FAMILY HANDBOOK

for

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&

Center II: 805 Rock Creek Church Road, NW

Washington, DC 20010

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Email: Idealdcdc@gmail.com

Website: www.Idealchildcaredevelopmentcenter.com

Director: Yves-Carmel Decelian-Cadet

WE VALUE THE UNIQUENESS OF EACH CHILD!

Effective: October 2025

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Message from the Director

Dear Parents,

We are pleased that you chose Ideal Childcare Development Center (Ideal) for the care and education of your child. We operate two (2) centers in the North West area of the District of Columbia. We encourage close interactions between your family and our center. This open relationship will assure the success of your child's early care and education.

Our childcare program strives to foster positive values, creativity, and independence in each and every child. We are concerned with growth in all areas of development: cognitive, social emotional, communication as well as physical. Your child will participate in a developmentally appropriate program which provides stability as well as flexibility, ensuring individual needs are recognized, addressed, and met by qualified staff members.

The most valuable educational experiences in early childhood are known to happen through play. Child's earliest learning experiences start with the gathering of information through the senses, making memories and connections which will be the foundation for all future learning. We work hard to set up an environment that allows your child to explore and learn in a stress-free, relaxed, spontaneous way that encourages curiosity and leads to exceptional growth and development.

We respect the uniqueness of each child and will always put your child's welfare first. Although we cannot replace you as a parent, we regard Ideal as an extension of the home. We provide love and understanding in a safe, clean, and comfortable learning environment where your child will receive the best care we can possibly provide.

This handbook has been prepared for the purpose of helping you to understand our program at Ideal Childcare Development Center. Your child's care and education is our #1 priority!

Sincerely,

Yves-Carmel Decelian-Cadet

Mrs. Yves-Carmel Decelian-Cadet
Director

THE IDEAL MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

Our Mission: Our childcare program strives to foster positive values, creativity, and independence in each and every child.

Ideal believes that children are the future. We must invest in our knowledge, skills, and resources to ensure their future is bright. Family input is imperative. Support for each family and expanding the knowledge of each parent/guardian is essential to the developmental growth of the child. Ideal believes in a strong team effort that includes both staff and families. We allow the family to influence program implementation by giving us feedback ongoing and formally annually.

Ideal bases its beliefs on the philosophy that all young children are entitled to enriching experiences. These experiences further the development of the total child in all areas (social emotional, physical, cognitive, and communication). Experiences are planned intentionally to increase the natural inquisitiveness of each child. Staff take their lead from what the children demonstrate as their interests, abilities, and needs with lesson plans adapted to encourage ongoing growth and development.

Ideal believes that all children can benefit from a quality educational experience. Children with delays or disabilities as well as children from different ethnic/cultural groups are accepted without hesitation. Training, educational opportunities, mentor-coaching, and consultation must be offered to both staff and families to ensure the full integration of all children regardless of needs.

IDEAL HISTORY AND SERVICES

Ideal opened its doors in 1998 with one (1) center and expanded to two (2). Ideal is licensed to serve up to 80 children between the two (2) centers which represents seven (7) classrooms for children ages six (6) weeks to five (5) years.

Teaching staff include those with a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with either infant/toddler or preschool endorsement, Associate's degrees as well as Bachelor's degrees. The administration includes a Director, Assistant Director, Administrative staff, and Consultants/Coaches. Both Director and Assistant Director have completed required coursework to qualify as early childhood administrators.

Ideal provides a special pre-kindergarten program that is grant-funded through the OSSE and offers confirmed DC residents a 'free' pre-k school-day regardless of income level.

PROGRAM CORE VALUES

Ideal strives to care for and grow well-developed, motivated, articulate, thinking children beginning in infancy.

Our Core Values:

1. ***Safety:*** *Commit to Create and Maintain Safety at All Times*
    a. *Maintain consistently high standards in the classroom, on the playground, and everywhere the children are present.*
    b. *Ensure the security of the children and the staff.*
    c. *Safety is the first priority.*
2. ***Care:*** *Inject Love, Fun, and Passion, and Maintain a Friendly Environment That Fosters Learning and Growth*
    a. *Maintain respectful relationships with parents, children, staff, and administrators.*
    b. *Strive to be a model the children can emulate by showing care, attention, and inclusivity in our environment.*
    c. *Take responsibility for the growth of our children and our teachers.*
3. ***Trustworthy:*** *Create Relationships Based on Courtesy, Respect, Honesty, and Integrity*
    a. *Always do what we promise to do.*
    b. *Establish and communicate clear expectations.*
    c. *Safeguard parent, child, and staff confidentiality.*
    d. *Promote open and honest communications with the Ideal community.*
    e. *Maintain transparency.*
4. ***Reliable:*** *Build a Team of Dependable, Knowledgeable Professionals Who enjoy Their Work and Thrive to Deliver Compassionate Services*
    a. *Always be on time and attentive to Ideal's needs.*
    b. *Identify emerging issues and offer innovative solutions.*
    c. *Maintain professional and ethical standards around the children and peers at all times.*
    d. *Pay attention to the well-being of the children at all times.*

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO OUR FAMILIES

Ideal only continues to exist because family's who have young children are interested and supportive of the services we offer. Our families influence our daily operation, our schedule, and our focus. Our families influence what our program looks like and our goals from year to year. Our families give feedback and input, express joy and concern, wanted or not, regarding what they see and hear whether directly related to their child or someone else's child; the activities shared in the classroom; what happens on a walk; what happens on the playground; what happens during drop-off or pick-up; as well as how their child looks and seems to feel at any given time that might have something to do with the care and education we provide. There is no limit to what a family member may bring to our attention, request, object to, or express pleasure and adoration about. We as the "Ideal" place for a child to grow and develop accept it all without hesitation because we know it helps us grow as an early care and education program.

Our families come from all walks of life and from across the world with different backgrounds, home languages, and experiences. We intend to honor the diversity each family brings to Ideal just as we

honor the diversity each staff member, volunteer, contractor or therapist brings to Ideal. That means honoring the trust placed in us.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

A. Licensing

Ideal holds current licenses for operation under the District of Columbia's Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE), Childcare Licensing Unit. Ideal adheres to the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 5, Chapter 1 (Child Development Facilities: Licensing), Subtitle A which governs the licensing and operating standards for child development facilities. The DCMR provides guidance "to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children in licensed Child Development Facilities and to ensure the provision of developmentally appropriate programs to those children." Ideal works hard to adhere to all licensing requirements.

The licensing process includes a stringent set of standards that must be met and includes such things as a "Clean Hands" certificate, Certificate of Occupancy, proof of liability insurance, proof of qualifications of the Director, statements regarding certain program standards for operation, and a contingency plan for emergencies. The program walks through an application process to renew its license every three (3) years and must submit to an annual as well as unannounced monitoring visits.

A copy of the approved license is displayed in each center along with the 'Certificate of Occupancy.' The Certificate of Occupancy certifies that the center complies with all Federal and District of Columbia fire, safety, building, and zoning regulations and codes.

A copy of the DCMR is available on the OSSE website under the Division of Early Learning and drop-down "Licensing."

B. Locations

Ideal operates two (2) centers in the North West area of the District of Columbia. Both centers are within walking distance of the Petworth Metro Station (green line) at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and New Hampshire Avenue, NW and on the Georgia Avenue metrobus line.

Center	Address	Phone Number
Ideal I	801 Rock Creek Church Rd, NW	202-722-0633
Ideal II	805 Rock Creek Church Rd, NW	202-722-0633

The Ideal management team may be reached via email at: ideald1@verizon.net or Idealdcdc@gmail.com

Ideal provides early care and education services to infants [from age six (6) weeks], toddlers, and a pre-k program for three (3) and four (4) year old children.

