



2025-2026  
FAMILY  
HANDBOOK

## **WELCOME TO CHILDREN UNLIMITED!**

We are happy you have chosen to share your child or children with us! This Children Unlimited Family Handbook is designed to familiarize you with our program and philosophy and to simplify and clarify our policies and mutual commitments. Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have questions or concerns about anything in this Handbook.

## **OUR MISSION**

Children Unlimited strives to help children and families to be the best they can possibly be at any given time.

## **OUR PHILOSOPHY: KINDNESS, RESPECT, AND BELONGING**

Children Unlimited believes every human is special and deserving of respect. We are committed to treating all people with kindness, respect, and dignity in an honest, open, fair, and friendly manner. When all children, families, and team members feel a strong sense of belonging every day, we do our part in building a more inclusive and equitable world. Only then can we succeed in our mission and help children and their families achieve their full potential.

Our school environment encourages kindness, trust, and independence. Interactions between teachers, children, and families are based on mutual respect and acceptance. We stress sensitivity to one another's feelings and we encourage the children to help themselves and be responsible for their actions. We help each child to gain a positive self-concept and self-discipline, and to learn how to develop warm relationships with others. Our goal is to enhance each child's self-esteem and excitement for learning in every phase of life at Children Unlimited.

We believe that only through partnership with the family can our children grow and thrive. Developing a strong, trusting, respectful relationship between the family and our program is the foundation for carrying out our mission. Together with the family, we appreciate the wonder of each child as an individual. We value the family as the child's first advocate and we support families in their child rearing roles. We respect the dignity and uniqueness of each child, family, and colleague and support the full inclusion of all, regardless of differences in culture, family structure, language, racial identity, gender, abilities and disabilities, religious beliefs, or economic status. We are committed to cultivating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all teachers, staff, children and families feel welcome and free to be their true, authentic selves; to initiating hard conversations and speaking up if and when offensive or harmful words are spoken, knowing this is an opportunity to learn and grow; and to leading with curiosity and a commitment to ongoing shared learning around equity issues, including racism, cultural diversity, and inclusion.

## **GENERAL AND REGULATORY INFORMATION**

Children Unlimited is a licensed early education facility regulated by the Child Development Division of the Vermont Agency of Human Services' Department of Children and Families. The Center Based Child Care and Preschool Programs licensing regulations are posted in our office and are available [here](#). If you have questions or concerns regarding regulations and/or CU's compliance, please let us know. We will be happy to discuss them with you and investigate if necessary. If you need further assistance or have further concerns or questions, please call the Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642 option 3. More information about the Child Development Division can be found [here](#).

## **Our History**

CU has been providing high quality early care and education to Vermont's families for over 40 years. CU was founded in 1984 by Susan LaTulippe, who successfully owned and operated the program for 25 years. In 1991, Trisha Scharf joined the staff and Sue and Trish worked together for the next 18 years. Upon Sue's retirement in 2009, the program was purchased by CU2 Childcare LLC, a member-managed Limited Liability Company doing business as Children Unlimited. CU is now operated by Trish, the Executive Director (or managing member of the LLC), and the wonderful staff. Welcome to the CU Family!

## **Hours of Operation**

Our operating hours are Monday through Friday 7:00 am to 5:00 pm. We welcome drop-off between 7:00 and 9:30 am. Late arrivals should be discussed in advance with CU administration and/or the child's teachers.

We close to observe various holidays and summer and winter breaks and to allow our teachers and staff to participate in professional development and in-service activities. Additionally, we occasionally close early for our teaching team meetings. Please refer to our annual school calendar for details.

Children Unlimited may also close due to weather conditions or other emergencies, consistent with the Champlain Valley School District (CVSD). Please note that CVSD and/or CU may have emergency closings for reasons other than weather (for example, water or heat issues, etc.), which would not necessitate both entities closing for the day. Emergency closing or delay information will be emailed and Brightwheel messaged to all families and reported to the Vermont Association of Broadcasters for posting on media outlets. We have found WCAX.com to be a reliable source for this information. Please consult these resources prior to leaving the house for school in the morning. If we are open and the weather turns, we may close early. You will receive an email, Brightwheel message, and/or a text or phone call giving you at least two hours to pick up your child/ren.

If the weather is bad, please **leave your workplace early!!!** If you are late picking up your child, standard per child late fees of \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$1.00 per minute thereafter will be assessed.

## **Tuition and Contract Information**

Please refer to our annual Tuition Policy, Tuition Rate Schedule, and Contract.

Our goal is always to provide a consistent environment for children. Children Unlimited does, however, reserve the right to terminate any contract between CU and a family/parent/guardian with 5 days' notice should it be determined that commitments and responsibilities on behalf of any child are not being met by the parent/guardian, or if the Director deems that, for any reason, the continuation of this contract is not in the best interest of the child, family, or Children Unlimited. This includes, but is not limited to, failure to pay tuition in a timely manner, disrespectful and challenging behaviors from family members, repeated disregard of CU's etiquette guidelines (see below) or refusal by the family/guardian to work together with CU in the event issues or concerns arise.

## **Etiquette Guidelines**

CU is committed to maintaining a respectful and welcoming environment that is safe, healthy, nurturing, and conducive to learning and growing. It is essential that all parents/guardians/visitors to our program:

- Follow CU's four basic school expectations of behavior. (Treat others with kindness and respect. Be helpful. Take care of yourself. Keep your body in control.)
- Maintain courteous and respectful relationships and communications with all members of the CU community, including early childhood educators, other parents/guardians, volunteers, and children.
- Adhere to CU's confidentiality policies concerning information about children, families, and our team members. This includes refraining from taking photos or videos without permission and using extreme caution and exercising good judgment when interacting with CU team members or referring to CU on social media platforms or messaging applications.
- Recognize and respect the work that is early childhood education. CU is 'school,' 'early childhood education (ECE),' or 'child care' (not 'daycare') and our team is made up of 'teachers' or 'educators.'

