



WECARE ACADEMY

Growing Bright Futures

Parent Handbook

450 Union Boulevard, Floor 3

Allentown, PA 18109

Phone: 347-435-9917

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WECARE ACADEMY

Dear Parents and Families,

Welcome to WeCare Academy. We are truly honored that you have chosen us to care for and educate your child. We understand that leaving your child in someone else's care requires trust, and we take that responsibility very seriously.

At WeCare Academy, we believe that early childhood is the foundation for lifelong learning. Our goal is to provide a safe, loving, and structured environment where children feel secure, confident, and excited to learn each day. We combine nurturing care with purposeful instruction to support every child's social, emotional, physical, and academic development.

We are committed to creating a classroom experience that encourages curiosity, independence, kindness, and respect. Through guided learning activities, hands-on exploration, and meaningful interactions, we help children develop the skills they need to succeed both in school and in life. We also believe that families are our partners. Open communication and collaboration between home and school are essential to a child's success. We look forward to building a strong relationship with you and supporting your child every step of the way.

Thank you for trusting WeCare Academy with your most precious gift.

Sincerely,

Edmarlyn Marichal
Director



WECARE ACADEMY

Introduction

This Parent Handbook has been designed to provide families with important information regarding the policies, procedures, and expectations of WeCare Academy. WeCare Academy offers both a Traditional Daycare Program and a Drop-In Care Program to support the varying needs of families within our community. Our mission is to provide safe, nurturing, and flexible childcare solutions that support families while fostering each child's academic, social, emotional, and physical development. We are committed to maintaining high standards of care while ensuring that each child feels valued, respected, and supported. This handbook outlines enrollment procedures, tuition and payment policies, health and safety guidelines, daily operations and expectations, and parent responsibilities and communication procedures.

WeCare Academy operates in accordance with the regulations set forth by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) and all applicable local and state requirements. Please review this handbook carefully and keep it for future reference. By enrolling your child at WeCare Academy, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to follow the policies outlined in this handbook.

Mission & Philosophy

At WeCare Academy, our mission is to provide safe, nurturing, and flexible childcare solutions that support families while fostering each child's academic, social, emotional, and physical development during the most important years of early growth. We strive to create a strong foundation for lifelong learning by combining structured instruction with meaningful play experiences that inspire creativity, independence, confidence, and problem-solving skills.

We believe that every child is unique and capable of learning when given the right environment, guidance, and encouragement. Early childhood education is not simply supervision it is the foundation for future academic success and character development.

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At WeCare Academy, we believe:

- Children learn best in a safe and loving environment
- Positive relationships build confidence and trust
- Structure and routine create security and stability
- Play is a powerful tool for learning
- Family involvement strengthens a child's success
- Respect, kindness, and responsibility are essential life skills

We are dedicated to providing intentional instruction while maintaining a warm and family-oriented atmosphere. Our goal is to prepare children not only for kindergarten, but for life, helping them develop independence, self-esteem, and a lifelong love for learning. Quality Commitment: WeCare Academy is committed to continuous quality improvement and high standards of early learning consistent with recognized best practices (including Keystone STARS quality principles).

Hours of Operation

Daycare Program (Enrollment-Based Care)

Monday through Friday: **6:30 AM – 6:30 PM**

Daycare Holiday Closures

The Daycare Program will be closed on:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The Friday following Thanksgiving
- Christmas Day

Additional closure days may occur for staff professional development, deep cleaning, and maintenance. Families will receive advance written notice of any additional closures.

Emergency Closures

WeCare Academy reserves the right to close due to emergencies including, but not limited to severe weather conditions, power outages, facility-related emergencies, or public health concerns. Parents will be notified as early as possible via text message, phone call, or email.

