



Vancouver Society of Children's Centres
FAMILY HANDBOOK
EARLY YEARS

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Welcome to VSOCC

Welcome to the Vancouver Society of Children’s Centres (VSOCC)

This handbook provides information about our Early Year’s programs and is reviewed with families during program orientation. If you have any questions or would like more information, please speak with your Program Supervisor.



PLEASE NOTE: As outlined in the VSOCC Child Care Parent Agreement, the Society reserves the right to change or amend its operating policies and procedures, and program fees. As much notice as possible will be provided.

Introduction to VSOCC

History

The Vancouver Society of Children’s Centres (VSOCC) has been serving families with young children since 1995. In partnership with many others, we have created a vibrant community for families in Vancouver.

Vision, Mission & Values

Vision: Empowering all children and families to reach their full potential.

Mission: We develop and deliver excellent quality, inclusive childcare services in collaboration with government, community and business partners.

Values: Life-long Learning
Diversity and Inclusion
Employee Well-being
Strong Partnerships

Membership

As a Society, VSOCC is governed by the British Columbia Society’s Act and a VSOCC membership is required for enrolment and participation in all VSOCC programs. All members of VSOCC may participate and vote at the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

All member families must respect our values and principles and adhere to our policies.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is elected by and responsible to the members of the Society. The VSOCC Board consists of both parent and community members and at least 50% must be parent directors. A current list of Board members can be found on our website at www.vsocc.org.

Our Employees

Our employees are a diverse group of educators with a variety of cultural backgrounds, work experience and languages. All educators are licensed Early Childhood Educators, certified in first aid and food safety, and have completed a criminal record check.

Program Teams

Program Manager

- Manages Program Supervisors in several licensed childcare programs, and provides leadership in quality program delivery
- Member of the Management Team, and reports to the Director, Programs
- Ensures mandate, policies, and procedures are consistently maintained
- Oversees compliance with regulatory bodies, legal, budgetary and other requirements in their programs

Program Supervisor

- Manages the day-to-day operations; oversees the program; supervises the team of educators and communicates with families
- Reports to a Program Manager
- Has a valid Early Childhood Educator certificate and may have additional certification in Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs Care

Early Childhood Educator (Under 3, Infant, Toddler and 3-5)

- Cares for children; plans and implements an emergent curriculum that aligns with the BC Early Learning Framework
- Provides families with updates and information about their child
- Has a valid Early Childhood Educator certificate and may have additional certification in Infant/Toddler and/or Special Needs Care

Program Cook

- Provides healthy meals for children based on the VSOCC approved menu
- Maintains a safe and sanitary environment for food preparation and storage
- Has food safe certificate and may have chef training or professional cook experience

Casual Educators (replaces educators who are away)

- Supports our teams with the supervision and care of children
- May have either an Early Childhood Educator or Early Childhood Assistant certificate as per Child Care Licensing regulations

Early Childhood Practicum Students (enrolled in post-secondary training)

- Enrolled in an Early Learning Education program
- Completing practical training in Early Childhood Education
- Supervised in program by VSOCC educators

VSOCC Philosophy & Guiding Principles

At VSOCC, commitment to quality and excellence in our work with children and families is a core value.

The following principles, based on the *BC Early Learning Framework*, guide our decisions and are central to creating quality learning experiences and environments for children and their families:

- Upholding a strong image of children, families and educators:
 - Children are capable, competent, naturally inquisitive, and creative.
 - Families (parents/guardians) have the most important role in promoting their child’s well-being, learning, and development.
 - Educators are committed to understanding and supporting each child’s unique strengths, interests, and inquiries, within the contexts of both family and community.
- Relationships are the context for learning. There is a reciprocal relationship between children, families, and educators as partners in learning
- Reflective, collaborative, and responsive practice are critical to program quality
- Environments are inclusive and create possibilities for learning and wellbeing, unique to each child and family
- Connection to and acknowledgement of the land, culture, community, place, and history by responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, and Rights of the Child
- Play is integral to children’s lifelong health and learning
- Learning is holistic. There is a connectedness between a child’s physical, personal, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being as well as the cognitive aspects of learning

Each of these focus areas uniquely reflect the principles of the BC Early Learning Framework and work together to create environments that deliver quality programs and help children and families thrive.

Our Curriculum

VSOCC provides an emergent, play-based approach to curriculum and incorporates the four core areas of early learning from the BC Ministry of Education’s Early Learning Framework:

Well-being and Belonging Engagement with Others, Materials and the World
Communication and Literacies Identities, Social Responsibility and Diversity

Our approach is based on the premise that children learn best when the materials and activities offered are based on their interests, strengths, needs, and experiences. During play, educators intentionally observe and listen to children to identify their natural interests and inquiries and explore these further in our programs.

Once an interest or inquiry is identified, educators plan learning pathways or more specifically, small group experiences and discussions to inspire and extend children’s learning. Our physical environment continually adapts to reflect the interests, inquiries, and exploration of the children. This cycle of observation, reflection and curriculum planning continues through the year with no timeline or boundaries.

To make this cycle of learning visible, the educators, children and families collaborate on program-based documentation and visual displays which may include a collection of different traces of learning such as artifacts made by the children in the program, photographs, video, audio recording, stories and/or reflections.

Storypark

VSOCC uses Storypark – a secure, private online community that allows families to be involved with their child’s play and learning experiences. Families must provide consent if they wish to have access

VSOCC and Storypark take privacy and confidentiality seriously. Storypark is a password-protected, private space for you, your child’s educators and your family. Content is shared only with our program educators, families whose children are tagged in stories and family members you choose to invite. No personal information is shared with any third party. To learn more about Storypark, please visit www.storypark.com

Storypark stories are posted by educators to share children’s curriculum experiences with families. It is only used to communicate about curriculum.

All other communication, i.e. questions, concerns, are to be made directly with the educators or Program Supervisor.

VSOCC also posts newsletters on the Storypark Community Board, which include a variety of topics related to early childhood, resources for parents/guardians, and closure dates / early dismissals.

The Importance of Families

At VSOCC, we recognize and value families as primary caregivers and the most important source of knowledge about their children. We respect diverse family structures, cultures and parenting approaches. The engagement of families and caregivers in their child’s care and learning experiences is critical to high quality child care.

