



Employee Handbook

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Mission: Education Explorers Learning Center focuses on three main principles: faith, exploration, and growth. We are passionate about outdoor opportunities, to promote social, emotional, physical and cognitive development which includes life skills. Our educational objective is building kindergarten readiness. Successful education is rooted through exploration. We provide opportunities for children to explore their individual talents through indoor/outdoor education. We have served over 500 children and have been in business for 7.5 years. We partner with local programs, provide volunteer opportunities and offer employment in the community. It is our purpose to inspire, guide, teach and care for children, and most importantly to act as an advocate and a resource to the families at Education Explorers.

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2023 AMENDMENTS:

- SLANDER - ANY ACTIONS OR WORDS AGAINST THE BUSINESS WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE DISMISSAL OF POSITION AND LEGAL ACTION MAY BE TAKEN IF NECESSARY
- NON COMPETE - ANY DOCUMENTS OWNED BY EDUCATION EXPLORERS MAY NOT BE COPIED OR SHARED WITHOUT PERMISSION AND ANY BUSINESS TAKEN FROM EDUCATION EXPLORERS BY AN EMPLOYEE OR THEIR ACTIONS WILL RESULT IN DISMISSAL OF POSITION
- EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTS / EMAILS MUST BE RELEASED TO OWNERS AT TIME OF RESIGNATION OR DISMISSAL
- BENEFITS: PAID TRAINING TIME, PAID TRAINING REGISTRATION, UNPAID LEAVE (SICK, VACATION, FUNERAL, PERSONAL), -CLOSED PRESIDENTS DAY (STAFF TRAINING), OPPORTUNITY FOR PTO AND BONUS
- FIRING / REMOVAL OF POSITION / DISENROLLMENT Education Explorers has the right to fire, “let go” and disenroll children at any time for any reason which includes but not limited to behavior, slander, and failure for timely payments
- 2024 HANDBOOK AGREEMENT FORM

Purpose of the Employee Handbook

This handbook provides information on procedures, policies and other personnel matters. It is the foundation for positive interpersonal relationships, professionalism, and standards of excellence among the staff of Education Explorers Learning Center. These policies affect every employee and apply to all employees. Education Explorers prioritizes the value of quality childcare and a strong work ethic from each employee. Each employee's daily objectives should be focused around childcare, family support, and respecting the mission of Education Explorers. All employees will be provided with fair compensation, an appropriate working environment and job security, enabling them to enjoy their work and contribute to the success of the center.

All staff members at Education Explorers report to the director and licensee.

Personnel policies are established and amended by the director and licensee.

Although adherence to these personnel policies is considered a condition of employment, nothing in this handbook is intended to imply a contract. It may be modified or revised by the owners of Education Explorers Learning Center at any time. Policies will be reviewed periodically and changes or amendments will be presented to each staff member. When changes are made, employees will be notified in writing. If you believe a policy has become outdated or is adversely affecting employee performance, advise a director.

Primary Goals of the Center:

To continually fulfill the mission statement of Education Explorers Learning Center and focus on three main principles: *faith, exploration, and growth.*

To create a setting in which children will find warmth, comfort, and gentleness as well as an abundance of opportunities for movement, exploration, and self-discovery according to individual needs, interests, and abilities. To assist each child to grow to his fullest potential by recognizing each stage of development and providing an environment of opportunity (i.e. curriculum, facilities, staff) designed to nurture and facilitate growth during each stage.

To help children achieve independence, self-discipline, social competence, self-knowledge, enthusiasm for learning, positive attitudes, intellectual growth, and an organized approach to problem solving.

To assist parents in understanding the developmental stages of their child(ren), enabling them to contribute most effectively to the child's growth and enrichment.

Personnel Policy Administration

The director has direct responsibility for administration of personnel policies and shall ensure that the current "Employee Handbook / Personnel Policies" manual is available at all times to the staff and candidates for staff positions. Each staff member shall have access to the "Employee Handbook / Personnel Policies" and after reading it thoroughly, shall sign a statement that he or she has read and understands the policies and agrees to honor his or her obligation to the policies.

