessary. Some additional fees may be necessary from time to time to cover special events and field trips.

Multiple Child Discounts

Parents with more than one child enrolled will receive a 10% discount on second and subsequent children. Discounts will be applied to the oldest child's account.

Private Pay Discounts

All private paying families will receive a 20% discount for each child enrolled. This applies only to fulltime status not part-time.

Vacation/Illness Policy

Illness credits will be given only after five consecutive days of absence due to illness. All consecutive days absent after five days will receive full credit with a doctor's excuse. After a prolonged illness, your child will need a physician's release to return to the center. Full credit will be given for in-patient

hospitalization of a child. A written notice from the attending physician indicating which days the child was or will be hospitalized is required. Credit will be given for days absent due to a death in the immediate family – father, mother, brother, sister or grandparent. A maximum absence of three days will be allowed.

Vacation is prorated according to your child's enrollment schedule and the time of year your child begins to attend the center. There is no charge for vacation time up to two weeks per calendar year for full-time children. Unused vacation time cannot be carried over into the next calendar year. To receive credit for your vacation, a written notice must be given to an Administrator two weeks prior to the vacation.

Late Child Pick-up

Charges will be assessed to parents who leave their children beyond regular business hours/closing time. One dollar (\$1.00) per minute will be charged per child for every minute after 6:00 p.m. Children who are scheduled half day will be charged after the scheduled pick-up time. The fee must be paid before the child can return for services. Consistently picking-up your child late will result in disenrollment and/or reporting to the local authorities, if deemed necessary.

Holidays/Center Closings

We are closed for eleven holidays each year: New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve. In addition, MELC reserves the right to schedule one week during the month of August to close for building maintenance, cleaning, and professional development.

Should the traditional holiday occur on a Saturday, we will close on Friday. Should the holiday fall on a Sunday, we will close on Monday. Full tuition is charged for these holiday weeks.

MELC will make every effort to stay open to meet your needs. Our center will only close for inclement weather when Milwaukee Public Schools announces their closing. Please do not hesitate to call the center before heading out on a questionable day or watch the local news on Channel 12.

Reporting of Absences

If your child is going to be absent, please notify the center as soon as possible. When calling, please state your first and last name and the child's first and last name. If your child is absent more than five consecutive days due to an expired childcare authorization or any other unexcused absence, MELC reserves the right to dis-enroll your child from the program. If your child is ill, you should notify us as to the nature of the illness, particularly if it is contagious.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days, and we are more than glad to celebrate with your child. Please arrange with your child's teacher and an Administrator. To ensure the safety of all children, we ask that you limit your treats to store bought items and such snacks must not contain any type of peanuts.

Clothing

We ask that all children have a complete set of extra clothes to be kept in the classroom in case of spills or accidents. All clothing should be clearly labeled and weather appropriate.

Children should come ready to learn and play! We recommend washable, comfortable play clothes that are easy for the child to manage. Tennis shoes or other soft soled shoes are best and the safest, whereas sandals and flip-flops can lead to injuries to the toes and/or feet.

Illness/Sick Child

MELC is not licensed to provide sick childcare. Please do not bring a child who is ill to the center. Each day upon arrival, your child will be observed for symptoms of illness. If a child has any signs of illness and/or fever of (100° F) or higher, the child will be sent home with the parent. If a child has no obvious symptoms of illness but displays significant behavior changes and is clearly uncomfortable and not able to participate in classroom activities, a parent will be called to pick up the child. If your child becomes ill, a parent will be contacted and asked to take him/her home. The child will be isolated, within sight and hearing of an adult until a parent arrives. If a parent cannot be reached, the staff will contact the emergency contact person listed on the child's enrollment form. Because we are not licensed to provide sick childcare, parent or emergency contacts must pick up their child within one hour after being contacted. Failure to do so will result in a per hour late charge. This charge must be paid upon arrival when picking up the child and cannot be added to the weekly fee.