VSOCC supports and promotes families as partners with educators and encourages families to be involved and engaged in programs. Family members (including extended family) are welcome to spend time in programs and build relationships with their child's educators.

We welcome families to speak with educators about opportunities to participate in the program including:

- Reading books with children
- Participating in program activities such as baking, planting, art, field trips, or other special events
- Sharing family traditions, celebrations, or cultural practices
- Sharing skills, talents, or expertise with children and educators for example, artistic, musical, building, gardening, physical (yoga, dance), etc.
- Sharing something about your work or organizing a visit to your workplace if appropriate.

In the spirit of providing holistic care to children and families, VSOCC collaborates with other community services, organizations and professionals to support children and families. Resources, information, and community events are key aspects of all VSOCC services.

Family & Educator Relationship

How will I know what is happening in my program or during my child's day?

Our goal is to maintain consistent, open and respectful communication with you and your family.

You can expect:

- Conversations with individual educators at pick-up and drop-off
- Written and visual documentation including photographs and stories
- Stories posted on Storypark
- Email or telephone communication from program educators and administration staff
- Individual discussions and/or meetings between parents/guardians and educators
- VSOCC newsletters
- Child development and community resource information
- Opportunities for family connection and parent education

We ask that you tell us about:

- Your child's day, night or weekend at time of drop-off
- Changes in routine or context at home (e.g. moving homes, parent illness or absence for extended period)
- Changes in health, behaviour or disposition
- Any other details which may help us understand and care for your child

You can:

- Talk to educators at drop-off or pick-up times
- Phone or email the program

Family / Educator Meetings

Please note that educators are responsible for the supervision and care of children during the day, and it may be difficult to engage in conversation during program hours. If you have questions, concerns or would like more time to speak or meet with educators, please request a meeting.

What if I have a concern?

We are committed to working cooperatively with you.

Concern between a parent/guardian and an individual educator:

1. If a concern arises between you and an individual educator, please discuss the issue with the educator openly and attempt to reach resolution.
2. If a resolution is not achieved, either party is encouraged to speak with the Program Supervisor. If mutual resolution is not achieved, contact the Program Manager.
3. Where appropriate, the Program Director or CEO may be contacted.

Concern related to the program:

1. If you are concerned about the program, please share your concern with the Program Supervisor.
2. If a resolution is not reached, the Program Manager or Program Director will be contacted. Where appropriate, the CEO may be involved.

Concern related to an organizational policy or decision:

If you have a concern about a policy, procedure or general matter related to the organization, please contact the Program Director or CEO. Contact information can be found here: [VSOCC - Vancouver Society of Children's Centres - Contact Us](#)

Tell us what you think—we value your input!

Annually, we invite families to participate in a survey and you are encouraged to complete the survey. This allows families an important opportunity to provide feedback. Additionally, we welcome feedback and encourage your comments, questions and feedback at any time. Please don't hesitate to reach out to your Program Supervisor or Program Manager.

Social Media Policy

When employees engage in communication with families outside of the work environment, there is the potential for confusion regarding the employee and employer relationship and the professional relationship that VSOCC must maintain between employees and families. It also raises potential concerns about confidentiality. As such, VSOCC employees are not permitted to interact or engage with, nor provide access to their personal social media accounts or services to current or past parents or children of VSOCC programs or services. Also, VSOCC employees are not permitted to “follow” parents and children or exchange direct messages with clients via personal social media.

Outside Work for VSOCC Families


VSOCC strongly discourages VSOCC employees from providing services outside of VSOCC hours for VSOCC families (i.e. babysitting, house-sitting, etc.) When employees engage in services with families outside of the work environment, there is the potential for confusion regarding the employee and employer relationship and the professional relationship that VSOCC must maintain between employees and families. It also raises potential concerns about confidentiality.

Operating Hours and Closures

Hours of Operations

Monday to Friday

Program	Open	Close
Under 3, Infant and Toddler and 3 to 5 Programs	8:00 am	6:00 pm

 **Limit your use of care to less than 9 hours per day.** This is in the best interest of young children as care over 9 hours makes for a very long, mentally and physically stimulating day. Also, the 9-hour day aligns with our staffing schedules.

PLEASE NOTE: In the morning, to maintain child to educator ratios, it may be necessary for a parent/guardian to wait with their child until the next educator arrives and begins their shift.

Closures

Our centres are closed on the following days:

New Year's Day	Thanksgiving Day
Family Day	Remembrance Day
Good Friday	Christmas Eve (early closure at 3pm)
Easter Monday	Christmas Day
Victoria Day	Boxing Day
Canada Day	Winter Closure (<i>three business days between Christmas and New Year's</i>)
B.C. Day	
Labour Day	
National Day for Truth and Reconciliation	

*When a holiday falls on the weekend, we will be closed the following Monday.

VSOCC Professional Development Days: Up to five days per year. These dates will be shared with families well in advance.

Monthly Staff Meetings: On the third Thursday of every month, all programs close at 4pm. Children must be picked up before 4pm.


Unscheduled Closures:

Programs will be declared closed if:

- The Government, Translink and/or other authorities declare an extreme weather alert and/or advisory to avoid unnecessary travel;
- The Vancouver School Board closes schools due to extreme weather conditions; and/or
- The centre/facility is unsafe (i.e. loss of electricity or water)

If programs are closing/closed, educators will:

- Email families announcing that the centre is closing/closed and
- Contact families or, if not available, the emergency contact person, advising that children must be picked up immediately

 In the event of severe weather closure, we will make every effort to advise families before 7:00 am on the day of closure. Closures will be posted on the VSOCC website front page.

Our Programs

The British Columbia Child Care Act and Regulations provide rules and guidelines for licensed child care facilities. These are outlined in the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the *BC Child Care Licensing Regulations*.