Director Requirements / Employee Duties

*The directors acquire required certification from the DHHS through qualification and training. The Directors, Michelle Wikines, Katie Fitz and Star Cook, will be available during most of the operating hours and are responsible for daily operations. The Director will assign a lead teacher to supervise/direct the center when the director is not available. The director will be available for communication to families and employees. The Director will maintain, manage, and facilitate the Education Explorers Learning Center program with integrity. The director must report to the licensee regarding all matters related to the maintenance, operation, and management of the child care center and be directly responsible to the licensee or to a person delegated governing authority by the licensee. **Director Skills:** organization, creativity, flexibility, integrity, consistent communication, bookkeeping, planning, and business management. The director will continually be in compliance with Education Explorer's mission, and all state regulations listed below:*

1. Be responsible for the center's compliance with rules and regulations; *The director will assure compliance is met through understanding the regulations and the renewal of all licenses.*

2. Be within the child care area a sufficient number of hours to permit adequate attention to the management of the center; *The Director will report to the center when necessary and ensure each day is operating 6:30am-6:00pm M-F and fully prepared for through employee and child activity schedules, meal preparation, maintenance, and holding all members of the Education Explorers family accountable through the daycare's policies.*
3. When not in the child care area, designate another staff to act in his/her absence who will be responsible and accountable for management of the center; *The assistant director will be responsible for management of the center when the director is absent. The assistant director will follow all directors orders. The assistant director will ensure the children at Education Explorers are safe, happy, healthy, and learning. The assistant director will ensure staff members are following all guidelines in providing care for children, completing daily chores, and being a person of integrity to be a positive influence to all children and coworkers.*
4. Provide written personnel policies and procedures specific to Job descriptions & Responsibilities
5. Provide orientation for new staff, including training on child care center regulations; the director will follow the orientation process for each new employee and provide necessary resources to support the growth of children and employees at Education Explorers
6. Schedule training and continuing education for all staff and ensure that records are maintained including the date, topic, and length of time for each training entry; The director will inform employees on in-service training opportunities, the director will encourage and support in-service opportunities. The director will maintain employee records to ensure training hours are met annually.
7. Ensure that center staff identify and review incidents, accidents, complaints, and concerns, and monitor patterns and trends in overall operation and take action to alleviate problems; The director will immediately handle all incidents to come to a solution or agreement. The director will put the child's needs first. The director will provide constant communication with parents and act as an advocate for all families.
8. Develop and implement written procedures that require the reporting of any evidence of physical abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse of any child in care at the child care center; The director will continually evaluate policies and update them as necessary. The director will report any concerns of child endangerment.
9. Immediately file a report with the Child Abuse-Neglect Hotline (1-800-652- 1999) and/or appropriate local law enforcement agency when s/he has reason to believe child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse may be occurring in the child care center, in the child's home, or elsewhere, or ensure that a report is filed;
10. Not knowingly allow any individual who is a registered sex offender on the premises, except that a parent who is a registered sex offender may be allowed on the premises only to pick up and drop off his/her child; The director screens all employees and protects all children in care
11. Ensure that the maximum capacity of the child care center is not exceeded at any time; The childcare center will not exceed fifty children in the licensed area
12. Ensure that staff-to-child ratios are met at all times; The director follows, and informs all employees on the DHHS staff to child ratio regulations
13. Ensure that parents have access to their children at all times that children are in care; Education Explorers provides access to the parents / guardians of children at all times unless the parents are under the influence of a substance or if the parent is putting the child in danger
14. Develop and use written criteria to assess the ability of staff to give or apply medication; all staff will be educated, assessed and provided training to administer any medication

Assistant Director: The assistant director is responsible for assisting the director at Education Explorers with daily tasks and ensuring that the mission of Education Explorers is continually met along with all state regulations.

1. Assisting the director with clerical work including updates on policies and handbooks
2. Employee Scheduling, Meal Plan, In-service Training Schedule, Enrollment Packets
3. Organization of resources for staff, and families
4. Opening and closing the center
5. Communicating any family concerns, issues, or inquiries about our program
6. Curriculum planning
8. Supporting our mission and maintaining high integrity in the workforce

Teacher (certified / non-certified): an individual who is responsible for the direct care of children. Employees who are teachers have experience in childcare are continuing training to be the best support to children and families at Education Explorers

- All teachers must provide nurturing and adequate care to all children in their care
- Ensure each child is engaged in learning, interacting with peers, and all physical cares are met

constantly

- Ensure children follow their schedules appropriately as preferred by parents
- All teachers must communicate to parents daily in regards to the wellbeing and educational growth of their child thru brightwheel, text, phone calls, emails and written reports when necessary
- All teachers must communicate to the director daily in regards to curriculum development, child incidents, and any concerns about the childcare center
- All teachers must clean their classroom nightly to ensure a healthy environment for children
- All teachers should promote and support Education Explorers mission and maintain a high integrity in the workforce including goal setting and reflection on personal growth
- All teachers should be reliable, responsible and keep their employee forms up to date

Support Staff: Provides indirect childcare support, clerical work and cleaning for Education Explorers. Support staff assists in clerical duties, indirect care of children and cleanliness of the center.