C. Hours of Operation

Ideal is licensed and authorized to operate as a non-traditional program providing early care and education services seven (7) days per week from 7:00 a.m. – 12:00 a.m. Ideal currently provides care weekdays from 7:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

D. NAEYC Accreditation

Ideal is a recognized and certified as a "NAEYC" accredited program. NAEYC, the National Association for the Education of Young Children is a nationally recognized organization that provides 'best practice' guidance to early childhood programs across the country. Since 1985, NAEYC's national accreditation system has set professional standards for early childhood education programs, allowing families to find high-quality programs for their child. NAEYC strives to raise the quality of education for all children from birth through age eight (8). Accreditation systems are a major part of NAEYC's efforts to improve early childhood education; they allow programs to provide the best learning experiences for young children and their educators by meeting national standards of quality.

Accreditation is the highest form of recognition an early childhood program can attain and is an indication of a program that has undergone inspection of its facilities, educational practices, as well as policies and has been given a "high-quality" program rating.

E. Multi-Cultural & Bi-Lingual Staff

Ideal values the diversity of its children and families as well as its employees. Staff represent many countries across the world including the Philippines, Haiti, Ethiopia, Peru, and Panama. Staff speak the languages of their country and are able to support some of our families whose first language is not English. Languages spoken include Haitian Creole, Eritrea, Taiga, Amharic, Filipina, and French.

F. Closings

1. **Holidays:** Ideal follows the federal schedule for closings for major holidays and includes:
    - New Year's Day
    - Martin Luther King's Birthday
    - President's Day
    - D.C. Emancipation Day
    - Memorial Day
    - Juneteenth
    - Independence Day
    - Labor Day
    - Columbus/Indigenous People's Day
    - Veteran's Day
    - Thanksgiving Day & the Friday after (when approved)

- Christmas Day

2. **Staff Development:** As a licensed childcare facility, Ideal is required to provide its staff with ongoing opportunities to expand their knowledge and skills to ensure a quality program. The DCMR outlines the minimum requirements for ongoing professional development and states that "each paid employee of a Child Development Center serving infants, toddlers, and/or preschoolers whose duties and/or responsibilities include the care of enrolled child shall participate in at least 21 hours of training annually in the fields of child and youth development and/or early childhood education." Staff are also expected to complete annual health and safety trainings, some of which may be offered by the center.

   To meet this requirement, Ideal will close for up to ten (10) staff development days during the year. For the purpose of counting hours, the Ideal 'year' begins in October and ends in September. Childcare will not be provided during the staff development days. Ideal will develop and share its calendar each fiscal year so families can plan and will also notify families at least 30 days in advance of each closing to allow for alternative childcare arrangements. Staff development days are built into the existing childcare payment structure.

   Families should know that there may be additional mandatory professional development requirements or meetings from the OSSE during the course of the fiscal year. Families will be alerted when necessary.

3. **Inclement Weather:** Ideal follows the District of Columbia Public Schools policy for delay in opening or closure due to inclement weather. Families are advised to monitor the local news channels and/or radio on days when weather is poor for announcements regarding opening delays, closure or closure during the day. A delayed opening time is calculated based on ideal's normal start time [i.e., a delayed start of two (2) hours would mean Ideal would open at 9:30 a.m. – 2 hours later than a normal 7:30 a.m. opening]. An early closure alert of two (2) hours would mean Ideal would close at 3:30 p.m. [i.e., two (2) hours earlier than a normal closure of 5:30 p.m.]. Should Ideal need to close during business hours due to the weather, families will be notified as soon as a decision is made to close. The parent/guardian identified for contact will be called and asked to pick up their child. Ideal will use all means necessary to contact families (Brightwheel, email, phone).

4. **Emergencies:** Should Ideal need to close for an emergency not caused by inclement weather, families will be notified as soon as a decision is made to close and provided the reason for closing. The parent/guardian identified for contact will be called and asked to pick up the child. Families should note that depending on the nature of the emergency, a closing may not affect both centers. Ideal will use all means necessary to contact families (Brightwheel, email, phone).

G. Smoke and Drug Free Environment

Ideal maintains a smoke and drug free learning environment for its children as required by the DCMR. Adults are not permitted to smoke within 50 feet of the center. Staff and families are encouraged to avoid exposing a child to second-hand smoke (i.e. finishing a cigarette/cigar and then coming into contact with a child or smoking near a child). Further, staff are encouraged to work to overcome the need to smoke at all.

H. Fire Drills

Ideal regards the need to ensure each child's safety seriously. The DCMR outlines requirements for practicing evacuation drills, in accordance with the guidelines and/or regulations adopted by the DC Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services. A written 'exit' map is posted in each classroom. Fire drills are practiced regularly, at least monthly, without announcement, and at varying times during the program day. The drills include all groups of children and all staff procedures are in place to ensure the buildings are evacuated and all children are accounted for. The details of each evacuation drill are documented for the record. The fire drill logs are submitted to the OSSE as a part of the licensing monitoring requirement. Ideal provides two (2) ways out of the building on each floor. In addition to these precautions, Ideal follows the requirement for its youngest children to occupy classrooms closest to the street level and incorporates two (2) cribs certified as suitable for evacuation purposes in the infant classroom. The details of each evacuation drill are documented for the record and adjustments made and/or staff alerted to needs to perfect the evacuation process.

***I.* Emergency Preparedness & Shelter-in-Place Provisions**

As required by the DCMR, Ideal has an 'Emergency Response Plan' (ERP) in place for both an evacuation (fire, loss of power, heat or water service issue, unsafe indoor temperature) or shelter-in-place (disaster or safety threat) related emergency. In some instances, the children may just combine in the other building for a temporary shelter. (801 to 805 or vice versa). In the event of an emergency that does not allow for children to leave the center to go home, shelter-in-place provisions apply. The plan includes provisions (food/drink) for care for up to three (3) days for each child.

Regardless of emergency, all families will be alerted as soon as possible and informed of the situation. Ideal utilizes its Brightwheel app for most notifications, however, in the case of an emergency, Ideal will utilize any and all technology to ensure every family has the information needed to respond appropriately (i.e., Brightwheel, email, phone, emergency contacts identified in the enrollment application) until the family is contacted successfully.

Ideal has identified where the center would relocate in the case of an emergency that required repair work to the center.

Ideal has an updated 'Emergency Response Plan' that outlines all possible emergency situations and our plan for addressing them. This plan shall be posted on the Ideal website.

J. Inspections

Ideal must meet ongoing licensing requirements to remain open and in good standing with the District of Columbia. The DCMR outlines the requirements for inspections. Ideal submits to an annual fire safety inspection annually and prior to application for renewal of its licenses.

OSSE Licensing unit staff also perform monitoring visits in the center, announced and unannounced. Deficiencies are identified with requirements for abatement and a deadline for completion. License continuation or renewal is contingent on meeting requirements and deadlines.

K. Open Door Policy

Ideal encourages the active participation of its families in the early care and education experience. Ideal continues to practice its 'no shoe' policy in the building and therefore would like to also continue to schedule visits throughout the year such as during special events and holiday celebrations, parent teacher conferences, and celebrations of learning (completion of a theme or study) performances.

Visits will be most successful when family members participate in the routine including hand washing upon arrival, and removing shoes or wearing shoe covers. Family members are invited and encouraged to accompany their child on fieldtrips. At times, there may be fieldtrips that require parents' attendance in order for the child to participate.