Child Care Programs	
Program Type	Educator: Child Ratio
Under 3 Programs, Infant & Toddler Programs	1 : 4
3 to 5 Programs	1 : 8

Under 3 - Infant & Toddler Programs

Under 3 Programs for infants and toddlers capture and extend the magical moments of learning that happen every day. We focus on:

- Building trusting relationships
- Sensory-motor experiences
- Integrating the development of key self-help skills
- Language development
- Basic social skills that encourage the development of early cooperative play skills and emotional regulation

Under 3 Programs have a sequenced routine to ensure the children can feel a high sense of security and familiarity. However, the day-to-day activities are flexible and open-ended, including a balance of indoor and outdoor time. The schedule for infants is based on individual rhythms for sleep, feeding and diapering. This gradually becomes more consistent within the group over time as the children age.

3 to 5 Programs

Our programs for children ages 3 to 5 engage children in a wide variety of opportunities, experiences and activities with a focus on:

- Learning more about themselves, their peers and their community
- Building confidence, positive self-image and practicing self-help skills
- Communication and language development
- Sharing, kindness and cooperation
- Developing skills for managing emotions, creative thinking and decision making
- Play, dialogue, problem-solving, creative expression, scientific inquiry and small group collaboration

Getting Ready for Your First Day

Orientation: Before Your Child's First Day

Our educators will be contacting you to arrange an orientation meeting (approximately one hour) to:

- Understand your child's interests, experiences, needs, and preferences.
- Learn about your family, your priorities and your interests.
- Provide a tour of the centre and introduce you to the educators.
- Discuss the daily schedule and review important procedures.
- Discuss gradual entry.
- Provide you with the centre's contact information and access information.



Please share any information you feel is important for us to better understand and care for your child, know your family, and ease the transition. It is important that information about food restrictions, allergies, diagnosis, or guardianship related details are also shared at this time.

Earthquake Comfort Kit:

An earthquake comfort kit is required for your child. This kit will be used in the event of an earthquake and other emergencies and will be returned to you upon your child's departure. Please place the following items in a large plastic Ziploc bag (max. size 11" x 11"), clearly labelled with your child's name:

- Family photo (including pets / friends)
- A note with some words of encouragement for your child
- Emergency contact numbers for out-of-town friends/family
- A special, small, comfort toy
- Infant formula for those not yet eating solid food
- Diapers and wipes if needed

VSOCC programs have additional emergency supplies for all children and educators onsite including food and drinking water.



Please Note: These items must be received by our educators **PRIOR** to your child attending the program. If any of these items are missing / incomplete, your child cannot attend until all items are received.

Required Items:

Please label everything with your child's name.

- Inside shoes or non-slip slippers (for Under 3 Programs)
- Outdoor shoes or sandals (shoes must securely fasten on your child's feet) - **NO flip flops** due to safety hazards.
- 2 changes of clothing (pants, shirt, underwear & socks)
- If not participating in the lunch program, a nutritious lunch, **NO** nuts or peanuts
- Waterproof pants and rain jacket with hood
- Warm hat and gloves/mittens
- Waterproof boots
- Sun hat and sunscreen lotion (**not** spray)
- Thin blanket for sleep and rest periods

For infants or toddlers, also include:

- Diapers & diapering supplies (for all the changes of the day)
- Prepared Bottles (including formula, soy, cow or breast milk)

For sleep and rest periods, children are welcome to bring a special blanket. For infants that sleep in cribs, please speak with educators about items from home.

Please note: Drinking cups will be provided in the program, however; if you choose to bring a water bottle for your child, it will be your responsibility to clean and sanitize it **daily**.

Clothing/Footwear

Please leave 'good clothes' at home. Washable, comfortable clothing appropriate for the weather and for messy play is best. Your child will be enjoying art and play activities both in and outdoors. While we use washable paints, there is **no guarantee** that clothing will not be stained.

Ensure your child is dressed to spend time outdoors **every day** in rain, snow or sunshine. This includes waterproof rain gear, boots, mittens and hats in cold, wet weather. Layers of clothing are very effective when it is cold, and a change of dry clothes and indoor footwear is essential. In times of warm, sunny weather, include a hat.

All footwear should be properly fitted and securely attached. Flip flops are a safety hazard and should not be worn to child care.

Do NOT Bring Toys:

Our programs are very well equipped. Please do not bring toys from home as they are difficult to share and may be lost or broken.

Gradual Entry

What is Gradual Entry?

Beginning a new child care program can be an emotional experience for both the family and child. It is important that this is a positive experience for all and for families to feel comfortable in the program. Therefore, children often require a gradual introduction to the program.

Gradual Entry gives the child time to:

- Become familiar with their educators, other children, and families
- Become familiar with the program's rhythms and flows
- Develop trust and a sense of security
- Learn by experience that their parent/guardian will return

During gradual entry, an adult with whom the child is comfortable with must accompany the child.

How Long is Gradual Entry?

Every child is different and the length necessary will depend on your child's comfort level.

Children New to VSOCC

Our standard schedule is five days of gradual introduction to the program. However, this may be extended or shortened, as necessary. We will prepare the schedule with you during your orientation meeting. Below is a typical gradual entry

SAMPLE GRADUAL ENTRY	
DAY ONE	Child will visit with their parent/guardian or familiar adult for approximately 2 hours. The adult will have an opportunity to connect with educators and become familiar with the program’s rhythms and flows.
DAY TWO	Child will visit with their parent/guardian or familiar adult for approximately 1 hour. The adult leaves the child for 1 hour in the program. The adult may stay in the VSOCC building.
DAY THREE	The parent/guardian or familiar adult will help settle the child into the program and leave. The child will stay on their own for the morning. The adult will return and have lunch with the child in the program. Both will leave at naptime.
DAY FOUR	The child will stay through lunch and afternoon nap. The parent/guardian or familiar adult will return after naptime.
DAY FIVE	The child stays all day. A shorter day, if possible.

Throughout gradual entry, we will communicate regularly with the family and monitor your child’s progress. If your child is having a difficult time, we will work with you to adjust or extend the gradual entry schedule.

Please feel free to speak to any educator in your child’s program about special instructions, concerns and your child’s progress. Also, please feel free to call us to hear about how your child is doing.

Children Transferring Age Groups within VSOCC

When a child is transferring programs *within the same location*, the child will be given opportunities to visit the program on a regular basis, through exchanges and informal visits. Children transferring *between different locations* may participate in gradual entry depending on the child’s comfort level.