Employee Classifications

Full-Time Hourly: employees work forty hours per week and receive a designated rate per hour, paid bi-weekly.

Part-Time Hourly: employees work less than forty hours per week, as the center requires, and receive a designated rate per hour for hours worked, paid bi-weekly, and are not eligible for benefits

Temporary, Summer, and Substitute Workers: contract to fill in for regular staff members for a limited period of time (up to three months), are paid on an hourly basis, and are not eligible for benefits (including Paid Time Off).

Position Qualifications

Director Qualifications:

Complies with DHHS regulations

Maintains appropriate license for childcare

Attends yearly in-service training

Renews CPR/FIRST AID certification

Bachelor's degree in Education or childcare related area and/or DHHS director certification

Employee Qualifications / Skills:

Complies with DHHS regulations and required inservice training

High School GED

Experience in childcare (1500 hours)

CPR/First Aid Certified

Good moral character; organization, initiative, creativity, leadership, communication, positivity

Abilities and Physical Demands:

The director and all employees must be in good health and maintain good hygiene to be able to meet the demands of the job. The director will need to be able to interact with children, balance clerical work, and be accessible during all hours of operation. All other employees must remain current on immunizations to ensure a healthy environment for children. Employees must assess his/her own ability and the ability of all staff to provide care for children with special needs while meeting the needs of other children enrolled; The director will evaluate personal growth and the success of employees quarterly. The director will meet individually with employees and discuss areas of growth and celebrate areas of success. All employees will be evaluated on their ability to care for children, teach basic concepts, reliability, integrity, and professionalism.

Equal Opportunity Employment

Education Explorers Learning Center is in compliance with Federal, State, and local laws at all times. The center does not discriminate in employment with regard to race, creed, national origin, political affiliation, marital status, age, gender, or number of dependents. No employee shall aid, coerce or conspire to cause dismissal or resignation of another employee because of illegal discriminatory factors. Individual compensation is established at the time of employment. Compensation may vary according to the amount of responsibility associated with a particular position as well as the abilities, training, length of service, education and experience of each employee. Pay raises will be evaluated yearly at the discretion of the director; this will be based off performance, completion of in-service hours, attendance and completion of your health form each year. **EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION IS A CONFIDENTIAL MATTER.**

Childcare of Employees - There are no discounts for employee childcare.

Pay Day/ Salary Deductions

Staff members are paid every other Tuesday. *The center cannot accommodate requests for salary advances.* Education Explorers Learning Center is obligated to make certain deductions and/or remittances to state and federal agencies for such items as Social Security, Medicare, Unemployment Tax, and Federal Income Tax. The center contributes an amount established by the federal government to each employee's Social Security fund. Every employee must complete and submit to the center a form W-4 when hired and whenever withholding status or information changes.

Breaks

Employees will be provided a fifteen-minute break for each work shift of six or more hours (if needed/desired). Breaks of fifteen minutes or less will be paid. Unspent break time cannot be used to justify leaving early or reporting to work late. Employees who work ten-hour shifts will receive a thirty-minute break. *If an employee leaves the center for a break they must communicate to the director or supervisor prior to leaving and when returning.* All employees must clock in and out for their 30 minute break or when leaving the center.

Assignment / Reorganization of Staff Members All staff members are employed with the understanding and acceptance of assignment or reassignment is at the discretion of the directors. Any supplemental duties given to staff members, including those for which additional pay is received, may be modified or discontinued at any time. Reorganization includes any change in the philosophy, purpose, organization, or programs of the center resulting in changes to job requirements, elimination of positions, or creation of new positions with no suitable place for the staff member concerned.

Work Week Schedule

Education Explorers is open Monday through Friday of each week, except for specified holidays. Flexible hours, which meet the needs of the center, may be employed at the discretion of the director. Employees must be available to work the hours stated. Scheduled lunch and work breaks are established by the scheduling director and may be changed to best meet the needs of Education Explorers Learning Center. If you are asked to leave early due to low attendance in your classroom, you will receive fifteen minutes for duty completion before being required to clock out. Education Explorers has the right to clock you out after fifteen minutes. Please communicate with the supervisor or director if a situation restricts you to fulfill this obligation. *Staff will only be paid for the time they are scheduled; you may not clock in early or clock out late and receive pay for this unless it is approved by the director.*

Cleaning

All Education Explorers staff is required to keep their environments sanitized, and organized. Daily duties include, but are not limited to, emptying trash nightly, propping classroom and bathroom doors, disinfecting, sweeping, mopping, and vacuuming floors, sanitizing toys, and locking outside access doors.