In addition, to provide a healthy environment for our teachers and children, in compliance with state regulations, the following are strictly prohibited on Children Unlimited premises, including our parking lot:

- Smoking;
- Possession, sale, distribution, or use of alcohol, marijuana, intoxicants or illegal drugs;
- Being under the influence of alcohol, marijuana, intoxicants, or illegal drugs.

If any parent/guardian/visitor repeatedly disregards these etiquette guidelines, CU reserves the right to:

- Request a meeting to resolve any conflicts and create a plan.
- Restrict parent/guardian or visitor access to the CU program, classrooms, functions, and/or facilities.
- Terminate the family's contract with CU.
- Contact the Vermont Division of Children & Family, the Vermont Agency of Education, and, if necessary, the police.

## **Mandated Reporting**

Vermont law states that all early educators, including teachers and staff, are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. We are required to report to the Child Abuse Hotline if we reasonably suspect abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or neglect of a child. We must make this report within 24 hours of the time information regarding the suspected abuse or neglect is first received or observed. Children Unlimited has policies and procedures in place to address such situations. All staff members are trained in the prevention, identification, and mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect. More information about mandated reporting can be found at <https://dcf.vermont.gov/fsd/report/mandated>.

## **Water Testing**

State regulations require all licensed early education programs ensure that the drinking water system complies with the Vermont State Water Supply Rule by having a first draw test for lead.

Children Unlimited's water system has been tested and found to be in compliance, with no further action necessary. Children Unlimited's test results are available here: <https://leadresults.vermont.gov/school/112>. More information about the importance of lead water safety can be found here: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/environment/children/lead-drinking-water-child-care-settings>.

## OUR PROGRAM

Children Unlimited is a community of families, teachers, and area professionals working together to provide a loving, nurturing, and safe place for our children to grow, learn, and play. We work hard to make CU a very welcoming environment and to build trusting and respectful relationships with children, parents, and colleagues.

Through our daily activities, we explore concepts and encourage independent thought. We base our weekly discussions on the children's interests and encourage the children to share their knowledge of the subject as well as to learn new ideas. Our discussion topics are posted each week and we encourage parents to discuss these with their children as this adds to enthusiasm for learning. Through play and activities, children discover how they relate to the world around them while learning and practicing motor, visual, auditory, cognitive, and social skills. Our daily plan provides opportunities for both individual and group play and activities as well as both quiet times and physically active times.

### Typical Daily Schedules

#### VOYAGERS CLASSROOM (PRE-KINDERGARTEN)

| TIME:       | ACTIVITY:                         |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7:00-8:30   | Welcome & Explore Time            |
| 8:30-9:00   | Snack                             |
| 9:00-9:15   | Books & Puzzles                   |
| 9:15-9:45   | Circle                            |
| 9:45-10:30  | Small Group Extension Activities  |
| 10:30-11:00 | Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |
| 11:00-11:30 | Story                             |
| 11:30-12:00 | Lunch                             |
| 12:00-1:00  | Independent Quiet Time            |
| 1:00-2:00   | Explore Time                      |
| 2:00-3:00   | Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |
| 3:00-3:30   | Snack                             |
| 3:30-5:00   | Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |

#### ADVENTURERS CLASSROOM (3-4 YEAR-OLD PRESCHOOL)

| TIME:       | ACTIVITY:                         |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 7:00-8:30   | Welcome & Explore Time            |
| 8:30-9:00   | Snack / Books & Puzzles           |
| 9:00-9:30   | Morning Meeting / Circle          |
| 9:30-10:30  | Small Group Extension Activities  |
| 10:30-11:00 | Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |
| 11:00-11:30 | Story & Discussion                |
| 11:30-12:00 | Lunch                             |
| 12:00-2:00  | Nap / Independent Quiet Time      |

|           |                                                                 |
|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2:00-2:30 | Music & Movement / Explore Time                                 |
| 2:30-3:00 | Snack                                                           |
| 3:00-3:30 | Books & Puzzles                                                 |
| 3:30-5:00 | Stations (Small Group Play) / Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |

#### EXPLORERS CLASSROOM (24-36 months)

| TIME:       | ACTIVITY:                                                                 |
|-------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:00-8:30   | Welcome & Explore Time                                                    |
| 8:30-8:45   | Circle Time (Concepts, themes, music, books)                              |
| 8:45-9:15   | Snack / Books & Puzzles                                                   |
| 9:15-10:00  | Small Group Extension Activities                                          |
| 10:00-10:45 | Gross Motor (Outdoor Play / Movement)                                     |
| 10:45-11:00 | Story / Music                                                             |
| 11:00-11:30 | Lunch                                                                     |
| 11:30-2:00  | Nap / Rest Time / Quiet Activities                                        |
| 2:00-2:45   | Story / Music / Gross Motor / Outdoor Play                                |
| 2:45-3:15   | Snack / Books & Puzzles                                                   |
| 3:15-5:00   | Child-directed Small Group Activities / Outdoor Play (Weather permitting) |

#### DISCOVERERS CLASSROOM (12-24 months)

| TIME:       | ACTIVITY:                           |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| 7:00-8:30   | Welcome and Free Play               |
| 8:30-9:00   | Snack                               |
| 9:00-9:30   | Free Play                           |
| 9:30-10:30  | Outdoor Play / Project Time         |
| 10:30-11:00 | Clean Up / Music & Movement         |
| 11:00-11:30 | Lunch                               |
| 11:30-2:00  | Nap / Quiet Time / Quiet Activities |
| 2:00-2:30   | Books / Songs / Music               |
| 2:30-3:00   | Snack                               |
| 3:00-4:00   | Outdoor Play / Gross Motor Play     |
| 4:00-5:00   | Free Play                           |

#### DREAMERS CLASSROOM (6 weeks – 12 months)

Daily routine is based upon individual needs.