Drop-In Care Program (Flexible Scheduling Option)

Monday – Thursday: **6:30 AM – 6:30 PM**

Friday: **6:30 AM – 9:00 PM**

Saturday: **9:00 AM – 9:00 PM**

Sunday: **11:00 AM – 5:00 PM**

Drop-In Scheduling Policy

Parents must schedule drop-in care at least **three (3) hours** in advance of the requested care time. Care is subject to space and staffing availability.

Drop-In Hours Adjustment

WeCare Academy reserves the right to close up to **three (3) hours** earlier than posted hours if no children are scheduled or present in care.

Admission & Enrollment Policy

WeCare Academy welcomes families seeking a safe, structured, and nurturing educational environment for their children. Admission is open to children within the age groups served by the center, subject to availability and compliance with DHS regulations. Enrollment is accepted without discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or any other protected category under applicable law. In accordance with federal and state civil rights laws, WeCare Academy does not discriminate in enrollment or employment practices.

Daycare Enrollment (Enrollment-Based Program)

To complete enrollment in the Traditional Daycare Program, parents/guardians must submit all documentation required by WeCare Academy and DHS, including but not limited to:

- Completed enrollment application
- Signed Parent Handbook acknowledgment
- Signed tuition agreement
- Registration fee (non-refundable, if applicable)
- Emergency contact information
- Current immunization records
- Health assessment form completed by a licensed healthcare provider
- Any additional forms required by DHS regulations

Enrollment is not considered complete until all required documentation has been received, reviewed, and approved by the center. Parents are responsible for ensuring all documentation remains current and compliant with DHS standards. Failure to submit or maintain required documentation may result in delayed enrollment, suspension of services, or termination of care until compliance is met.

Immunization Requirements

Up-to-date immunization records must be provided in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Health requirements. Medical or religious exemptions must comply with state law. The center reserves the right to exclude unvaccinated children during outbreaks as directed by public health authorities.

Drop-In Enrollment (Flexible Care Program)

Families utilizing the Drop-In Care Program must complete the same enrollment documentation required for the Traditional Daycare Program to comply with DHS regulations.

Online Enrollment: If enrollment is completed online, all required documentation must be submitted a minimum of **forty-eight (48) hours** prior to the requested care date to allow processing time (example: Monday care must be completed no later than Saturday).

In-Person Enrollment: If enrollment is completed in person at the center, same-day processing may be available provided all required documentation is submitted in full, space is available, and staffing allows. Completion of enrollment does not guarantee placement for a specific date or time.

Waiting List

If the program is at full capacity, families may request placement on a waiting list. Placement on the waiting list does not guarantee future enrollment. Families will be contacted if space becomes available.

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Tuition & Payment Policy

WeCare Academy is committed to providing high-quality childcare services in a structured and nurturing environment. Tuition and fees support staffing, facility operations, educational materials, and overall program stability. **Rates and fee amounts are provided separately** and will be disclosed at the time of enrollment or booking.

Traditional Daycare Program (Enrollment-Based Care)

Tuition is due **one (1) week in advance** of care. Payment is required regardless of attendance. Tuition reserves your child's space in the program and is not based on daily attendance. No refunds or credits will be issued for absences, holidays, illness, emergency closures, or voluntary withdrawal without proper notice.

Late Payment Policy

A late payment fee will be assessed for tuition not received by the due date. Failure to make timely payments may result in suspension of services until the account is brought current.

Late Pick-Up Fee

Children must be picked up by the designated closing time. A late pick-up fee will be assessed for children remaining in care after closing hours. Late pick-up fees are due immediately and must be paid promptly. Failure to pay late pick-up fees may result in suspension of services. Repeated late pick-ups may result in further action, including possible termination of services.

Drop-In Care Program (Flexible Care Option)

A one-time registration and processing fee is required prior to participation. Drop-In care is billed on an hourly basis with a **minimum of two (2) hours** required per visit.

Payment Requirements:

- Online reservations must be paid in full at the time of booking.
- Walk-in services require payment at the time of check-in and a valid card on file.
- Phone or advance in-person reservations must be paid in full at the time of booking.