Parents/guardians who would like a meeting with the director are encouraged to make an appointment to ensure good use of their time and the director's availability.

L. Service Providers (Volunteers/Contractors/Therapists/Special Activity Instructors)

Ideal utilizes service providers regularly for a variety of reasons including supporting children's therapy needs. Volunteers come from many walks of life and may include family members, high school or college students or perspective early childhood workers completing practicums/experience hours as well as members of the business community. Families will always be notified of the inclusion of service providers in their child's classroom. Service providers will always be supervised by staff. Service providers must submit to a background check and receive a health clearance to participate in the classroom in addition to participating in an initial orientation prior to being permitted to support the classroom. Service providers are required to be supervised at all times by certified staff. Service providers are never permitted to be alone with children and may not change diapers or supervise children in the rest room.

M. Disclosure of Child/Family Information

Ideal follows the requirements in the DCMR related to 'administrative records on children.' Ideal "shall not disclose information concerning an individual child or the child's parent/guardian to persons other than the facility staff or government officials acting in the official course of their duties, unless the parent/guardian grants written permission for the disclosure, or unless the disclosure is necessary in an emergency situation."

N. Notice of Non-Discrimination

Ideal embraces the diversity of the District's community. This is seen in both its diverse staff as well as in its children participating in the program. Ideal does not discriminate in either its hiring or childcare service practices related to gender, religion, race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, national origin, age or disability. All staff, service providers, children and their families are expected to be treated with equal respect.

II. ENROLLMENT

A. Entrance Requirements

Ideal requires the participation in an 'information session' prior to requesting /receiving an application to enroll. Completion of the application and submission of all required documents is required prior to considering a child for enrollment and allows the family to move to the final phase of enrollment consideration which is interview with child present. Acceptance is based on availability for the age group and hours of care desired as well as compliance with all requirements.

B. Completion of Required Forms

The application process is not complete until all documents are submitted. Families are expected to provide the following:

- Child's Birth Certificate;
- Child's Social Security card;
- Parent/guardian's official government issued ID
- Child's current Health Certificate which includes vision and hearing screening results as well as immunization record or valid DC Department of Health exemption [current means the exam date is less than one (1) year ago];
- Current Dental Certificate (Oral Health Exam) [for children three (3) years and older];
- DC Residency Verification form (for children applying for the pre-k program) along with proof of residency;
- Proof of Childcare subsidy, if applicable; and/or
- Plan and Payment Agreement for tuition.

With approval for enrollment, families will complete a registration packet and receive a copy of the family handbook. The registration packet includes the following forms:

- Registration for a Child Receiving Services;
- Authorization for Emergency Medical Treatment;
- Authorization for Medication Administration; and
- Travel and Activity.

Children who will require attention for allergies or medication administration must provide the details for either prior to enrollment.

1. **Dietary Restrictions & Allergy Alert:** DCMR outlines requirements for precautions related to food allergies.

   Ideal shall:

   - Require parent/guardians to provide all relevant information regarding dietary restrictions and food allergies for each child as appropriate at time of admission with information placed in the child's file;
   - Require parent/guardians to provide updated information at least annually;
   - Ensure that all staff responsible for food preparation and distribution are informed in writing of any dietary restrictions, food allergies or other special dietary requirements that concern any child enrolled; and
   - Only serve a special therapeutic diet to a child upon the written instruction of the child's licensed health care practitioner.

2. **Medication Authorization:** DCMR outlines requirements for providing medicine or treatment to any child.

   Requirements include:

   - A written medical order or prescription from the child's licensed health care practitioner and the written consent of the child's parent/guardian;
   - Ensuring that each medication ordered or prescribed is maintained by Ideal in its original container, and clearly labeled with the name of the child for whom it has been ordered or prescribed, the name of the medicine, the dosage, the method of administration, and the name and telephone number of the child's licensed health care practitioner;
   - Refusal by Ideal to administer any medication for any period beyond the date indicated on the medical order or prescription;
   - Obtaining from the parent or guardian of the child, in writing, each day, for purpose of administering medication, a statement indicating when the last dose was administered prior to the child's arrival at Ideal with Ideal staff adding this information to the medication log;
   - Recording details for each time the medication is administered on the medication log and keeping the family informed of same;
   - Allowance for the administration of nonprescription topical ointments, including sunscreen, lotion, petroleum jelly, lip balm, as well as diaper

ointment, to a child, only upon obtaining the written permission of the child's parent/guardian; and

- Maintaining each nonprescription topical ointment in its original container and administering each such ointment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

C. <u>Tuition and Fees</u>

Monthly Tuition Non-Proration Policy

At Ideal, we are committed to providing our children with the highest quality of education and resources throughout their entire academic period. To maintain the integrity of our educational offerings and ensure the stability of our programs, Ideal has adopted a policy of not prorating monthly tuition fees. This policy is applicable to all children enrolled in any of our classrooms or programs.

1. **Monthly tuition Fees:** The monthly tuition is a fixed cost that covers access to services for the duration of the monthly billing cycle.

2. **No Proration:** Monthly tuition and fees are not prorated under any circumstances. This includes, but is not limited to, children who enroll after the commencement of the monthly billing cycle or withdraw before the end of the monthly billing cycle.

3. **Billing Cycle:** The monthly billing cycle is defined as the period from the first to the last day of each calendar month. All families are required to pay the full monthly tuition regardless of the number of days attended within any given billing cycle.

4. **Refunds and Credits**: No refunds will be issued for the payment of the registration or any other fees. However, the tuition deposit is applied towards the last month at Ideal provided that a 30-day notice has been provided. No other credits are provided for non-attendance, late enrollment, or early departure within any given billing cycle.

5. **Exceptions:** There are no exceptions to this policy. All children are subject to the terms outlined herein without exception.

6. **Registration:** Families interested in enrolling their child in an Ideal center start the process with a visit to the center for a tour and interview. A completed registration packet is required for consideration of enrollment. A non-refundable registration fee of $500.00 is required during this initial application process. Families with more than one (1) child are expected to pay a registration fee of $500.00 for the first child and $10.00 for each additional child.

7. **Deposit Hold:** Private pay families completing the registration process at Ideal are currently expected to provide a deposit equivalent to half of the monthly tuition before start in the program. This tuition deposit will be held and applied to the child's last month in the program provided a 30-day notice is given to management that the child will be leaving the program.

The deposit requirement for new families includes a full months' deposit equivalent to the tuition fee in advance in addition to the first months' tuition before the child's start in the program.

8. **Discounts**: Ideal will honor one discount per family. The discount will apply either to a sibling or for a fully potty-trained child whichever provides the greater discount. In no instance will Ideal honor two discounts.

9. **Tuition & Ongoing Payments:** Currently Ideal accepts payment monthly at the beginning of the month for tuition. Tuition rates are subject to change upon review of fiscal expenses. Rates are reviewed annually and take effect with the January invoice.

   Current tuition rates are:
   - Toddlers - $2,750.00 per month (6 weeks – 2 ½ years)
   - Preschoolers - $2,650.00 per month (ages 2 ½ - 5 years)
     - Preschoolers must be fully toilet trained (without accidents) to qualify for the preschool rate
   - Pre-K Before/After Care for children in the PKeep Grant- $900.00 per month (includes care at Ideal for winter and spring breaks)

Families are required to pay their tuition fees by the 1st of the month to cover the entire month.

10. **Late Payment:** Families are required to pay their tuition fees by the 1st of the month for the entire month. Payments received after the 5th will be subject to a $25.00 late fee. Failure to pay the assigned monthly fee or any late fees may result in a child's termination from the program.