Personnel File Requirements

Each staff member must complete an application for employment. In addition to this the director will receive a copy of the employee's high school diploma, degree, transcripts, previous in-service training hours and certificates, current CPR/First Aid cards and driver's license. Each employee must also complete the following forms: staff information, W-4, yearly health, a criminal history, yearly law enforcement contact, finger printing, a release of information and any other form required by the director. The personnel file shall be completed before start date. Personnel records are confidential. Aside from the previously listed forms, personnel files include evaluations, salary history, training records, resume, leave information, reference information, documentation of employment actions, letters from colleagues, parents, and insurance information. All staff must complete **orientation** and return required forms before employment begins. The health form needs to be completed within the first thirty days of employment in order to maintain your position with Education Explorers. Immunizations are required unless proper exemption documentation exists. All mandatory in-services training is to be completed within the first six months of employment in order to maintain your position with Education Explorers. Employees who lack one year of childcare experience, a degree in Early Childhood Education or at least three credit hours towards your Early Childhood Education degree, are required to fulfill forty-five in-service hours within the first six months of employment.

3-006.11 Employee Records Requirements: The licensee must ensure the following employee records are maintained, updated as needed, and made available to the Department upon request. Records must be maintained for at least one year after an employee leaves the center.

3-006.11A Staff: Records for all staff, except substitutes and volunteers, must include:

1. Name;
 - Address and telephone number;
 - Social Security Number;
 - Date of hire/termination;
 - A completed Report of Law Enforcement Contact;
 - Documentation of a criminal history record check;
 - A completed Health Information Report;
 - Documentation of Nebraska registry checks with no adverse findings;
 - Documentation that the individual has met the qualifications for the position;
 - Documentation of orientation training and required ongoing training; and
 - Documentation that the individual has read and understands these regulations.

3-006.11B Substitutes: Records for each substitute must include:

1. Name;
2. Address and telephone number;
3. Social Security number;
4. A completed Report of Law Enforcement Contact;
5. Documentation of a criminal history record check;
6. Documentation of Nebraska registry checks with no adverse findings;
7. Documentation that the individual has met the qualifications for the position; and
8. Documentation that the individual has read and understands these regulations.

3-006.11C Volunteers: Records for each volunteer must include:

1. Name;
2. Address and telephone number;
3. Start date;
4. A completed Report of Law Enforcement Contact;
5. Documentation of Nebraska registry checks with no adverse findings; and
6. A written schedule that includes the hours and days of the week the individual serves as a volunteer.

Probationary Period/ Orientation A ninety-day probationary/orientation period is required for all new employees. During this time, either the employee or the director may terminate the employment arrangement immediately upon notice to the other party. After the initial ninety days, the director will prepare a written evaluation and the employee will prepare a self evaluation. Input from parents (clients) and co-workers may also be requested. The evaluations will be discussed with the employee and an individualized training plan will be developed. The employee will sign and date the evaluations to indicate completion of the process. If the evaluation results indicate a need, the probationary period may be extended. Raises may be given at the employee's yearly evaluation meeting if the employee has met the requirements of their personnel files.

Evidence of Teacher Training: *The director must maintain a list of all Teacher's for each calendar year that identifies which individuals have completed:*

1. Orientation training;
2. Safety training;
3. Nebraska Early Learning Guidelines Training;
4. Clock hours of annual training; and
5. CPR and First Aid training.

TRAINING TIME AND TRAINING REGISTRATION REIMBURSED 30 DAYS AFTER TRAINING IF
EMPLOYEE IS STILL EMPLOYED

3-006.10A Orientation: *When new staff or volunteers are employed, those individuals must be provided with orientation prior to their having direct responsibility for the care of children. The orientation must include: Job duties and responsibilities such as reviewing all policies, walk thru of center, review schedules, introduction to staff team, file review, inservice training, communication tools and classroom assignment.*

Infection Control Practices including proper hand washing techniques, personal hygiene, and disposal of infectious material Hand washing: rinse with warm water, lather with soap, rinse with water, and dry Personal Hygiene: bathe regularly and wear clean clothes to promote a healthy environment (do not wear clothes that smell from smoke) Disposal of infectious material: remove gloves from the inside out, and dispose immediately. **Health and Safety Practices** Updated immunization records, known illnesses, and **Hand washing-Staff** is asked to wash their hands: When entering the classroom, Before handling food and bottles, After using the restroom themselves or helping the children, After handling of coming in contact with bodily fluids, Before and after administering medication, After using cleaning products, After taking the trash, After handling an ill child **Children** will be assisted in hand washing: Before and after meals, After toileting and diaper changes, After playing outside, After coming on contact with bodily fluids Steps on hand washing: Always use warm water and a liquid soap, Wet hands and apply a small amount of soap to hands, Rub hands together for at least 20 seconds, Rinse hands with warm water and Dry hands with a paper towel