Separation Anxiety – Tips for Families

- Tell us about your child’s likes, dislikes, fears, eating/sleeping habits and anything else that will help us understand and get to know your child and family.
- During this transition time, children like to know what to expect. Try to have the same adult drop off and pick up during this time.
- Show your child that you trust the educators. Children often use their parents/guardian and/or familiar adult as a “bridge” for developing new relationships.
- Keep arrivals calm and happy. A pleasant, calm start to the day is crucial to successful separations.
- If your child is interested, have them help you prepare for going to the program the night before (i.e. preparing lunch or clothes).
- Bring something from home to help comfort your child (i.e. favourite stuffy, blanket, a family photo, etc.)
- Spend a few minutes getting your child settled into an activity in the program before leaving.
- Always say “goodbye” and let your child know you will be back. **DO NOT** sneak out while your child is distracted as this can alarm your child and lead to increased upset in the future.
- We recommend saying just one goodbye. Stalling or immediately returning after you have left can make children more uncertain and add to separation anxiety. Develop a goodbye ritual with your child. A special way to say goodbye. A consistent routine is reassuring.
- There will be a temporary period of adjustment— feelings of worry and guilt are normal. Please ask the educators if you need support.
- Please feel free to call us to hear about how your child is doing.

Rhythms, Flows & Activities

Routines

Routines are important for young children to encourage a sense of familiarity, trust and security. VSOCC programs for children 5 and under have the following general routines:

The schedule and times are flexible to best meet children's interests and development.

Morning

- Gradual arrival
- Morning snack
- Variety of open exploration, small group activities, group gatherings, and outdoor/ active play activities
- Wellness and self-help opportunities such as toileting, hand washing routines, and cooperative clean up

Afternoon

- Lunch
- Sleep, Rest, or Quiet Time
- Variety of open exploration, small group activities, group gatherings, and outdoor/active play activities
- Wellness and self-help opportunities such as toileting, handwashing routines, and cooperative clean up

Late Afternoon

- Afternoon snack
- Variety of open exploration, small group activities, group gatherings, and outdoor/ active play activities
- Wellness and self-help opportunities such as toileting, handwashing routines, and cooperative clean up
- Centre closes

Small Group Activities / Group Gatherings / Open Exploration can include:

- Science and sensory exploration including sand, water, playdough, etc.
- Activities including cooking, gardening, etc.
- Mathematic and fine motor activities including, puzzles, blocks, board games, sequencing, and other manipulative toys
- Language and literacy experiences including, storytelling, felt stories, finger plays, reading, and writing
- Creative exploration including open-ended exploration using various mediums, painting, drawing, collage and construction
- Dramatic Play including dress-up, role play, puppet play, and pretend play
- Music, creative expression, dance and movement
- Emergent projects and activities

Active Play

As per Child Care Licensing Regulations, VSOCC ensures all programs create daily opportunities for active play and the development of fundamental movement skills (e.g. crawling, balancing, running, jumping) indoors and outdoors.

On a daily basis, full-time childcare programs must ensure a minimum of 60 minutes of outdoor active play every day.

Outdoor / Active Play Activities can include:

- Community explorations including neighbourhood walks and visits to local parks
- Gross and fine motor games & activities

Community Outings—Walks & Fieldtrips

Community outings provide children with opportunities to:

- Explore and learn about the neighbourhood and community
- Gain knowledge about the urban and natural environment
- Develop healthy bodies through exercise and fresh air

Short group walks occur each week for all ages and often include visits to local playgrounds and parks.

Children over three years have the opportunity to go on occasional field trips outside of the local neighbourhood. You will be informed in advance and asked to provide consent for your child to participate.

If your child is unable to attend the trip and the entire group is going, you will need to make alternative arrangements for your child's care for the duration of the trip. Parents are welcome to attend field trips with their children.

We reserve the right to cancel field trips for reasons including not enough permanent educators and adults to ensure safety and enhanced supervision, low attendance, inclement weather, and venue or travel schedule changes.

Screen Use

VSOCC programs do not use screens with children except under special circumstances related to curriculum and with approval of the Program Supervisor or Program Manager.

Birthdays

Each family has their own preferences related to the celebration of their child's birthday and VSOCC understands and respects these choices. For families who wish to have a special celebration within their childcare program, please speak with the educators as your child's birthday draws near. You are welcome to bring a selection of uncut fruit or vegetables, store-bought unopened fruit or veggie platters or store-bought and unopened food. Items **MUST** contain the ingredient list and be low sugar/salt. Either you or the educator can then prepare the food at the program. This will ensure there is no cross contamination with allergy causing foods.



To ensure health, safety and sustainability, as well as a respect for family choices and the right to make decisions for their children, VSOCC does not permit families to distribute 'goody bags' or gifts to children in programs during celebrations. Families for whom giving a gift is important are welcome to donate a favourite children's book to the program on their child's behalf.

Invitations to birthday events outside VSOCC programs should be either distributed to all children in the program, or not distributed within the program.


Celebrations, Traditions and Holidays

Our children, families, educators, and community are multicultural and diverse. To recognize, honour and promote inclusion and diversity and the understanding and awareness of different cultures, practices, and heritage of individuals in our community, we invite families to contribute and share traditions, celebrations and values which are important to their family and culture.

VSOCC's philosophy, curriculum, and emphasis on family engagement provides a framework for our approach to celebrations, traditions and holidays in programs. We celebrate these events as part of our curriculum, in a child-led, developmentally appropriate manner and ensure activities are meaningful and inclusive of all children in our care. We encourage families to use our seasonal sign-up sheets to identify and share their family traditions, celebrations, and values.

Activities involving food must comply with VSOCC's food and allergy policies.


Visitors

 Parents are welcome to be in the program at any time. If you wish to have other visitors or family members visit your child in the program, please speak to the Program Supervisor (or designate) to arrange the visit.

Personal Care Routines

Sleep & Relaxation Times

Sleep and relaxation are healthy parts of a child's day and are important for physical and emotional health and well-being. Educators will adapt the sleep and rest time for each child based on the needs and natural rhythms of the child.