11. **Checks Returned By the Bank Due to Insufficient Funds:** Families may make their tuition payment thru the link in Brightwheel or by check, money order, cashier's check or cash. In the event of a returned check due to insufficient funds, Ideal reserves the right to charge the parent/guardian $36.00 to cover bank charges (actual charge subject to change according to bank fees). The parent/guardian will also be required to sign a written statement taking responsibility for the bounced check which will be provided to Ideal's financial institution so as to avoid damage to its credit report. Once a parent/guardian writes a bad check, future tuition payments will be accepted with certified funds only.

12. **Invoicing:** Ideal issues monthly invoices via an online accounting system in Brightwheel. Payments may be made by check or credit card safely through the online system.

13. **Late Pick-Up/Overtime Fee:** Unless otherwise approved by Ideal management, children are expected to be picked up each day they are in attendance no later than 5:30 p.m.

Ideal allows a grace period of five (5) minutes for the first time when a parent/guardian is late. The grace period does not apply for a parent/guardian who has been late more than one (1) time. After the five (5) minute grace period, the parent/guardian will be assessed a charge of $2.00 per minute for each minute they are late. The parent/guardian will be expected to pay the total late fee at the time of pick-up and no later than the following morning when the child is dropped off. A receipt will be provided for the late pick-up payment. ***Children may not return to the program until the late fee is paid. Failure to pay the late fee within 24 hours or the next business day is cause for termination.***

Each family is encouraged to keep its 'emergency contact list' up-to-date to ensure it is available should a need arise to reach out to someone other the parent/guardian.

Families should note that children left in the center 30 minutes or more after the 5:30 p.m. closing time without contact from the parent/guardian constitutes an emergency. Ideal will make every effort to reach out to locate the parent/guardian and/or anyone on the emergency contact list. If this fails, children will be considered abandoned and may be treated as such. Abandoned children are subject to being turned over to the Child Protective Services Agency (CFSA) or the Police Department for care.

D. <u>File information</u>

1. **Maintaining Up-to-Date Information:** The DCMR outlines the requirements for 'administrative records on children' and 'children's health records.'

   A good deal of information that is required to be maintained is collected from the family on a daily and/or regular basis. Families are asked to provide or will contribute to the following file information for their child:

   - Daily attendance of each child;
   - Health records including a current "Health Certificate and Immunization Record" or valid immunization exemption through the DC Department of Health;
   - Child's current home address and phone numbers (home, work, mobile);
   - Full names of parent/guardians;
   - Business address/phone number of parent/guardians;
   - Designation of individuals authorized to receive the child at the end of the day;
   - Emergency contact information (names and phone numbers);
   - Language(s) spoken in the home;
   - Written authorization for the administration of medication as applicable (including prescription from an authorized health care practitioner and medication in a labeled, unopened package);
   - Emergency medical treatment authorization form;
   - Travel and Activity permission form;

- Annual developmental screening (completed by both the family and teaching team); and
- Oral health examination for children three (3) years and older.

E. <u>Childs with Special Needs</u>

Ideal welcomes the diversity each child brings to the program and recognizes that children may come with more than traditional needs that require attention in order to be successful.

Ideal complies with the DCMR for 'children with special needs' and shall:

- Obtain informed, written consent from the parent/guardian to implement any treatment or protocol ordered by a licensed practitioner;
- Follow the child's IFSP [Individualized Family Service Plan if under age three (3) years] or IEP [Individualized Education Plan if age three (3) years or older] and maintain a copy of the document on file;
- Maintain a written individualized 'care' plan in accordance with the IFSP/IEP;
- Obtain written permission before disclosing any information regarding the child to any person, including a licensed health care practitioner who is not an employee of Ideal;
- Ensure each child with special needs receives a developmentally appropriate program and care; and
- Ensure that persons providing therapeutic services on site, follow the IFSP/IEP and have appropriate licenses/authorization to provide services.

Families are expected to comply with any agreement for services (therapy, IFSP/IEP) to ensure the child receives the best care.

Ideal takes additional steps to ensure all children receive appropriate care:

- Staff complete a developmental screening in collaboration with the family as each child starts in the program;
- Staff conferences with the family to compare notes regarding the results of the screening and identifies goals to focus on; and
- Staff and the Ideal administration shall counsel any family whose child demonstrates delays or other concerns for possible referral to either the early intervention or early stages program (depending on age) for further evaluation and possible therapeutic services.

III. ATTENDANCE

A. Program Daily Start & End

Ideal is licensed and authorized to operate on a non-traditional schedule. Children participating in the regular day program may come as early as 7:30 a.m. and stay as late as 5:30 p.m. Ideal is not currently providing non-traditional care.

Child are expected to arrive at the center by 9:00 a.m. each day to ensure a good start to the day unless other arrangements have been approved or the child has an appointment.

B. Best Practice - Maximum # Hours in Care Daily

Ideal loves having its children participate in the program however, we know that while Ideal is the next best place to home, children should have adequate contact with their respective families to bond, grow, and develop. Ideal recommends no more than ten (10) hours of care daily for any given child.

C. Authorization for Pick-Up

Ideal takes it role as childcare provider and protector of children seriously. The DCMR outlines requirements related to designation of an individual authorized to receive the child at the end of the day. Therefore, families will be required and expected to identify in writing those persons who will have authorization to pick-up their child from the center. No other person without written permission or verbal permission from the parent/guardian (in an emergency) and proper photo identification will be permitted to take a child from the center. Additionally, persons authorized to pick-up a child must be at least 18 years of age unless otherwise approved by the center and the OSSE. Persons picking up a child should expect a possible delay of a few moments in the release of a child in order to confirm authorization as well as a request to provide photo identification during the first few days with program start. When a staff member is unfamiliar with the family (in the case of new staff or a substitute) confirmation of authorization should be expected.

Should an emergency arise and a parent/guardian need to make other arrangements for a child's pick-up, a phone call is required by the authorizing parent/guardian with the name of the person who will be substituting as pick-up. The substitute will be required to visit the office to confirm authorization. Photo identification will be required and copied for the record from the designated substitute prior to release of the child.

Families experiencing personal challenges with a mate or spouse are expected to identify those challenges and provide proof of any court-ordered arrangement so that Ideal can enforce the 'pick-up' authorization rule. Ideal is not able to make changes in authorization for contact if the application reflects the mate or spouse in dispute without a valid court order.

D. Change in Drop-Off/Pick-Up Time or Authorized Person

As indicated in "C" above, the DCMR and Ideal requires persons picking up a child to be authorized in writing by the parent/guardian. Should a change be needed in the pick-up arrangements for a child, the parent/guardian is expected to provide a written request to change the designated person.

Families are requested to notify the center when the drop-off or pick-up time schedule changes. Notification will allow the staff to anticipate the parent/guardians' arrival and facilitate the process to get the child ready for changing hands.

E. Curbside Reminders: Sign-In for Drop-Off & Sign-Out for Pick-Up

Ideal recognizes that each family may want to move quickly when dropping off and picking up their child so they can make their next destination on time. We ask that each family wait near the door while the family ahead of them is processed for drop-off or pick-up so that we may maintain the confidentiality of conversations for each family.

Further, we ask that while you wait, that you not leave your vehicle running unless the weather dictates that need (extreme cold or extreme heat) for the passengers who remain in the vehicle. If no one is in the vehicle, we ask that the motor be turned off regardless of the weather conditions. This will help reduce exposure to toxic vehicle fumes.

