

MVCA

SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE

PARENT HANDBOOK

**MVCA *59 East Mill Road, PO Box 399, Long Valley, NJ 07853
908-876-3141 * FAX: 908-876-9435
director@mvca.org**

Facebook: MVCA (Musconetcong Valley Community Association)

MUSCONETCONG VALLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

School-Age Child Care Programs PARENT HANDBOOK

Welcome to the MVCA School-Age Child Care Programs. This handbook is designed to provide parents with helpful information about the MVCA and the school-age programs we offer.

HISTORY OF THE MVCA

The Musconetcong Valley Community Association was founded in 1995 for the purpose of providing quality and affordable recreational and child care programs to the citizens of the Musconetcong Valley and surrounding areas. It is incorporated and was awarded 501(c) 3 tax-exempt status by the IRS. Boards of Trustees oversee the MVCA and its Foundation (MVCF).

The MVCA offers school-age child care programs in Washington Township (Morris County). Camps in Long Valley with bus stops in Warren County and Mount Olive offer children an enriching summer experience. In addition, the MVCA sponsors fitness, educational, recreational, and cultural programs. The MVCA does not require a membership fee for its programs.

The MVCA office is located in the Valley Professional Center in Long Valley. The administrative staff includes the director, bookkeeper and per diem clerical and technology staff.

LICENSING

MVCA child care programs are licensed by the State of New Jersey through the Department of Children and Families. The state licenses are renewed every three years based on results from inspections in the areas of safety, administration and program content. See **Information to Parents Statement** for more information.

SAFETY PLAN

The safety of the children in our care is of utmost concern. We believe that careful planning, establishing and implementing safety routines and policies, and good communication are essential elements in order to keep our children safe and happy. The MVCA Safety Plan includes program, staff, student and parent responsibilities:

PREPARATION

Staff are trained in CPR/AED and First Aid, including "Epi-pen" and inhaler, and emergency procedures.

Periodic drills are conducted at the program: Fire, Lockdown and Intruder, following school guidelines for consistency.

Periodic staff training to review skills and procedures is done.

Staff is made aware of students' special and medical needs.

SUPERVISION

The minimum staff:student ratio of 1:10 is maintained at all times.

Head counts are done every half hour.

A user-friendly attendance/tracking system is used.

Supervision is adjusted to fit the activity or setting.

Supervision includes staff actively "playing" with the children along with scanning larger areas.

Children are monitored in school hallways.

Children are not allowed in hidden or remote locations.

During transition times, e.g. students going from homework to outdoors, regular supervision is enhanced by the use of communication devices such as walkie-talkies.

PROGRAM STAFF

Adult counselors/ head teachers and assistants age 16+ comprise the staff at each child care site, with site supervisors overseeing these programs.

Criminal and child abuse background checks are done on all employees and volunteers working directly with children.

PHYSICAL SETTINGS

The MVCA before and after school programs take place at Old Farmers Road School in Washington Township. Site safety includes:

Checking for hazards such as liquid spills, broken or malfunctioning equipment, and informing the school of any problems with tables, etc. for which the school is responsible for maintaining.

Cleaning products (non-bleach) are kept out of children's reach and used only by adults.

The MVCA receives notices re: product recalls from the Consumer Product Safety Commission and shares such information with parents.

Students' possessions are strategically placed to avoid tripping hazards.

Children are made aware of rules re: using equipment only for its intended purpose, walking in hallways, not climbing on railings, etc.

Outdoors: cones are placed at end of parking lot near playground to indicate a safe pedestrian path.

Parents are asked, and may be reminded, to drive conservatively in the parking lot.

Frequent bathroom/water breaks are scheduled.

Trees provide shade on hot days.

BUILDING AND PROGRAM SECURITY

Staff will check ID of anyone unfamiliar.

Doors not in use are kept locked.