Withdrawal & Termination Policy

Withdrawal requires written notice at least two (2) weeks in advance. Tuition remains due during the notice period regardless of attendance.

WeCare Academy reserves the right to suspend or terminate services for:

- Non-payment
- Failure to comply with policies
- Failure to maintain documentation
- Repeated late pick-ups
- Unsafe or aggressive behavior
- Threatening or inappropriate parent conduct
- Any situation compromising safety or operations

Termination decisions will be documented and communicated in writing.

Cancellations, Store Credit, and Refunds

All payments are non-refundable. If a parent is unable to use a scheduled booking, a store credit may be issued at the center's discretion. Store credit, if approved, must be used for the next scheduled booking. If a parent cancels again after using store credit, the credit will be forfeited and no additional credit will be issued. To qualify for cancellation consideration, notice must be provided at least **five (5) hours** prior to the scheduled care time. In the event of a documented emergency, cancellation without penalty may be requested; however, approval is subject to review and authorization by the Director. Approval is not guaranteed.

Health & Illness Policy

The health and safety of all children and staff at WeCare Academy is a top priority. To maintain a safe environment, we follow health regulations and best practices for illness prevention.

When a Child Must Stay Home

Children must remain at home if they exhibit symptoms such as fever (100.4°F or higher), vomiting, diarrhea, persistent cough, severe congestion, rash of unknown origin, eye discharge consistent with conjunctivitis, or any contagious illness.

Children must be symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication before returning to care, unless a doctor's note states otherwise.

Illness During Care

If a child becomes ill while at the center, the parent/guardian will be contacted immediately. The child must be picked up within **one (1) hour** of parent notification. The child may be separated from other children until pick-up.

Parents are required to maintain up-to-date emergency contact information at all times.

Communicable Diseases

Parents must notify the center if their child is diagnosed with a communicable disease. We follow state guidelines regarding exclusion and return-to-care requirements while maintaining confidentiality.

Diapering & Toileting Policy

Diapering procedures follow DHS sanitation guidelines including proper handwashing and surface disinfection. Parents must provide diapers, wipes, and authorized ointments (with written permission). Toilet training is supported in partnership with families. Children are never forced and are treated with dignity and respect.

Safe Sleep & Rest Policy

WeCare Academy follows Pennsylvania DHS Safe Sleep regulations.

- Infants are placed on their backs to sleep unless a written medical waiver is provided.
- Approved cribs meeting safety standards are used.
- No loose blankets, pillows, stuffed animals, or soft items are permitted in cribs.
- Swaddling is not permitted without written medical authorization.
- Staff conduct regular visual checks of sleeping children.

Older children are provided supervised rest periods. Rest equipment is spaced and sanitized according to DHS regulations.

Accident & Incident Reporting Policy

In the event of a minor injury, staff will provide appropriate first aid and complete a written incident report. Parents/guardians will be notified the same day and asked to review and sign the report at pick-up. For serious injuries or head injuries, parents will be contacted immediately. If emergency care is required and a parent cannot be reached, 911 will be contacted.

Parents are responsible for medical expenses incurred.

Medication Policy

Medication will only be administered when necessary and in accordance with state regulations.

- A completed medication authorization form signed by the parent/guardian is required.
- Prescription medication must be in its original container with the child's name and dosage instructions.
- Non-prescription medication must be in its original packaging and labeled with the child's name.
- Medication will be administered according to written instructions.

WeCare Academy reserves the right to refuse administration of medication if proper documentation is not provided. Emergency medications (such as EpiPens or inhalers) must be clearly documented and accessible according to the child's care plan.

Meals, Hydration & Food Allergy Policy

Parents must send a labeled water bottle daily. Water is accessible at all times. Heavy metal containers are prohibited due to injury risk. If a child remains in care more than six (6) hours, a labeled lunch must be provided. Refrigeration is available.