Ideal will always want to make sure we know who was in the center and when. Should an emergency occur, accounting for all child is of utmost importance. If the center is evacuated suddenly, a staff member carries not only the child to safety, but also carries the attendance book. The attendance book ensures that staff can account for all children once out of the building. Staff will also carry and refer to the classroom tablet so they can access Brightwheel – the online system that families use to sign-in/out each day. This is most important when staff has transitioned on/off the clock due to shift change – staff will need to know which children did not come in at all or left earlier and which children they should expect to locate to safety. Staff have Brightwheel accounts as well with most accessing via their phone as this is the same system classroom staff use to sign-in/out daily. Staff are expected to keep up with which children are with them at any point in the day whether in the classroom or away from the building (i.e., on the playground, walk, or fieldtrip).

Therefore, each day, the parent/guardian dropping off or picking up a child **MUST** sign the child in/out without fail with time noted. The DMCR addresses this requirement. During monitoring visits from the childcare or licensing divisions of OSSE, sign-in and out records are checked for compliance with this requirement.

F. Late Pick-Up/Overtime

The operating hours for each center are identified above. Children are expected to be picked up no later than 5:30 p.m. each day. Timely pick-up allows the staff to clean up, prepare for the next day, and conclude their work day.

Ideal recognizes the possibility of an emergency situation and asks families to notify the center at once when their arrival may be delayed past their normal pick-up time. This is especially important when arrival will be after 5:30 p.m.

Ideal allows a grace period of five (5) minutes for the first time when a parent/guardian is late. The grace period does not apply for a parent/guardian who has been late more than one (1) time.

Families should note that children left in the center after 5:30 p.m. without contact from the parent/guardian within 30 minutes are considered abandoned and may be treated as such. Abandoned child are subject to being turned over to the Child Protective Services Agency (CFSA) or the Police Department for care. Parent/guardians who are chronically late in picking up their child will be subject to termination from the program.

G. Family Vacations

Ideal respects the need for families to take a break during the year. Families are asked to provide the center with two (2) weeks' notice when a child will be taking a vacation along with a note on the length of time the child will be away. Vacations are built into the existing childcare payment structure. Families are expected to pay for the time away in order to reserve the childcare slot.

Child who receive the childcare subsidy are permitted up to 15 vacation days during the fiscal year provided they give the center written notice of plan to vacation prior to stepping away.

H. Late Arrival or Absence

Ideal recognizes the possibility that a child may occasionally be late in arriving or absent from the center. Families are asked to notify the center as soon as possible when a child will be late or absent. This notification will allow the staff to plan properly. Absences are built into the existing childcare payment structure. Families are expected to pay regardless of late arrival or absence.

Children who receive the childcare subsidy are subject to additional absence restrictions. Children with a subsidy are subject to termination from the OSSE when absences exceed 30 in any given month without a valid excuse.

I. Child Illness

Ideal also recognizes the possibility that a child may become ill and not be able to participate in the program. Young children's immune systems are developing and may not be as strong as an adult's. Families are encouraged to keep an ill child home to allow recuperation and prevent the spread of germs to the other children in the center. Keeping a child at home will prevent the need for staff to contact the parent/guardian to request that the child be picked up during the day.

The DCMR outlines requirements related to 'excluding and re-admitting children who are ill' and provides guidance and a long list of restrictions regarding symptoms of children who must be excluded from Ideal until such time as a licensed health care practitioner deems he/she to be ready for return to the program with written permission provided.

Ideal shall isolate a child who becomes ill or is suspected of being ill and shall require that the parent/guardian remove the child from the center should any of the following symptoms be identified:

- Diarrhea, *i.e.*, runny, watery or bloody stools;
- Vomiting two (2) or more times in a twenty-four (24) hour period;
- Body rash with fever;
- Sore throat with fever or swollen glands;
- Eye drainage with thick mucus or pus draining from the eye;
- Pink eye, *i.e.*, colored drainage, eye pain and/or redness of the eye;
- Yellowish skin or eyes;
- Fever accompanied by rash, vomiting, diarrhea, earache, irritability or confusion;
- Continuous irritable crying that requires more attention than the Facility can provide without compromising the health and safety of other child;
- Any other symptom indicative of a reportable communicable disease, as such is defined in Chapter 2 of Title 22 of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations;
- Fever;
- Lethargy or inability to walk;
- Respiratory problems, including: increased respiratory rate; retractions in the chest; excessive nasal flaring; audible persistent wheezing; persistent coughing, either productive or nonproductive; severe coughing causing redness or blueness in the face; or difficulty in breathing;
- Abdominal and urinary system problems including: intestinal parasites, dark urine, white spots in the stool, increased urgency or frequency of urination, or no urination for an entire day;
- Cardiac problems, including: choking, change in color of the skin, chest pain, or persistent sweating;
- Ear problems, including discharge from the ear and/or ear pain;
- Throat and mouth problems, including: sores on the lips or in the mouth, white patches in the mouth, throat pain, or a dental problem that needs immediate attention; and
- Injuries, including: persistent bleeding, oozing wounds, apparent fracture, complaint of persistent bone pain or stiffness, or difficulty with the movement of any extremity.

A child who exhibits one or more symptoms of illness identified above and who has been treated for said symptom(s) by a licensed health care practitioner, may be readmitted to the Facility only with written permission, and written instructions for continuing care if needed, from that licensed health care practitioner.

If a child exhibits mild symptoms of illness and/or discomfort, the Center Director or his/her designee, or the Caregiver, in consultation with the child's parent/guardian, shall decide whether the child should be immediately discharged or discharged at the end of the day.

A child who exhibited a fever, vomiting, and/or diarrhea may not return to school until all symptoms have subsided without medication for at least 24 hours.

J. Child Emergency During Program Hours

Ideal does its best to ensure the safety of each child each and every day. Despite all of our efforts, challenges may arise that become emergencies. The DCMR addresses the requirement for emergency contact information from each family. Emergencies require staff to dial "911" for assistance. In the event of an emergency, the parent/guardian listed on the programs contact list will be contacted. A staff member will stay with the child while waiting for emergency transport to the nearest hospital (Child's National Medical Center) and will accompany the child for an emergency requiring immediate medical attention. In the case of an emergency involving actual or potential poisoning, the Facility may administer emergency treatment without previous written instruction, as directed by an authorized poison control center.

K. Withdrawal

Ideal asks for a 30-day notice when a family is planning to withdraw their child from the program. The DCMR outlines requirements for 'administrative records on children' and instructs the program to document the reason and date of exit from the program in the child's file.

Families that provide the required notice and are private pay clients will have the benefit of having their 'deposit' being held since the time of enrollment applied to the balance of cost for care. Families who fail to provide one (1) months' notice will not receive any portion of their deposit.

L. Termination

Ideal reserves the right to terminate a child from the program for cause. Things that might cause such an action to be taken include but are not limited to:

- An out-of-date health certificate and vaccination schedule (with no evidence of immunization exemption through the DC Department of Health);
- Tuition/fees unpaid with no evidence of attempt to bring current;
- Failure to follow policies/procedures;
- Children or staff's physical or mental health threatened by an enrolled child, parent/guardian;
- Failure to follow policies regarding illness for a child;
- Failure to pay late fees;
- Habitual late pick-up of a child; and/or
- Absence from the program for 30 days without valid excuse.

IV. THE 'IDEAL' PROGRAM

A. Guiding Principles

Ideal believes in the need to have a guide to ensure each child's success. As a licensed early care and education program, Ideal is required to adhere to a set of standards set forth by the District of Columbia Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). Basic requirements are outlined in the DCMR. Basic requirements are outlined in the DCMR 'application for initial or renewal license.' Ideal utilizes the following tools to inform the program:

1. **DC OSSE Early Learning Standards:** The OSSE revised the District's Early Learning Standards for birth to age five (5) years in 2019.