Safety Practices: Follow child care center regulations and policies; (see family handbook) ,Evacuation plans in the event of fire; (see evacuation map and procedures), Safety plans in the event of a tornado; (see shelter map and procedures), Emergency preparedness in the event of a natural or manmade disaster (see evacuation map and procedures), The center's method of interacting with children and discipline policies. **Information on abuse, neglect and sexual abuse of children and the state's reporting requirements** **Adult & Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline: 1-800-652-1999**

Discipline Policy - follow Education Explorers Discipline Policy

3-006.20B Child behavior that cannot be disciplined: *Children must not be disciplined for: • Toileting accidents • Refusal to take medication • Refusal to eat* **3-006.20C Use of Time Out:** *Separation from the group, if used, must be brief and appropriate for the child's age. The time out period must: Take place within a safe, lighted, and well-ventilated area; Occur within direct vision of staff; and Not exceed more than one minute for each year of the child's age.*

Education Explorer's Plan of Action: "Think-Time Outs"

Get down to child's level , Discuss the negative choice, and how to prevent this choice from being made in the future, Discuss the positive outcome from the learning experience ,Have the child communicate their action plan and to parties involved, Write an incident report, Communicate to parents and director, Follow up if necessary. *All employees must comply with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to ensure the great safety and well-being of every child.*

3-006.10B Nutrition and Food Safety Training: When meals are served, all staff responsible for menu planning, food preparation, and food safety must be provided at least four clock hours of training in nutrition and food safety within 30 days of employment and annually thereafter.

3-006.10C Transportation Training: Individuals who transport children on behalf of a child care center must: 1. Receive and maintain a valid certificate of completion of the "Safe Kids Buckle Up" program within 90 days of employment and every five years thereafter. Individuals who transport children who were employed before the operative date of these regulations must receive and maintain a valid certificate of completion for "Safe Kids Buckle Up" within one year and every five years thereafter. Any proposed equivalent training must be approved by the Department. 2. Maintain valid certificates for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and First Aid Training. Individuals who transport children who were employed before the operative date of these regulations must complete CPR and First Aid Training within one year and maintain valid certificates thereafter. **Transportation Policies and Use of Company Vehicle** Education Explorers does not currently provide transportation as a center and transportation provided by a staff member is on personal time and a personal favor to families. Education Explorers is not responsible for children being transported.

3-006.10D Annual Training: Each staff member, not including substitutes or volunteers, who provides direct care to children must obtain a minimum of 12 clock hours of training annually. Staff who work 20 hours or less each week must obtain six clock hours of training annually. Employees may not be compensated for training time.

3-006.10D1 Training must include but is not limited to the following topics: Safe Environments, Healthy Environments, Learning Environments, Physical Development, Cognitive Learning, Communication, Creative Learning, Self-Esteem, Social Development, Guidance, Family Relationships, Program Management and Professionalism. *Audio, video, and reading material specific to one or more of these training topics will count toward the annual training requirement only if an Independent Learning Summary is completed on a form provided by the Department. The actual length of audio and video material will be counted, and 50 pages of text will be considered equal to one clock hour of training. Two hours of CPR and one hour of First Aid will be counted toward the annual training requirement in the year each is taken.*

3-006.10D2 Each clock hour spent participating in any of the following types of activities counts toward the annual training requirement: Center-sponsored training, Workshops and conferences, College courses, Non-credit course work and Adult education courses.

3-006.10E CPR and First Aid Training

1. CPR training must be obtained from an entity that has been approved by the Nebraska Board of Emergency Medical Services. The Department will provide the program with information about approved CPR courses. 2. At least one staff member with current CPR and First Aide training must be on the premises at all times during the hours/days of operation. 3. The CPR card and documentation of First Aid training must be available upon request.

Medication Administration Criteria

- Staff must complete online training and submit their certificate to the director before be permitted to administer medication
- Staff must be added to the child's medication administration permission list
- Access the online training at: <https://shop.aap.org/account/create-account-1/> create an account and search for "Medication Administration in Early Education and Child care"

Disciplinary Action/ Termination of Employment

Education Explorers Learning Center may take disciplinary action in cases of employee violation of center policies, procedures, or instructions. One form of disciplinary action is a period of disciplinary probation, during which the employee is not eligible for review, pay increase, or promotion. If the problem is not corrected, additional disciplinary action or termination of employment will result. The duration of a disciplinary probation period is at the discretion of a director, but will typically be thirty to ninety days.