Parents must:

Abide by WT Schools policy re: gaining building access

Sign their children out at the MVCA sign-out sheets

Inform the MVCA if someone other than one listed on the approved pick-up list will be picking up their child on any given day.

Periodically update their child's approved pick-up list.

IMPAIRED INDIVIDUAL POLICY

New Jersey DCF and the MVCA have specific policies regarding the pick-up of children by an impaired individual. If the person attempting to pick up the child, in the opinion of the director or staff member, appears to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that the child would be placed at risk if released to that person, we will not release that child.

We will contact another person on the child's pick-up list. If there is no way of contacting another person to pick up the child, we will contact DCF or WT Police to seek assistance.

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

An afternoon at our school-age child care program includes adequate time for completing homework. Whenever possible, a choice of quiet or semi-quiet homework environment is given. A snack is provided. Whenever possible, the children have the opportunity to use the gym or outdoor playground, fields, etc., depending on weather conditions. Group activities are incorporated into the program, and there are opportunities for arts and crafts, games, performing arts and special programs.

An occasional field trip may be planned. Permission slips are distributed well in advance of any such trip. The students are transported in an MVCA owned vehicle driven by a CDL driver.

With safety in mind, activities are age and developmentally appropriate and:

- Rules are clearly communicated
- Appropriate space is allotted
- Proper equipment and materials are used
- Periodic risk assessments and modifications are performed.

MVCA SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE POSITIVE DISCIPLINE POLICY

To guarantee a safe, positive social and educational climate, it is important that students of all ages understand that acceptable standards of behavior will be expected at all times. The methods of discipline used shall be positive and consistent with the developmental needs of the child and will be applied with full knowledge and understanding of the parents.

Positive discipline is a process of teaching children how to behave appropriately. Positive discipline respects the rights of a child, the group, and the adult.

Positive discipline is different from punishment. Punishment tells children what they should not do; positive discipline tells children what they should do. Punishment teaches fear; positive discipline teaches self-esteem.

We will use the following methods of positive discipline:

- Praising – describing the specific behavior we like
- Persuading – pointing out the positive aspects of the desired behavior
- Modeling – setting an example for the child to model
- Challenging – appealing to a child's competitive desire to do well
- Resolving Disagreements – listening to both sides of the story without intent to blame or hurt

- Ignoring – ignoring undesirable behavior (if not harmful) and focusing on positive
- Distancing – removing ourselves or the child from the immediate scene (time out)
- Establishing Routines – children thrive best on order and regularity; they are happier when they know what to expect.
- Setting Limits – (rules and regulations) – having an appropriate balance between control and affection to help the children grow up well-adjusted
- Keeping control – keeping our emotions under control when disciplining

At no time will we do any of the following:

- Hurt a child physically or with name-calling
- Deprive a child of food or any other basic need
- Shame or belittle a child
- Isolate a child for any length of time
- Threaten a child with force or retaliation

To ensure the safety of all of the children in the program, staff will immediately intervene and report when a student's behavior is potentially unsafe or threatening to him/herself or others.

The MVCA reinforces skills for children to use in resolving their own conflicts.

Good sportsmanship is emphasized.

The staff will recognize in some children, certain triggers known to lead to negative or threatening behavior.

EXPULSION POLICY

All attempts are made to apply positive, behavior-modifying discipline. It is the goal of the MVCA that reinforcing good behavior, rather than reacting to undesirable behavior, will affect the desired change. However, the MVCA staff will notify parents by way of a written document if a child's actions include habitual inappropriate language, or harassing another student or staff member. Other infractions that require written documentation include, but are not limited to, jeopardizing one's own safety or that of another, and willful destruction or theft of property. In the rare case that a student receives three related write-ups, a decision will be made by the MVCA staff, director, and Board of Trustees as to whether the child should be allowed to remain in the program. The parent will be notified before and after the decision is made, and adequate time will be given for the parent to make other childcare arrangements.