 Infants have individual rest schedules and may sleep as long as they need. VSOCC follows the recommendations of the Public Health Agency of Canada, [A Baby's Safe Sleep Environment](#) for infants in cribs which includes using a firm mattress with a fitted sheet. Soft bedding, pillows, comforters, quilts, soothers with attached blankets/stuffies and bumper pads can increase the risk of suffocation. If a blanket is needed, infants are safest with a thin, lightweight and breathable blanket.

Toddlers and children in the 3-5 programs have a nap time each day after lunch. Children who do not sleep during the day will be offered alternative quiet or relaxing activities.

Diapering & Toileting

Regular opportunities for children to use the toilet are provided; adult support is provided if necessary.

Diapering: Diapers are changed on a regular basis according to children's needs. A record of daily diaper changes is posted in Under 3, Infant and Toddler programs and if needed, 3-5 programs. If your child requires diapering, families are required to provide diapers, wipes and creams as needed.

Toilet Learning: Each child's readiness to start using the toilet varies. Educators will take the child's lead in determining readiness and will work in partnership with the family. Toilets in VSOCC centres are appropriate, child-sized, safe and hygienic. **Potties and removable, adaptable toilet seats are a health hazard and are not used in VSOCC programs.** Educators will support and encourage children in this process. Rewards for successful use of the toilet will not be used in VSOCC programs.

It is natural for your child to have toileting accidents during this time. Your child will naturally forget that they may need to use the toilet, especially at times when they are having lots of fun or feeling stressed. When your child is learning to use the toilet, please provide multiple changes of clothes.

It is not a requirement that children moving from Under 3 or Toddler programs to 3-5 programs can use the toilet.

Handwashing

To encourage good hygiene and minimize the spread of disease, all children wash their hands, after toileting, when returning from outdoor play, before and after meals and snacks. Children and families are required to wash their hands upon arrival and departure.

Mealtimes (please see 'Food & Nutrition', page 18)

VSOCC Snack and Lunch Program

Our lunch and snack menus meet the BC Child Care Regulations requirements, *Canada's Food Guide*, and are approved by a Dietician from Vancouver Coastal Health.

Food preparation is done in a way to minimize the risk of cross contamination of foods and with an awareness of any food allergies present within the program.

Drinking Cups and Hydration

Water is available in all programs throughout the day. Educators provide children over the age of six months with cups for drinking water throughout the day. If you bring a water bottle for your child, it will remain in their cubby and be your responsibility to clean and sanitize daily.

Breakfast

Children should have a nourishing breakfast before arriving at the centre. If your child needs to eat their breakfast after arriving at the centre, please discuss this with an educator when you arrive. Educators will supervise children who are eating and assist the child to eat their breakfast, as needed.

Snacks

For children who can eat a variety of solid foods, the program will provide a morning and an afternoon snack. For infants who are not yet eating a variety of foods, families are asked to discuss snacks with their program's educators.

Lunch

Optional Lunch Program (additional monthly fee)

- Your child can enjoy a nutritious lunch each day prepared by our Program Cooks.
- 30-day written notice is required to withdraw from the lunch program, effective on the 15th and last day of the month.

Please note: Children who bring their own lunch are not offered food from the lunch program. If you are interested in the lunch program, please speak to the Program Supervisor.

If you provide lunch:

Please pack a nutritious lunch which has:

- Foods low in sugars and salt
- Steam cooked vegetables for infants
- Hot items should be stored in a Thermos and cold items with ice packs
- Food items such as sausages, carrots, and grapes must be cut lengthwise and in small pieces to prevent choking.

Please Note: Homemade or store-bought foods prepared offsite may NOT be reheated, stored or served in licensed kitchen areas including fridge or freezer



Please **DO NOT** pack:

- Any products that state they "may contain traces of peanuts or tree nuts"
- Candy, chocolate, chips or soda pop

Infant Programs - Food Storage and Reheating

- Store bought or homemade food items may be stored in the refrigerator or freezer
- Food may be reheated and served by educators

Infant Feedings

Please discuss your infant's feedings with educators. It is important that educators are familiar with the foods your child has been exposed to and able to eat.

For infants not included in the lunch program, please provide food in containers clearly marked with the child's name.

If your child requires bottled milk/ formula/breast milk or baby food, please provide sufficient supplies.

Please note:

- Bottles must be prepared and clearly marked with the child's name and contents of the bottle (e.g. breastmilk, cow's milk, soy milk, formula) and stored in the refrigerator
- **Almond milk is NOT** permitted due to our peanut/tree nut policies
- No glass bottles are permitted
- Contents of bottles are thrown out if they have been standing for two hours after being heated

Mealtimes

Helping children develop healthy attitudes towards eating nutritious and varied foods is important for lifelong health. We encourage children to enjoy trying a variety of foods.

Educators will not force children to eat, but will provide a relaxed environment, encouragement and sufficient time.

If there is a concern related to your child's eating, we will work with you to plan different strategies.

Food Restrictions/Alternative Diets

If for religious, cultural or other personal reasons, your child has food restrictions or alternate mealtime practices, please speak with your Program Supervisor and we will try to accommodate individual needs.

In some situations, the family may be requested to provide their child's daily meals and snacks to ensure their child's needs are met.

For children who are not ready to eat solid foods, who require additional or supplemental foods or who have multiple and/or severe allergies or food sensitivities, families must provide their child's snacks, lunches, and drinks (i.e. milk or formula, pureed foods, extra snacks).

Shared Foods and Special Occasions

To reduce the risk of exposure to allergy causing foods and cross contamination, we are unable to serve any homemade foods that have been prepared offsite.

For special occasions such as birthdays, you are welcome to bring a selection of uncut fruit or vegetables to share (see 'Birthdays', page 16) for more details).

Supervision & Guidance

Supervision

Educators ensure children are always supervised and adhere to the required educator to child ratios. Page 12 outlines program specific educator to child ratios.

VSOCC's Approach to Guidance

We take a proactive and positive approach to guiding children's behaviour and our prevention and intervention strategies are guided by current research and understanding of child development. We do not use punishment or rewards to guide children.