Voluntary Termination Notice of resignation, tendered by an employee, shall be in writing, and delivered to the director at least two weeks in advance of the effective date for hourly employees.

Involuntary Termination A director may release an employee for incompetence, or in the event of reorganization. An employee may be released from their duties if management feels they are not fulfilling their duties.

Incompetence is measured in terms of such factors as

1. Inadequate personality match for sound relationships with others at the center
2. Lack of growth or progress on the job
3. Inadequate skill in performing duties
4. Lack of understanding or acceptance of the center's mission
5. Excessive absenteeism or tardiness
6. Consistent failure to carry out assigned duties
7. Failure to comply with licensing regulations
8. Inappropriate treatment of children
9. Unsuitable communication with parents
10. Inappropriate relationships with other staff members and parents within or outside of the center
11. Poor relationships in the professional community

12. Inappropriate use of alcohol or drugs within or outside of the center

When the work of a staff member appears to be unsatisfactory, a director will review an evaluation with the employee and allow an opportunity for improvement. Following this period, a director may give the employee notice of dismissal. Staff disciplinary actions may include, but are not limited to, the following options: Verbal warning by the supervisor to the employee with a dated note placed in the employee's file, A written reprimand with copies for the employee and employee's personnel file, Suspension without pay for up to five days, Demotion, hourly pay reduction or reassignment of duties, Probation with a written plan and time frame for improvement, Dismissal

The following are examples of infractions of rules of conduct that result in termination of employment: Physical discipline of a child, Absence from work without authorization or too many absentees, Acts indicating a lack of good moral character, Use of intoxicants while on duty or reporting to work under the influence of intoxicants. 5. Illegal possession or use of drugs, Conviction of any offense or crime involving moral turpitude, Disclosure of confidential information regarding children, parent, or other staff, Falsification or omission of information regarding job qualification or information required on the employment application form, Failure to comply with Childcare Licensing Minimum Standards, Failure to treat children and adults with respect, Repeated occurrence of failure to perform satisfactorily, Cell Phone Abuse, Inappropriate relationships with other staff members, families, or a child.

Staff Meetings

All staff members shall attend regularly scheduled staff meetings and planning sessions outside of regular working hours, generally not exceeding two hours per month and may not be paid.

Attendance/Absence/Tardiness

All employees are expected to be reliable and punctual in reporting for work. Our goal is to provide consistency and stability for children, families, and staff; all employees are expected to maintain prompt, regular attendance. Excellent attendance and punctuality are reflections of reliability and a positive work ethic. Both are an important part of performance evaluations. Recurring tardiness, excessive absence, and/or failure to provide adequate prior notice of absence are grounds for disciplinary action, including termination. Notification of absence must be as far in advance as possible. Failure to provide adequate notification through a phone call of absence without good cause will result in disciplinary action.

Personal Absence *time should be kept to a minimum; it is discouraged, however, circumstantial, and should be discussed with the director.*

Excessive Absence / Tardiness *is more than three (3) **Personal Absences** in any ninety (90) day period or six (6) in any twelve (12) month period. Employees with excessive absences or tardiness will receive disciplinary action. Call-Ins include, but are not limited to: calling in sick, car troubles, family troubles, sick kids, sick pets, relationship problems, too much homework, no ride, too tired, and weather issues. We understand unfortunate circumstances arise and value employees who prioritize their duties and obligations.*

Time Off Requests

To be submitted in writing as soon as possible, at least two weeks in advance. Request forms do not guarantee that your time-off will be granted. We will try our best!

Sick/Emergency Call-In

To facilitate scheduling please contact the director or supervisor the night before you are scheduled to work. If you become ill in the morning before work immediately call the director or supervisor. Do not expose the center to illnesses by arriving to work and informing us of your illness. Texting, emailing and leaving voicemails will not be accepted as an appropriate call in method. Direct personal contact with the scheduling director is required.. **If an employee finds a substitute it will need to be approved by the Director, not another staff member or supervisor.**

Employee Illness Policy:

In order to maintain the health of all staff and children at Education Explorers we ask that employees NOT to enter the center if they exhibit any of the following symptoms: A temperature of 101 or higher, Any contagious condition

(chicken pox, mumps, measles, flu, conjunctivitis), Unusual rashes, Excessive unexplained drowsiness, Vomiting, Discharge from eyes or ears, Diarrhea (more than 3 in 2 hours, Flu like symptoms, Head lice, Covid Symptoms. If any employee encounters these symptoms prior to arriving at their shift contact the director immediately.