   The Early Learning Standards show the continuum of learning and development expected of all young child, from birth through grade three. They include alignment with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics (2010). The standards provide parents and teachers with a sense of what child should know and be able to do at various ages and grade levels. The Early Learning Standards focus on the whole child and include a broad range of domains because a young child's learning and development is interrelated and crosses all domains of learning. The Early Learning Standards acknowledge the essential role of the teacher in intentionally guiding child's learning and development in a high-quality environment.

   Staff utilize these standards to plan for children individually and in groups.

2. **Curriculum – The Creative Curriculum:** All licensed programs are required to select and use a curriculum to guide program implementation. Ideal has chosen "The Creative Curriculum" developed by Teaching Strategies to guide program implementation.

   The Creative Curriculum is a part of The Teaching Strategies company. This curriculum:
   a) Provides guidance for the implementation of a organized system of instruction for young children;
   b) Provides guidance for Infants, Toddlers and Twos in separate volumes from Preschool;
   c) Provides the foundation for identifying and planning to meet ongoing needs with four (4) steps in the assessment cycle: (1) observing and collecting facts; (2) analyzing and responding; (3) evaluating; and (4) summarizing, planning and communicating.

3. **Assessment System – Teaching Strategies GOLD™:** All licensed programs are also required to monitor child progress. Ideal uses the Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment system to meet this requirement. This assessment is part of the Teaching Strategies company and is aligned with the curriculum utilizing assessment information to inform curriculum development. The assessment system provides a

mechanism for keeping track of each child's progress in all areas of development (social emotional, cognitive, physical, communication). The Teaching Strategies GOLD™ assessment system is aligned with the DC Early Learning Standards set forth by OSSE.

B. Charting Child Progress

Ideal monitors each child's developmental progress from entry into the program to exit. Monitoring allows Ideal to make wise decisions about how to support each child. Monitoring also helps inform decision making related to program and procedural changes. The charting process includes:

1. **Initial Developmental Screening:** Parents are asked to help Ideal paint a picture of their child upon entry into the program as the first and most knowledgeable educator of their child. Ideal utilizes the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ) for this purpose. The ASQ screens children is all areas of development.

   Any concerns identified as a result of this initial screening are addressed immediately. Need for additional referrals are addressed on a case-by-case basis. A review of each child's health certificate confirms whether there are additional concerns related to vision and/or hearing screenings.

2. **Ongoing Assessment:** Staff utilize daily observations to inform decision making for next steps for individual children, daily schedule and routine as well as classroom and program changes. These observations are a form of 'informal assessment' and are an important piece of the big picture. Staff document their observations throughout the day.

   Families are invited to contribute to the assessment process either formally or informally throughout the week. Drop off and pick-up times are perfect for sharing an observation or asking a question about a child's development.

3. **Quarterly Checkpoint Update:** Three (3) checkpoints have been identified during the year when staff will organize their observations of each child and document progress in all developmental areas. Status of development is recorded on a Teaching Strategies GOLD™ individual Child Assessment Portfolio or in the on-line system.

4. **Progress Report and Family Conference:** A family conference will be held to discuss child progress and plan for next steps after the initial developmental screening and after each checkpoint. Families will be notified of the plan to hold a conference and will be invited to choose a convenient day and time for the conference. Conferences may be held virtually or in person. Families should expect to receive information about their child's developmental status ahead of the planned conference to allow for family feedback and input.

   Family insight and input is important and welcomed throughout the year before, during, and after each conference.

C. Daily Schedule/Routine

Ideal knows that a predictable, organized and well-planned program contributes to the success and development of each child. Each and every activity whether toileting, eating a meal, singing a song, following a direction, having a conversation, problem solving or manipulating materials provide a learning experience and are taken advantage of.

1. **Arrival and Transition in Daily:** Starting each day, especially in a new and different environment can be difficult. Under normal circumstances, children are expected to be brought into the classroom each day by a responsible adult. Curbside service would not be an option. Families have been asked in the past to help their child transition into the program each day by helping them put their belongings away and updating the staff on status and needs. Families were encouraged to make a big deal out of saying good-bye and the plan to return even when the child was having difficulty letting go. Families were expected to help with the transition into the class each day. Parent/guardians staying for a few minutes were expected to wash hands for both themselves and the child.

Since the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, Ideal has had to reconsider its policy and practice that allowed multiple people in/out of the center throughout the day bringing germs and bacteria in on shoes and hands that may complicate our ability to keep the children attending healthy. As a result of this ongoing concern and evidence that COVID-19 illnesses are still possible, children will be received at the door but still must be signed in each day by the person bringing the child. Teachers will make an effort to support the successful transition into the program each day.

2. **General Plan:** Each class has a schedule and routine in place that is predictable yet flexible. A schedule, routine, and flexibility ensure that the needs of the children are met each and every day. The DCMR provides guidelines for what is expected during the child's day as part of 'general daily program activities.'

The general daily plan includes:

- Periods of active and quiet play;
- A minimum of one (1) hour of outdoor play or activity each day (morning and afternoon);
- A program of activities suitable to the ages and abilities of all children;
- A written activity plan;
- Structured and unstructured activities;
- Periods of rest, with duration and time appropriate to prevent fatigue; and
- Ensuring each child has a supply of clean, dry clothing in case of accident or emergency.

3. **Age Group Differences:** Infants, toddlers and preschoolers have different interests, abilities, and needs. Staff is able to recognize and adapt the daily schedule and plan to meet the varying interests, abilities, and needs of the children.

4. **Classroom Grouping:** Teachers are assigned to each classroom of children and stay with that group from day to day. Ideal works to keep children with the same teachers for nine (9) months or more. We know this is especially important for our youngest members of the Ideal family. The Papoose classroom (infants) can enroll as early as six (6) weeks. The classroom space has been renovated to ensure our youngest infants have a safe space away from the mobile infants. As a small program, Ideal keeps toddlers and twos together in the same classroom. Children will potentially stay together and with the same teachers for more than a year. Children may move to the next group when two and half years old if there is a space and they are ready developmentally. The classroom set up contributes to our ability to keep children with their assigned teacher for as long as possible.

We recognize that enrollees may not come at the ideal time (beginning of each age range for the classroom) however as an agency, we have the option to keep a child in a classroom for a longer period of time if found to be beneficial to the child.

5. **Meals:** Ideal has an on-site kitchen and certified Food Protection Manager. Breakfast, lunch, and a snack are served daily. While breakfast and the p.m. snack are prepared on site, lunch is provided by a caterer. Food is prepared and served to children in all classrooms. All meals meet the meal pattern requirements specified by the US Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The DCMR, provides specific guidance for 'food and nutrition requirements' and 'menus, meals, service' provider guidelines related to food service. Additional guidance specific to infants is provided for 'infant formula and feeding' and 'infant solid food.'

Meals are served family-style for children in the preschool classrooms. Children are involved in set-up and serving as much as possible and staff sit and eat with the children during the meal. This special time allows for learning to be continuous.

Families who wish their child to partake of breakfast must arrive at the center by 8:30 a.m. Breakfast is served at 8:00 a.m. and ends at 9:00 a.m. Parent/guardians should be sure to feed their child prior to drop-off if they will not arrive by 8:30 a.m.

Lunch is served at 12:00 p.m. and a snack is provided shortly after children awaken from naps at about 3:00 p.m.