Our guidance strategies are in place to:

- Ensure maximum safety, well-being and respect of children
- Promote children's development of impulse control, confidence, personal responsibility and natural consequences of their actions when appropriate
- Provide a supportive environment where children can learn, and practice critical skills related to social and emotional growth including the ability to:
 - Get along with others, solve problems and resolve conflicts
 - Be compassionate, kind and express emotions in healthy and appropriate ways
 - Remain calm, make decisions and think before acting
 - Take appropriate and reasonable risks in a safe and supportive environment

Prevention strategies are proactive techniques educators used to create a positive environment and minimize behaviours that are challenging. Generally, these strategies include:

- Engaging and interacting with children to build positive relationships
- Setting clear, consistent, and simple limits
- Providing easy to understand explanations for limits
- Communicating limits in a positive rather than a negative way
- Giving children enough time to respond to expectations
- Focusing on the behaviour, rather than on the child
- Saying what is expected, rather than asking
- Offering appropriate choices
- Reinforcing positive behaviour
- Modeling appropriate behaviour
- Encouraging children to use educators as a resource
- Being alert and near children
- Ignoring minor incidents.

Intervention strategies are used when children are demonstrating inappropriate, unsafe or harmful behavior that is challenging, and educators must intervene and help children self-regulate and resolve the problem. Generally, these strategies include:

- Obtaining a child's attention in a respectful way
- Using proximity and touch
- Providing positive reminders to clarify and reinforce limits
- Acknowledging children's feelings before setting limits
- Respecting individual differences, abilities and experiences
- Offering appropriate choices

- Providing experiences with natural and logical consequences
- Redirecting and offering substitutions
- Modeling and encouraging a child's active participation in problem solving
- Providing opportunities for children to make amends

In the event there is a pattern of ongoing challenging behaviour, the Program Supervisor and parents will arrange to meet and discuss strategies, supports, and resources to assist the child in their growth and development.

Attendance, Arrivals & Departures



Given the significant demand for childcare spaces, VSOCC requires regular attendance. If a child is not attending on a regular basis VSOCC may end service and provide the space to another family.

Drop-off and pick-up transitions can be extremely busy times and require educators and families to be particularly attentive and aware of safety. Children, 5 years old and under, must be dropped off and picked up by a person over the age of 16. The educators' primary responsibility is the supervision of children in their care during pick-up and drop off times. Should you wish to speak with an educator at length, an appointment may be made to ensure adequate time for the discussion.

Drop Off



When you are on-site with your child, responsibility for your child resides with you.

To ensure the transfer of supervision and care for each child is very clear and meets Child Care Licensing Requirements, please ensure you:

- Let an educator know when you and your child arrive **and** leave the program
- **Sign-in your child as you are leaving after drop-off.**

Families are encouraged to share relevant details about their child and give any special instructions for the day/week (i.e. child did not sleep well, changes to typical family situations, etc.).

If your child is having difficulty at drop-off, please speak to an educator about how we can help you and your child during the transition.

If my child is going to be late/away:

Families are to contact the centre by **9:00am** if their child will not be attending or will be arriving later in the day.

If your child is going to be away due to illness, share the type and/or symptoms of the illness.

Strollers/Bikes/Scooters:

Due to limited storage, please walk with your child to and from the centre or use a small umbrella stroller, take your large stroller home after drop-off or fold your stroller for compact storage.

PLEASE NOTE: VSOCC is not responsible for damage to strollers or loss of items left inside strollers on VSOCC property. If bringing bikes or scooters, please talk to your Program Supervisor to confirm space as strollers have storage priority.

Pick Up



When you are on-site with your child, responsibility for your child resides with you.

To ensure the transfer of supervision and care for each child is very clear and meets Child Care Licensing Requirements, please ensure you:

- Let at educator know when you arrive **and** leave the program.
- **Sign-out your child as you are entering the program.**

Please **arrive at least 15 minutes prior to program closing time**, to enable your child to depart in a relaxed, unhurried manner. Educators will provide you with any updates or information.

Late Pick Up & Fees

If you are late picking up your child, please phone the program and let them know when to expect you.

If we have not heard from you by **6:00 p.m.**, an educator will:

1. Phone your home, cell and place of employment
2. Phone the alternate person(s) on your registration form

If no one is available and no alternate arrangements have been made by 6:30pm, we will contact the Ministry for Children and Family Development (MCFD) to pick up your child.

If you are late and your child is no longer at the centre, please contact MCFD to locate your child: **1-800-663-9122**

Late Pick-up Fees

There is a late fee charge per minute. The time will be recorded from closing time to when the family leaves the program. Late fees are due at time of pick-up. Repeated incidents of late pick-up may result in a withdrawal of services.

Authorized Pick-Up Persons

Your child will be released only to parent(s)/guardian(s) or persons over the age of 16 years authorized by parent/guardian and listed in the child's file.

What if I or an authorized person cannot pick-up?

If you cannot pick up your child and you must send someone who is not on the pre-authorized pick-up list, please contact the program to provide authorization. You must provide the person's full name. Educators will verify the person's government issued photo identification upon arrival.

Unauthorized Pick-up Person

If a person arrives to pick up your child and they are not on your child's authorized pick-up records and/or specific instructions were not received, educators will not allow the person to pick-up or enter the childcare facility.

Educators will contact the parent/guardian and unless authorization is granted, families will be asked to make alternative arrangements. If contact with a parent/guardian cannot be made, the person will be asked to leave.

What if the pick-up person is impaired?

If educators suspect the pick-up person to be impaired (i.e. drugs or alcohol), they will not release the child and will:

- Offer to call the alternate parent/guardian
- Offer to call a relative or friend to pick up the parent and child

If these offers are refused, the educator will notify the police. Educators must support the law.

Guardianship Agreements

If there is legal documentation specifying guardianship or limited access for your child, a copy of the signed legal documentation (i.e. current guardianship agreement and related court orders) must be provided.

Educators will always follow the written guardianship agreement and court orders. Educators will not become involved in guardianship disputes and will not provide documentation to be used by either party. Educators will appear at guardianship proceedings only when issued a court subpoena.

Health & Safety – Child Illness & Injury

Child Illnesses & Injuries

As required by Child Care Licensing Regulations, VSOCC follows the guidelines of the Vancouver Coast Health (VCH) resource '*Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases*'. This document provides information for families and childcare providers about prevention, symptoms and treatment of common illnesses, communicable diseases and infestations. A copy of this document can be obtained through Vancouver Coastal Health.