Employees with these symptoms will not report to work and a sub will be assigned for their replacement until the employee is symptom free for twenty-four hours. If an employee encounters these symptoms while at the center, inform the director immediately. The employee will be relieved by a substitute and will not return to work until they are symptom free for twenty-four hours. Please communicate any illness immediately to the director for appropriate action to be taken. **COVID 19 Policy - Employees DO NOT RECEIVE PAY FOR COVID LEAVE**

Education Explorers will follow guidelines in accordance with CDC to reduce the potential spread of COVID.

Timely communication of illness is critical and required. Please review guidelines:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/if-you-are-sick/quarantine.html> **Direct Health Measures:**

<http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/COVID-19-Directed-Health-Measures.aspx>

Paid Time Off / Vacation

Education Explorers Learning Center does not currently provide these benefits.

Holidays

Education Explorers Learning Center closes for the following holidays: New Year's Day, Presidents Day, Easter Monday, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Day after Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve Day, and Christmas Day. We will close at 3:00 PM on New Year's Eve Day,

Family and Medical Leave/Bereavement

Family and Medical leave will be permitted without pay. Education Explorers Learning Center permits bereavement leave without pay.

Jury Duty

If applicable under state and local laws, full-time (40 hours / week) employees are entitled to compensation for days spent serving on jury duty. Education Explorers Learning Center will compensate an employee on what would have been earned in an eight-hour workday. Employees must notify a director within 48 hours of receipt of the summons for jury duty. Upon return from jury duty, please provide a director with a notarized statement of jury duty and any payment receipts issued by the court.

Professionalism/Dress Code

Professional teachers are role models for young children. With this in mind, there are standards for your attire while at work. *Business casual is to be worn during working hours.* Education Explorers clothing may be worn with business casual code. Pajamas, short shorts, skirts or dresses without shorts underneath and sweatpants are not allowed at any time. The administration reserves the right to ask an inappropriately dressed employee to clock out and to return in appropriate dress code.

Child Abuse and Neglect

Children who attend our program are cared for, nurtured, and kept safe at all times. Child abuse is a very serious allegation; policies are intended to protect both the children in our care as well as colleagues at the center.

It is the center's goal to employ childcare professionals who are committed to the highest standards of ethical behavior. To ensure the health and safety of young children in care, a policy of "Zero Tolerance for Child Abuse" is strictly enforced. Children at the center should expect to be treated with kindness, concern, and respect at all times. An employee who exhibits unprofessional behavior that could be construed as abusive in any way may be dismissed from work without accrued benefits or assistance in legal representation. Any evidence of physical or sexual abuse or misconduct will be grounds for immediate dismissal. Any person who has information about behavior that may reasonably be characterized as known or suspected abuse or neglect shall make a report to a director and to appropriate authorities, as required by law. Allegations of abuse shall be reported to parents and investigated. Any employee accused of abuse or neglect shall have an opportunity to respond to the allegations. Until the issue is resolved, an employee suspected of abuse or neglect may be reassigned, suspended, or placed on administrative leave, either with or without pay, at the discretion of the director. If any staff member suspects a child may be the victim of child abuse or neglect either by another staff member or outside the center, we as child care providers are

obligated to report this to proper authorities. We ask that the concerned party first come to a director either in person, by phone or email as soon as you have any suspicion. We will decide together what would be the best direction to take the issue and possibly contact the *Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline at 1-800-652-1999* for a further investigation.

Education Explorers staff and management will not tolerate any child abuse or neglect and report suspicions that include but are not limited to: Unusual bruising, marks or cuts on the body, Severe verbal reprimands, Improper clothing cleanliness, Transporting a child without proper restraints, Dropping off or picking up a child under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs, Children who exhibit behaviors consistent with an abusive situation

No Harassment

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has established guidelines particularly for sexual harassment, as a form of sexual discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Education Explorers Learning Center will follow these guidelines if any atmosphere of harassment has been created. Any employee who believes he/she is being harassed, discriminated or retaliated against should report the incident to the administration immediately. Each report will be promptly investigated to determine the extent of the incident. Allegations that are substantiated will result in disciplinary actions. Likewise false allegations will result in disciplinary actions.