Other causes for expulsion include: habitual non-payment of tuition; verbal abuse by a parent towards MVCA staff or another child; failure to complete required forms; habitual tardiness when picking up.

If a suspension, rather than expulsion, from the program is warranted, the MVCA will inform the parent about the duration of the suspension and an expected return date.

A child will not be expelled for a parent: making a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center's alleged violation of the licensing requirements; reporting abuse or neglect occurring at the center; questioning the center regarding policies and procedures.

TRANSPORTATION

The MVCA transports students from all WT schools to the after care program at Old Farmers in a fully outfitted, 16 passenger, Type II school bus. To ensure the safety of everyone on the bus:

The bus is regularly serviced, and inspected twice yearly. Evacuation drills are conducted periodically.

Passengers will, at all times the bus is in motion:

- Keep seatbelts securely fastened

- Place backpacks on the floor

- Remain seated, upright, with legs out of the aisle

- Not touch rear emergency door

- Not throw or roll loose objects

- Not play with seatbelt straps

- Use "inside" voices

- Keep hands to oneself

REGISTRATION AND TUITION

Before a child may attend an MVCA child care program, parents must fill out an application, a health history, emergency form, and child custody form. There are additional forms for bus riders. Parents indicate on the registration form that they have read this handbook. The student's information remains on file at the MVCA office as well at the program site. It is vital to keep the MVCA informed of changes of address, work or emergency phone numbers, etc.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition is a yearly fee divided into ten equal "monthly" payments. The fees are calculated on 180 care days for those attending five days/week, 144 care days for four days/week; 108 for three days/week; 72 for two days/week; 36 for one day/week.

To begin a program, the MVCA requires the June tuition as a deposit and the current month's tuition. Payments must be received by the 1st of the

month. You are asked to mail payments to the MVCA office rather than to hand them to a counselor. You will be provided with invoices to be submitted with your payment. There is a \$20 late fee for payments made after the 10th of the month. You will be responsible for any bank charges incurred for checks returned for insufficient funds. You have the option to charge tuition on a credit card, or have tuition charged automatically on the 1st business day of each month.

The MVCA will expect prompt payment unless you notify the office of any unusual circumstances. Tuition accounts that are a month or more in arrears may result in dismissal from the program. Tuition payments more than 30 days in arrears are subject to 1.5% interest.

The MVCA works with County agencies subsidizing tuitions. It is the responsibility of the parents to initiate the required paperwork with the agency.

WITHDRAWALS

To withdraw a child from the program, a parent must notify the MVCA in writing two weeks prior to the anticipated last day in the program. A refund of unused tuition will be issued after the child leaves the program. If written notice is not submitted, your child is considered to be in the program, and tuition payment is expected.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships based on a sliding scale may be available to those who qualify. You may contact the MVCA office to request an application.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

DAILY SCHEDULE

3:00	Children arrive from bus – walked to MPR*
3:05	K and 1 st picked up in lower hall
3:10	School dismissal – all students come to MPR* attendance
3:15	Confirm attendance
3:15-3:30	Hand-washing
3:30	Snack; LVMS students arrive
3:45	Homework Room – until 4:30 Craft/free art Games Active play in gym or outdoor play when possible
5:00	Electronics permitted (see policy)
FRIDAYS	no homework room

*indicates multi-purpose room

PROGRAM CALENDAR

MVCA programs follow the Washington Township Schools calendar. In addition, full day programs are offered, provided there is adequate enrollment (at least 10 children) for school holidays such as Teachers' Convention, Presidents' Day, and Spring Vacation. Notices will be distributed prior to these holidays. The minimum enrollment count is determined one week prior to the date of the proposed full day program. There will not be programs on Good Friday, or during Thanksgiving or Christmas vacations. On **scheduled** early dismissals, after school care will run from school dismissal to 6:00PM. For **scheduled** delayed openings, the before care program at Old Farmers cannot be held.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS

Before care

In case of inclement weather causing an early morning school delay, the Early Bird before care program at Old Farmers Road school **will not be held**. This is due to school scheduling difficulties.