We are required by Child Care Licensing Regulations, as well as our own health and safety policies to send children home when they are sick. Our goal is to minimize illness from spreading among children and educators.

⚠️ What happens if my child becomes sick at the Centre?

- Educators will call you.
- If you are not available, educators will contact your emergency contact person(s).
- Children often become very ill very quickly. Please be accessible by telephone during childcare hours, and/or designate an alternate emergency contact.
- If a child has symptoms of illness that require the child to be excluded from the program, parents must arrange to pick up their child (or send an authorized alternate person) immediately.

⚠️ When should my child stay home?

If your child is unable to *fully* participate in all indoor and outdoor program activities, and/or requires one-to-one care, due to illness or injury, they are unable to attend childcare.

Please contact your program to notify us of your child's symptoms, injuries and of any diagnosis made by a medical doctor.

⚠️ Your Child should **NOT** attend the program if they have:

Fever (over 38°C)

- Your child may return 24 hours after the fever breaks and *no* fever medication is required. Fever medications such as Tylenol, Tempera, and Advil only temporarily relieve symptoms but will not cure a virus or illness.

Gastro-Intestinal Symptoms - Vomiting, and/or Diarrhea

- Your child may return 24 hours after the last incidence of vomiting or diarrhea. If the Environmental Health Officer has declared the program in a Gastro-Intestinal Outbreak, your child may return 48 hours after the last incidence of vomiting or diarrhea.

Eye Or Ear Discharge

- Your child may return with a note from the doctor, nurse practitioner or pharmacist, as per the [BC Government website](#), stating the symptoms are not contagious or the condition clears.

- If your child is prescribed antibiotics, they may return to the program after 24 hours of first dosage/as indicated by the doctor.

Undiagnosed Rash or Skin Infection

- Any unidentified rashes or skin infections must be diagnosed by your child’s doctor before they come to the centre.
- Your child may return when they have a note from the doctor identifying the rash and confirming it is not contagious.

Known or suspected communicable diseases

- Please refer to resource (e.g. measles, chicken pox, etc.)

Doctor’s Note

In certain situations, we may ask you to provide a doctor’s note to confirm your child is well enough to return to a group childcare setting. When a doctor’s note is required, it must state the diagnosis and that your child is not or no longer contagious

Outbreaks

VSOCC is required to notify Vancouver Coastal Health of all outbreaks of communicable diseases. VSOCC follows all protocols, as directed by the Environmental Health Officer; at times, this includes collecting samples during an outbreak with parent permission. We will post information about any outbreak of illness.

Serious Illness or Injury at the Centre

If your child is injured or becomes ill while at the centre, you will be notified by phone immediately. If necessary, your alternative contact person will be called. In an emergency, we will call an ambulance, and an educator will accompany your child to the hospital.

St. Paul’s Hospital
1081 Burrard Street
Tel: (604) 682-2344

BC Children’s Hospital
4480 Oak Street
Tel: (604) 875-2345

Questions?

Children need to be well enough to participate in **all aspects of our daily program**, including playing outside in the rain, snow or sun. If you have questions or concerns, please contact the Program Supervisor

Health & Safety – General

Washing Hands

We require all children and families to wash hands upon arrival in all programs. Washing hands is key to preventing the spread of germs and/or illness.

Immunization

It is strongly recommended by Vancouver Coastal Health that children enrolled in child care services receive immunizations appropriate to the child’s age.



PLEASE NOTE: Should there be an outbreak of a reportable communicable disease which is included in the BC Childhood Immunization Program, children who do not have current immunizations for that

specific disease will be excluded immediately from the program and until such time as the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority approves their return. Childcare fees remain payable.

Medications

As per Child Care Licensing Regulations, if medication is to be given to your child by educators:

- All medications, **including over the counter medications and alternative herbal medications**, must be prescribed by the child’s physician or accompanied by the physician’s written instructions including exact dosage and frequency;
- A “Permission to Administer Medication” form giving the educators permission to administer medication as prescribed by the doctor must be completed; and
- **Medication must be in the original container.** Prescription medication must be clearly labelled with the child’s name, name of drug, the dosage, date of purchase, and instructions for storage and administration of the drug.

Allergies and Scent Aware Environments

All VSOCC childcare programs are “allergy and scent aware”. Special care is taken to avoid exposure to allergy-causing foods and strong scents as some children and educators are highly allergic and/or sensitive. As such:

- **Do not bring any peanut or tree nut products into VSOCC programs** including items that state they ‘may contain traces of peanuts or tree nuts’
- Please note we cannot guarantee the exclusion of peanuts or tree nuts
- A detailed list of tree nuts and additional information regarding severe allergens can be found through: [“Government of Canada, Tree Nuts—Priority Food Allergens”](#)
- Avoid wearing scents in our programs.



It is extremely important to inform educators of your child’s allergens, especially those that are life threatening. Upon confirmation, all families are notified of life-threatening allergies in the program. Medications to treat life threatening allergies and Vancouver Coastal Health allergy care plans must be in place before your child can attend.

Sunscreen

We strongly encourage families to be “sun-smart” and to provide appropriate clothing (wide-brimmed hat, sun shirts, sunglasses) and sunscreen for their child. As per Child Care Licensing Regulations, we require your written permission to apply sunscreen. This consent is included on your child’s “Emergency Card” and completed during registration.

- Parents are responsible for applying sunscreen on their children in the morning. Educators will reapply it as per the recommendations on the bottle.
- Please provide a bottle of sunscreen lotion labelled with your child’s name. **Spray sunscreen is not permitted** given it can create slipping hazards. To reduce the risk of an allergic reaction, educators will only apply sunscreen supplied by the family for their child’s use.

Information and Records



For your child’s safety, it is extremely important that our information and records are kept up to date. **Please notify educators immediately if there are any changes** in phone numbers, e-mail addresses, emergency contacts, guardianship information, medical information, allergies, etc.

Health Services

Public Health Nurse Practitioners from Vancouver Coastal Health regularly visit our Centres. Any external consultation regarding a child’s health and/or development will be pursued only in consultation with, and written permission from parents.