WeCare Academy is not responsible for the nutritional content of parent provided meals.

WeCare Academy will provide mid-morning and mid-afternoon snacks. A snack menu will be posted on the Parent Information Board.

WeCare Academy is a peanut-aware facility. Allergen restrictions may be implemented based on documented medical needs. Food sharing is prohibited.

For diagnosed allergies:

- A healthcare provider action plan is required.
- Emergency medication must be supplied and accessible.
- Staff receive allergy response training.

Parents have the right to breastfeed or provide expressed breast milk. A private space is available upon request. Breast milk must be labeled and stored per health regulations. Hot liquids over 110°F must be secured and kept out of children's reach.

Discipline & Behavior Policy

At WeCare Academy, we believe that discipline means teaching and guiding children toward appropriate behavior, not punishing them. We use positive guidance strategies such as redirection, positive reinforcement, clear expectations, and age-appropriate guidance.

Prohibited Discipline Practices

The following are strictly prohibited:

- Corporal punishment
- Physical restraint (unless necessary for safety)
- Verbal abuse
- Humiliation or shaming
- Withholding food or basic needs

Behavior Concerns

If a child displays ongoing behavioral challenges that impact their safety or the safety of others, parents will be notified and a behavior support plan may be developed. WeCare Academy reserves the right to suspend or terminate services if a child's behavior poses a consistent safety risk and appropriate interventions have not resolved the concern.

Mandated Reporter Policy

WeCare Academy staff members are mandated reporters under Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (CPSL). Any staff member who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect is legally required to make an immediate report to ChildLine and appropriate authorities. Reports are made confidentially and in good faith. Parents/guardians will not necessarily be notified prior to a report being filed. The center is not permitted to conduct an independent investigation prior to reporting. Failure to report suspected abuse is a violation of state law. The safety and well-being of every child is our highest priority.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

WeCare Academy maintains emergency procedures and conducts safety drills in accordance with DHS requirements. Emergency plans include fire, severe weather, lockdown situations, power outages, medical emergencies, and building evacuation.

In the event of an emergency requiring evacuation, children will be relocated to a designated safe location. Parents will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so. Children will only be released to authorized individuals listed on the enrollment form during an emergency relocation.

Parent Communication Policy

WeCare Academy believes that strong communication between families and staff is essential to a child's success. We are committed to open, respectful, and consistent communication through in-person conversations, phone calls, text messages, email, and scheduled conferences.

We ask that communication remain respectful and professional at all times. Concerns regarding classroom matters should first be addressed with the Director. Confidential matters will be handled privately.

Confidentiality & Photo Release

WeCare Academy respects the privacy of all families and children. Child records and family information are kept confidential in accordance with state regulations and will only be released with written parental consent, when required by law, or during DHS inspections/authorized agency review. Parents may request to review their child's records in writing. Records will be provided within a reasonable timeframe in accordance with DHS regulations. Records are retained for the legally required period and stored securely to maintain confidentiality.

WeCare Academy may take photographs or videos of children for educational, documentation, or promotional purposes. Written parental consent is required before any child's image is used for social media, marketing materials, website content, or printed publications. Parents may decline photo usage in writing. A separate Photo Release Authorization Form will be provided at enrollment.

Security & Supervision Policy

The center maintains controlled entry access. Parents and authorized individuals must follow check-in and check-out procedures at all times. Visitors may be required to present valid photo identification. WeCare Academy reserves the right to refuse entry to anyone who cannot provide proper identification or whose presence may compromise safety.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children will only be released to individuals listed as authorized pick-up contacts. A valid government-issued photo ID may be required. Changes to authorized pick-up must be submitted in writing. If there is a custody restriction, legal documentation must be provided and kept on file.

Supervision Standards

Children are supervised at all times. Staff maintain active supervision, conduct headcounts, monitor classroom and playground areas, and ensure staff-to-child ratios in accordance with Pennsylvania DHS child care regulations. Children are never left unattended.