After school care emergency closings

If the weather becomes inclement during the day but school is not dismissed early, the MVCA will hold the after school care program as usual. The Washington Township Schools administration determines whether the after school care program can be held. If yes, we ask parents to allow extra driving time for safe travel and on-time pick-up. It is our goal to insure the safety of our children, families, and staff. Counselors may call parents at work to advise them of weather conditions.

There will be no after school care programs on days when school is closed or dismissed early **due to inclement weather**. If school is dismissed early, your child will be sent home on the bus unless you have made other arrangements with the school. It is imperative that the school has your work phone number and emergency plan on file. The MVCA will not provide transportation.

PICK-UP

Whoever picks up a student must sign him/her out in the attendance log. No one other than those with written authorization may pick up a student, unless a parent calls the MVCA office or program prior to pick-up, with the pertinent information. Counselors will ask for identification from any unfamiliar person (parents as well as others) requesting to pick up a student. This ID will be checked against the student file information. There may be a situation in which a non-custodial parent is NOT authorized to pick up a child, thus the counselors will familiarize themselves with each student's family situation. Students will not be released to anyone under 18.

In the event that a student is not picked up by 6:00PM, a late fee must be paid directly to the counselor at the time of pick-up. The fees are:

<u>Fee (per child)</u>	<u>Pick-up between</u>
\$15	6:01 to 6:15
\$20	6:16 to 6:30
\$25	6:31 to 6:45
\$30	6:46 to 7:00

If a student is not picked up by 6:15PM, the counselor will attempt to call a parent. If a parent cannot be reached, someone from the list of emergency phone numbers will be called. The counselor will try to leave a message to notify the parents of the arrangement that has been made. If no one can be reached by 7:00PM, the MVCA is **required** to notify DCF and/or local police.

In the event that someone arriving to pick up a student appears to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or in some other way impaired, a staff member may not release the student to him/her. Someone from their emergency list will be called. See *Impaired Individual Policy*.

Communication with the MVCA by phone is encouraged. Information cards with contact numbers will be distributed at the beginning of the program year. Please note, however, that calling ahead does not automatically absolve a parent from paying a late pickup fee.

ARRIVAL

Parents dropping off a student for a morning program must escort the student to the program room no earlier than 7:00AM. Children may not be left unattended.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND SCHEDULES

If a student participates in any after school activity in addition to MVCA, a parent's written note to that effect must be on file at the site. All attempts will be made to get students to and from these activities. If a student leaves the MVCA program for an activity that lasts until 6:00PM, the MVCA relinquishes responsibility at the time the student leaves MVCA.

Please notify the MVCA office – **908-876-3141** - or appropriate program phone if your child is in school but will not be attending the program on a regularly scheduled day.

NEWSLETTERS

Newsletters, notices, and/or program calendars will be distributed periodically. Included will be notification of upcoming events, plans, and general information. A reminder of program changes due to school half days and vacations will appear.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between parents and the MVCA is the key to the safety of your child and the positive experience he/she will get from the program. It is the parent's responsibility to keep the MVCA office and staff, as well as the school, informed of any changes in your child's daily schedule. Upon enrolling your child in an MVCA program, you must inform the school in writing. Please call the MVCA office or program phone if you have questions or concerns about the program.

STUDENT HEALTH AND MEDICATION

It is suggested that any student requiring medication receive his/her dosage from the school nurse before dismissal or after arriving at school; MVCA staff members should not be responsible for giving medication during program hours.