If you have any health questions, please call:

- Your child's physician
- The public health nurse practitioners at your closest community health centre. Phone numbers and addresses are listed on the resources page or Healthlink BC at 8-1-1

Facility Emergencies

As per Child Care Licensing requirements, we practice emergency drills regularly. Formal fire drills are practiced once a month and earthquake drills are held four times per year.

If full evacuation of the facility is necessary (i.e. an earthquake, water or gas leak), the educators and children will evacuate to a safe location. Every attempt will be made to call parents, or the designated emergency contact and a sign will be posted on the centre's front door letting you know where to find us.

You may also call our Administration Office at 604-718-6555 for further information.

Building Alarms

If, at any point, you enter the parking lot or centre and there is an alarm going off; please immediately exit the building and meet the educators and children at their designated meeting place. At orientation, the Program Supervisor will confirm the location.

Security & Reporting

⚠ When entering and exiting our centres, please wait and **ensure the doors and gates are closed completely behind you**, and that:

- No child has exited the building without their parent or an educator present; and
- No strangers are let into the building without authorization.

The following security features are for **ADULT USE ONLY**. Please **DO NOT PERMIT** your child to:

- Press the handicap access button
- Use your VSOCC key card/fob
- Press the door alarm 'over-ride' buttons

⚠ Your key card/fob is for your use **ONLY**. Do **NOT** share them with your authorized pick-up people. If an alternate person is picking up your child, please inform them to buzz the program to be let in.

If you see any suspicious persons in or around the building, maintenance issues, or a safety hazard, please notify educators immediately.

Inclusion & Extra Support

VSOCC works in partnership with families, respecting the diverse backgrounds that enrich our programs, and recognizing that all families have different needs, interests, and expectations. We work closely with a variety of support services to ensure supportive experiences in our programs.

If your child has extra support needs, developmental delays, or a formal diagnosis, we will work with you and any other service providers to:

- Assess your child's strengths, interests and needs
- Develop a care plan, outlining strategies, supports, and necessary program/staffing modifications to assist your child in the program
- Contribute to child and family support plans, outlining and identifying goals and priorities
- Provide community resources or referrals

If additional staffing is required to support your child's care and well-being, external funding must be available and confirmed prior to attending. If a child is already attending, external funding will need to be confirmed to continue attendance. If funding for extra staff is unavailable, alternate options for care will be discussed with the family.

For further information regarding our Inclusion policy, please contact the Program Manager or Program Supervisor.

Enrollment

Enrollment

VSOCC's Administrative staff are responsible for managing our waitlist and registration processes. On acceptance of a space, children must attend on a regular basis as outlined in the Child Care Parent Agreement. If a child is not attending on a regular basis, VSOCC reserves the right to end service.

Childcare spaces cannot be assigned to others. Only your child may use the assigned space. VSOCC retains ownership of spaces.

Every effort is made to ensure that children can move to the next age group's program; however, due to the limited number of spaces, this is **not guaranteed**. Priority for enrollment is given to children who are already enrolled in our programs and your child will automatically be added to the waitlist for the next age group's programs except for school age. We aim to provide a minimum of three months' notice regarding the probability of a space in the next age group.

We encourage you to place your child's name on the waitlists of other organizations, in the event we do not have a space for your child at the time you need it.

For enrolment-related information, please call the Administration Office at 604-718-6555.

Once I have accepted a space, can I transfer to another centre?

A child's feeling of security, connection, and well-being is our priority. A child's attachment to and relationship with the educators and other children is essential and provides continuity to support their growth and development. On an exception basis only, transfers may be granted for siblings after a minimum of 6 months from their from start date.

Privacy

The Vancouver Society of Children's Centres is committed to the privacy and protection of personal information and follows responsible information handling practices in keeping with privacy laws. Our Privacy Policy explains how VSOCC collects, uses, discloses and retains personal information, including the personal information of minor children, parents and legal guardians of minor children and staff.

Our Privacy Policy can be found on our website. [VSOCC - Vancouver Society of Children's Centres - Privacy Policy](#)

Photo & Video Policy

We consider the personal information of children to be very sensitive and take seriously our responsibility to protect the privacy of all children in our programs. Outside of designated locations and times as determined by the program, we do not permit parents or families to take photos or videos in our programs.

Fees

Payment



All fees are due on the first of the month, paid through automatic withdrawal (pre-authorized direct payment). Your child's space is reserved and therefore fees are required regardless of your child's absence (i.e. vacation, illness).



NSF Cheques: A bank service charge is applied for cheques rejected due to non-sufficient funds. Full payment must be received within 5 business days.

Child Care BC

Affordable Child Care Benefit

The BC Government's Affordable Child Care Benefit may assist families with the cost of childcare. Details on how much funding is available as well as access to an online calculator to estimate funding can be found on the BC Government website [BC Child Care Affordable Benefit](#). Information required from VSOCC to complete the Benefit can be obtained from the Administrative Office or via info@vsocc.org.

Withdrawal Notice



Withdrawals from VSOCC Child Care Programs require a minimum of **45-day notice period** or payment in lieu of notice and will be effective on the 15th or the last day of the month.

Withdrawal from the lunch program requires a minimum of 30-days written notice or payment in lieu of notice.

Late Pick-up Fees



There is a late fee charge per late minute. Payment is due at the time of late pick-up and will be processed by signature on the 'Late Pick-Up Form' provided by the educator on duty. The fee will be deducted using the pre-authorized direct payment process used for payment of fees.

Membership

A Society membership is required for participation in all VSOCC programs.

Income tax receipts

Tax receipts for your childcare fees paid are distributed annually by the end of February.

Donations

The Vancouver Society of Children's Centres is a registered, charitable, non-profit society.

- We accept financial donations and can issue tax receipts
- Occasionally, programs or centres may request donations of specific toys, equipment, or materials which meet VSOCC curriculum standards, guidelines and requirements.

If you would like to donate, cheques can be made payable to the Vancouver Society of Children's Centres. You can also donate online by visiting: www.vsocc.org

For reasons related to space, health, safety, waste and junk removal, VSOCC will not accept:

- Unsolicited / unrequested donations of toys, clothing, linens, books, furnishings or household items
- Used furnishings or stuffed toys/household items