Ideal recognizes the possibility that young children may have or develop allergies to foods and asks that families keep the staff informed of any allergies that develop and put this information in writing as well. Information about a child's allergies will be posted in plain sight of the Foor Manager as well as the classroom staff to ensure awareness and compliance. All posted information about individual children is covered to ensure privacy.

6. **Infant Feeding:** Ideal welcomes families with young infants. We ask that parents supply whatever food and liquid that is needed to cover the day for their infant. We encourage the family to bring both liquid and/or food ready to serve. Ideal staff are not permitted to heat food or liquids.

Parent's who bring formula, expressed breast milk or food should ensure:

- each item is not yet expired;
- bottles/food are labeled with the child's name and date received;
- enough bottles/food are received "pre"pared so staff are not measuring/mixing during the day;

The teaching staff will ensure:

- the oldest breast milk in the refrigerator is used 1st;
- that unused formula/breast milk/food is discarded after two (2) hours once out of the refrigerator;
- any unused formula/thawed breast milk or food is returned to the parent each day;
- formula, breast milk, food is not heated before serving (cold or room temperature use is recommended); and
- that the microwave or crock pot is not in use at any time to heat formula or food.

7. **Naps:** Toddlers and preschoolers are encouraged to rest during the day at a regularly scheduled time. The DCMR outlines the guidance for 'general daily program activities in the center' related to the daily schedule and rest. A formal nap time is scheduled between the hours of 12:00 and 3:00 p.m. for the youngest children and from 1:00 p.m. each day for the preschool group. Children may need and are permitted to nap at a time other than the scheduled nap time.

Infants are permitted to nap when needed on their own schedule. Infants use either a crib or cot for sleeping depending on age. All children under the age of one (1) year are placed in their crib on their backs for sleep to reduce the possibility of SIDS (sudden infant death syndrome). Young infants are monitored and returned to their back should they flip over on their stomach.

All children are monitored by both sight and sound throughout the rest period with the exception of the preschool group. Preschoolers are monitored by mainly by sound with regular visual checks.

Ideal recognizes the need for children to get regular rest during the day. No child is forced to sleep but may be helped to fall asleep. Children who are not sleeping are moved to another part of the classroom for a quiet activity.

8. **Toileting:** All child are regularly checked (hourly) or asked throughout the day to ensure toileting needs are met. Staff watch for signs that indicate a child is ready for beginning the toilet training experience. The family will be consulted for approval to

move forward with training and a plan developed for home and center. All children in the toddler and preschool classrooms participate in a regular toileting schedule to ensure their success. Toileting will always be tailored to individual child needs. Assistance will be provided to children who continue to need assistance with a diaper change or managing clothing regardless of age.

The DCMR provides detailed guidance for 'handling diapers and training pants' as well as diaper changing areas, handling of soiled diapers, related items and cleaning/disinfecting requirements.

9. **Outdoor Time:** Children need fresh air and sunshine as a part of their development. The DCMR requires daily outdoor time. All child enrolled in Ideal go outdoors for at least one (1) hour each day, weather permitting. Scheduled time includes morning and afternoon.

D. Family Involvement

Ideal knows that without families there would be no Ideal and without truly active and involved families, the quality of Ideal services would not be the same. Families help shape the Ideal program. We encourage active participation on the part of all families. Opportunities for family involvement include:

1. **In-Classroom Volunteering:** Families can always visit and stay for a while as an observer or as an active participant.

2. **Parent Meetings:** Ideal hosts regular parent meetings for each classroom. These meetings are designed to bring information to and hear from each family. Feedback will help Ideal improve and enhance its overall program. In-person meetings are scheduled during the last hour of the traditional childcare day from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m. so families can participate without worry regarding the care of their child. Virtual meetings are held around 6:15 p.m. to give families enough time to get home and settled.

3. **Parent Trainings:** As a part of our commitment, Ideal provides opportunities for families to increase their own knowledge, skills, and abilities to support their child's growth and development. Trainings will be scheduled throughout the year and announced with adequate time to encourage family participation. Childcare will be provided for in-person trainings when requested to allow for family participation. Virtual trainings are also possible in the evening or on Saturdays.

4. **Program Support:** Families are welcome and invited to support Ideal in other ways. Families can:

    a. Volunteer time to assist in a special project or event;
    b. Serve on a planning committee for an upcoming event;
    c. Accompany children on a fieldtrip;
    d. Loan the program a relative for a special project;

e. Share their specific expertise or skills with the administration, staff or children;
f. Recycle their child's working toys, books and/or music into the program;
g. Donate used clothing or costumes for our dramatic play area;
h. Alert the program to bargains or freebies; and
i. Think outside the box for things, services, etc. that might help improve program operations.

E. Incorporation of the Creative Arts & Special Activities

Ideal knows that a well-rounded child includes experiences in the arts. Ideal offers children many opportunities to be exposed to music, drama, and traditional art. Ideal often brings in guests – story tellers, musicians, and other artists to introduce the children to the arts.

Ideal looks forward to continuing to incorporate the arts and special activities in all classrooms:

- Drumming and vocal arts;
- Sign-language;
- Yoga;
- French language lessons;
- French music; and
- Tennis lessons.

F. Incorporation of Technology

Ideal offers a variety of ways for children to grow and develop. The preschool classrooms utilize computers/tablets as a part of its curriculum. A 'smart' board is in the plans for this classroom as well. All technology in use is expected to be tied in to the lesson plan, limited in time use (less than a total of 60 minutes in the course of the day) and not used as a time filler. We are not permitted and ***DO NOT*** use television or videos for infants or toddlers under age two (2) years.

G. Special Activities

Ideal offers the child a variety of ways to enhance their learning experiences.

1. **Fieldtrips:** Children may take short trips to the park or library. Fieldtrips to other locations such as the Fire Department, grocery store, farm, zoo, etc. may also be offered. Parent/guardians are always welcome on fieldtrips. The safety of each child will always be our focus. Occasionally a child's participation in a fieldtrip experience may be contingent on a parent/guardian or other responsible family member being available to go as well.

Should a family decide not to allow their child to participate in a center-wide fieldtrip, the parent/guardian will need to find alternative childcare arrangements for the day. In the case when a fieldtrip does not involve every classroom, a child not going on the trip may be able to participate in another classroom for the day if space is available and the child/adult ratio can be maintained.

2. **Celebrations:** Individual classrooms may announce their own celebrations such as a birthday or other special day. Graduating pre-k children participate in a graduation ceremony. Families are invited and encouraged to be a part of any and all celebrations. Center-wide celebrations will be announced early enough for families to participate.

H. General Care and Safety

Ideal knows that the most important aspect of a child's development involves staying safe and being well cared for. Without attention to each child's care and safety, learning will not occur. Various sections of the DCMR address aspects of program requirements related to care and safety.

1. **Adult/Child Ratios:** The DCMR addresses 'group size and adult/child ratios' requirements throughout the day while children are in the program.

AGE OF CHILD	ADULT/CHILD RATIO	MAXIMUM SIZE OF GROUP
0 – 12 months	**1:4**	**8**
12 – 24 months	**1:4**	**8**
24 – 30 months	**1:4**	**12**
30 months through 3 years	**1:8**	**16**
4 – 5 years	**1:10**	**20**

2. **CPR/First-Aid Certification:** The DCMR requires a minimum number of staff to be trained and certified in both CPR and first aid in each center. Ideal has ensured that all staff are trained and certified. Two (2) first-aid kits are available in each classroom with one (1) carried with staff when the class leaves the building.