Custody and Visitation

From time-to-time issues arise as to which parent or guardian a child should be released to and/or who may visit with the child while at the center. Malaika Early Learning Center will adhere to the following policy:

Non-custodial Parent Visits: In families where the parents are separated or divorced, the
custodial parent must have on file the legal document stipulating custody. Only the parent who
is listed on the child's most recent enrollment form as having legal custody is authorized to pick
up the child unless the other parent is listed on the child's enrollment form under the
"Emergency Care Information" authorized to pick up the child.

• Non-custodial parents have a legal right to visit their child within the structure of the child's daily schedule.

Withdrawing Your Child

At Parent's Request:

- Two-week written notice of withdrawal is required.
- Your signature on the enrollment form verifies your agreement and understanding of this policy.

At Center's Request:

• Notification prior to withdrawal is not required if the withdrawal is requested by the Center. MELC has the legal option to withdraw a child for any of the following reasons.

Non-payment of fees.

Repeated failure of parent(s) to pick up child on time.

Failure to provide the center with current medical information as stipulated by the state licensing board.

Continuous disciplinary problems.

Failure to follow center's policies.

SAFETY PRACTICES

The following practices have been developed to ensure an effective operation with your child's safety as our main concern.

Arriving at the Center

Malaika Early Learning Center is open from 7:00 a.m. -5:30 p.m. No children will be accepted after 9:30 a.m. unless prior arrangements have been made with the Director or you have a physician's note stating that you had an appointment. Even with a note from the physician, we ask that your child arrives before 11:00am.

We ask that you accompany your child into the classroom. This provides a smooth transition and allows you a brief time to inform the teacher of any information he/she may need to know about your child. Our responsibility for your child begins when you place your child in the care of a Malaika Early Learning Center staff member.

When the center first opens for the day and the attendance is low, children are gathered in one room before they move to their respective classrooms. This provides the children an opportunity to interact with other age groups and to get settled. Likewise, at the end of the day as the children are picked up, the remaining children may be placed in one room.

Sign in/out Procedures

At arrival and departure, each parent/guardian is required to sign their child in and out using the form located at the front desk and in each child's classroom. If someone other than the custodial parent or guardian will be picking up your child, they must be listed on the Family Information Form authorizing them to pick-up the child.

MELC will ask for identification before releasing a child to someone other than the parent or guardian if it is his or her first time picking up or if we are unfamiliar with that person.

Student Accidents

If your child is injured at MELC, the Administration staff will take whatever steps necessary to obtain emergency care. This includes but is not limited to the following.

- Attempt to contact the parent or guardian
- Attempt to contact other adults listed on enrollment forms.

If we cannot reach the parent or guardian, we will do one or both of the following, if necessary:

- Call an ambulance or paramedic.
- Have the child taken to the emergency room.

Please note: In the event of a serious emergency, 911 will be called first.

MELC will reserve the right to utilize the nearest hospital to MELC which is Columbia St. Mary's Hospital located at 2301 N. Lake Drive, Milwaukee, WI 53211. When children are taken to the hospital, a staff member will accompany the child in the ambulance. The staff will take along the child's enrollment file to have available all personal identifying information.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Medication

Malaika Early Learning Center is allowed to administer both over-the counter and prescription medications upon request of a parent if, and only if the Authorization to Administer Medication Form is completed in its entirety. All medications must be in the original container with clear instructions and medications will be kept in a locked box located at the front desk or in the child's classroom. Medications administered will be logged in the classroom medical logbook.

At least one staff member that is CPR trained and certified in first aid will be present at the center at all times. In all situations, we will follow the instructions of the poison control center or a licensed physician when providing first aid.

Toilet Training

If your child is not yet toilet trained, you will be responsible for providing diapers and/or pull-ups and wipes for your child. Parents are often anxious to toilet train their children. State regulations prohibit toilet training for children under 18 months in age. Our program is designed for potty training experiences to begin in our older toddler classroom. Toilet training should be a positive experience for the child. It requires patience and consistency. Since each child develops at his/her own pace, if our staff feels that your child is not physically ready to be toilet trained, we will discuss this with you. Toilet training is a shared responsibility between the center and home and will be successful when the two work together.