### OUR POSITIVE GUIDANCE PHILOSOPHY AND METHODS

#### Philosophy

Children Unlimited believes each child is special and deserving of respect. We encourage respect by showing respect for one another's feelings. We use positive language to set clear and consistent expectations of behavior.

We believe that the focus of guidance is building a child's self-regulatory skills. Helping children preserve their dignity in all situations is essential. When they are treated with respect, when their feelings are listened to and acknowledged, when they know what the expectations are, children develop positive self-esteem and confidence in their abilities.

## **Positive Guidance and School Expectations**

At Children Unlimited, we have four basic school expectations of behavior for all adults and children:

- Treat others with kindness and respect.
- Be helpful.
- Take care of yourself.
- Keep your body in control.

We reference these expectations when guiding behavior. We explain reasons for these expectations, we discuss consequences of actions, and we provide choices. We give visual and verbal cues for appropriate behavior, recognize and encourage children's efforts to make appropriate choices, and redirect inappropriate behaviors. We promote self-regulation skill building by helping and encouraging children to identify and name their feelings and to use words to resolve problems and conflicts.

Children Unlimited is a S.E.E.D. certified program, which stands for Schools Excelling in Emotional Development. This is a comprehensive training course for educators which supports the use of research-based practices in the classroom to build emotional intelligence and reduce teacher burnout. As a S.E.E.D. certified school, we are committed to fostering emotional regulation and supporting mental wellness in children and adults. All parents/guardians have access to a free workshop on emotional development. Please email us for access code information.

No matter how respectful and understanding we are, it is developmentally appropriate and totally expected that children will sometimes test the limits of acceptable behavior and make inappropriate choices. We help guide children through these times by acknowledging feelings and offering tools to help them self-regulate, such as taking a deep breath, getting a drink of water, or spending time in our quiet spaces, all while reinforcing our clear and consistent boundaries.

Pretend play is a child's main way of making sense of his or her world. Through play, children can master fears and difficult experiences by reinventing them in a playful way. In our program, dramatic play, like all playful learning experiences, is monitored by teachers and is often used as an opportunity to discuss thoughts, feelings, and safety. By providing a safe environment and appropriate toys for play, we help the children to understand more about the world around them and how they interact with and impact that world.

In the event a child is injured during play, we will notify you of the circumstances and any necessary first aid steps taken through the Brightwheel system. The incident will be discussed with the parents of all children involved at the end of the day. To protect the confidentiality of all children, we will not disclose to any parent the identity of any other child(ren) involved, but we are happy to discuss the positive guidance techniques we use and the ways in which we support all children in speaking up for themselves and taking care of their bodies.

If aggressive, hurtful, or other inappropriate or challenging behavior becomes frequent, we will request a meeting with the child's family to discuss possible causes and how we can work together to best support the child's developmental needs. Open communication between CU and the family is essential to effectively meeting the needs of each child. Sharing relevant information and observations will allow us to better understand what the child's behavior is

communicating and what strategies may help. We may request the assistance of community partner support services, such as Children's Integrated Services, the Howard Center, or the home school district's early education program. If appropriate, we will welcome and work with support staff in our program to develop and implement a plan to address concerns and to provide the best possible learning environment for the individual child as well as the group of children as a whole. In these situations, families, teachers, and support staff working together is essential to the child's success. If, for any reason, Children Unlimited cannot meet the needs of a particular child or family, or if a family refuses support services, CU and the family will work together to develop and implement a transition plan to support both child and family as they move to a more suitable early education environment. Children Unlimited will provide the family with at least five days' written notice if it is determined that our program cannot meet the needs of a child or family.

## **FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Family engagement is crucial to a child's learning. We value families as partners in the growth and development of the children in our program. We encourage parents/guardians and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback about the program. We always encourage parents and family members to share their knowledge, expertise, and customs with the children through visits, activities, projects, and crafts. Our Dreamer Room (infants) always welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their babies at any time.

### **Pre-enrollment**

Families considering enrollment at Children Unlimited are welcome to visit and tour our facility, meet our staff, and observe our program. Once enrolled, we encourage families to work with us on a slow introduction of new children to the program, beginning with visits with parents/guardians, followed by short drop-off visits and gradually longer stays. During these visits, parents/guardians will have the opportunity to review and discuss the information presented in the Family Handbook and ask questions to become familiar with our procedures, schedules, and routines.

Please list your child's strong likes and/or dislikes or any other information you feel we should know on the Admission Form. This will help us in the "getting to know" process. Feel free to send a "love" such as a blanket or stuffed animal if you feel this would make your child feel more comfortable. Please ensure it is marked clearly with his or her name.

### **Open door policy**

We have an open-door policy. Parents/guardians are welcome to visit with their children at any time and without prior notice. We do ask that parents sign in and participate in the activities in the room as well as follow all school expectations while visiting so as not to disrupt the daily routine. If you change your child's diaper at CU, please follow the Diaper Changing Procedure posted above each changing table. Brightwheel messages, calls, or emails to check on a child for any reason or to speak with a child's teacher are always welcome. Teachers check their classroom emails at least once per day, usually at midday. Our teachers will always speak with families, but sometimes it is not feasible to have a long discussion during the normal day. If you would like to have a longer discussion with your child's teacher or the Director, please arrange a meeting. Requests for meetings with our staff will be accommodated as soon as possible, but always within ten business days.