In accordance with the NJ state licensing requirements for child care programs, the following information outlines the MVCA policy on communicable diseases:

If a child exhibits any of the following symptoms, he/she should not attend the program. If such symptoms occur while in the program, the parent will be called to take the child home:

Severe pain or discomfort	Acute diarrhea
Episodes of acute vomiting	Oral temperature of 101.5 degrees F
Severe coughing	Yellow eyes or jaundice skin
Red eyes with discharge	Infected untreated skin patches
Difficult or rapid breathing	Stiff neck
Mouth sores with drooling	Weeping or bleeding skin lesions
Skin rashes in conjunction with fever or behavior changes	

The child may return to the program once he/she is symptom-free or has a health care provider's note stating that he/she no longer poses a serious health risk to him/herself or others, unless contraindicated by the local health department or Department of Health.

If a child contracts an excludable communicable disease, he/she may not return to the center without a health care provider's note stating that the child presents no risk to him/herself or others. These diseases include respiratory, gastrointestinal and contact illnesses such as Impetigo, Lice, Scabies and Shingles. Note: in the case of chicken pox, a health care provider's note can be substituted by a note from the parent stating that at least six days has elapsed since the onset of the rash, or that all sores have dried and crusted.

A copy of the Department of Health's Reporting Guide for Communicable Diseases is included as an insert in this manual.

AFTERCARE ELECTRONICS POLICY

Personal electronic devices may be used at the aftercare program from 5:00 – 6:00 for a maximum of twenty minutes at a time. Exceptions to the policy may be granted for homework reading or research, or interactive gaming supervised by a staff member.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

The MVCA staff is prohibited from taking photos of minors, except under the specific direction of the MVCA director. The director may post photos, including those of children taken at an MVCA program from time to time on Facebook or www.mvca.org. Minors will not be identified by name in such posts, and the MVCA will be clearly identified as the posting entity, e.g. MVCA Facebook page.

Parents have the right to withhold permission for their child's photo to be taken, used or posted by not signing the designated statement on their child's application form.

Parents are forbidden from taking and/or posting photos or videos of children other than their own during MVCA programs without permission from the child's parent and the MVCA Director.

Methods and devices used for communicating with parents:

Email: director@mvca.org

Office phone: 908-876-3141

Director's cell: 908-797-9153 – call or text

Site cell phone: 908-528-4134 – call or text, possible group text

In the case of a serious illness or injury to a student, staff will use the site or director's phone to call the child's parent's cell, and may have also called 911 if necessary. If the parent cannot be reached voice to voice, the staff member will try the parent's work #, other parent, emergency contact, etc. until someone can be reached directly. Leaving a voicemail or text message will not suffice in this instance.

INFORMATION TO PARENTS STATEMENT – revised 4/2017

Under provisions of the **Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers (N.J.A.C. 3A:52)**, every licensed child care center in New Jersey must provide parents of enrolled children written information on parent visitation rights, State licensing requirements, child abuse/neglect reporting requirements and other child care matters. The center must comply with this requirement by reproducing and distributing to parents and staff this written statement, prepared by the Office of Licensing, Child Care and Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families. In keeping with this requirement,

the center must secure every parent and staff member's signature attesting to his/her receipt of the information.

Our center is required by the State Child Care Licensing Law to be licensed by the Office of Licensing (OOL), Child Care and Youth Residential Licensing, in the Department of Children and Families (DCF). A copy of our current license must be posted in a prominent location at our center. Look for it when you're in the center.

To be licensed, our program must comply with the MANUAL OF REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS (THE OFFICIAL LICENSING REGULATIONS). The regulations cover such areas as: physical environment/life-safety; staff qualifications, supervision, and staff/child ratios; program activities and equipment; health, food and nutrition; rest and sleep requirements; parent/community participation; administrative and record-keeping requirements; and others.

Our center must have on the premises a copy of the MANUAL OF REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS and make it available to interested parents for your review. If you would like to review our copy, just ask any staff member. Parents may view a copy of the MANUAL OF REQUIREMENTS on the DCF website at <http://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/CCCmanual.pdf> or obtain a copy by sending a check or money order for \$5 made payable to the "Treasurer, State of New Jersey", and mailing it to: NJDCF, Office of Licensing, Publication Fees, PO Box 657, Trenton, NJ 08646-0657.