Smoking/Vaping /Alcohol/Drugs

Smoking, alcohol, and drugs of any kind (except for valid prescription medication) are absolutely prohibited on or near the center facilities, inside or outside. Use of these substances in or near the center is grounds for immediate termination and legal action will be taken. The manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, sale, purchase or use of a controlled substance on the center's property is prohibited. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs on the center's property are prohibited. Tobacco users must be considerate of others around you and make sure you do not smell like tobacco when you come to work. Please do not be offended if we ask you to go home and change if we feel your clothes have a problematic odor. Education Explorers reserves the right to hold random drug testing at the center or a designated location. We will pay for the test if the test is negative. The employee will pay for the test if the test is positive. *If the test is positive for drugs, the employee will immediately be terminated.*

Sanitized Items

The items listed below will be cleaned with appropriate bleach/Water solution which consist of 1 tsp bleach to 1 gallon of water or ¼ tsp bleach to 1 quart of water, do not rinse off after being sprayed and let air dry: Crib rails, Pacifiers, Teething rings, Counter tops, High chairs, Tables, Infant bouncers and swings

Disinfected Items

The items listed will be cleaned with a stronger bleach solution on a daily basis at the end of each day. This solution consists of *¼ cup bleach to 1 gallon water or 1 Tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water*: Hand washing sinks, Soap dispensers, Nap mats, Toilets, Door knobs, Diaper changing areas

Fire and Tornado Procedures

Fire and tornado procedures are posted in all the classrooms giving clear instructions on your exit plans and where to go in case of a fire or tornado. Make sure you are able to locate these in all the classrooms and are aware of all procedures when in a classroom. Also make sure that emergency bags and the proper contact information is in a location that is accessible to all teachers. *If we would have to evacuate the building for any reason and not be able to re-enter, we would escort the children outside of the building safely. In the event that the weather is too extreme to remain outside children and staff will walk to a designated location for each center. They will remain there until all students are safely united with a parent or guardian. Arlington's designated location: City Auditorium, 410 W Elm St, Arlington, NE 68002. Kennard's designated location is 505 Linda Lee lane Kennard, Ne 68034*

Crisis and Disaster Plan

Education Explorers maintains a safe environment, which includes controlled access to our building, safety plans, crisis procedures, and practice drills for our staff and children. If we are made aware of a crisis in the area, our center will go into immediate lockdown, an email will be sent out to all the parents to inform them that no one

will be allowed into the center (including parents) until safety is assured. If we are unaware and caught off guard, we will alert the classrooms immediately. The teachers will barricade their doors with the classroom tables, and the teachers will make a decision whether to hide in locked spaces or to escape through their fire exit doors. We will be practicing our crisis procedure along with our annual fire and tornado drills. During any of these unfortunate events we will send an email out to all of our families updating them on our current situation and let everyone know our plan of action. We, at Education Explorers Learning Center pray these circumstances never arise; however, in the event that they do our team will be fully prepared to ensure the safety of all.

Confidentiality

As professionals it is our obligation to keep information regarding the children and their families confidential. Each child's records are open to the primary teacher, parents, administration, and licensing. Staff records contain much information of a personal and confidential nature; therefore, these records are accessible by administration and licensing only. With this commitment to confidentiality in place, the center will be a place of security and trust. All files are the property of Education Explorers Learning Center.

Cell Phones/ BrightWheel

Cell phones may be used during breaks, lunch, or when children are not present. This also includes text messaging. Disciplinary action will be taken if this rule is abused. (Each employee signs an agreement form on this with their hiring paperwork). Employees are required to have their cell phones with them and fully charged at all times for emergency use. Phone use to the director, staff, and the use of brightwheel to communicate to families is permitted within professional guidelines.

Food and Drink

In accordance with licensing criteria, employees are expected to sit and eat with the children at snack and lunch times, eating at any other time should be confined to the staff break time. Be aware of allergies centerwide.

Grievance Policy and Procedure

Any staff member, who has a concern about some aspect of classroom operation or policy, should first discuss the matter with the lead classroom teacher. If the lead teacher cannot resolve the concern independently and to the satisfaction of the staff member within 24 hours they may verbally bring the matter to the attention of a director. If the director is unable to arrive at a solution satisfactory to those involved, within 24 hours the director will verbally bring the matter to the attention of the owners. For convenience and expediency, the director may ask the staff member to present the concern to the owners. If a staff member brings a concern to the owners without first consulting with a director, the owners will ask the staff member to first confer with the lead teacher or director as appropriate. A grievance may be filed in writing followed by an appointment to review the grievance. At any time during the above process, a grievance may be filed in writing, and submitted to the appropriate individual in the designated chain of command. This will be followed by an appointment to review the grievance within seven (7) working days by the lead teacher, director, and/or owners as appropriate. The owner's action regarding the grievance is final.



2025/2026 Employee Handbook Agreement Form

I _____ (Print full name) as an employee of Education Explorers Learning Center have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies and regulations stated within the employee handbook.

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)

DHHS Regulations Agreement Form

I _____ (Print full name) as an employee of Education Explorers Learning Center have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies and regulations stated within the Department of Health and Human Services Handbook.

_____ (Signature)

_____ (Date)