Cleanliness

Our center is maintained and cleaned by our maintenance staff during center hours. Our staff is required to clean and disinfect the changing tables after each diaper changing. All toys and equipment are disinfected on a regular basis and within the infant and toddler rooms, the toys are disinfected immediately after being put into the mouth. Frequent hand washing is practiced with the staff and children. Hand washing is always required before and after eating, toileting and sensory play (water table etc.). Please see our hand-washing procedures below and help support cleanliness by practicing the same procedures at home.

Hand-Washing Procedure

- 1. Moisten hands with warm water.
- 2. Apply liquid soap.
- 3. Rub hands together for at least **20** seconds outside of the water, rubbing all surfaces of hands (including in between fingers, backs of hands, and under rings, if applicable).
- 4. Rinse under warm running water.
- 5. Dry hands with a clean, disposable paper towel, one-use clean, dry cloth (which is then put to the launder and not reused until cleaned), or air dry with a blower.
- 6. If needed, use paper towel to turn off the faucet so as not to re-contaminate hands.
- 7. If used, throw paper towel into hands-free trash.

Child Abuse Prevention

The health and well-being of your child/ren is essential to our center. MELC has developed a policy on the prevention of child abuse that includes the following provisions:

- Parents are encouraged to visit the program site at any time and do not need to make an appointment to do so. Please sign in at the front desk.
- Parents are informed about their child's program participation at MELC.

- Staff and volunteers will be alerted to the physical and emotional state of all children. When any sign of injury or suspected abuse is detected, the Executive Director will be notified immediately.
- MELC will offer information on child abuse and assistance to parents and children through workshops, counseling and resource materials upon request.
- MELC staff will not release a child to anyone other than the authorized individuals that are listed on the Family Information Sheet completed by the parent/guardian. Sign-in and sign-out logs will be maintained on a daily basis and kept on file at the program site.
- MELC staff and volunteers will not verbally or emotionally abuse or punish children.
- MELC staff and volunteers will not discipline children by use of physical punishment or by failing to provide the necessities of care, such as food and shelter.
- Reference checks on all prospective MELC employees are conducted, documented and filed prior to employment. Criminal background checks are conducted on all staff and volunteers working with children.
- Staff training will include information about the signs of child abuse and the approved procedures for responding to the suspected abuse.
- MELC is mandated by law to report and document any suspected child abuse cases to appropriate authorities.

We are legally obligated to comply with these policies.

Rest/Nap Time

In compliance with the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families requirements, all children under five (5) years of age in care for more than four hours will have a minimum of one hour per day rest period or nap time but no longer than two hours. After 30 minutes of rest and/or nap, children will be allowed to engage in a quiet activity.

Food/Nutrition

MELC encourages sampling new foods and providing proper nutrition. Full-time children will receive a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack each day. At the time of enrollment families are provided a Special Dietary Needs Form that may be completed. MELC will make accommodations for dietary restrictions verified by a physician (including lactose intolerances) or for religious beliefs. Personal preferences may or may not be accommodated by MELC. MELC participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). Parents are provided the "Building for the Future" flyer, which consists of the meal requirements. All meals are prepared by the Milwaukee Center for Independence. Parents may choose to send a bag lunch for their child to consume but it must meet the USDA requirements listed on the "Building for the Future" flyer and keep in mind that Malaika is a "peanut free environment." If parents provide a lunch that does not meet the USDA requirements, a regular lunch that meets all of the USDA requirements will be provided and the lunch provided by parents will be saved and sent back home. If

parents forget to send a lunch, the regular lunch on the menu will be provided. Please check with the Administration staff if you have any questions about the nutritional requirements.

Menus are posted in each classroom and sent home at the beginning of each month. All meals are served in the classroom family style. During this time, we teach the children good nutrition and eating habits. If food items are sent that are not nutritional, staff will make sure that the items are saved and sent back home with the child.

MELC provides infant formula and will make reasonable accommodations for children with special dietary needs, such as allergies, vegetarian diets, and lactose intolerances.