We encourage parents to discuss with us any questions or concerns about the policies and program of the center or the meaning, application or alleged violations of the MANUAL OF REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS. We will be happy to arrange a convenient opportunity for you to review and discuss these matters with us. If you suspect our program may be in violation of licensing requirements, you are entitled to report them to the Office of Licensing toll free at 1 (877) 667-9845. Of course, we would appreciate your bringing these concerns to our attention, too.

Our center must have a policy concerning the release of children to parents or people authorized by parents to be responsible for the child. Please discuss with us your plans for your child's departure from the center.

Our center must have a policy about administering medicine and health care procedures and the management of communicable diseases. Please talk to us about these policies so we can work together to keep our children healthy.

Our center must have a policy concerning the expulsion of children from enrollment at the center. Please review this policy so we can work together to keep your child in our center.

Parents are entitled to review the center's copy of the OOL's inspection/violation report on the center, which are available soon after every State licensing inspection of our center. If there is a licensing complaint investigation, you are entitled to review the OOL's Complaint Investigation Summary Report, as well as any letters of enforcement or other actions taken against the center during the current licensing period. Let us know if you wish to review them and we will make them available for your review or you can view them online at <https://data.nj.gov/childcareexplorer>.

Our program must cooperate with all DCF inspections/ investigations. DCF staff may interview both staff members and children.

Our center must post its written statement of philosophy on child discipline in a prominent location and make a copy of it available to parents upon request. We encourage you to review it and to discuss with us any questions you may have about it.

Our center must post a listing or diagram of those rooms and areas approved by the OOL for the children's use. Please talk to us if you have questions about the center's space.

Our center must offer parents of enrolled children ample opportunity to assist the center in complying with licensing requirements; and to participate in and observe the activities of the center. Parents wishing to participate in the activities or operations of the center should discuss their interest with the center director, who can advise them of what opportunities are available.

Parents of enrolled children may visit our center at any time without having to secure prior approval from the director or any staff member. Please feel free to do so when you can. We welcome visits from our parents.

Our center must inform parents in advance of every field trip, outing, or special event away from the center, and must obtain prior written consent from parents before taking a child on each such trip.

Our center is required to provide reasonable accommodations for children and/or parents with disabilities and to comply with the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (LAD), P.L. 1945, c. 169 (N.J.S.A. 10:5-1 et seq.), and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), P.L. 101-336 (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.). Anyone who believes the center is not in compliance with these laws may contact the Division on Civil Rights in

the New Jersey Department of Law and Public Safety for information about filing an LAD claim at (609) 292 -4605 (TTY users may dial 711 to reach the New Jersey Relay Operator and ask for (609) 292-7701), or may contact the United States Department of Justice for information about filing an ADA claim at (800) 514-0301 (voice) or (800) 514-0383 (TTY).

Our center is required, at least annually, to review the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), unsafe children's products list, ensure that items on the list are not at the center, and make the list accessible to staff and parents, and/or provide parents with the CPSC website at <https://www.cpsc.gov/Recalls>. Internet access may be available at your local library. For more information call the CPSC at (800) 638-2772.

Anyone who has reasonable cause to believe that an enrolled child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect, or exploitation by an adult, whether working at the center or not, is required by State law to report the concern immediately to the State Central Registry Hotline, toll free at 1 (877) NJ ABUSE/(877)652-2873. Such reports may be made anonymously.

Parents may secure information about child abuse and neglect by contacting: DCF, Office of Communications and Legislation at (609) 292-0422 or go to www.nj.gov/dcf.

If you have any questions about information included in this publication, feel free to contact us at:

MVCA office: 908-876-3141
MVCA Director/before care: 908-797-9153
After care site: 908-528-4134
Email: director@mvca.org

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