Parents also have access to their child's records at any time. If you would like to review these records, your child's file will be made available to you within 5 business days of a request. The information documented in your child's CU file will be maintained for 365 days from the last day of enrollment.

## **Communication**

Frequent and open communication between families and teachers is essential to building strong and trusting relationships. Your family's comfort with our staff, curriculum, and facility is very important to us. Please let your child's teacher and/or the Director know if you have any concerns or questions about your child, our program, the facility, etc. We welcome your suggestions and questions. Only through working together can we ensure the highest possible quality of care and learning for your child.

We use a number of different methods to regularly communicate with families:

- We feel there is nothing more effective than daily check-in with families at drop-off and pick up times. We feel this builds strong relationships with families and allows us to answer questions and address any concerns as soon as they arise. At drop-off time, parents should check in with a staff member who will perform a daily health check and document any pertinent information. Please let us know if your child has had any incidents or accidents at home or is exhibiting any symptoms of illness. This allows us to best meet your child's particular needs on any given day. (Please refer to the CU Health Information, Policies, and Procedures.) Also please inform us of any lifestyle changes (e.g., a new baby, a move, a death in the family, etc.) and/or any disruptions in your child's normal routine (e.g., a parent out of town, extended family visiting, etc.) so we can be sensitive to any special needs or feelings. Additionally, please let your child know about any changes in the normal pick-up procedure as some children can be uncomfortable with unexpected changes in routine. At pick-up, please touch base with staff members to obtain information about the child's day.
- For children under twenty-four months, meals and snacks, bowel movements, naps, and other general information is logged into the Brightwheel system. Parents/guardians have access to this information in real time through the Brightwheel app.
- Each classroom sends monthly newsletters or 'updates' that provide information about what is going on in the room. We hope you will use this information to open discussions with your child about what is happening at school and to make connections at home. Additionally, the office periodically sends updates about school-wide events and broad early childhood issues. Please ensure you are checking Brightwheel and email and reading any information we send so you are aware of this important information.
- We periodically post pictures, videos, information, and links on our closed Facebook group and/or the Brightwheel app so families can see what their children are doing at school throughout the day. (Please note that this Facebook group is open only to custodial parents/guardians of the children enrolled in our program.) If you would like to access the page, please go to <https://www.facebook.com/groups/childrenunlimitedvt/> and request to join the group. We will not include pictures of any child if we do not have a permission form signed by the parent/guardian allowing the child's picture to be posted.
- White boards located in each classroom provide information about what activities children in that classroom were engaged in throughout the day.

- Families can request a conference with their child's teachers or with the Director at any time. Requests for conferences will be accommodated as soon as possible, but always within ten business days. We also offer scheduled parent/teacher conferences twice a year, in January and June. We encourage families to take advantage of these opportunities to discuss your child's strengths, likes and dislikes, style of learning, areas we might be working on, and next developmental stages. Conferences are also a great time to communicate any concerns you might have, so we may work together to set goals for your child's growth and development.
- We always welcome feedback from our families. We encourage you to discuss any concerns or questions with your child's teacher or the Director at any time. If you are not satisfied with our response, you may contact the Department of Children and Families via the Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642 option 3.
- Annually, Children Unlimited will ask for feedback through the use of a formal survey. This feedback is used to help us improve our program to better serve our children and families.

### **Family Events**

Children Unlimited hosts a number of family events throughout the year, including an Ice Cream Social in the spring and a potluck picnic in the summer. From time to time, CU will arrange family outings on a weekend, such as blueberry picking or sledding. These fun activities provide opportunities for children, parents, and staff to share learning experiences and to connect with each other as a community. We also host information nights on topics related to child development and parenting, such as milestones, positive guidance methods, nutrition, etc.

### **Inclusion**

Children are admitted to our program without regard to economic status, racial identity, culture, language, gender, religious beliefs, national origin, ability or disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, family structure, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws.

We believe children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging. Children with special needs will be included in our program, provided a safe, supportive environment can be provided through reasonable accommodation. We welcome support services and aides to accomplish our goal of inclusion of all children.

Children Unlimited strives to provide an environment that reflects the diversity of our families and community. We respect each child's family and culture and will accommodate a family's expressed preferences in our nurturing, care and education when these are developmentally appropriate, do not constitute a violation of regulations, and are feasible in our group setting.

We are committed to cultivating a welcoming and inclusive environment where all teachers, staff, children and families feel welcome and free to be their true, authentic selves.

### **Holidays, Observances, and Birthdays**

While Children Unlimited's curriculum does not center around holidays, we believe holidays can be wonderful opportunities for children to learn about the traditions and values that are important parts of people's lives. At Children Unlimited, we learn about traditions, cultures, and customs of people both in and outside our program. There is a distinction between "learning about" and

"celebrating" a holiday. When "celebrating" a holiday, children become immersed as full participants, even if the holiday is not celebrated in their own home, nor falls within their family's belief system. In contrast, when "learning about" a holiday, children discover what the holiday means to the cultural/religious groups who honor it, and the various ways they choose to celebrate it. At CU, we acknowledge that not everyone celebrates any or every holiday, that different families may celebrate different holidays, and that families may celebrate the same holiday in different ways. Children are exposed to a wide range of holidays, some that are often represented and some that are less represented in our North American media and culture. Children are encouraged to share feelings and information about the holidays they celebrate. We welcome all families to share aspects of their holidays with the children in the classroom in a meaningful and respectful way.

At Children Unlimited, we enjoy celebrating the birthdays of both the children and the teachers by making birthday crowns and singing Happy Birthday at circle time. Some families may not celebrate birthdays or they may celebrate in a different way. We must always be respectful of each family's customs. Families are welcome to send a special snack to share with the child's class, but all snacks must be store bought in accordance with our nut aware environment, **not baked at home**. If your family does not celebrate birthdays or celebrates in a different way, please let your child's teacher know so we can ensure we are respectful of your family customs.

### **Drop-off and Pick-up Times**

Traffic flows through our driveway in a counter-clockwise motion. When parking, please be sensitive to blocking other cars; we have limited space. Please do not park in the spaces marked as reserved for employees and visitors of the company upstairs from us (on the left side of the parking lot when viewed from the street).

We welcome drop-off between 7:00 and 9:30 am. After 9:30 am, our teachers are fully engaged in classroom activities and do not have time to appropriately welcome children into the group without disrupting the flow of the day. Please arrive before 9:30 each morning. Late arrivals should be discussed previously with CU administration and/or the child's teachers.

All children should be escorted all the way into the building and to the child's classroom so parents can check in with teachers. By regulation, everyone entering the building must wash hands upon arrival. Please wash your hands and your child's hands immediately every time you enter the program. At drop off, teachers will greet you, check in with you about your child's night, morning, and general health. Please share with the teachers any changes at home, such as visitors or family members traveling. This allows us to best meet your child's particular needs on any given day.

Drop-off and pick-up times can be confusing for children as there are two different figures of authority present at the same time (parent and teacher). Often children will test the boundaries at these times. It is important that everyone follow school expectations while in our facility. We ask that children remain with their parents while parents are in the building, especially at pick-up time, as children must be supervised at all times. Note that children may not go out either of the two front doors into the foyer or up/down the stairs to the Voyager Classroom alone; they **must** be accompanied by a parent or a teacher. If we are outside on the playground at pick-up time, please be sure that you check with a teacher before leaving. At school, for safety reasons, opening doors is an adult job so please do not allow your child to open the doors or go into/out of

the building unsupervised. Please give your child reminders of the expectations if boundaries are being tested. CU teachers will intervene if necessary.

Please call, email, or message in the morning if your child is not going to be attending that day. This helps with our planning and scheduling for the day.

### **Release of Children**

By law, Children Unlimited must release a child to either parent unless there is a court order in the child's file that prohibits release to a particular parent. If there are legal restrictions regarding who has access to your child, you must provide Children Unlimited an official court document such as a divorce decree stating sole custody, a current restraining order, a judgement of adoption, foster parent documentation, etc. Such legal documentation must be updated in CU files when any changes occur.

Documentation of joint custody arrangements in which both parents have designated custodial days/times each week must also be maintained in the child's file. In such cases, each parent will complete a set of enrollment paperwork. The custodial parent for each particular day per the legal document will determine who is authorized to pick the child up on that day. In the event we need to contact a parent during the day (for example, if the child were to become ill), we will contact the parent designated to pick up on that particular day, unless legal documentation states otherwise.

Vermont state regulation requires the name, address, and all applicable current telephone numbers for at least two people designated by the custodial parent(s) as emergency contacts. Emergency contacts are authorized to pick up the child at any time without other written notice from the parent. Emergency contacts must be at least 18 years of age and able to pick up your child within one hour of notification of need. In the event Children Unlimited cannot reach either parent/guardian, Children Unlimited will call the emergency contacts and, if necessary, release the child to the emergency contact. This includes both emergency situations and situations in which we cannot reach the custodial parent who is more than 15 minutes later than the contracted pick-up time without notice.

Each family is assigned a CU ID number at enrollment. Please make note of it. We understand that situations may arise in which a parent is unable to pick up a child at the contracted time and, therefore, alternate arrangements for pick up must be made. The person picking up must be on the enrollment form as either an emergency contact or a person authorized to pick up the child. In order for us to release a child to someone other than you:

- You **MUST** inform us of the name of the person who will be picking up your child prior to that person's arrival at the program. Notification must include the full name of the person picking up and must be in one of the following forms:
  - Notification in person at drop off time.
  - An email from the parent's email address known to the program.
  - A telephone call in which the parent identifies him/herself and provides the family's CU ID number. Telephone calls will be logged by CU staff.
- The person picking up your child must be designated as a person authorized to do so on the Admission Form in your child's file.
- The person picking up your child must know your family's CU ID number.
- The person picking up your child must show valid, legal identification upon arrival.

We will not release a child to any person other than the parents/guardians unless ALL of these conditions are met.

The health and safety of our children, families, and staff is our first priority. If, for any reason, we are concerned for the safety or well-being of your child upon release of your child to you, we will inform you of our concern and call one of your emergency contacts. If we are concerned for your child's safety when an authorized person picks up your child, we will immediately call you and/or another person on your emergency contact list. Some examples of situations in which CU staff may be concerned about a child's safety include: apparent or reasonable suspicion of intoxication; lack of proper car safety seat; and/or erratic or abusive behavior. In certain instances, CU staff, as mandated reporters, may report the incident to the Department of Children and Families and/or the police.

### **Confidentiality**

All written and verbal information regarding our children and families is confidential. We will abide by our state's privacy laws and will release records or information about your family only when required by law. This includes releasing information to authorized representatives of the Child Development Division, or other state or local building, fire, or health agency for the purpose of determining compliance with laws and regulations. Other than these legal requirements, we will release records or information about your family only with your written permission.

With written permission from families, we commonly post pictures of the children in our care and their families in our classrooms as well as on our Facebook page. We also post names of children on cubbies and artwork in the classrooms. We ask that all families respect the privacy of other families and refrain from sharing names, photos or videos (including those from Facebook), or information about other CU families or staff. We do not allow families to take pictures or videos of children other than their own in our program. All families should use extreme caution and exercise good judgment when on social media platforms and messaging applications, particularly when interacting with CU team members or referring to anyone or anything related to CU.

### **Safe Space**

Children Unlimited is a safe space. Our safe space policy and protocol is designed for the purpose of keeping our services accessible to all families, upholding core constitutional principles of educational equity and access, and protecting the well-being of children, parents, and staff. This policy and protocol is not intended to interfere with the enforcement of federal immigration laws and are not political in nature but are provided for staff in case of immigration enforcement actions on Children Unlimited property, including all classrooms, restrooms, offices, kitchen, and playground located at 35 Dorset Lane, Williston, Vermont. We recognize that having federal immigration agents on our property would discourage parents from bringing their children to CU and from accessing services on behalf of their children. We also recognize that an unwelcome, unannounced visit from immigration agents or other law enforcement officials can be scary for children and adults. It is our responsibility as early education professionals to ensure our program is safe, reliable, and accessible to every family we serve or who seeks our services and to every CU staff member. More information regarding CU's safe space policy and protocols is available upon request.

### **Consent to Hold Harmless**

We have a wonderful staff and we understand that families may cultivate relationships with teachers outside of Children Unlimited hours. To protect the confidentiality of all staff, families, and children, it is the policy of Children Unlimited that staff not send or accept “friend” requests to/from CU families, partners, or consultants. Any communication between CU families and staff members via social media sites must be unrelated to the care and education a child or family has received at Children Unlimited. Additionally, Children Unlimited does not authorize any staff member to accept any kind of direct employment from families enrolled in our program. If your family chooses to enter into such an arrangement with a member of CU’s staff (for example, childcare or house sitting), Children Unlimited is not responsible for any actions or inactions of any employee privately employed outside of his/her duties during Children Unlimited’s hours.

### **SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT**

Children Unlimited, in conjunction with parents and guardians, performs periodic developmental screenings of all enrolled children through the completion of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). Developmental screening is a brief process that helps identify a child’s progress through early childhood milestones and provides opportunities to identify developmental concerns or delays so we, in partnership with families, can provide the best support possible to each and every child. If screening identifies an area of concern, we will discuss our findings and concerns with families and, together, make decisions regarding referrals to partner support agencies for possible evaluation and intervention. Early intervention is critical to the future success of children with an identified developmental delay. We are happy to partner with many community support agencies in order to provide the best possible early education opportunities for every child.

We also perform regular assessments of progress of all children three years and older. Assessment tracks each child’s developmental growth over time and helps us to plan curricula to meet individual learning needs. Assessment will be performed using Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) for all preschool and prekindergarten children. (The use of TSG for assessment is mandated by Act 166 for all children receiving publicly-funded preschool.) Based upon these assessments, two progress reports are sent home each year for children three years and older, one in January and one in June.

We offer scheduled family/teacher conferences for all age groups in January and June each year, though families are welcome to request a meeting with teachers at any time.

### **NUTRITION**

At Children Unlimited, we believe that good health in the early years helps to safeguard children’s health and well-being throughout life and that it is important that children develop healthy eating habits when they first learn about food and activity. We believe that sitting and eating with children provides an opportunity for positive role modeling and pleasant social interaction. We treat meal and snack times as opportunities to promote children’s social, emotional, cognitive, and motor development while enjoying food and highlighting the importance of making healthy choices. We never force, trick, or coerce a child into eating. We honor the division of responsibility in feeding children, acknowledging that our role as adults is to provide nourishing food, and it is the role of the child to decide how much to eat. We provide

appropriate utensils so children gain confidence as they learn to successfully feed themselves. We stress the importance of handwashing before and cleaning up after eating.

Parents provide lunch and two snacks every day. Lunches should consist of at least three choices (e.g., protein, fruit, vegetable, yogurt, etc.). Morning and afternoon snacks should each consist of at least two choices (e.g., cheese and crackers, etc.). Depending on the classroom, morning snack times for children begin between 8:30 and 8:45, lunch times begin between 11:00 and 11:30, and afternoon snack times begin between 2:30 and 3:00.

Please note the following:

- Lunches and snacks should be packed in a lunch bag or box clearly labeled with the child's first and last name.
- By regulation, lunch bags or boxes must contain **two** ice packs. If the lunch does not contain two ice packs, it must be refrigerated.
- All containers inside the lunch bag must also be clearly labeled with the child's name and indicate if the item is for lunch, morning, or afternoon snack.
- We do not heat lunches. If you would like your child to have a hot dish, please heat it thoroughly and place it in a thermos. This will keep it warm until lunch time.
- Please send appropriate serving sizes of nutritious food choices. For information about USDA/Child and Adult Care Food Program recommended food items and serving sizes, visit <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cacfp/nutrition-standards>. Please avoid sending 'goodies' or sweets for your child.
- Please send food ready to eat. Food should be prepared to accommodate your child's independence in eating (i.e, food cut into appropriate bite-size pieces; fruit peeled and cut; etc.). Hot dogs, grapes, raw carrots, and popcorn are choking hazards and should be avoided or steamed, peeled, and cut into eighths (whichever is appropriate).
- Food allergies are common among infants and young children. It is important for us to work together to provide a safe environment for all children. Therefore, to protect all children, **CU IS A NUT AWARE ENVIRONMENT**. Please carefully review all allergen information on packaging of all food items sent to school. No items containing nuts or processed in a facility that also processes nuts should be sent to school. **It should be noted that, while we take reasonable precautions to prevent allergic reactions, complete protection is not possible.**
- By regulation, once food is heated and/or served to a child, it must be discarded.

Any medical or therapeutic dietary restrictions should be noted on your child's Health Form at admission, discussed with your child's teachers, and must be supported by written documentation from the child's health care provider. Special requirements and/or Allergy Action Plans signed by both the child's physician and the parent/guardian will be placed with the medication in the classroom emergency backpack, which allows for immediate teacher access at all times. The Allergy Action Plan must be updated annually. Any dietary restrictions due to a family's food preferences or religious beliefs should be noted on your child's Health Form at admission and discussed with your child's teachers.

Each child must bring a water bottle to school each day clearly labeled with his/her name. Water bottles are always available to children, both indoors and outside on the playground. Water bottles should be taken home and cleaned each night.

## **Infant Feeding and Nutrition**

Parents are always welcome to visit us at mealtimes to give their children bottles or to nurse. We have adult rocking chairs in our infant room for your comfort.

Parents/guardians provide written instructions specifying your child's primary source of nutrition and feeding schedule. These feeding instructions should be updated as your child's diet changes. Introduction to new foods will be made only with written permission of the parents/guardians.

We accommodate breast milk or formula for feedings. We ask that all bottles come to school ready to serve. All bottles, bottle caps, and food containers must be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name.

Unused portions of bottles or food that was offered to a child cannot be served again. Unused formula will be discarded. Unused breast milk will be labeled as used, refrigerated, and returned to you at the end of the day. Breast milk that has not been offered to a child will be returned to you after ninety-six (96) hours if refrigerated and after six (6) months if frozen. Similarly, any food containers that are opened but not depleted must be used or discarded within 36 hours from initial opening.

Bottles and pacifiers must be taken home and sanitized each day.

## **SLEEP AND REST**

All children younger than school age and present in our program for five hours or more in a day have the opportunity to sleep or rest. No child will be forced to sleep, but all children have at least 30 minutes of quiet time which may include reading or looking at books, doing puzzles, etc. CU follows the American Academy of Pediatrics' safe sleep practices.

Children over 12 months of age:

- Children older than 12 months nap on mats on the floor (provided by CU). Parents provide a sleeping bag or other bedding to place on the mat. Please make sure it has your child's name clearly marked on it. We welcome pillows or "lovies" (e.g., blankets, stuffed animals, etc.) if your child wants or needs them.
- Each child's bedding is stored in a parent-provided labeled plastic bag in the bottom of his/her cubby. This prevents contact with bedding used by other children. By regulation, all bedding must be taken home and washed at the end of each week.

Infants:

- Infants will be allowed to nap when tired.
- Infants will be placed on their backs in cribs for naps. If a child falls asleep in a swing, highchair, or jumping chair, we will transfer him/her to a crib as gently as possible as soon as feasible. If a child is physically able to climb out of the crib, he/she will nap on a mat on the floor.
- Each crib provided by CU meets current safety standards (Consumer Product Safety Commission 16 C.F.R. Part 1220) and has a firm, tight-fitting mattress.
- Parents provide two crib sheets which are taken home when soiled and/or at the end of the week for laundering. Pack-n-play sheets fit our crib mattresses.
- Sleep or swaddle sacks designed specifically for sleep may be used, but no blankets, toys, or other soft objects may be placed in the crib with a child. Children cannot be



- placed in cribs wearing bibs, necklaces, or garments with ties or hoods so please do not send your child to school in these types of garments.
- Positioning devices can be used only with specific written instructions from the child's health care provider.
  - Pacifiers are permitted in cribs with written parental permission, but they may not have cords or clips attached.

## **HEALTH INFORMATION, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES**

Please refer to the Children Unlimited Health Information, Policies, and Procedures document.

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

CU holds emergency drills monthly. We feel that regular practice gives both teachers and children the skills to react quickly, calmly, and safely in the event of a true emergency. In an emergency drill, children learn to follow the instructions of the teachers while remaining calm. When the drill is completed, including the teachers verifying attendance, the teachers discuss the drill with the children to answer any questions and ease any anxieties. In the event of an emergency requiring relocation, we will evacuate to Williston Automotive and immediately call parents/guardians to pick up the children.

All Children Unlimited teachers are trained in CPR and First Aid. In the event of a medical emergency, one teacher will tend to the child and another will call 911 and then the parent/guardian. The remaining teachers will work together to care for the rest of the children. If medical transport is necessary and a parent has not yet arrived, either the CU Director or one of the child's primary teachers will accompany the child.

### **PUBLICLY-FUNDED PRESCHOOL**

Children Unlimited is prequalified to partner with school districts to provide publicly-funded preschool for eligible children. Vermont's Act 166 provides 10 hours of preschool for 35 weeks each year to all children ages 3, 4, or 5 but not yet attending kindergarten. To be eligible, a child must be 3 by September 1<sup>st</sup> and must register with his/her home school district. More information about Act 166 and registration is provided as children reach eligibility age.

### **WHAT TO BRING**

Please make sure that any items sent with your child are appropriate for school and clearly labeled with your child's name. Children Unlimited will not be responsible for any lost or damaged clothing or other items. The general information here is followed by classroom-specific lists.

Children should come to school in clothes that are appropriate for play. Clothing should be comfortable and appropriate for the weather as the children go outside to play in all seasons. The children participate in many activities throughout the day and often get dirty, so please don't send 'special' clothes that can't get messy. For sanitary purposes, diapers and underwear must be worn and must be covered by pants, shorts, or bloomers at all times in case of an accident. Shorts or bloomers must be worn under skirts or dresses.

Each child must have *at least* two full changes of clothing in his/her cubby, including underwear, socks, and shoes. Please ensure that extra clothes are appropriate for the season, clearly labeled with the child's name, and fit comfortably.

Walking children should have comfortable, well-fitting shoes for running, jumping, climbing, and playing. Sneakers are the safest and most comfortable option for children to wear each day. If you choose to send your child in sandals, the sandals must be sturdy, with straps around the back and over the toes. Flip flops are not safe for school. The children often participate in water or puddle play, especially in spring and summer. We recommend having a pair of shoes that can get wet and are easily cleaned (e.g., Crocs, water shoes, etc.) in your child's cubby.

In winter, please send snow pants, jackets, mittens, hats, and boots every day. Please make sure all are clearly labeled. Snow gear should be waterproof and suitable for drying, as we often put it in our dryer between trips outside. In summer, each family supplies sunscreen. Parents should apply sunscreen in the morning, and CU staff will reapply mid-day. (Written permission is required for CU to apply sunscreen.)

#### WHAT TO BRING TO THE DREAMERS CLASSROOM (6 weeks – 12 months):

- Bottles & nipples (labeled) with milk or formula ready to be warmed & served
- Extra (reserve) milk or formula in case of emergency
- Empty bottle & nipple (labeled)
- Food (labeled), if applicable
- Water cup (labeled), if applicable
- Diapers & wipes
- Diaper rash ointment, if you choose (fill out permission slip)
- Pacifiers (labeled), if used (permission slip required if pacifier is to be used in the crib)
- Sleep or swaddle sack, if used
- 2 crib sheets (pack n' play size)
- At least 5 changes of clothes, including socks and onesies, without hoods or strings (during changes of season, you may want to include shorts, pants, t-shirts, sweatshirts, etc.)
- Tylenol, Motrin, or other teething remedies, if you choose (fill out permission slip)
- Outdoor gear (snowsuit, winter hat, sun hat, etc.)
- Sunscreen for infants older than 6 months (w/ permission slip) – parents apply in the morning, CU reapplies later in the day

#### WHAT TO BRING TO THE DISCOVERERS CLASSROOM (12-24 months):

- Lunch and two snacks – CU is a nut aware program – no items containing nuts or items processed in a facility with nuts
  - Lunch boxes and all containers inside must be clearly labeled with your child's name
  - Lunch boxes must have two ice packs (by regulation)
- Thermos for hot lunches, if applicable
- Water bottle or no-spill cup, clearly labeled with your child's name
- Pacifiers (labeled), if used
- Diapers & wipes
- Diaper rash ointment, if you choose (fill out permission slip)
- Sleeping bag that can fit in bottom of cubby (taken home and washed at the end of each week)
- Backpack or reusable bag with at least three extra sets of clothes
- Shoes with hard soles

- Outdoor gear (jacket, snowpants, boots, winter hat, waterproof mittens, sun hat, etc.)
- Sunscreen (w/ permission slip) – parents apply in the morning, CU reapplies later in the day

#### WHAT TO BRING TO THE EXPLORERS CLASSROOM (24-36 months):

- Lunch and two snacks – CU is a nut aware program – no items containing nuts or items processed in a facility with nuts
  - Lunch boxes and all containers inside must be clearly labeled with your child's name
  - Lunch boxes must have two ice packs (by regulation)
- Thermos for hot lunches, if applicable
- Water bottle, clearly labeled with your child's name
- Diapers & wipes, if applicable
- Pacifiers (labeled), if used
- Sleeping bag that can fit in bottom of cubby (taken home and washed at the end of each week)
- Backpack or reusable bag with at least two extra sets of clothes
- Shoes with hard soles
- Outdoor gear (jacket, snowpants, boots, winter hat, waterproof mittens, sun hat, etc.)
- Sunscreen (w/ permission slip) – parents apply in the morning, CU reapplies later in the day

#### WHAT TO BRING TO THE ADVENTURERS CLASSROOM (preschool):

- Lunch and two snacks – CU is a nut aware program – no items containing nuts or items processed in a facility with nuts
  - Lunch boxes and all containers inside must be clearly labeled with your child's name
  - Lunch boxes must have two ice packs (by regulation)
- Thermos for hot lunches, if applicable
- Water bottle, clearly labeled with your child's name
- Diapers & wipes, if applicable
- Sleeping bag that can fit in bottom of cubby (taken home and washed at the end of each week)
- Backpack with at least two extra sets of clothes
- Shoes
- Outdoor gear (jacket, snowpants, boots, winter hat, waterproof mittens, sun hat, etc.)
- Sunscreen (w/ permission slip) – parents apply in the morning, CU reapplies later in the day

#### WHAT TO BRING TO THE VOYAGERS CLASSROOM (pre-kindergarten):

- Lunch and two snacks – CU is a nut aware program – no items containing nuts or items processed in a facility with nuts
  - Lunch boxes and all containers inside must be clearly labeled with your child's name
  - Lunch boxes must have two ice packs (by regulation)
- Thermos for hot lunches, if applicable
- Water bottle, clearly labeled with your child's name
- Backpack with at least two extra sets of clothes
- Shoes
- Outdoor gear (jacket, snowpants, boots, winter hat, waterproof mittens, sun hat, etc.)

- Sunscreen (w/ permission slip) – parents apply in the morning, CU reapplies later in the day

### **CONCLUSION**

Please note that this handbook is designed to acquaint families with Children Unlimited's policies and procedures. Families should read and understand all provisions of this Handbook. If you have questions or concerns about any information it contains, please don't hesitate to ask. Obviously, no Handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question. As CU continues to grow and change, the need may arise and Children Unlimited reserves the right to interpret, revise, supplement, or suspend any policies, procedures, or portions of this Handbook at any time with or without notice as it deems appropriate, in its sole and absolute discretion.

When you sign your contract with Children Unlimited, you acknowledge that you have received, read, and understand the information, policies, and obligations set forth in this Family Handbook.

Thank you for inviting us into your lives! We hope you enjoy being part of the Children Unlimited family as we work together to build community and raise our children!