Staff Clearances & Training

All WeCare Academy staff members meet Pennsylvania DHS hiring requirements, including state and federal background clearances, child abuse clearance, fingerprinting, mandated report training, and required annual professional development hours. Staff certifications such as CPR and First Aid are maintained as required by DHS regulations. Staff are not permitted to work independently with children until all required clearances and documentation have been verified and approved.

Safety Concerns

If there is reason to believe a child's safety may be at risk during pick-up, WeCare Academy reserves the right to delay release and contact appropriate authorities if necessary.

Policy Revision Clause

WeCare Academy reserves the right to revise policies to comply with changes in law, DHS regulations, or operational needs. Families will be notified in writing of significant changes. Continued enrollment constitutes acceptance of updated policies.



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Parent Handbook Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the WeCare Academy Parent Handbook. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and follow the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook. I understand that policies may be updated as necessary and that families will be notified in writing of any policy changes. I agree to comply with the policies and expectations set forth by WeCare Academy.

Child's Name: _____

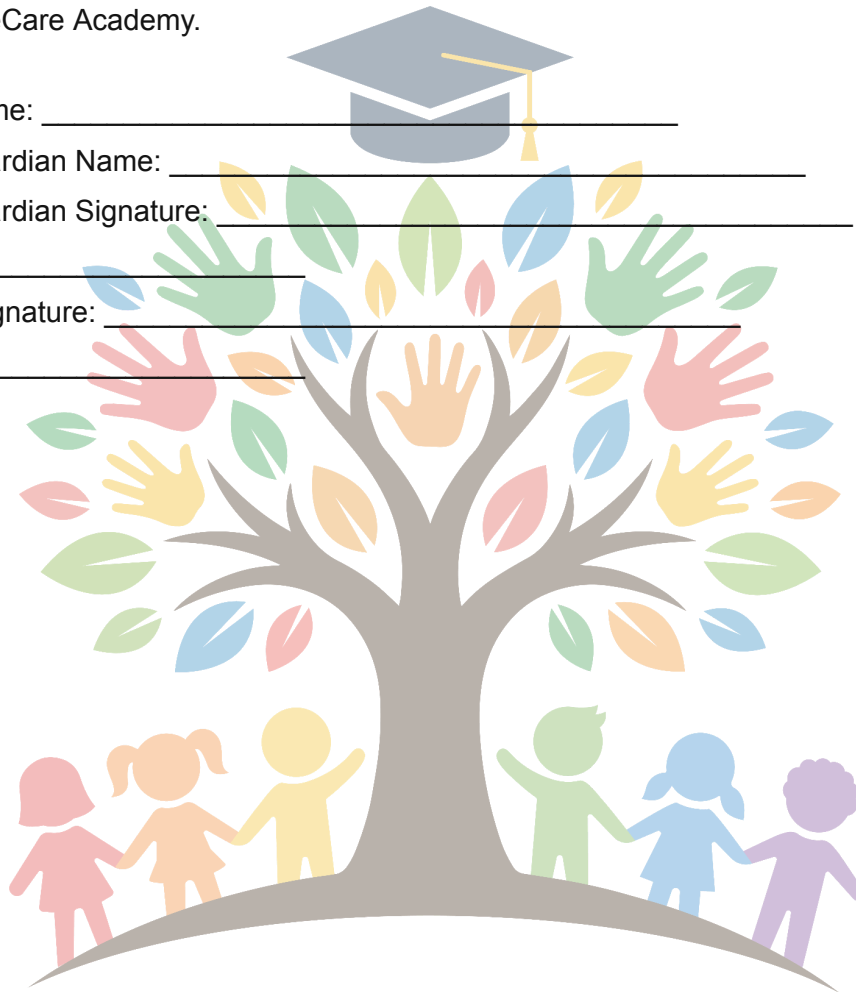
Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Director Signature: _____

Date: _____



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