Discipline

MELC's goal is to guide children in becoming happy, responsible, and cooperative participants through positive teaching techniques. In the event that behavior requires discipline:

- Teacher action will not damage the child's self-image or embarrass the child.
- Teacher action will help children learn self-control, choose alternatives, identify feelings and develop an understanding and respect of feelings for others. Teachers will communicate regularly with families regarding behavior concerns.
- Staff will work as a team with the child and parents to solve problems related to behavior.
- Additional information can be found in Malaika Early Learning Center's Policy Handbook, which is available for review at the front desk.

FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS/INVOLVEMENT

Be a Part of the Learning Process

Parents are always welcome at Malaika Early Learning Center. Just sign in at the front desk and join in the fun. Please feel free to discuss any concerns with the Executive Director at any time. Your input is valuable to us.

Please consult with your child's teacher or someone on the Administration staff if any questions or problems arise concerning your child. We encourage you to attend Family Fun Nights, Open Houses, and other center events.

Please read all information that is given to you by MELC. Check your child's cubby, weekly folder, and his/her book bag daily for notes, newsletters, etc. Malaika uses Class Dojo to communicate on a regular basis. Please make sure that you are connected to Class Dojo.

Confidentiality

MELC strives to promote understanding and comfort for each child. Children can be very sensitive to happy and sad events in their families. Children may react to exciting news or situations in many different ways. If something unusual happens at home, please feel free to talk to your child's teacher, Administration staff or Executive Director.

All information regarding any child, whether observed or verbally disclosed, will be kept confidential. Staff members have the right to discuss matters with the Executive Director and appropriate authorities, if necessary. No staff member will share information with another parent or family regarding another child or family.

Lesson Plans

Teacher lesson plans are completed and posted on the parent communication board at the beginning of each week. Lesson plans provide information on activities and skills being learned and developed.

Assessment of Child Progress

Teachers will use different tools to assess each child's developmental progress. Teachers will share developmental progress and other information at bi-annual family conferences.

Field Trips

Field trips will be taken to provide experiences related to the curriculum. Parents will receive advance notice of such trips. Permission slips must be signed and returned for each trip. Parents are invited to accompany children and teachers on field trips. No siblings may attend these field trips. There are times when an additional fee or a lunch from home will be required. All children should wear tennis shoes on field trips. Malaika Early Learning Center will provide transportation for field trips only during the summer programming months. Malaika will use the yellow school bus that is owned by Malaika and operated by a Malaika employee that meets all of the requirements for the Department of Public Instruction for a school bus driver. To ensure that no child is left on the bus the vehicle is equipped with a child safety alarm. The bus driver will be accompanied by a teacher that will have the daily attendance, classroom backpack that includes all emergency information, first-aid supplies and materials needed for the field trip. The teacher will also complete a name to face count as second check for all of the children upon exiting the bus when they arrive at their destination and when they are picked up. Families will be notified of the field trips in advance.

Policy Changes

This handbook is designed to promote an understanding of Malaika Early Learning Center's current programs, policies and procedures. The childcare business is complex and ever changing. As such, there

may be times where we will need to change policies; procedures or programs will little or no notice to best meet the needs of our families. Any changes will be made known as soon as effective.

Parents have opportunities to share input regarding programming at Malaika Early Learning Center during monthly parent meetings, at board of directors' meetings and through the parent representative on the board of directors.

Non-Discrimination Policy

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: <u>https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf</u>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. mail:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

2. fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

3. Email: program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF PARENT/FAMILY HANDBOOK

This will acknowledge receipt and understanding of the provisions contained in the Parent/Family Handbook. I understand the information contained in the Parent/Family Handbook has been prepared to give me a better understanding of my role as a parent of a child enrolled at the Malaika Early Learning Center.

The policies set forth in this policy manual are not intended to be all-inclusive and are subject to change at any time at the discretion of Malaika. I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the MELC Parent/Family Handbook.

Parent Signature

Print Name

Date

Names of Child(ren) please print: