

# Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc.

## Family Handbook

### Welcome to the Red Balloon Family!

A copy of this handbook is available on our website for your convenience at [redballoonearlylearning.com](http://redballoonearlylearning.com)

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## **XXII. Addendums**

*Addendums is a section at the end of the employee manual that will contain updates and additions to current policies.*

## **II. Purpose of This Manual**

At Red Balloon, we always put health and safety first. We believe it is our duty to provide you with a safe and healthy learning environment. For the protection of everyone in our program, we have in-house safety inspections for building and grounds, as well as kitchens. We offer safe cleaning products in our center. Our staff have trainings on safe and toxin-free environments and the usage of bleach as required by the State of Wisconsin. Staff are also trained and remain current in First Aid, CPR/AED, Abusive Head Trauma Prevention, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Prevention, and Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention. In accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code, we are inspected by the Department of Children and Families, Division of Early Care and Education (DCF), as well as the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Youngstar regularly.

We ask that you read this manual carefully and refer to it whenever questions arise. For your convenience, a copy of this manual is always available at any time near the sign-in area, as well as on our website's Useful Forms page at [redballoonearlylearning.com](http://redballoonearlylearning.com). Additional copies can be made available upon request.

This manual has been prepared to inform you about Red Balloon's history and philosophy, as well as our practices and policies regarding items such as enrollment, health and safety, early childhood education and curriculum, child tracking and guidance, and emergency procedures.

No parent manual can answer every question, nor would we want to restrict the normal question and answer interchange among us. It is in our person-to-person conversations that we can better know each other, express our views, and work together in a harmonious relationship.

We hope this manual will help you feel comfortable with us. Please don't hesitate to ask questions; your Administrative Team or teaching staff will gladly answer them. We believe you will enjoy your time in our early education program and that your child will grow and have fun learning with us!

## **III. Notice**

The policies in this manual are to be considered as guidelines. Policies and rules, as explained in this manual, may be changed from time to time as business, governing agency regulation, legislation, and economic conditions dictate. The Administrative Team and/or the Board of Directors may change, suspend, or discontinue any part of the policies at any time without prior notice. If and when updates are required, you will be notified of any changes. No one other than the Administrator or Board of Directors of Red Balloon may alter or modify any of the policies in this manual.

Should any provision in this manual be found unenforceable and invalid, such findings do not invalidate the entire manual, but only the subject provision.

## **IV. Background & Philosophy**

For years people have struggled to find early learning and childcare programs for their young children while they work. Many tears have been shed when the search ended with unsafe centers and homes, where dark, cold, or sterile environments with a lack of structure and often uneducated and unregulated people are doing the job. These conditions can seriously undermine and even damage the upbringing of a child.

Since Red Balloon began providing early learning and care for the Coulee Region in 1982, we've seen the business industry sit up and take a hard look at the need for providing quality care for children of working parents, especially now that our economic conditions often require two working parents in a family. Our single parent households are also on the rise, and we recognize that more and more children are in need of quality early learning programs with all day care; programs with appropriate activities and social experiences; even programs that teach adults - whether it be parent or community members.

Red Balloon is one of the area's most valued and respected childcare centers. This is attributed to the wonderful staff that have dedicated themselves and given so many years of service to providing quality early childhood programs.

Red Balloon opened its doors in 1982 as the Red Balloon Child Care Centers, Inc., now known as Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. The Administrative Team continues to provide the most up-to-date quality programming through a consistent review of current information. Red Balloon follows the early learning model in Wisconsin (WMELS) and offers the Creative Curriculum, among various other curriculum programs, to support this model. Furthermore, the team supports our staff by helping them achieve goals that will keep their education current and consistent with state and national goals and trends for early childhood quality.

### **Early Childhood**

Early childhood is a special time; a unique beginning for each life. We at Red Balloon believe a positive beginning requires a healthy, safe, loving, affirmative, and stimulating atmosphere with a curriculum that has a child-directed focus and meets high-quality standards. We believe in respecting the dignity of each child and affirming them as a person. Every moment with a young child is a learning moment and there is more to teaching young children than what one can read on a lesson plan. We believe that children learn about the world around them through conversations, curiosity, discovery, playing, observing, interacting, thinking, and being present. We believe that by engaging children on a deeper level and meeting them where they are in their development allows the teachers the opportunity to extend learning and have meaningful interactions as children work out social expectations, self-care skills, and academics. We believe that because each child is part of a family and community, by incorporating culture and diversity from families and our community not only enriches our program but empowers each child.

## **Our History of Service**

Red Balloon opened its doors as Red Balloon Child Care Centers, Inc. in October of 1982 in the basement of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in downtown La Crosse and moved to the former Holy Trinity school site at 1417 S. 13th St. in November of 2002. In March of 1999, we opened doors in Onalaska at 573 Braund St. to offer care to families in that area. The business was expanded by 2007 to better meet the community's needs and to create an educational program that helped our staff, our clients, and our community. In 2012, Red Balloon changed its name to reflect those wonderful changes and we are now called Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. In June of 2016, Red Balloon once again expanded its family to include centers on the north side of La Crosse at 2910 Gillette St., as well as in West Salem at 359 North Leonard St. in the basement of Our Savior's Lutheran Church. Sadly, in June of 2017 the West Salem location closed its doors due to the end of the lease of that building. September of 2019 was also a time of change, as we consolidated our 13<sup>th</sup> Street South location when the building was put up for sale. In September of 2024, the Onalaska location consolidated into the North location and Red Balloon Onalaska was closed due to ongoing staffing shortages in the area.

## **Our Commitment to Our Community Children and Their Families**

We have worked diligently to improve the health and safety of our children at all of our locations over the past years and we remain proud to serve the Coulee Region. Parents can take comfort in choosing a quality and safe program, where their children feel secure as their natural curiosity entices them to explore relationships and the stimulating environment around them.

The way a teacher or caregiver relates to a child, how much time they spend with them and the opportunity they provide for learning will influence what kind of person that child becomes. Red Balloon affirms this process and offers many opportunities for the development of mind and body.

We believe that parents are the most important people in a child's world. Therefore, we encourage their active interest and participation in our program whenever possible. Together we will be able to offer children a positive beginning.

We believe in a home-like, child-friendly, and developmentally appropriate atmosphere. We believe in a **safe** and stimulating environment where children play a significant role in their day and choosing activities at their own pace. It is our goal to continuously evaluate and better our program.

*Dedication: We dedicate our philosophy statement to the memory of Grandma Besl's Babies, our infant only program that had been open from June 24th, 2002 - August 25th, 2006 and to the memory of little Wyatt Johnson (July 23, 2002 - August 12, 2003) who spent the only year of his life with us at this location. Wyatt passed away at home in his sleep and left behind a twin sister and big brother who were also part of the Red Balloon family. Grandma Besl's Babies closed its doors because the land it was housed on was sold.*

## **V. Concept & Mission Statement**

We provide a quality, high standard program for our clients. We are constantly searching for ways to improve by researching the industry and discovering new ways to provide the best possible environment for our children.

Our clients appreciate us because we are knowledgeable, caring, concerned, and sincere. They can see that our programs foster safety, independence, and choices while nurturing and building on the children's positive self-image.

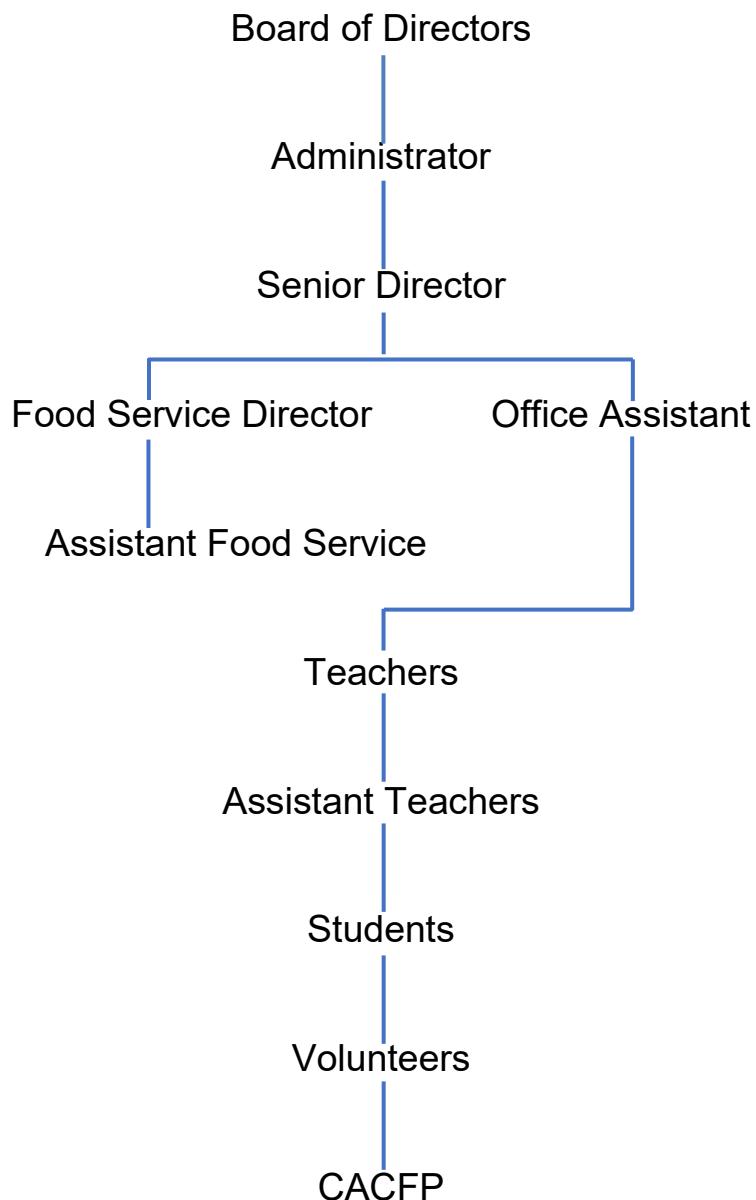
It is through our commitment to children, families, co-workers, and community that makes us stand out as one of the area's very best childcare and preschool programs.

### **Mission Statement**

It is the mission of Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. to serve the children and families in our area by providing a safe and healthy program that is educationally enriching, highly nurturing, and affordable. We aim to provide flexible hours of operation to meet the ever-changing family needs. We promise to work with families in a respectful and friendly manner to ensure that children feel the unity between home and Red Balloon.

## VI. Administrative Structure

\*251.04(2)(h)2.



\*USDA Food Program participant: To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington DC, 20250-9410 or call 800-795-3272. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

## **VII. Child Enrollment & Admissions**

Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. is a not-for-profit corporation. Our scope of services meets the needs of children age 6 weeks through 12 years of age. Staff-to-child ratios are determined by the State of Wisconsin.

Red Balloon does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, disability status, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws. We are inclusive of all children that we are physically and economically able to care for. We embrace diversity and work to instill pride and dignity in all children.

### **1. Enrollment Process & Policies**

We take applicants on a first come, first served basis, with priority given to clients with children already enrolled. After capacity is reached, a waiting list may be provided. Red Balloon is licensed for 91 children. The center is open Monday through Friday and is licensed to be open from 6:00am until 6:00pm. Red Balloon serves our community 12 months of the year.

Before enrollment can be accepted, it is necessary for the parent/guardian to meet with a member of the Administrative Team or the appointed person in charge. It is recommended that the child also come along to meet their teachers at some point during the enrollment process. All meetings include a tour of the center, going over policies, procedures, and paperwork, and learning about the security system. This is a great time for us to answer any questions you may have. However, often families return home and think of many more. Please don't hesitate to call or email us with any further questions; we are welcoming you to our early learning center and want you to feel comfortable leaving your child in our care before you go to work each day.

At Red Balloon, we have an open-door policy for all those enrolled. Unless access is denied by court order, parents are encouraged to stop in for a visit at any time to observe their child. Parents are also encouraged to set up a meeting with their child's teacher or a member of Administration if you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions. Your child's complete file with all required paperwork will be kept securely in the office of your center. If you wish to review this file at any time, please contact the office to set up a meeting as needed. Copies of forms can be made available upon request, but may require a small fee.

Children contracted under the Preschool contract (infant through 5 years of age) will be considered enrolled for one fiscal year, which runs September 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>. School-age children will have separate contracts for any Before and After School care, Non-School Days, and Summer Day Camp. The school-age program is extremely limited, due to various constraints such as staffing, classroom licensing space, and transportation difficulties. Those very few spots for children 6 through 12 years of age may not always be offered during any given term.

Drop-in care is offered, if availability exists. Children who attend drop-in care are considered enrolled within our program as “drop-in enrollment” for one fiscal year (September 1<sup>st</sup> through August 31<sup>st</sup>) with the understanding that a drop-in rate will be paid and children will be able to attend as needed, provided that the center has an opening at the time requested. On or before the first day, parents/guardians must turn in a signed drop-in contract, a Child Care Enrollment form, a Health History & Emergency Care Plan form, and a Household Size Income Statement form for the CACFP meal program Red Balloon participates in. Payments must also be made ahead of time for care received.

Emergency closing due to an emergency situation such as loss of utilities (electricity, water, heat/cooling), a reportable communicable illness or public health emergency, or a severe weather event will be reported to families as quickly as possible via a message from the classroom communication app, email, and/or phone call.

If at any time after enrollment we find that a child is not benefiting from a group care situation, the parent/guardian will be asked for a conference to determine what is best for the child. If the safety of other children or adults is in jeopardy due to another child, that child may be dismissed from the program without notice. Likewise, if a client’s behavior, action, or words at any time is not appropriate and/or is threatening, termination may be immediate for the wellbeing of the center’s children and staff. This decision is at the sole discretion of the Administrative Team and/or Board of Directors (see Dismissal Policy for further information).

## **2. Client Responsibility**

Upon initiating the enrollment process, a packet containing all of the forms required by the State is given to the client. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that all required forms are completed and turned into the center office prior to the first day of attendance. These forms include:

- Red Balloon Contract(s)
- Child Enrollment Form
- Health History & Emergency Care Plan (updated every 6 months)
- Emergency contact information and authorized pick-up list
- Child Health Report Form (required a doctor’s signature and regular updates are required; children under 2 years require an updated form every 6 months, children over the age of 2 years require an updated form every 2 years)
- Immunization Record (updates required by age)
- Household Size Income Statement for CACFP (updated yearly)
- Various additional forms as needed specific to age group or transportation permissions

Failure to return forms can be serious for a licensed childcare program. Written notice will be sent to you about any forms missing or in need of updating. A fee of \$20.00 will be billed to you monthly until the item is received and file is complete. If the State of Wisconsin DCF issues a non-compliance statement and/or a fine to Red Balloon due to the absence of one of the forms indicated above, after you have received prior written notice of the missing item, a fine of \$25.00 per item may be billed to you.

Parents/guardians will provide Administration with a schedule that is current and must provide a notice of any changes in their schedule, contact information (especially phone numbers and address changes), etc. Any time a contracted child will be absent from the center or late in arrival, the parent/guardians must notify the center via email, phone call, or classroom communication message before the child's usual scheduled arrival or no later than 9:30am. If a child has not arrived or departed by their scheduled time, we will contact the parent/guardian via message, email, or phone to inquire about the child's attendance and make sure all is well.

Each child shall be required to have a change of clothing, clearly labeled with their name. If you have a child in diapers or pull-ups, you will need to supply the diapers and wet wipes. Staff will send a message via classroom communication app or in-person during drop-off/pick-up to alert you when your child's clothing or diapering supplies are running low and will need to be replenished. If clothing or diapering items are not made available by the parents, a fee may be charged for any items Red Balloon supplies.

Each child will be required to bring in a crib-sized sheet and small blanket for nap time (small pillow and/or favorite comfort toy are encouraged too). Please label each of these items with your child's name. The sheet and blanket will need to go home at the end of each week to be laundered. We encourage you to bring them in on Mondays and take them home at pick-up on Fridays. Extra blankets for emergencies may be supplied and laundered by center staff. Red Balloon uses scent-free/dye-free laundry products to ensure a formaldehyde-free, eco-friendly, and healthy option for our childrens' bedding.

The license certificate, inspection results/actions, rule exceptions or exemptions, DCF Licensing Rules, and Family Handbook are located near the building entrance and/or sign-in area for your convenience. You will also find schedule change forms, sick/vacation time request forms, and other important information in these areas. Monthly Parent Newsletters are posted on the classroom communication app as well as on our website at [redballoonearlylearning.com](http://redballoonearlylearning.com).

We ask that parents/guardians sign their children in and out of the center each day using our Procare system. The sign-in computer is located in the main entrance of the center. This is another way that we can keep track of child attendance and hours for safety/security and for billing purposes. Classroom teachers will also keep track of arrival and departure times in their classrooms to ensure proper child tracking is established and maintained.

We offer multiple methods for parents to review their account balance. Parents can check their account status on the Procare system by simply signing in on the computer and looking at the bottom of the screen to review the account balance. Families can also sign up within the Procare app to view and manage billing and payments right from your phone. A paper copy of the statement can also be made available upon request.

Parents/guardians are required to provide Red Balloon with the names of persons authorized to pick-up a child in writing. Parents may also email the office or use the app to message this permission. A phone call or verbal permission will not be granted.

We ask that families read all communications: bulletin boards, newsletters, notices posted or sent home, emails, classroom communication app messages, or on our website or Facebook page. We will do our very best to provide all pertinent information in a variety of places, especially in the case of information you are required to know such as any rate and/or policy changes at least 30 days in advance.

All clients will receive a link to a free mobile app to access our secure building to avoid using the doorbell to enter the building. Our staff are very busy working with the children and cannot always leave their group to respond to the doorbell. If you are in need of a physical key card or key fob, please notify the office and we can activate one for a small fee.

## **VIII. Enrollment Classifications & Considerations**

Red Balloon enrolls children and bills families according to various tiers of contracted schedule types:

- Full Time – a child contracted 5 days per week, 5 or more hours per day
- Part Time – a child contracted 2-4 days per week
- Flex – a child contracted 2-4 days per week, varying/alternating days weekly
- Hourly – a child contracted 2-4 hours per day
- Drop-In – a child not contracted that attends only upon request when space is available

Tuition will be billed according to the contract completed and signed by a parent/guardian for each new enrollment or each re-enrollment period. Families may increase or decrease contracted hours as needed with a written schedule change submitted to the Administration at least two weeks prior to the change going into effect.

## **IX. Tuition Billing & Other Fees**

### **1. Current Tuition Rates**

Red Balloon Early Learning Center's rates are set for all persons regardless of age or income. Red Balloon reserves the right to "grandfather" clients already enrolled at previous rates at our discretion. To see the current tuition rates, please refer to the copy posted near the sign-in area or visit our website at [redballoonearlylearning.com/programs](http://redballoonearlylearning.com/programs) to view the most recent rates chart. Red Balloon will notify clients at least 30 days in advance of any rate changes via Parent Newsletter, website, classroom communication app, and/or in-person notice.

## **2. Multi Child Discount**

There will be a discount available for families with more than one child enrolled. Discounts are applied to the oldest child/ren. Please refer to our most current rates sheet for more details on specific discount rates.

## **3. Active Duty Military Discount**

Any family, enrolled or not, that has a parent of a preschool aged child that would need childcare (long or short term) may use our program, provided that we have space available. Tuition would be discounted 10% per week. Red Balloon is honored to help families who make sacrifices to serve and protect our country.

## **4. Registration Fees**

Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. incorporates a registration fee upon initial enrollment of your child. Please refer to our most current rates sheet for specific registration fees. Initial registration fees are charged at the time of enrollment. Re-enrollment fees are charged at the beginning of each contractual period.

A prospective client may have the opportunity to sign a holding contract to ensure a place for their child at Red Balloon at a future date and place down a holding fee of one-weeks' tuition. Current tuition rates can be found on our website. Holding fees are applied to the account of the client at the time of enrollment and are only forfeited in the event that the client does not follow through with enrollment for any reason.

## **5. Two-Week Deposit**

A two-week deposit will be required for all new clients enrolling. Clients with outside funding will have the amount of their two-week deposit calculated by the amount they are authorized for by the outside source. The deposit of two weeks' tuition will be charged in advance, or a payment arrangement for that amount will be provided with authorization by the Administrator. This deposit will be held in reserve and serve as the final payment, typically applied at the end of the contracted time with Red Balloon.

The final bill, after notice is served to end care by either party, will be added to the account in full and charged to the client or via the client's autopay setup if applicable, at receipt of notice. A client's pre-paid deposit, if applicable, will be applied to this final statement.

## **6. Key Card/Fob Fees**

The secured access security system at Red Balloon allows clients the added comfort of knowing their child is safe. All clients or authorized pick-up persons who will be regularly needed access to the facility are required to download the free mobile app or purchase and use a key card or key fob to enter our secured building. These keys/fobs cost \$10 each and can be charged to the client account.

To use your phone or the key/fob, simply wave it in front of the sensor box located by the main entrance door. After hearing a click, you may enter the building and please ensure the door closes completely and securely behind you as you enter. For the safety

of our children, please notify a staff member immediately if someone unfamiliar follows you in under your key/fob access. Most likely it will be another client, but it is better to be safe. Also please report any missing keys to the office immediately. Key access can be locked out or deactivated to avoid compromising building security.

Please be sure to bring your phone or key each time you arrive at your Red Balloon center for drop-off or pick-up. Our doorbells are in place as a security measure to be used by persons who are not enrolled or authorized in our program and have not been granted access to the center. The staff at Red Balloon is not always near the access pad or able to leave a classroom full of children to answer the doorbell at times during the day when the children would be left unattended and outside the lines of State Regulations. To ensure your prompt admittance to the building, please make certain you use your own access for the safety of the children and for your own convenience. If you are in need of a new or additional key, please notify Administration so we can activate a new one for a small fee which can be billed to your account.

## **7. How to Make Payments**

Tuition is billed to your account each week on our Procare system. Clients are billed tuition Monday through Sunday. Billing is completed on Monday for the current week and tuition payment is due no later than Wednesday at 4:30pm of that week. Any alteration in your child's account that occurs during the week will be posted during the next billing period. For example, applying sick/vacation discounted days.

Monthly tuition billing may also be available, which is completed at the beginning of the month and due by the 7<sup>th</sup> of that month. Please contact the Administrator to set up this type of billing.

Clients can access their account information in Procare on the sign-in computer, in the Procare app, or through their own profile on MyProcare.com (information was provided in the enrollment packet). A paper statement may also be made available upon request.

Making payments for tuition is easy and client-friendly! There are various ways of making a payment on your account. A locked payment box is located near the sign-in area. You may place a check in the payment box (child's name noted in memo of check please). A cash payment may also be made by stopping in the office during business hours, or speaking with one of the senior teaching staff, so a handwritten receipt can be properly completed for the transaction. Never, under any circumstances, leave cash payments without first receiving a receipt and the payment has been placed in the locked box. Red Balloon is not responsible for lost/stolen cash unless a receipt signed by a staff member has been provided.

Credit card payments can be made in the office or by phone during business hours. Credit card payments may also be made directly through your Procare smartphone app. Red Balloon accepts MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit card payments. Your account will be charged a small monthly fee for electronic payment service convenience. Current fee rate is listed on your contract and on the tuition chart. To

avoid this fee, you may pay by cash and/or check. Please inform the Administrator in advance how you would prefer to make payments on your account.

Weekly or monthly automatic payments can also be set up at any time through Tuition Express for your ease. Payments can be EFT from your checking or savings account, or debit card or credit card. Clients have three days to review tuition charges before they are run. Weekly automatic billing will be processed on Thursday morning of each week. Monthly billing statements are sent out on the first day of each month and are processed on the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month. This allows families the opportunity to review their account before the payment goes through.

Any questions regarding tuition statements or billing procedures, please contact a member of the Administrative Team to discuss.

## **8. Past Due Accounts**

Any account that is past due will be considered delinquent. An account that is delinquent will need to be paid before a client can bring their child in for care. Services will not be allowed to continue until the tuition payment for the current week of care is made. Per our contract, even though a child may not be attending, services will continue to be charged during any unattended time for up to two weeks after the last day of attendance if the client does not return before that time if no prior notice was given.

Payment due reminders may be made via email or phone call reminders on Thursdays if payment has not yet been received. While we try to alert clients, ultimately it is the client's responsibility for knowing their account status at all times and paying by the due date each week or month. Services will not continue without payment in full on or before the following business day.

Any account remaining past due after Thursday of the billing week will be assessed a late charge of \$20.00 per week. Late fees can accrue to a maximum of \$100.00 before being turned over to collections.

Payment plans can be made available to clients by specific request when an account gets past due under certain circumstances. Payment plans have a pay-off period of no more than eight weeks. Red Balloon does not charge interest on payment plans. Childcare service will be ended by the Administration if a payment plan between a client and Red Balloon is not completed and/or adhered to. Special circumstances may be allowed. Clients that are declined may appeal to the Red Balloon Board of Directors.

All accounts that are not paid in accordance with the terms of this policy will be subject to termination of the contract for childcare at the discretion of the Administrator and collection procedures will be initiated.

Past due accounts need to be taken seriously to ensure that Red Balloon can continue to provide quality care and treat all families and staff fairly. We are a non-profit facility and fully rely on tuition to stay in business.

## **9. Other Fees**

It is against our license to care for children outside of our hours of operation. Failure to pick up your child by closing time (6:00pm) will result in a late fee of \$15.00 for every 15 minutes.

Non-sufficient fund checks (NSF) and declined credit cards will result in a \$40.00 fee per occurrence. Clients will be asked to pay by cash, credit card, or money order in the future after NSF has resulted.

If a child becomes ill while in attendance and a parent has been contacted, the ill child should be picked up within a half hour of parent contact whenever possible or may be charged a \$20.00 late pick-up fee. If the parent needs additional time, this may be granted within reason at the discretion of Administration.

If a child is contracted flex-time, a client must complete a flex schedule each week by Thursday at noon for the coming week's schedule. The account will be billed according to the flex schedule, and the clients are obligated to pay for those days whether attending or not. Schedule change forms are located near the sign-in area and can be placed in the payment box or in the Director's Mailbox on the office door. Clients may also email Administration to keep us informed of future schedules.

There may be additional charges for field trips. Charges will be listed with all field trip permission forms to be signed by a parent/guardian prior to the event. All field trip charges are minimal.

## **10. Refunds**

When a client ends a contract with Red Balloon by either a two-week notice, not renewing the contract, or a dismissal by Administration, the account will be billed according to the signed contract on file. The two-week deposit will then be applied to the account. If a credit remains after all additional charges have been applied, a refund check will be mailed to the client after 30 days of the last billing date.

For clients enrolled with the Wisconsin Shares Child Care Subsidy Program, according to policy 3427, "Over payments by parent to provider: If the provider is overpaid by a Wisconsin Shares family, the provider should make arrangements with the parents to reconcile the difference, according to the provider's payment policies. However, providers must NOT return any form of payments including cash to the parent from the childcare subsidy amount. This is referred to as cashing out the subsidy funds or a kickback, which may result in a sanction. The provider should return any overpaid Wisconsin Shares funds to the Department through a Voluntary repayment agreement." If the client feels they deserve the overpayment refund they must meet with the Administrator to review the account and discuss the matter further. Once a decision has been made on who the overpayment will be refunded to, Red Balloon will begin the process of either issuing a check to the client according to the aforementioned policy or informing the Wisconsin Shares by filling out a voluntary repayment agreement form (4121).

## **11. Vacation Day & Sick Day Discount**

All clients that have a child that is enrolled for a minimum of three full days per week will be provided with vacation/sick days. Each family receives two weeks per year. The amount of days will be determined by the contracted schedule. A child that is contracted 3 days per week will have 6 days to use for the vacation/sick discount, a child scheduled 4 days per week will have 8 days, and a child scheduled 5 days per week will have 10 days. Summer only clients will receive one week under the same conditions.

Vacation/sick days will be discounted in full days only at the current holding fee rate per day; please refer to our most current rate sheet for this information. All vacation/sick days must be used in the contracted year and there is no carryover to the next contractual year. All vacation/sick days will be tracked by the Administrator through the family Procare log.

Vacation/sick day request forms are located at the sign-in area, or on our website under the Useful Forms tab. Completed forms should be turned into the office. Email requests sent to a member of the Administrative Team are also accepted. We ask that vacation requests be turned into the office at least one week before the scheduled vacation whenever possible, and that sick time requests be turned in no later than two weeks after the date of use. The vacation/sick day credit will be applied to the week after the day has occurred.

## **12. Holidays Center is Closed**

Tuition charges are made for all contracted days even when they fall on holidays in which the center is closed because Red Balloon pays its full-time staff for holidays. Annually, these holidays include:

- New Year's Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Black Friday (day after Thanksgiving Day)
- Christmas Eve
- Christmas Day

If the holiday falls on a weekend, Red Balloon will close the Friday before or Monday after, depending on the day of the actual holiday. The holding fee may not be used for holidays unless the holiday falls on your scheduled full week of vacation.

## **X. Health & Safety Administration**

Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc. believes that your child's health and safety are our number one concern. We place this priority above all else. Simply stated, we cannot provide quality care anywhere unless we have addressed these important matters first.

We also take confidentiality very seriously at Red Balloon. We feel it is one of the key components in keeping your child and their information safe. We promise to keep all

information regarding your family identity, health information, and all personal details contained in your child's file completely confidential. Rest assured, confidential information will be handled by our staff with sensitivity. Red Balloon staff are trained regularly in all areas of confidentiality and the handling of sensitive information.

In addition, please note that in order to maintain the confidentiality and safety of the children in our care, Red Balloon staff will not post or share any photos of the children in our program on any form of social media without prior written permission. Photos shared within your classroom communication smartphone app are never shared outside of your secure account, and we ask that you yourself please refrain from sharing any photos containing children other than your own.

### **1. Required Child Health Forms**

Per DCF 251 State Licensing Regulations, there is a number of child health forms that a group childcare center is required to keep on file. The State of Wisconsin requires each child to have a Health History & Emergency Care Plan form, a Child Health Report form, and an Immunization Record held on file for every child enrolled in our program. These forms, as with all forms that hold any personal or medical information about your child, are viewed only by necessary staff members of Red Balloon and will be held confidential in your child's file. A copy of some of these forms may also be in a private place in your child's classroom when necessary for medical information that staff would be required to know. Each of these forms also needs to be updated regularly, according to the form-specific information listed below, to ensure each child's file is kept current.

The Health History & Emergency Care Plan form is included in your initial enrollment packet. This form is to be completed and signed by the child's parent/guardian before the child's first day of attendance at Red Balloon. This form is reviewed twice a year for any updates that may need to be made to any information. Please note that it is imperative that a parent/guardian not wait until the next review period if new or changed information is available regarding their child. Contact Administration if this form needs to be updated at any time. Any special health needs will be addressed on an individual basis, and necessary staff will be trained as a need presents itself.

Each child enrolled shall have an initial health examination not more than 6 months prior to or no more than 30 days after enrollment. The Child Health Report Form, also included in your initial enrollment packet, is required to be completed and signed by your child's physician. For children under the age of two years, a subsequent physical exam and updated form needs to be completed every 6 months; for children over the age of two years, a subsequent physical exam and updated form needs to be completed every 2 years. No health exam will be needed after children are enrolled in kindergarten. Copies of the Child Health Report form can be found near the sign-in area, or on our website under the Useful Forms tab.

In addition to the form signed by a physician after the health examination, each child also needs to have an Immunization Record on file at Red Balloon within 30 days of enrollment. This record can be requested from your child's medical facility or can be

found online through the Wisconsin Immunization Registry database. Parents must provide the office with the most current list of immunizations each time a new immunization is given to the child.

Reminders are sent out to families when any of these forms kept on file is set to expire and a new one is required; please respond to these requests as promptly as possible so that our program remains in compliance with State regulations. The Child Health Report and the Immunization Record can also be requested from your child's medical facility to be mailed or faxed directly to Red Balloon (fax 608-784-9407).

As appropriate, children shall be protected from sunburn and insect bites with protective clothing, sunscreen, or insect repellent. Sunscreen and insect repellent should be provided from home seasonally and be clearly labeled with the child's name. Sunscreen and insect repellent may only be applied upon the written authorization of the parent on our Sunscreen/Bug Spray Permission form; this authorization should include the ingredient strength and be updated at least every six months, or as needed.

## **2. Emergency Cards & Medical Care Consent**

Emergency Cards will be created from emergency information that a client provides upon enrollment. These E-Cards will hold all information of the utmost importance; this includes emergency contact information, a list of persons authorized to pick up your child, the name and medical facility of your child's primary physician, any important medical information about your child, and a parent/guardian medical consent form for emergency treatment at one of our local hospitals or clinics designated by you where your child's medical records are kept. These confidential cards will be with your child wherever they go; from the classroom to the playground, field trips, during emergency evacuation drills, and real emergencies. Wherever your child goes, the Emergency Card must go along, so our staff always have this important information on hand.

Any changes to the Emergency Card such as phone number, addresses, changes in emergency contacts, etc. must be submitted by the parent/guardian in writing, be updated in the Procare system by the Administrative staff, and properly filed.

Administration updates classroom copies of Emergency Cards at least one time each year (more often as needed) to ensure all information is most current and up-to-date.

## **3. Medical Logbooks**

Each classroom in the center has a medical logbook for logging the details of all accidents/incidents that occur during the day, any concerns of note found in daily well checks of a child, as well as any medication administered by our staff to a child in our care. This logbook is bound with numbered pages. Logbooks are reviewed by Administration every 6 months to ensure entries are being entered correctly and patterns of accidents or incidents are being addressed. The information in the logbooks must always remain confidential. A parent or guardian may request to view the portions of the logbook pertaining to their own child at any time but will not be permitted to see entries of any other child.

#### **4. Healthy & Safe Buildings**

A very important consideration when choosing childcare and an early education center is the building itself. Red Balloon is constantly monitored for safety in many areas, including identification of and protection from hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic.

Our center has proper air ventilation and circulation. Air purifiers are used throughout the center to assist with improving air quality.

The interior building temperature is maintained to be compliant with state licensing requirements to ensure your child's comfort with proper heating and air conditioning systems. The air comfort level will fluctuate a little during heavy drop-off and pick-up times during very hot or very cold weather but will level off again as the door stays closed most of the day. It is always recommended to dress your children in layers during these Wisconsin season changes so they do not get too hot or too cold throughout the day.

Because the cleanliness of our center is important for health and safety, our staff have daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning duties. Specific attention is given to common high-touch areas and bathrooms, which are cleaned and sanitized/disinfected at least once daily. Each staff member is responsible for cleaning their own classroom area.

Classroom items and toys are cleaned immediately or put out of reach when they have been in a child's mouth. Toys are cleaned by staff when they become soiled. A bleach solution is used to sanitize hard surface toys and fully air dried away from the children.

Red Balloon is equipped with a security system requiring secured mobile or key access into the building, as well as an alarm system which sounds from the inside while activated. Exterior doors are locked at all times and the buildings are only accessible during operational hours through the main entrance with the mobile app or a secure key card/fob issued only to authorized persons. This helps prevent unauthorized or unknown persons from entering our facility without our knowledge. The door alarm system also provides another layer of added security, as alarms will sound if an exterior door is opened without first pushing the green release button. Staff are trained to respond to alarms immediately. This is an extra safety precaution in place to alert our staff in the event of a child running out ahead of a parent/guardian or trying to exit the building for any reason unaccompanied.

#### **5. Surveillance Cameras**

Another way Red Balloon helps to ensure the safety of our children is having surveillance cameras placed in each classroom, office, and around the exterior perimeter of the building. These security cameras record our premises 24/7, and Administrators monitor cameras often during the day for safety and evaluation purposes.

### **A. Policy Statement**

Surveillance cameras may be installed in situations and places where the security of either people or property would be enhanced. When appropriate, cameras may be placed inside and outside of buildings. Cameras will be used in a professional, ethical, and legal manner consistent with all existing Red Balloon Policies. Camera use will be limited to situations that do not violate the reasonable expectation of privacy as defined by law. Cameras will not be installed in areas where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as restrooms. A sign will be posted at the Red Balloon entrance informing the public, as well as our clients, that surveillance cameras are in use. The Administrative Team will manage all activities of the surveillance cameras.

### **B. Reason for Policy**

The purpose of this policy is to regulate the use of surveillance cameras to protect the legal and privacy interests of the children, parents, and staff of Red Balloon. The function of surveillance cameras is to assist in protecting the safety and well-being of the children, parents, and staff of Red Balloon. The primary use of surveillance cameras will be to monitor situations for the safety of the children, parents, and staff of Red Balloon and to note areas for improvement.

### **C. Policy Requirements**

Only authorized personnel will be involved in, or have access to, surveillance camera data. When an incident is suspected to have occurred, designated personnel may review the images from surveillance camera data. A log will be maintained for a period of approximately 48 hours for all access to and use of surveillance data stored by the surveillance system. In approved situations, selected individuals in the company of a member of Administration will have access to the real time monitors for observation of their child so as not to disturb the child and classroom activities. Requests from parents or the public to have access to surveillance camera images will only be considered relating to documented incidents of criminal activities and only following a request from law enforcement or other legal processes.

### **D. Related Policy Information**

Video surveillance data may be stored on the hard drive for up to one week, after which time it will be automatically deleted and can no longer be accessed. Recorded surveillance camera data is not automatically retained or stored as a digital video. Recorded surveillance camera data may be used to provide tangible evidence as a means of identification and may be turned over to the police by a member of the management team or their designee.

## **XI. Health & Safety Policies**

### **1. Daily Well Check**

Upon arrival at Red Balloon, each child will be observed by staff members for any signs of illness or injury. Staff will take note of any visible signs of illness or injury or note any

behaviors that are not usual for this child. Staff will communicate with the parents whenever possible and gain as much information as they can right away about the status of a child during daily drop-off.

If a child is discovered to be exhibiting symptoms of illness such as fever, diarrhea, vomiting, rash, eye excretions, cough, or unusual lethargy, or that child has recently been seen at a medical clinic/hospital, our staff must insist that the child does not remain at the center. A sick child policies chart is available in various places around the center to reference when a child must not attend Red Balloon.

If there are any visible injuries on a child, such as evidence of bruises, scratches, burns, or difficulty moving a part of their body, this will be discussed with a parent and subsequently documented in the Medical Logbook for several reasons. Firstly, if an injury is present on a child that they came into our care with, the documentation can help clear up any confusion later regarding the timeline and/or cause of the injury in question. Secondly, if staff feel that the explanation for the injury does not match the injury's location and/or characteristics, there is a possibility that a staff member may need to use this information to make a report of the injury to Child Protective Services (CPS).

This daily well check of each child during drop-off time does not take long and can provide our staff with useful information regarding the determination of whether a child may be ill or injured upon arrival at our center.

## **2. III Child**

In addition to the daily well check of each child during drop-off times, staff will also continue to observe all children throughout the day. If a child begins exhibiting signs or symptoms of an illness such as a fever of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, vomiting, one or more episodes of diarrhea, rash, conjunctivitis, unusual lethargy, uncontrollable coughing, head lice or nits, or any symptom that keeps the child from participating in daily activities, our staff will need to contact the child's parent/guardian to have the child sent home.

In this event, the child will first be isolated as much as possible from the rest of the group. This may mean moving the child to an alternate area of the classroom away from the other children where they can continue to be observed within sight and sound of a Red Balloon staff member. The child can be given a cot with a sheet and blanket where they can rest comfortably until they are picked up from our center. The child's parent/guardian will be notified that their child must go home via classroom messaging app and/or phone call. If the parent cannot be reached or does not respond within a reasonable timeframe, emergency contacts will be contacted. The ill child should be picked up within a half hour of parent contact whenever possible, or may be charged a \$20.00 late pick-up fee. If the parent needs additional time, this may be granted within reason at the discretion of Administration.

No child or other person with a known reportable communicable disease may be admitted or be permitted to remain in the Red Balloon center during the period of time when the disease is communicable or contagious. A communicable disease chart can be found at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/disease/childhood-communicable-diseases.htm> This chart includes a list of common communicable diseases, signs and symptoms, whether they require a report to the County Health Department, how they are spread, criteria for exclusion, incubation period, and prevention measures. Please note that this reference chart is very informative but may not be all-inclusive; various other communicable illnesses not listed may also be considered cause for not being permitted in the center.

Common communicable illnesses such as conjunctivitis, strep throat, head lice, hand foot and mouth disease, RSV, Covid-19, and various other illnesses will be documented in the office, reported to the County Health Department when required, and a notice will be posted for all parents on the main bulletin board and/or near the classroom when possible. The notification will include the illness, the age of the child, the child's classroom, and the date the illness was reported.

We ask that you inform us of any illnesses that your child has been diagnosed with. When our program is notified that an individual has been diagnosed with a reportable illness, the Administration will inform the County Health Department, state licensing agency, and the parents of any/all exposed children. Parent notification will be shared immediately via classroom communication app or email. When notifying families of a possible exposure to a communicable disease, the identity of the ill individual will always be kept confidential. With all reports of contagion, classroom equipment and toys undergo additional disinfecting and sanitation.

Again, no individual will be admitted or permitted to remain at Red Balloon during the period when the known disease is communicable. Guidance on when a child can return to the program following an illness include remaining fever-free without the aid of medication for at least 24 hours, has been lice/nit-free for at least 24 hours, any eye excretions have cleared, or any rash has scabbed over and is no longer active. Additionally, Administration may require that a parent provide a note from the child's physician stating the individual is no longer contagious. It should also be noted that under some circumstances, Red Balloon retains the right to decide that a note from a physician is not sufficient to allow a child to return to the program yet if the child is still exhibiting any signs/symptoms of illness. If Red Balloon feels it would be in the best interest of program safety, the child may still be sent home at Red Balloon's discretion.

### **3. Child Injury & Medical Emergency**

All Red Balloon staff are certified in First Aid and CPR/AED procedures. Universal precautions are always followed when handling bodily fluids, including runny noses, urine, fecal matter, and blood. Staff are trained in OSHA/bloodborne pathogens procedures. In the event of an injury occurrence either on or off site while a child is in our care, staff members are familiar with and able to promptly follow those steps from their training experience. In the event of a head injury of any kind (bump, blow, jolt,

etc.), a seizure, or consumption/contact with poisonous materials, the child's parent/guardian will be notified immediately.

In the event of a minor injury: Gloves are applied, and an emergency First Aid kit is obtained. These kits include items such as band-aids, tape, gauze, and bandage wrap. Any cuts, scratches, bites, or other skin abrasions are washed with soap and water, then bandaged if necessary. An Incident/Accident Report is completed for the injury to be signed by the parent or will be posted in the child's activity log, and the event is entered into the Medical Logbook. Children are treated with a comforting voice, soothing words, and lots of TLC.

In the event of a serious injury: Red Balloon staff will employ their First Aid and/or CPR/AED training knowledge as deemed necessary. The scene of the emergency is assessed and, if required, 9-1-1 is called immediately. All other children are removed from the scene of the injured individual. Necessary First Aid and/or CPR/AED care is provided until emergency personnel arrive on the scene. During an active injury event, staff will immediately contact emergency personnel and the child's parent/guardian. The staff member present will remain with the injured child until a parent arrives, whether it be on-site at our center or at a medical facility. Any injuries requiring subsequent medical care must be reported to the Administrative Team as soon as possible to allow Red Balloon to make the required report to the State (DCF) within 24 hours.

The licensing department will be notified within 24 hours of any death of a child in care or of an animal-related injury (both wild and domestic).

#### **4. Allergic Reaction**

Allergic reactions can be extremely dangerous, and it is vital that Red Balloon staff be aware of any potential or existing allergies for those in our care and be knowledgeable in what to do if a child in our program has an allergic reaction. Every classroom, office, and kitchen have a Confidential Medical Alerts packet which includes information regarding any allergies present for those in the center, what to do in the event of an allergic event, and emergency contact information.

Parents are required to inform Red Balloon of any known allergies in their child's medical history. When the Administrative Staff become aware of an allergy (typically during the initial enrollment process) they will inform the teachers and update all Confidential Medical Alert information in the center.

Our program does have a number of individuals with known allergies at any given point in time. Some of the most common allergies we have are nuts/peanuts, fish/shellfish, milk or dairy, various fruits, latex, and insect stings. Please note, due to the possible life-threatening nature of a peanut allergy, our center is fully peanut-free. Be sure not to send any type of peanut or nut items along with your child at any time as it may very quickly create an emergency situation.

It is the responsibility of the teachers to be aware of all allergies and care needed for the children in the classroom in which they are working. If a child comes into contact with an allergen such as a certain food, drink, bee sting, etc. the teacher will immediately contact the child's parent and then follow the instructions provided by the parent on the child's Health History & Emergency Care Plan regarding the allergy. Administration is notified and informed of the incident and will assist with any additional care if needed, including actively monitoring the situation and/or calling 9-1-1 emergency services if necessary.

There may be times when an allergen is not previously known, but a child appears to be experiencing an allergic reaction. Teachers will monitor all children throughout the day for changes in behavior, breathing, skin condition, skin color, etc. Symptoms of an allergic reaction can vary greatly, and can include hives, swelling, difficulty breathing, drooling, lethargy, etc. In cases involving swelling and difficulty breathing, 9-1-1 will be called immediately, followed by informing Administration, who will then assist with contacting the child's parent/guardian or with any ongoing care for the child. Other behaviors that could indicate a mild allergic reaction are also reported to Administration, the child's parents will be notified, and the child will continue to be closely monitored for any changes that may require contacting emergency services.

## **5. Public Health Emergency**

In the event of a public health emergency in our community, Red Balloon will follow all recommended safety precautions and guidelines according to our various governing agencies. Program governing agencies include Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPR), Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), Wisconsin Department of Children & Families (DCF) and the La Crosse County Health Department (LCHD). Additional safety measures may be taken, amended or stricter health and safety policies may be put in place, or possible temporary closures may be considered. All agency recommendations are taken into account and implemented to the best of our knowledge and abilities, and always with the best interest of our families, staff, and program in mind.

## **6. Vehicle Accident Emergency**

Red Balloon occasionally utilizes school bus services for field trips and other activities outside of the program. The bus companies that we use conduct regular safety inspections on all vehicles, but accidents can happen. All staff are regularly trained in First Aid procedures, and each teacher carries along an Emergency Kit when leaving the center for any reason.

In the event of a vehicle accident, teaching staff that are physically able will immediately call 9-1-1 to summon emergency service personnel and assess the scene. After assessing the scene for safety and security, staff will administer any First Aid care to the level of their training to children or adults with injuries until emergency personnel arrive on scene. Red Balloon staff will contact a member of the Administrative Team as soon as possible to inform them of the accident and relay all details as soon as they are able. The Administrative Team and teaching staff will then begin contacting parents to inform

them of the event and provide them with as much information as possible. Red Balloon staff on scene will stay with their group until all parents have arrived and each child has been properly signed out of our care; children are never left unattended or unsupervised.

## **7. Medication Administration Policy**

Red Balloon will assist parents with the dispensing of prescription and non-prescription medication that a child may require. Staff that are qualified teachers or a member of Administration will be the only persons allowed to administer medication to a child according to the information provided by the parent on the Authorization form and will document all information about the medication administration in the Medical Logbook (time, type, and amount given).

If your child will need medication while attending Red Balloon, a parent/guardian is required to fill out the Authorization to Administer Medication Form. This form will be valid for the duration listed on the original container prescribed by a doctor and will allow a teacher or Administrator to dispense the medication as prescribed. Authorizations for over-the-counter medication will only be valid for the timeframe specified on the original container. Red Balloon will not dispense medication in amounts listed by the parent/guardian that is not consistent with the amount listed on the container, nor will any type of medication be administered past the specified expiration date. Medication for children without an authorization form is not allowed on the premises.

All medication, whether it is prescription or non-prescription (such as Tylenol), must be in the original bottle or container with the child's name printed clearly on it. If it is a prescription medication, it is recommended that you ask the pharmacist for two prescription containers that are labeled; one to remain at Red Balloon for the duration of the prescription, and one for home so you do not need to worry about remembering to bring it back and forth each day. Red Balloon stores medication (both refrigerated and non-refrigerated) in clearly labeled and secured places so that only trained staff may have access. Staff are trained as needed for various specific medication dispensing, such as blood sugar checks, Epinephrine injectors, and nebulizers.

If a medication dose is somehow missed, staff will immediately inform Administration and contact the child's parent to notify them of the missed dose. Parents will be immediately notified if an incorrect medication is administered.

## **XII. Healthy Children**

Children learn at an early age to take care of their health. Part of our mutual job as parents and educators is to act as role models in helping our children understand why we need to be healthy.

### **1. Handwashing**

One of the most important ways to stay healthy is simple handwashing. Children and staff are required to wash hands before and after each meal, after each diapering or

toileting trip, upon arrival at the center, after coughs or sneezes, after playing on the playground, and any time hands are visibly soiled. This learning process begins when children are babies in our program so that it becomes part of the child's healthy lifestyle as a healthy habit. Role modeling is key to the education on healthy habits, and we ask that parents model proper handwashing at home too to continue this important learning experience.

The steps to proper handwashing techniques we use every time are:

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

## **2. Rest Time**

Children under 5 years of age who are in our care for more than 4 hours shall have a nap or rest period of a minimum of 30 minutes, as required by our State Licensing rules. Rest is needed for healthy growth and development of our bodies and minds. We ask that parents/guardians make sure your child has an evening routine that promotes a good night's sleep. A good night of sleep will help your child stay alert, focus, and participate in their daily activities. Behavior problems are often proved to be reduced simply by making sure a child has enough rest each night. A consistent bedtime routine is important. We suggest the following based on what we have learned.

- Share a family meal together around the table
- Let your child enjoy a relaxing bath time soak to calm their bodies, put on cozy pajamas, and don't forget to brush teeth to keep those smiles healthy too
- Read a bedtime story...or a few! No screen time at least 2 hours before sleep is recommended to avoid extra stimulation
- Set consistent bedtime and wake up times that will provide between 10 and 12 hours of sleep each night

## **3. Nutrition**

Children will receive nutritious meals and snacks at Red Balloon each day. The meals follow USDA guidelines and all meal components are present, nutritional, and age-appropriate. Red Balloon provides breakfast, lunch, and two afternoon snacks. For children still in our care past 5:30pm, a late afternoon snack will be provided. We also keep extra food on hand at all times if a child is still hungry after a meal has been served or between meal and snack times. Menus are posted in our Parent Newsletter on our website and on parent boards near the sign-in area where any menu changes can be found.

Red Balloon participates in the USDA Department of Public Instruction Child and Adult Care Food Program. We follow the serving guidelines for meal components and portion sizes set down by the CACFP. Current requirements can be found on our website. On

the rare occasions that a child brings a meal from home, we will require that these guidelines are followed as well. If the requirements are not met, Red Balloon will provide the necessary components to meet the requirement.

We use whole grain rich foods and fresh produce as often as we possibly can with respect to our budget requirements and product availability limitations. We believe very strongly that children need to be served the best possible foods available for their health and well-being. Additionally, we avoid MSG and items high in sugar.

Meals are made in the kitchen on location daily. All temperature guidelines are followed in accordance with state regulations.

Our Food Service Director may be certified in the Serv Safe Program, and all Food Service staff have orientation training by Red Balloon in food safety and handling and complete a minimum of 1 hour of continuing education each year in food service-related trainings and workshops.

Children between the ages of 2 and 12 years eat together as a group along with the classroom staff. Staff eat at the table with the children and will encourage them to try new foods, model proper eating habits and table manners, as well as engage the children in conversation and encourage socialization.

Meal times can be flexible, but no child will go without nourishment for more than 3 hours between meals. Infants and toddlers are fed on their own schedule. (For more information, see the Infant & Toddler Care policies in this handbook).

Children are allowed to bring in treats for special occasions and holidays, but all treats must be store-bought with the ingredient labels attached. We also encourage healthier treats for those special occasions, such as fruits or pretzels.

Red Balloon is fully peanut-free, and we will not serve any type of nut product; this includes peanut butter. We ask all families to refrain from bringing any snack or food item containing peanut butter into the center because of the prevalence and severity of the allergy.

#### **4. Special Dietary Needs**

A special dietary need based on a disability will be served only when it is accompanied by a valid written medical statement. CACFP requires programs to make reasonable modifications to accommodate participants with disabilities to provide equal opportunity to participate. This is required only when supported by a written medical statement from a Wisconsin Licensed Healthcare Professional authorized to write prescriptions, such as a Physician, a Physician Assistant, or a Nurse Practitioner (APNP). The definition of a disability: Physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities (includes eating, breathing, digestive, and respiratory functions, etc.). Most physical and mental impairments will constitute a disability; it does not need to be life-threatening. Ex. Digestion is impaired by lactose intolerance, whether or not consuming

milk causes severe distress. A valid written medical statement must include a description of the impairment (reason for request) and how to accommodate the request (foods to be avoided and recommended modifications).

A special dietary need based on a non-disability will also be accommodated as long as it is accompanied by a written request from the parent/guardian stating the non-disability special dietary need and includes foods not to be served and allowable substitutions that meet CACFP meal pattern requirements. Definition of a non-disability: A request not supported by a valid written medical statement or request is for religious, ethnic, or lifestyle preference (vegetarian, organic, vegan, etc.).

A special dietary need based on a medical condition, excluding food allergies, but including nutrient concentrates and supplements, may be served only upon the request of the child's parent and with written instruction of a child's physician.

## **5. USDA Nondiscrimination Statement with Complaint Filing Procedure**

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

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

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

1. mail:

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

2. fax:

(833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or

2. email:  
program.intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

### **XIII. A Typical Day**

A typical day for children ages two and older has a loosely structured routine adhering to specific mealtimes, curriculum activities, and rest time (diapering/toileting happen throughout the day as needed). All children under two years of age must be allowed to be on their own schedule. Staff will follow the cues of the infants and one-year-olds regarding napping, feeding, and diapering needs.

#### **6:00am – 7:00am | Arrival Time and Free Play**

Children begin arriving at the center in one area designated as the opening drop-off room. They will begin by snuggling with teachers or playing with tabletop activities or classroom toys.

#### **7:00am – 8:15am | Free Choice Time**

At this time, children have traveled to their age-defined classrooms or areas. Here they will utilize the learning areas set up for play and learning throughout the classroom. Learning centers are set up to extend the lesson plan curriculum learning experiences.

#### **8:15am – 9:00am | Breakfast**

Children will begin cleaning up for breakfast, washing hands, and assisting teachers with setting tables for the meal.

#### **9:00am – 11:15am | Early Learning Curriculum Time**

Various curriculum programs are utilized in collaboration at Red Balloon. One of the main curriculum in use is Creative Curriculum, which meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and is approved by Youngstar. Lesson plans include small and large group activities, weekly theme discussion, story time, music, movement, art, and STEM/STEAM activities based upon the weekly topic. During this time, children will also enjoy around 45 minutes of outdoor learning and gross motor play as weather conditions allow.

#### **11:15am – 12:00pm | Lunch**

Children will now begin cleaning up for lunch, washing hands, and assisting teachers with setting tables for the meal.

#### **12:00pm – 12:30pm | Winding Down**

Time for toileting, getting cots ready with bedding, or reading a story as the children get ready to settle in for nap.

### **12:30pm – 2:15pm | Nap or Rest Time**

Time for rest, usually sleeping, back rubs, and listening to relaxing music. Per state licensing rules, children under 5 years of age that are in our care for more than 4 hours are required to have a nap or rest period. After 30 minutes of rest, any child that is not sleeping may choose quiet activities on their cot or at the tables that do not disturb the other children around them.

### **2:15pm – 3:00pm | Snack**

Upon waking from nap, children will assist with putting away their naptime belongings, use the potty, and wash hands for snack.

### **3:00pm – 6:00pm | Indoor/Outdoor Play and Departure Time**

Children will again have the opportunity to extend their learning experiences during this time. Outdoor activities include, but are not limited to sand play, riding toys, climbing structures, and teacher-led planned outdoor fun all in a fenced-in, monitored, safe play environment. During this time, parents are arriving to pick up their child to go home. A late afternoon snack will be provided for children in our care past 5:30pm.

## **XIV. Education & Activities Policies**

### **1. Teachers & Assistants**

Red Balloon's teaching team members are trained early childhood education professionals. Lead teachers work with assistant teachers or co-teachers to provide your child with the best learning opportunities possible through many curriculum programs, including Creative Curriculum. Our staff participate each year in continuing education programs and stay current on issues involving the latest in childcare research. Classes and practices that teaching staff are trained in are:

- Wisconsin Registry certified with early childhood education credits
- Education certificates or degrees in Early Childhood Education
- Infant, Child, and Adult CPR/AED certified; including OSHA and bloodborne pathogen training
- First Aid certified
- Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention certified as Mandated Reporters
- Safe Sleep and SIDS Prevention training
- Abusive Head Trauma/Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention certification
- Child Nutrition training through Wisconsin DPI and CACFP
- Curriculum and Child Observation & Assessment training
- Child Guidance techniques
- Fire, Tornado, and Emergency Lockdown training
- Required 15+ hours per year in ongoing continuing education each year
- Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards and Pyramid Model for Social Emotional Development training

All our teaching staff have set professional goals to increase their education and progress up the levels of the Wisconsin Registry through credit courses from an institute

of higher learning. Red Balloon wishes to note to parents that quality teaching staff is more than a level on the Registry. We believe that it not only takes education, but also experience in the field, good instincts, and a nurturing individual with the mission of the heart to work with children. We are committed to finding the right type of person to work with you and your child.

## **2. Experience & Environment**

Red Balloon provides children with a variety of experiences for all age groups. These developmentally appropriate experiences include self-expression and communication, creative expression, large and small muscle development, and focus especially on a child's self-esteem, family culture, and pride in individualism. Red Balloon works to expand each child's individual learning experiences by meeting young children where they are developmentally, both individually and as part of a group and working with them toward challenging, yet achievable goals through daily interactions and learning opportunities.

Teachers are trained to encourage children's progress in all areas of curriculum. However, it is important to note that no child is ever forced to participate. Rather, we invite and encourage children while offering choices for a child that does not want to join a group activity. This respects a child's own developmental needs.

To provide the right environment for children to learn and grow, we first believe that we must create a safe and healthy environment. Our safe settings are inviting and encourage a child to explore their surroundings at their own pace. Children will be encouraged to make their own choices throughout the day and are directed with positive teacher guidance. This learning environment is tucked into the "play day" and based on child-approved themes in your room enriched with photos that reflect different families, abilities, and everyday life. Your child's room must be warm and loving, creating the kind of atmosphere that feels safe and welcoming for the whole family and includes a variety of safe and approved toys. We believe in appropriate physical settings that include large areas to move about as well as places for the child to break away and have some time alone if they choose. Red Balloon is flexible throughout our educational day; we balance indoor and outdoor activities, active and quiet times, and group and individual times.

The center has a fenced-in playground for use by the children of our program. Activities are teacher led as well as child led and offer the children the opportunity for large muscle physical activity, imaginative play, sensory play, block and truck play, and social interactions, to name a few.

All children will have outside play time twice each day unless there is inclement weather. Inclement weather means stormy or severe weather such as heavy rain, temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit, wind chills of 0 degrees Fahrenheit or below for children age 2 and above, or wind chills of 20 degrees Fahrenheit or below for children under age 2.

In addition to daily outdoor time, the children may also enjoy short walking field trips to explore our surroundings. These walks are sometimes planned in advance with a specific permission slip to be signed ahead of the trip by the parent/guardian, but others are decided upon spontaneously on the day. A walking field trip permission form is included in the enrollment packet. Teachers will make every effort to inform parents of these walks via messaging app when the walks are not planned in advance.

We believe that children learn the most by interacting with their environment and the world around them. It is for this reason that we limit all screen time for children at Red Balloon. A preapproved video may be shown as long as it matches the educational theme and is given as a choice to children. Even this is done only once or twice per year.

Our day is planned to help reduce long transitions and standing in lines. Teachers have songs, games, and other activities ready for these times.

A child may move or graduate to another group when they are developmentally ready and is within the age range of the given group. This decision will be a collaborative one between the family, teacher, and Administrative Team.

### **3. Curriculum**

Among various incredible curriculum programs and educational planning resources, Red Balloon uses a curriculum titled Creative Curriculum. This well-researched, theme-based curriculum was implemented beginning in January 2012 and meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards. This flexible curriculum allows our teaching team to plan daily activities based on each individual child's developmental goals. Plans are made at least one month ahead of time but are constantly evolving and being updated to meet the needs and interests of the children in each class. Creative Curriculum provides our teachers with a child-guided curriculum structure for each age group including Seedlings and Buds (infants and toddlers), Sprouts and Saplings (children ages 2 and 3 years), and Trees (children 5 years and above).

Our teachers track each child's progress through assessments and individual child portfolios on an ongoing basis. By regularly reviewing each child's portfolio, our team is able to expand the child's learning and help them reach their next developmental goal. A child's portfolio will follow each child as they progress through the classes at Red Balloon. This allows the next teacher to recognize where the child is at and continue to set more challenging yet achievable goals for each child. When your child leaves Red Balloon to move on to kindergarten, the portfolio will be sent home with you to appreciate the progression of their time with us for years to come.

Parents are encouraged to be a part of the assessment process at any time and especially during our twice-yearly parent/teacher conferences. Parents can take great pleasure in knowing that their children will be well-prepared for kindergarten after attending our early learning program. Every parent feels good about program criteria

that is reflective of many nationally accredited and school district 4K programs throughout Wisconsin and meets the Wisconsin Model Early Learning Standards.

Red Balloon offers consistency in the day with quality standards that are hard to compete with. Each day the children are exposed to learning through music, outdoor play, field trips and visitors, gross motor development, fine motor skills activities, dramatic play, STEM/STEAM, art and creative expression, pre-writing and pre-reading practice, and education in self-help skills such as handwashing, table manners, proper nutrition, and emotional regulation.

Within our weekly lesson plans throughout the year, teachers ensure that curriculum topics are inclusive and embrace diversity in all aspects whenever possible. They present ideas of diverse family structures, various religions and cultural backgrounds, celebrate all abilities and gender expression, and offer a wide variety of sensory and discovery activities. Materials, activities, and interactions in the classrooms are anti-bias and adaptive to the needs of the children in each group to allow everyone to participate and explore their own independence.

#### **4. Socialization**

Making friends is all part of the social development that will happen naturally in your child's day at Red Balloon. Like all new experiences, your child will learn positive social skills along with other children in a similar age group. This first school experience will assist a child to adapt to a lifetime of school experiences to follow. While conflicts with friends will be expected, our teachers will work to guide them in making good choices that will give them solid problem-solving skills. We keep families informed of any conflict or issues that our little friends are having so that parents can help reinforce the positive behaviors and social-emotional regulation at home too. Parents and teachers working together with consistency to nurture children on their journey of becoming friendly, patient, and accepting humans is paramount.

#### **5. Communication**

We provide our families with regular communication about activities in a variety of ways daily, weekly, and monthly. Monthly Parent Newsletters can be found on our website at [redballoonearlylearning.com/newsletter](http://redballoonearlylearning.com/newsletter), or a paper copy may be obtained by request. The newsletter lets you know what's happening that month, whether it be program reminders such as re-enrollment time or any upcoming special event days or field trips. This is also where you will find our menu for the month. Parent bulletin boards and family library areas in the center will display various notices or reminders and also provide a number of resources about our program and other family-friendly goings on around our community. Weekly lesson plans are posted in each classroom for you to view to see what type of learning activities your child will be participating in.

In the fall of 2017, in lieu of weekly/daily notes home, Red Balloon began using an electronic classroom communication smartphone app that allows teachers and parents the opportunity to communicate daily in real time. Teachers are now able to send activity updates, mealtimes, potty/diapering logs, photos, and videos directly to parents,

keeping them updated on what is happening throughout the day. Please note: Photos sent via the app may contain images of other children in the group. If a parent/guardian would prefer not to have their child's image appear in updates sent to other families, we will happily respect that wish. There is also a messaging feature which allows parents and teachers to communicate directly to each other through text message safely within the app as needed. We can also accommodate communication via phone calls and paper notes home for parents that choose not to utilize the smartphone app.

Twice per year, parents are encouraged to participate in a parent/teacher conference for their child(ren). While we encourage regular and ongoing communications between parents and staff as often as possible through the year, a conference can be a great way for teachers and parents to discuss goals for children and how they will work together to help each child meet these goals.

## **6. Family & Community Learning**

Red Balloon takes a family and friends approach to caring for each other. We work hard to be inclusive of each friend we have and celebrate our differences as much as we celebrate our similarities. We start to get to know the child and their family a bit before they even begin in our program through the All About Me sheet and the Family Questionnaire in the enrollment packet. We encourage families to share their unique family traditions and cultures and work to bring that information into our day; this includes various holidays and celebrations. Our planned activities do not focus on any specific holiday but will include traditions of a variety of cultures. We are dedicated to helping families preserve second languages that may be spoken at home. Red Balloon believes in giving lots of TLC and all the things that offer that home-like feeling of connection, security, and consistency. Like home, we offer free play to allow a child to work through issues, make choices, and develop socials skills and self-expression. To assist parent/guardians in their role, we help children learn independence through self-care and self-help skills needed in daily living.

## **XV. Infant & Toddler Care Policies**

Our goal is to provide high-quality care for your infant or toddler by hiring the most loving and nurturing staff. We provide safe and healthy environments with attention given to space, room atmosphere, and content of play equipment. We provide a nurturing environment with trained staff so that your baby doesn't have to wait for attention when it is needed. Safety and health are our top priority, and we strive to keep the program the best in our area for the needed security of your growing child.

Our team of professionals realize how difficult it is as a parent to leave a little one in someone else's care. We work to make the home to daycare transition as smooth as possible by adapting our day to your child's individual schedule and needs. The use of the form Intake for Children Under Two is just one of the steps in ensuring that your child's individual needs are met. We welcome your input and the ability to provide your own personal touch that will personalize the childcare experience for your baby and you. We want your childcare experience with us to be everything you could hope for in

an infant/toddler setting. We understand that often it is harder on the parent to leave for work than it is on the little one that is staying with us.

### **1. Infant/Toddler Teachers & Assistants**

To become qualified in the State of Wisconsin, Infant and toddler teachers (those who care for children birth through 2 years old) are given extra education and training beyond that of our baseline assistant- and teacher-qualifying level that give them the additional knowledge and skills needed to take care of our littlest children. Each lead teacher or assistant teacher who works in our infant/toddler classrooms at Red Balloon has received additional training in infant and toddler care approved by DCF to become qualified to work with children under 2 years of age.

Infant and toddler staff are also always trained in Abusive Head Trauma/Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention and Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention upon hire and regularly thereafter. At no time will a child be handled by a staff member who is frustrated or overwhelmed. Young babies can pick up on adult frustration quite easily; therefore, staff members are trained to recognize signs of stress in themselves and others. They are required to turn care over to another staff or intervene in care if they feel another staff needs a break from the children. Administrators are also fully certified and are available to step in at a moment's notice. If an Administrator is not available, staff may request another teacher switch places.

In our recognition that working with little ones can be stressful, we believe that we have taken steps to help prevent stress in our staff by helping manage and recognize signs of stress and burnout (especially when working with babies who often cry to communicate need) and giving them tools to reduce stress and burnout while helping them learn their own personal limitations. Prevention will create a successful and happy environment for your baby. Giving staff alternatives for stress/burnout, including schedules that fit their own needs and honoring time-off needs, are ways we care for the provider caring for your child.

### **2. Caring for Development**

Infants and toddlers are known in our program as Seedlings and Buds. They will have a regularly scheduled provider, and we strive for as little staff turnover or change as possible. We believe that it is extremely important for your child to see the same provider's face as much as possible in order to gain trust and form a secure connection. Red Balloon follows state licensing guidelines of a classroom ratio of 4 children to every 1 caregiver.

Our mobile infants/toddlers will be free to interact with other children in their respective age groups. If an infant is non-mobile, they will be placed where they can observe other children at play and will experience a change in activity and position approximately every 15-20 minutes (unless sleeping). For example, a child may be moved from the play swing to a teacher's arms to be rocked or fed and then placed on a playmat with toys to explore according to the twenty-minute rotation practice.

Staff will respond to an infant's gestures such as waving, blowing kisses, and reaching to be picked up. Staff will take time to read books and name objects to encourage language skills and use sign language whenever possible, especially at parent request for specific signs to be used. We feel that every moment counts and should be used for communicating and interacting, whether diapering, playing, or eating. To communicate we will sing, use positive facial expressions, and body language. We also play music often to encourage creative expression and further language development.

Staff will use individualized curriculum for each infant and toddler in areas of art, music, stories, and more that are specific to the developmental stages of each child. Staff will engage infants and toddlers in large muscle exercises such as rolling, exercising limbs, assisting infants in sitting or standing, and aiding toddlers in walking, sliding, and even some climbing. Outdoor time will be made available up to twice per day when weather permits for gross motor movement, sensory play, or even a short stroll. Staff will assist infants and toddlers in the use of equipment and use this time for one-on-one games like tossing a ball. All outdoor equipment, such as swings and strollers, will contain safety straps.

Creeping infants and toddlers will be provided with space and opportunities to be mobile and explore. This space will be free of hazards. Our providers will encourage independence in a safe and clean space. At least 3 different types of gross motor equipment will be available for mobile infants and toddlers such as rocking toys, balls, push/pull toys, slides, and crawl-through toys. All toys used by infants and toddlers will be removed from circulation after use to be sanitized before they are reintroduced to the play area in rotation. Note: Bleach sanitizers will only be used in safe ways in accordance with DHFS requirements. Children are kept away from bleach-cleaned items while they dry, and any cleaning products will be kept out of a child's reach at all times.

Infants and toddlers will be encouraged to try a variety of play situations, including sensory play, social play, large motor skills, small muscle development, and audio-visual skills practice. Plush toys, group activities, soft climbing toys, blocks, mirrors, and music will all be used to help meet these developmental growth goals. Infant/toddler staff will also begin the child portfolio of learning that will include learning artifacts and notes about your child and their goals, and ways to extend their learning that will follow with them to every classroom through kindergarten.

### **3. Feeding & Nutrition**

Infants will be fed according to a schedule specified by the parents and/or according to the infant's display of need on their own schedules. Infant feeding times will be used as a special one-on-one time for caregivers to bond with the infant. This includes singing, soft touches, talking, soothing, etc. Parents will complete an Intake for Children Under 2 Years form upon enrollment stating any specific or preferred feeding guides and current typical feeding schedule for the child. Staff will follow the information on this form, and the form will be updated by the parent at least every 3 months or more frequently as needed.

Red Balloon will provide one specific formula that meets USDA requirements for infant nutrition, or a parent may choose to provide their own type of formula for their child. Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to come in and take the time to do so at Red Balloon or bring in bags of breastmilk (fresh or frozen) for their child to consume during their day. Procedures for heating infant formula, breastmilk, and food are posted in each infant area. All food, breastmilk, and formula provided by the child's parents must be labeled with the child's name and the date it was refrigerated or frozen, if applicable. Parents will be notified promptly in the event that their child consumed incorrect breastmilk or formula. Leftover milk or formula is discarded after each feeding and bottles are cleaned and sanitized. A child who is unable to hold a bottle will be held to be fed whenever a bottle is given; a bottle will never be propped.

We will provide all other food including baby cereals, homemade baby food made by our Food Service staff with fresh fruits and vegetables. We use organic produce whenever possible. We will introduce solid foods according to the USDA age appropriateness and the parent's wishes. For toddlers, we use fresh and homemade foods as much as possible and avoid foods that could cause choking such as hard carrots, grapes, or un-cut hot dogs. Foods are always cut up and appropriately sized for a small child. Infants and toddlers will always be watched closely, especially as new foods are introduced, for any possible allergies. Safety straps will be used at all times when an infant is being fed in a highchair. Developmentally appropriate tables and chairs will be used as a child ages.

Staff will cover, date, and refrigerate any parent-provided commercial baby food containers which are opened and any foods prepared in the center which are stored. If not used within 36 hours, leftover food will be discarded.

Toddlers will eat according to scheduled mealtimes, but we will have extra snacks and water available if a child is hungry between meals. Toddlers will be served food according to the Red Balloon menu and we will substitute foods as needed. For example, when a hard vegetable and dip are on the menu, we will substitute with a soft or cooked vegetable.

Staff encourage children to experiment with self-feeding with their hands and spoons as they show readiness. Eating utensils and cups are scaled to the size and developmental level of the children. We also encourage a variety of foods to encourage the children to try new tastes and textures as developmentally ready.

#### **4. Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care**

Because breastfeeding has been shown to be the superior form of infant nutrition, providing a multitude of health benefits to both infant and mother, and because breastfeeding parents need ongoing support, Red Balloon is recognized through the Wisconsin Breastfeeding Coalition as a Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care program in the state of Wisconsin. In partnership with the WBC's initiative in support of breastfeeding families, Red Balloon subscribes to the following policy.

**Breastfeeding mothers shall be provided a place to breastfeed or express their milk.** Breastfeeding mothers, including employees, shall be provided a private and sanitary place to breastfeed their babies or express their milk. This area provided an electrical outlet, comfortable chair, and nearby access to running water.

**A refrigerator will be made available for storage of expressed breast milk.** Breastfeeding mothers and employees may store their expressed breast milk in the center refrigerator. Mothers should provide their own containers, clearly labeled with name and date. The center will follow guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control in ensuring breast milk is properly treated to avoid waste. Universal Precautions are not required when handling breast milk.

**Sensitivity will be shown to breastfeeding mothers and their babies.** Red Balloon is committed to providing ongoing support to breastfeeding mothers, including providing an opportunity to breastfeed their baby in the morning and evening and holding off giving a bottle, if possible, when mom is due to arrive. Artificial baby milks (formulas) and solid foods will not be provided unless the mother has requested. Babies will be held closely when feeding and a bottle will never be propped.

**Staff shall be trained in handling human milk.** All childcare staff will be trained in the proper storage and handling of human milk, as well as ways to support breastfeeding mothers.

**Breastfeeding employees shall be provided flexible breaks to accommodate breastfeeding or pumping to provide breast milk for their children.** The time allowed would not exceed the normal time allowed for lunch and breaks. For time above and beyond normal lunch and breaks, sick leave must be used, or the employee can come in a little earlier or leave a little late to make up the time.

**Breastfeeding promotion information will be displayed.** The center will provide information on breastfeeding, including the names of area resources should questions or problems arise. In addition, positive promotion of breastfeeding will be on display at the center.

## **5. Safe Sleep Practices & Crib Safety**

Infants and toddlers will be rocked, cuddled, or comforted as they direct us, usually through fussing, crying, and non-verbal communication while they transition into sleeping times. When babies are in our care, we soon learn their unique and quite individual style of communicating with us.

Soft music will be played and, whenever possible, lights will be turned down each afternoon from at least 12:00pm to 2:00pm to create a comforting atmosphere and prepare even the youngest of children for routines that will be part of their preschool years. This does not mean that babies must sleep during these times; babies are on their own schedules for napping.

Your child will be moved to a crib once they have fallen asleep, unless we have a signed statement from your child's doctor stating they can sleep in a swing or bouncy seat.

Sleeping infants will always be put to sleep on their backs in accordance with the Back to Sleep program to help reduce the risk of SIDS. All staff are trained in SIDS Prevention upon hire and regularly thereafter. See a member of the Red Balloon Administrative Team for more information on the Back to Sleep program and for more information on reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Your infant will be moved from their crib within 10 minutes or less upon awakening to be diapered, fed, or join in play (sooner if crying). Our providers will attend to your infant within 3 minutes if they have been disturbed or discomforted while sleeping. There may be times when the response time is not exact, depending upon the needs of the room at any given time, but every effort is put forth to make sure all response times are quick and child-centered.

At Red Balloon, we use only cribs that meet Consumer Product Safety Commission Standards. A safe crib has no missing, loose, broken, or improperly installed screws, brackets, or other hardware on the crib or the mattress support. There should be no more than 2 3/8 inches between crib slats so a baby's body cannot fit through the slats. The crib should have a firm, snug-fitting mattress so a baby cannot get trapped between the mattress and the side of the crib. It should also have no corner posts over 1/16 of an inch above the end panels (unless they are over 16 inches high for a canopy) so a baby cannot catch clothing and strangle. There should be no cut out areas on the headboard or footboard so a baby's head cannot get trapped between mattress and crib. The crib should also have no splinters, or rough edges, and should have no cracked or peeling paint to prevent lead poisoning.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission's document #5020, unsafe, used, or old cribs could be deadly. Each year, about 50 babies suffocate or strangle when they become trapped between broken crib parts or in cribs with other, unsafe designs. A safe crib is the best place to put a baby to sleep, so look for a crib with a certification seal showing that it meets national safety standards. If a crib does not meet these guidelines, it may not be used by children enrolled in a childcare center and should not be used at home.

## **6. Diapering**

At Red Balloon, we follow the standard procedures for diapering a child as the State of Wisconsin and NAEYC mandates. Diaper checks for soiled and wet diapers are done regularly throughout the day and immediately following a nap, and children are changed promptly in a reasonable amount of time once they have soiled their diaper. Children's hands are washed before and after diapering.

All diapering will be done on a designated surface used only for diapering. The surface will never be used for any other purpose and food will never be near it. The surface will be cleaned with soap and water and disinfected with bleach solution before and after each use. Children will be moved away from the diaper area before bleaching until the surface is dry to keep the child at a distance from the fumes of the bleach solution. The diapering surface will contain a strap and guard rail to prevent infants/toddlers from falling. Gloves for changing are used when necessary. Attempts are made to keep changing areas 3 feet from any other area whenever possible, and the diapering area is located near sinks for ease in handwashing. Our providers NEVER leave children unattended at the changing table.

Soiled disposable diapers will be placed in plastic-lined containers with a tight-fitting lid which remains closed when not in use. It will be opened by a step process and the bag will be changed daily. Soiled cloth diapers will be placed in a specially lined bag provided by the child's parents and sent home daily.

Each time a child's diaper is changed, it is logged in the classroom communication app. Parents will supply diapers (either cloth or disposable) and baby wipes for their child. Reminders for additional diapers and wipes will be sent via message in the app, a note sent home, and/or in person before the last is used. If a child does not have diapers and/or wipes, replacement diapers and wipes will be used, and the account will be charged a small fee for each item Red Balloon supplies.

## **7. Communication**

Red Balloon staff will communicate with parents/guardians each day with verbal reports at drop-off and pick-up as well as in the classroom communication app throughout the day to share how the day is going, share fun activities the children participated in, log meals, log diapers, note naps, etc. We encourage parents to message the staff if they have any questions or important messages throughout the day. For families who do not use the app, paper notes can be provided.

## **XVI. School Age Care Policies**

Our goal is to provide care for your school age child in a setting that feels different from preschool. Older children often do not wish to be associated with "baby care" or "preschool" because they see themselves beyond that state of life, and we can't blame them. Red Balloon believes in creating an atmosphere for school age care that allows the child to feel that they are involved in making the decisions that determine their day in our care. The school age program serves children that are enrolled in public or private schools in kindergarten through fifth grade; children enrolled in preschool programs through public or private schools are not considered school age.

Contracted school age options are Before & After School Care and/or Non-School Day Care during each school year September through June, or Summer Day Camp Care during the summer months June through August. Each option requires individual contracts.

If your child will be traveling to and/or from Red Balloon while attending school, an additional Transportation Permission form and an Alternate Arrival/Release Agreement form will also be required on file to allow us to receive your child off a bus into our care or to put your child on a bus from our centers. Red Balloon does not organize any school bussing services; these must be set up by the parent in coordination with the school and/or bus company. Red Balloon simply serves as a “bus stop” location.

School age program availability is extremely limited and may not always be offered, as it is highly contingent on sufficient staffing. If school age care cannot be offered for a period of time, currently enrolled families will be notified in advance of the change.

### **1. Before & After School Care**

Care is provided in the mornings before a child would be transported to their public or private school and/or in the afternoons when the child arrives from their school until they are picked up from our center by their parent/guardian. These school age children have the opportunity for outdoor play, games, social time, and various other planned activities, or allow them time to relax and unwind from their school day and have a light afternoon snack with us. They will be allowed a place and time to do homework if the parent/guardian desires.

### **2. Non-School Day Care**

Non-school days are planned in advance for the year when public and private schools are closed. Client accounts will be billed monthly accordingly. Children that are contracted for non-school days in any amount are considered contracted for any unplanned snow days that may occur. Our school-age teachers will have curriculum activities planned for those school-age children who will be in attendance those days.

## **XVII. Child Attendance & Tracking**

Daily attendance tracking takes place when a child is signed into the Procare system by the parents/guardians upon arrival and signed out upon departure; this is done by using the sign-in computer at the center or by QR code mobile device scan. Each client is given a sign-in code so that they can set up a number pass code in the Procare computer system. Tracking child attendance is very important for a number of reasons, so we ask clients to please remember to sign your child(ren) in and out each time they arrive and depart.

For added security, the classroom teacher will also sign each child in and out of the classroom on a Red Balloon attendance tracking form used daily by writing the times in and out as children arrive and depart. This information will be used to complete ongoing classroom monitoring. To monitor each class, face-to-face roll call is taken by the staff throughout the day any time a child is moved from point A to point B; whether it is to the bathroom, the playground, on/off a bus, etc. Additionally, this attendance form helps Red Balloon Administration track meals served to children, cross reference child attendance for billing purposes, and allows for staff-to-child ratio supervision.

If your child has not been dropped off around their usual time, or it has passed 9:00am, our staff will make attempts to contact you via app messaging and/or phone call to check on the well-being of your family and to inquire if your child will indeed be in attendance that day. Red Balloon staff will also contact you if your child is still in attendance past their usual contracted time to ensure all is well and the child does have someone picking him up that day. Please make sure that your contact information is always up to date.

Unless prior notification has been made, if your child is not in attendance by 9:30am and the staff attempts to contact the family have received no response, your child will be removed from the daily attendance count and will no longer be able to attend Red Balloon that day. This is to ensure our staff-to-child ratios are in compliance.

## **1. Child Pick-Up Procedures**

As detailed in the above Health & Safety Administration section of this handbook, security systems exist in Red Balloon facilities as an added safety for the often extra busy time at the end of the day when your child is being picked up. Please feel free to discuss the security system while on a tour of the facility or if you have any further questions about it. Our locked exterior doors and alarm system allows access only to those with authorized access, tracks whose key has been used to enter our buildings, allows visitors using the doorbell buzzer to be visually monitored, and alarms will sound to alert us if a child attempts to exit the building unattended. In addition to our staff carefully monitoring who arrives to pick up a child and checking photo identification of unknown persons against the child's authorized pick-up list, the surveillance camera system constantly monitors all comings and goings during the day as well.

When your child is dropped off or picked up from a field trip, or any site outside of the building where signing children in and out of the Procare system is not possible, the parent/guardian or authorized person should make sure that the teacher is aware that the child is arriving or departing with a quick touch-base conversation or even exchanging a wave of acknowledgement. The pick-up person may also be required to sign or initial the attendance tracking form that the staff carry with them wherever they go.

## **2. Authorized Pick-Up Persons**

In hopes of eliminating all possibilities of a stranger or unauthorized person picking up a child from our center, our first line of defense is each child's Authorized Pick-Ups List on their Emergency Card. Children will be released only to the parents/guardians or those persons whom a parent/guardian has designated, in writing, as authorized to pick up their child from Red Balloon. These authorized persons will be listed on each child's Emergency Card which is kept with the child's group at all times.

All staff are familiar with the people on this list and make efforts to get to know all common pick-up persons for the children in their group. Staff will never release a child to an unauthorized person; the staff member is responsible for making sure that any person picking up a child is indeed authorized to do. When a person other than a

parent/guardian arrives to pick up a child, they will need to have photo identification, usually a driver's license, to prove they are on the authorized list.

If a parent/guardian wishes to make changes or add someone to the authorized pick-up list, they must provide that information in writing in advance of the child being picked up by that person from Red Balloon.

### **3. Unknown or Unauthorized Persons**

If a person arrives to pick up a child and that person is not recognized or known to the staff member, the staff member must check the person's photo identification against the child's authorized pick-up persons list on the child's Emergency Card, and/or ask another staff member if the person is known to them. Even if the unknown person has a key card to enter the building, it does not necessarily guarantee they are an authorized pick-up person. Our teachers will never make an assumption; whenever in doubt, staff will always be extra cautious and ask the person for identification to cross-reference with the authorized list.

Should a person unknown to our staff fail to have identification on them at the time of pick-up or is not listed on the Emergency Card (even if they verbally identify themselves as a parent, family member, or friend of the child), our staff will accompany the person to speak with a member of the Administration or staff in charge. The child would not be allowed to depart with said person, and staff would then contact the parent/guardian by phone call and/or messaging immediately. Red Balloon will need to get in contact with the child's parent/guardian and insist that we either get authorization in writing (via email or classroom communication app), that the parent themselves come to get the child, or someone that is present on the authorized list come to get the child instead.

Authorizations should not be taken over the phone; it must be in writing. Staff will NEVER allow a child to leave with an unauthorized person *even if the child knows them*. Failure to reach a parent/guardian would result in an attempt to reach one of the listed emergency contact persons. Attempts to call will continue until the center is closed, the pick-up person returns having obtained proper identification, or an alternate authorized pick-up person has arrived. If we cannot reach any persons with authority to pick up your child after the center is closed, we will contact social services 30 minutes beyond closing our center for the evening. This is not a choice we would like to have to make, so please ensure ahead of time who will be picking up your child for any given day.

Persons that are not permitted to have contact with your child(ren) are taken very seriously at Red Balloon. To assist you, Red Balloon requires a copy of any legal documentation (restraining orders, court orders, etc.) to aid in enforcing the client's request, especially if the person is the child's other parent. We also require a photo of the person who is restricted from contact, in order to post with our staff notification so they can more easily make proper identification if the person was to arrive on the premises.

#### **4. Shared Custody Policy**

Red Balloon Early Learning Center will honor court orders that are specific to the child-parent relationship. We will respect the wishes of clients who are separated or divorced with shared or joint custody of minor children that attend our program to the best of our ability with respect to the well-being of the child(ren) involved. If at any time Red Balloon feels the best interest of the child(ren) is not being served, a meeting with both parents will be requested to determine a better approach to the situation.

Clients need to distinguish which parent is to be designated as the parent called in emergencies and other “need” situations (such as when paperwork need to be completed, or something needs to be authorized). That parent must then agree to keep the other parent informed.

Red Balloon will separate accounts and contracts for families who choose this option and only if the accounts can be split reasonably. When accounts remain shared and each party agrees to pay equally, it is the responsibility of the parents to track who is paying on the account. Each party will receive the same notice of due announcements. Each party will be affected equally. It is important that parents work closely to make timely payments in shared accounts so that their child’s care services stay consistent.

Items such as clothing kept in the child’s cubby that are to be kept separate are the sole responsibility of the clients, and not the child’s teacher.

Each parent has the right to see all information in the child’s file and log.

Each parent has the right to pick up their child at Red Balloon unless documented otherwise by the courts. Specific pick-up schedules are between parents and our staff are not responsible for distinguishing who is to pick up on given days. When pick-up times are violated according to specific agreement, the parents have a right to file a grievance with the courts, but Red Balloon will not participate nor discriminate in disputes between parents. For example, if a parent picks up a child earlier or later than a time agreed upon between both parties, this does not translate into the center being at fault for any reason.

### **XVIII. Emergency Procedures**

A childcare provider’s timely response in the event of an emergency situation is essential to the success of carrying out proper emergency plans and procedures; preparation is key. All center staff are made familiar with all emergency plans and procedures upon accepting a position at Red Balloon to be sure they are prepared to use their trained skills and judgment to jump into action when circumstances arise. With this thorough training and preparedness, our staff are able to remain calm and collected while carrying out the necessary emergency procedures with the children in our care. For emergency transportation, Red Balloon is within 10 minutes of emergency medical assistance. In most cases, a vehicle is also present at the center, whether it is a personal vehicle or the Red Balloon company vehicle, which could be used if

necessary. We are fortunate to have two major medical facilities in our area. Gundersen Lutheran and Mayo Health Care Systems have facilities in both La Crosse and Onalaska. Parents/guardians will designate on the Child Enrollment Form at which medical facility your child's records are kept and the name of their primary physician. This information will also be included on each child's Emergency Card which is always with the child and their group, especially during emergency situations.

### **1. Evacuation, Off-Site Assembly/Relocation & Reunification**

Fire drills are a mandated practice in every early childhood education program that is regulated by the State. However redundant a drill or practice may become, every teacher or staff member working with young children will never take the practice lightly. An emergency evacuation drill is practiced each month so that in the event of a true emergency, the staff working together for the safety of the children can move safely, calmly, and in a timely manner to the designated safe area. Our goal is that children's lives can be saved in a real emergency simply because staff members are so well-trained and well-practiced. The safety of a child is the single most important part of our job here at Red Balloon.

On- and Off-site evacuation circumstances include fire emergencies, structural failure, flood emergencies, bomb threat/suspicious packages, or hazardous materials release emergencies. In the event of such an emergency evacuation situation being carried out, staff will first call 9-1-1 to identify the location of our center, describe the emergency and state that the center is evacuating, and identify the location of the off-site assembly area. Attendance of the children in each group is taken immediately at the first designated evacuation area to ensure all individuals are accounted for, and then the entire group will proceed to the pre-designated relocation site. Attendance is always taken again when that site is reached, and staff will stay with their group while waiting for emergency services to arrive. Parents will be notified of the situation via classroom communication app and/or by phone as soon as possible once the children have been safely and fully evacuated.

If the event that the emergency is not able to be quickly and safely contained and the circumstances require families to come collect their children following the emergency, the children will need to be sent home until further notice. Red Balloon staff will contact every child's parent/guardian so they are made aware of the emergency situation and are informed of the location of the family reunification site to which the children have been relocated. As families arrive for pick-up, staff will release children only to persons authorized on that child's Emergency Card (checking proof of identity as needed). Red Balloon staff will stay in supervision of their group until every child has been picked up and properly signed out; the group is never left unattended.

When evacuating children under the age of 2 years, staff will utilize emergency evacuation cribs to exit the building. Evacuation cribs are specially designed to move through the building on wheels, over doorway thresholds and outdoor surfaces, and can hold 4-6 infants or toddlers, depending on the size and abilities of each child (ie. able to sit on their own). Children with special needs may also have specific methods for

evacuation depending on the individual needs of each child. Each staff member will be familiar with the particular needs of all the children in their classroom group and will plan ahead for possible situations that will require special accommodations during emergency situations. Teaching staff, the Administrative Team, and the parent/guardian of the child will work together to develop a plan that will meet that child's needs.

## **2. Lockdown/Shelter-In-Place (Inclement Weather or Human-Caused)**

Lockdown/Shelter-In-Place circumstances include severe inclement weather such as a tornado or severe thunderstorm, or a human-caused emergency such as an active shooter or armed intruder situation in or around our location. Designated safe areas within our building are used for lockdown/shelter-in-place procedures.

Lockdown/shelter-in-place drills are also practiced at least monthly at Red Balloon with staff and all children.

In the event of an emergency lockdown/shelter-in-place situation being carried out, while all children are immediately moved to their designated safe area and attendance is being taken to ensure the presence of all individuals in your group, staff and/or Administration will call 9-1-1 to identify our location, describe the situation and state that the center is currently locking down, and will provide a detailed description of the threat. The entire group will then remain in their interior safe zone until the threat has passed, it becomes unsafe to stay, or until emergency services have arrived and they are instructed otherwise. After a weather event, staff will watch for threats such as fallen power lines, structural collapse, or active fire concerns. If the area around their group becomes unsafe and any such threats are present, staff will swiftly and carefully move the group outside of the area and proceed with the above emergency evacuation and reunification procedures.

When assisting children under the age of 2 years during a shelter-in-place, staff will utilize emergency evacuation cribs to take the children to their safe area. Evacuation cribs are specially designed to move through the building on wheels, over doorway thresholds and outdoor surfaces, and can hold 4-6 infants or toddlers, depending on the size and abilities of each child (ie. able to sit on their own). Children with special needs may also have specific methods for taking shelter depending on the individual needs of each child. Each staff member will be familiar with the particular needs of all the children in their classroom group and will plan ahead for possible situations that will require special accommodations during emergency situations. Teaching staff, the Administrative Team, and the parent/guardian of the child will work together to develop a plan that will meet that child's needs.

If a true weather event has passed through, such as a tornado, Red Balloon staff will assess any damage. Staff will remain calm, check the children in their group first for any signs of injury, and respond accordingly using their level of First Aid/CPR training if necessary. Attempts to contact emergency services and parents/guardians will be continued, but in a true weather emergency, it is very possible cellular services may not be functional in the area. Following the emergency event, the above detailed

procedures for relocation and family reunification are followed until all children have been reunited with their family and properly released from the care of Red Balloon staff.

### **3. Building Utilities Services Loss**

In the event of a power outage/loss of electricity event, parents will be contacted via classroom communication app, phone, email, or text message to be made aware of the situation. The Administrative Team will make a determination on if the center can operate safely, taking into consideration the extent of the outage, potential window of time before electricity is restored, weather conditions, etc. If necessary, parents or emergency contacts will be alerted to make arrangements for their child to be picked up from the center if the building is deemed unsafe to continue operation. If the loss of electricity will be long term (30 minutes or longer), a member of the Administrative Team or the person in charge may decide to close the center for the remainder of the day or until services are safely restored. If the program will need to be closed for an extended period, parents/guardians will be notified of the severity of the loss and the next steps to take.

In the event of a failure of water utility services, the water company and/or plumbing services will be contacted for assistance. Every attempt will be made to restore water functionality immediately or to provide an alternate source of water for drinking, handwashing, and flushing toilets if possible. Parents will be contacted via classroom communication app, phone, email, or text message to be made aware of the situation. The Administrative Team will make a determination on if the center can operate safely, taking into consideration the extent/nature of the failure, potential window of time before water utilities are restored, weather conditions, etc. If necessary, parents or emergency contacts will be alerted to make arrangements for their child to be picked up from the center if the building is deemed unsafe to continue operation. If the water functionality will not be restored within 2 hours, a member of the Administrative Team or the person in charge may decide to close the center for the remainder of the day or until services are safely restored. If the program will need to be closed for an extended period, parents/guardians will be notified of the severity of the loss and the next steps to take.

In the event of a failure of building heat services, children will be made comfortable by putting on coats and additional garments of clothing if temperature is dropping, and the heating company will be contacted for assistance. Parents will be contacted via classroom communication app, phone, email, or text message to be made aware of the situation. The Administrative Team will make a determination on if the center can operate safely, taking into consideration the extent of the failure, potential window of time before heat utilities are restored, weather conditions, etc. If necessary, parents or emergency contacts will be alerted to make arrangements for their child to be picked up from the center if the building is deemed unsafe to continue operation. If the heat functionality will not be restored swiftly, or if the building temperature drops below 67 degrees Fahrenheit, a member of the Administrative Team or the person in charge may decide to close the center for the remainder of the day or until services are restored. If the program will need to be closed for an extended period, parents/guardians will be notified of the severity of the loss and the next steps to take

In the event of a loss of telephone services, the phone company will be contacted via cell phone for assistance; the center will always have access to at least one cell phone during program hours of operation. Parents will be contacted via classroom communication app or email to be made aware of the situation and instructed on alternative ways to contact Red Balloon center staff if needed. Red Balloon staff will keep families informed and updated on the situation until regular service is restored.

## **XIV. Child Guidance Policies**

### **1. Positive Child Guidance**

Red Balloon Early Learning Center employees act on the belief that effective discipline comes from caring adults in a positive environment. We believe that children model what they see adults doing and guide our own actions and words in accordance with this conviction. We believe that rules established with and for the children should be learned and easily understood so that we set children up for success. Guidance should be administered in a friendly, firm, fair, and consistent manner that allows children to feel respected, show respect in return, and gain control of self.

Crying and fussing are a given in an early childhood program and are a way of communicating for all children when they just don't have the words. Whether it be at drop-off when parents are headed to work, during an argument with a friend over a toy, out of tiredness, or when just having a hard moment, our teachers will assist children in soothing themselves in a calm, positive way. Various techniques to soothe an upset child can include offering an extra cuddle, taking a short walk, asking questions to engage the child, asking them to be a helper, distracting them with a toy or activity, singing, rocking in a chair, playing a game, etc.

Our goal is to provide a positive role model for your children and to be a support network for each parent/guardian. We will work with families to strive for consistency so that children have the best chance of success in life. Red Balloon staff use only various forms of positive child guidance in our center. We will create a positive classroom climate by posting rules that are stated positively, such as "Use your walking feet" instead of "No running". Our staff will create a classroom environment that allows for clear guidelines by using things like classroom arrangement, variety, and clearly posted expectations with words and visual cues. Red Balloon teachers will use techniques such as redirection or substitution to guide a child through an issue; sometimes they will also need to ignore a behavior if it is of no consequence and does not interfere with others, as this will often stop the unwanted behavior when attention is not provided. We will always use active listening and allow a child to talk about the conflict and come up with their own solutions on how to resolve it; the teacher will restate what the child is saying to show understanding while prompting the child to keep thinking and talking it through. While working through an issue or conflict, we will provide the child with choices and consequences accordingly. Red Balloon staff will always offer the children praise and encouragement to acknowledge the good behaviors. Staff are constantly role modeling so the children can see how to calmly solve a problem through self-control and good

decisions. At no time is any form of punishment tolerated at Red Balloon Early Learning Centers, Inc.

## **2. The Home & School Link**

It is imperative that we are consistent with positive child guidance between home and school so that children develop strong, healthy attachments and the best possible start in life, and we will strive to work with parents toward that goal. We promise to listen when you are concerned and to seek more information in your area of concern or share our own expertise. If necessary, we can always set up a personal plan for your child to ensure we are all moving forward together. If our staff notice behaviors that concern or worry us, we will track it and keep regular notes in your child's log. We will seek and share any knowledge in all areas that would benefit all involved. Our staff will continually communicate with you via messaging, notes, home, by email or phone, but most especially with face-to-face conversations. We will provide you with portfolio updates, behavioral successes and concerns, and make time to establish mutual goals for your child, both during our parent/teacher conferences as well as any time you request to set up a meeting. Red Balloon can refer families to classes that are affordable or free so that we can all stay updated and informed in relevant areas that improve the life of children. We respect the uniqueness of all families and honor family traditions, languages, and cultures, and we welcome the sharing of information so that we can have a fully inclusive program. Red Balloon staff will always speak positively about you and the other adults in your child's life, and we ask that you communicate about us in the same regard when speaking in front of your child. Trusting each other is not only the key to helping your child feel more secure, it is the critical link from home to school and vice versa.

## **3. Redirection & Breaks**

If a child requires redirection, their attention will be directed to a different activity. This is our first choice of guiding behaviors when conflict arises. However, when children continue to display inappropriate behaviors in a group setting, we recognize that often they simply just need time away from the group to collect themselves and think about other choices they could be making. In these cases, often a child is overtired or simply not in control of their emotions in the moment and is not benefiting from redirection. If this is the case, it's simply time for a break.

Time away from the group, or taking a break, will be used within the classroom and it is only used for children that are age 3 and older. At this age, they are better able to understand what the need for taking a break is all about. Time spent away from the group may be used when a child repeatedly makes choices that do not respect themselves, others, or property. In this type of situation, a child is reminded of the rule they are not following, and the child will be informed that their choices need to change or they will need to take a break or be removed from the situation. Oftentimes, a simple reminder that we have rules for our safety is enough to effect a behavioral change. If a child does take a break from the group, after no longer than 3 minutes, if the child is ready to talk, the teacher will actively listen and talk the child through a plan to return to the group after reviewing what happened. We work to keep this short, simple, and child-

directed. If the child does not wish to talk, the teacher will review what happened and ask if the child is ready to return to the group. If the child does not wish to return to the group, the teacher will allow the child to continue with the break in a reasonable space that the child chooses and remind the child that they will be there when they are ready and want to talk.

We ask that parents note that not all children are the same, nor are all behavior situations; in the above detailed positive guidance techniques, what works for one child may not work for the next. However, at Red Balloon, the general practice of taking a break from the group remains the same.

Actions that may be psychologically, emotionally, or physically painful, discomforting, dangerous, or potentially injurious are prohibited. Even at a parent's request, the following actions are prohibited:

- Spanking, hitting, pinching, shaking, or inflicting any other form of corporal punishment
- Verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family
- Blinding, binding, or trying to restrict movement
- Enclosing in a confined space such as a closet, locked room, box, or similar cubicle
- Withholding or forcing meals, snacks, or nap
- Punishing for lapses in toilet training
- Using lemon juice, vinegar, etc. for curbing biting problems
- Time out/time away for children under the age of 3 years; for children age 3 and up, the maximum length of time for a break is 3 minutes

We wish to reinforce that we do not feel that any kind of child guidance technique is effective when done in anger. The children in our care will always be praised for making positive choices and staff will be watching to "catch them being good" often so that they gain positive self-esteem and learn better self-control and emotional regulation.

#### **4. Behavioral Challenges**

At times, children with specific behavior concerns may need to be recognized and addressed when the behavior is not allowing the child to adapt well socially. With the intent of determining if any patterns are present, teachers will document behaviors in children where concerns exist, and the Administrative Team will be kept aware of all behavioral concerns and challenges. Significant behavior concerns include repeated behaviors that hurt others, impose self-inflicted hurt, or the damaging of property. Should such an occasion arise, it is determined that it is in the best interest of the child to remain at Red Balloon, the Administrative Team, the teachers, and the child's parents would then meet and determine together the need to initiate an individualized guidance plan for the child and their family.

In such a case where very aggressive or violent behavior is present, Red Balloon may require that a child have professional intervention with a doctor, social worker, or child counselor to create an individualized guidance plan with a team that is specialized. With

the parent's written permission, professionals working with a child in our program will be allowed and encouraged to be present in our program for observation and other services. They will further be encouraged to guide the child's teacher and parents to work toward a consistent plan for the child's behavioral well-being.

Guidance plans are intended to give clear guidelines for expected behavior and outline specific goals for the child regarding their behavior. Child guidance plans also include clearly stated consequences when the child's behavior is not in accordance with the classroom behavioral expectations and/or the child's individual goals. Guidance plans are created to support the child, teaching staff, and family with the intended result of benefitting the child's social interactions and future classroom success. Child guidance plans will be re-evaluated every 90 days, or more often if any person involved feels that it may be in the child's best interest. Copies of the child guidance plans will be signed by the teacher, Administrator, parent/guardian, and any other professional involved if applicable. Parent/guardian will be given a copy. Parents/guardians who fail to cooperate with the child guidance policy may be terminated from the program without notice.

## **5. Biting Policy**

Biting is a common occurrence in any childcare setting. When a biting incident occurs, there are many upset feelings. Parents of the child who is bitten, parents of the child biting, and their teachers all want the behavior to end as quickly as possible. When it does occur, we take it very seriously and try to find the underlying reason why the child bit in order to try stopping the behavior quickly and assist in developing more appropriate and positive social skills. As with any behavior concern, we will use a number of strategies to keep the biting from continuing. Age-appropriate strategies may include teething toys, opportunities to learn sharing, multiples of a favorite classroom toy, language activities, and positive role modeling, among many others.

Children bite for many reasons. Children this age often do not have the verbal skills to express themselves and use biting as a way of communicating. They can bite because they are frustrated, excited, overwhelmed, teething, tired, happy, sad, bored, etc.

When a child bites another child, we will intervene immediately and help the child who was bitten. Staff will wash the bitten area with soap and water and apply ice when needed. Often an app message or a phone call will be sent to let the parents know about the incident and how it was handled. An incident report will be written for the child that was bitten, as well as the child who did the biting. We will talk briefly with the child who bit with a calm but firm reminder that we don't bite because biting hurts and then remove the child from the situation for a brief period of time.

Biting incidents will be closely monitored by teachers and Administration. More than two bites in one week may prompt staff to begin documenting in a behavior log, including what is happening at the time of the bite, what the staff are doing to address the biting, communication with parents/guardians of the biter, and all follow-up that is done. If the biting behavior becomes excessive, the child will be sent home for the day. If the biting

continues, within one month of the time the biting began (sooner, if necessary), we will meet with the parents of the child who is biting and the teacher to discuss how best we can work together to help end the behavior and come up with a plan. Most children resolve the biting behavior as they begin to develop their communication skills. However, should this continue without improvement, we must take further steps to ensure the safety of the other children in our care. We may refer the child to a health professional or require that the child that is biting finds another learning environment that will better meet the child's individual needs by ending care.

## **6. Suspected Abuse or Neglect**

By law, all staff working in a childcare center are considered mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. If any staff suspects or knows of child abuse or neglect, a report will be made to the proper authorities. Our staff are trained and recertified bi-yearly in how to recognize child abuse and the proper ways to make a report. If, as a parent, you ever feel upset to the extent that you do not feel in control of your emotions, consider asking another adult to step in and help handle the situation. We recommend a firm but calm and controlled voice that is matter of fact and decisive. We strongly encourage consistency and follow-through for effectiveness in all aspects of guidance.

## **XX. Transportation Policies**

### **1. Parent/Guardian Transportation**

Our first responsibility is to protect the health, welfare, and safety of the children in our care. When parents/guardians drop off and pick up their children, like you, we want to make sure that the children are transported safely. Therefore, children who may be put at risk through transportation by another adult will be taken very seriously. Situations such as lack of appropriate car seats or child car restraints; any visible impairment that indicates an adult may not be able to drive safely, including but not limited to the inability to walk straight, slurring words, or extreme agitation; or known or suspected use of alcohol or drugs by persons picking up a child, including smelling alcohol or drugs on or around the person driving.

The above situations can create unsafe transportation for the child(ren). We are not interested in placing judgment on any person; however, if in our opinion, the child cannot be safely transported to or from Red Balloon, we will ask the parent/guardian or authorized pick-up person not to transport the child. For the safety of the child, our staff can contact individuals on the child's authorized pick-ups list and ask that they pick up the child(ren) instead, we can call a cab to transport at the client's expense, or we can ask that the person leaves and returns with the required safety seats if that is the concern. A late pick-up fee may be added in some of these circumstances if applicable.

If the pick-up person refuses these options and insists on transporting the child(ren), Red Balloon teachers and/or Administration will contact law enforcement and report the incident as we are required to do so by law as mandated reporters.

## **2. Center-Provided Transportation & Field Trips**

Red Balloon may utilize an area school bus company for field trip transportation. Before agreeing to a contract with any bus company, Administration will ensure that all mandatory licensing requirements are met. All vehicles must have proof of insurance and must conduct vehicle safety inspections at least yearly.

Before any field trip outside the center, Red Balloon will get prior written permission from each child's parent. This form must have the location of the trip, the date and time of the trip, the name of the bus company, the reason for the trip, and the cost of the trip if applicable. Each permission form will contain a list of the names of each child in the group in attendance on the field trip, a parent's signature granting permission, and a parent's phone number.

In addition to the attendance tracking form and the permission form, each classroom will also carry an Emergency Card for each child in their group containing the list of authorized pick-up persons and emergency contact information, as well as an Emergency First-Aid Kit.

Staff will ensure that all children remain seated during the bus ride and will assist with keeping the noise level down so as not to distract the driver. If the bus is equipped with child safety restraints, they will be used. No field trip may be more than 60 minutes in length in one direction.

Roll call will be conducted at various times in addition to counting the children multiple times throughout the duration of the trip, both on and off the bus, to ensure all children are present and accounted for. Times that roll call and/or counting will be done are before leaving the center, when seated on the bus, upon arrival, many times during the off-site activity, when returning to the bus, and upon return to the center and classroom.

At the end of a field trip, the last staff member off the bus will do a walk-through from the back of the bus to the front to ensure every child has vacated the vehicle and all personal items have been removed. At no time will a child be left alone in any vehicle.

## **XXI. Withdrawal & Dismissal**

A client choosing to end or change their contract for childcare services may withdraw from the program by providing the Administration with a two-week written notice in advance of the last day of attendance. Upon receipt of the two-week notice, the Administrator will discontinue charges for services after billing for the last two weeks from the date the written notice was received. Most clients will have already prepaid this two-week notice as a deposit upon initial enrollment and will see this reflected in the final charges. Failure to show for care is not considered an ending to the contract.

Red Balloon Administration choosing to end service for childcare may do so with or without a two-week notice. With that said, please note that Red Balloon values every

child and every family without discrimination and will work very hard to keep all children in our program. Reasons for termination include failure to pay tuition and/or fees, failure to complete required forms, failure to observe center rules and policies, excessive unexcused absenteeism, inappropriate extreme behaviors (such as yelling, screaming, and or threatening children or staff), or any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children or staff. If at any time it becomes apparent that a child is not benefitting from their group childcare situation and it cannot be resolved in a cooperative effort between the parents/guardians and the program, ending the contract for services may be the option the client or Administration may choose.

Dismissal given by Red Balloon Administration will be a two-week notice whenever possible. The client is responsible for making payments during the two-week notice period even if the child does not attend, unless the client has prepaid the two-week deposit and has not used those funds prior. At that time, the funds may be applied to the last two weeks of enrollment.

Clients wishing to appeal the Administration's decision to dismiss the child or family are free to write a letter to the Board of Directors within two weeks of dismissal stating why they feel the decision was made in error.

## **XXII. Addendums**