3. **Playground Use:** ideal does not have its own playground but instead utilizes a nearby playground maintained by DC Parks and Recreation. The number of children permitted on the playground at any given time is limited based on the size of the playground (required 75 square feet of available space per child). Adult/child ratios are in effect while children use the playground. Staff carry a first-aid kit as well as the classroom attendance whenever children leave the building. The DCMR outlines the 'outdoor space, equipment, and safety in centers' requirement.

4. **Child Foot Wear:** Child are expected to wear shoes that protect their feet and allow for safe movement no matter what they are doing. Children may not wear sandals, flip flops, mules or open-toed shoes in the childcare program. Shoes should have both closed toe and heel (or at least a strap over the heel) to ensure children can move without coming out of their shoes and increasing the possibility of falls or injuries.

5. **Hand Washing:** The DCMR addresses 'hand washing practice' requirements for daily hand washing. Clean hands are the foundation for an effective early care and education experience. Child will wash or have their hands washed frequently throughout the day, before and after activities and tasks to minimize the spread of germs and bacteria. Parent/guardians visiting the program during the day are expected to follow all hand washing requirements.

   Hand sanitizer is not approved for use by young children. Hand sanitizer is only approved for use in the case of an emergency when water is not available and for children over age two (2) years. Ideal further restricts the use of hand sanitizer and does not permit its use for any children over the age of two (2) who suck on their fingers. The alcohol in hand sanitizer is considered to act as poison in a young child's body. Hand wipes may be used for young children only when water is not available. All children are expected to wash their hands or have their hands washed with soap and water while in the center.

6. **Crib/Cot Arrangement:** The DCMR addresses the 'requirements for infant sleep and play positions;' as well as 'cots, cribs, and infant play.'

   Conscious placement of cribs and cots helps to minimize sharing of germs. Cribs and cots are spaced three (3) feet apart on all sides when children are sleeping unless a solid barrier is present that separates the crib/cot. Families are asked to provide a crib/cot fitted sheet and blanket for their child. Children do not share bedding or crib/cots. Infants are placed on their backs in the crib with the youngest infants returned to their back should they flip over. Infants do not use pillows or loose blankets in their cribs. A sleep sack is permitted but must not endanger the temperature of the infant. Controlling temperature via thermostat is preferred over adding clothing to the infant. Further, infants do not use positioning devices without the express request and guidance of a license health care practitioner.

7. **Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting:** The DCMR addresses 'handling diapers, training pants, and toys' as well as cleaning and sanitizing requirements. Just as clean hands are important, so is the cleaning and sanitizing of equipment, toys, and materials. Staff work to minimize the sharing of germs and bacteria by ensuring toys that are mouthed, drooled on or otherwise contaminated are removed from the classroom immediately and placed where they can be cleaned properly before another child uses them. Furniture is wiped down after each use with an approved solution. Diaper changing areas as well as toilets receive attention before and after each use to ensure a clean surface for each child. Staff are expected to put on gloves to minimize the transmission of

germs and bacteria before handling a child who has drooled, spit up, needs a diaper change, has a cut/scrape or has a runny nose. Gloves are also worn when food is served. In the infant group, there is a 'no shoe' policy in the classroom enforced to reduce the chance a young child will come into contact with outside germs and bacteria.

With all of these protocols already in place, few changes were needed to address the additional precautions due to the COVID-19 public health emergency. Additional precautions now include a 'no outdoor shoe' policy for all classrooms. Children are encouraged to bring a pair of 'indoor' shoes for use while in the building.

The program needs the cooperation of each family member to ensure an environment where children can play and learn without worry of illness caused by unintentional contamination.

I. Child Requirements

Each child needs to bring some basic supplies to support their participation in the program. Families are expected to check regularly to ensure adequate supplies are available for their child.

All items sent, whether clothing, supplies or food items should be clearly marked with the child's name. Infants' bottles and food containers should have their name on each one along with the date prepared. Bottles packed in their own heavy-duty zip-lock bag are preferred.

- **General Supplies:** Every child needs:
  - a complete change of clothes (including underwear and socks)
  - facial tissue
  - crib or cot sheet and blanket (no blankets permitted for infants in cribs)

- **Special Supplies:**

  a. Infants – all meals specific to needs (any liquids to be consumed – formula, expressed breast milk); solid food; coated spoon; multiple pacifiers, if used; blanket for use on the floor

  b. Toddlers – a cup with sippy-type lid; diapers for each day; diaper changing 'wipes'; extra underwear if working on toilet training

  c. Preschoolers – extra underwear if working on toilet training

- **What Not to Bring:** Ideal has scheduled "share and tell" times for the children. Unless it is "share and tell" time, we ask that families not permit their child to come to the center with trinkets, toys, candy, or chewing gum – these items

may pose a safety hazard to the child or other children and might get lost during the day. Ideal cannot be held responsible for damage or loss to any items brought by a child into the center when "share and tell" is not a scheduled event.

Families are welcome to help their child select an item for "share and tell" times. Families are asked to be sure that any item shared is clearly marked with the child's name to help ensure return to the family.

V. EXPECTATIONS

A. Program

1. **Keeping Everyone Informed:** Ideal will work hard to make sure every family has the information they need to stay abreast of needs, changes, and proposals related to the child's program.

2. **Transitioning Child:** Children may experience changes in the Ideal program for a number of reasons.

   a. Child will move from one (1) classroom to the next based on age. Child in the infant classroom are between the ages of six (6) weeks and 12 months; toddler classroom ages are between 12 and 23 months; preschool classroom children are between 2 ½ - five (5) years. Children spend short periods of time in the new classroom accompanied by a staff member from the current classroom weeks before the planned classroom change. These short visits allow the child to become familiar with the new staff as well as the routine of the classroom.

   Families will be notified as the time to transition to the next classroom nears with information about the new staff.

   b. Children may also transition out of Ideal when they age out of the program at age five (5) years to go to kindergarten. Graduating children will participate in a formal ceremony in June and will begin practicing for the graduation a few months before the actual event. Ideal uses the public school system calendar to guide its' time for graduation. While they may be 'graduates,' children may participate in the summer camp prior to exit for the start of the District's Public School system fall start date.

   Graduating child will have their assessment portfolio updated one last time to reflect their developmental status (May assessment checkpoint).

   c. Child may also leave the program for any number of reasons before the traditional exit time to kindergarten. Families are asked to notify the classroom teacher as soon as possible when their plans involve withdrawal from the program. An effort will be made to update the child's records when adequate

notification is provided. Notification is also necessary to settle the child and family's childcare account.

3. **Code of Ethics:** Ideal staff and administration work to adhere to the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. This code of conduct defines the core values of the field and provides guidance for what professionals should do when they encounter conflicting obligations or responsibilities in their work. The code outlines responsibilities to children, families, colleagues (including co-workers and employer), as well as the community and society.

B. Staff

1. **Hiring & Credentials:** Staff must meet minimum requirements for consideration to be hired. The DCMR includes qualifications as well as duties and responsibilities for teachers and assistant teachers.

   The District of Columbia is one of the few jurisdictions across the country now requiring credentials for all teaching staff in early care and education programs. Effective December 2023, all lead teachers are required to hold an Associate's degree in the early childhood field or related field with a minimum number or hours in early childhood from an accredited college or university or to have a valid waiver for their position. All assistant teachers are required to hold a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential with endorsement appropriate to the age group they are working with (i.e., infant/toddler or preschool). Newly hired staff without credentials have two (2) years to complete and secure a CDA. The District of Columbia offers 'free' tuition to anyone working in an early care and education program to complete these requirements.

   Ideal also has a special grant through the Pre-K Enhancement and Expansion Program (P-Keep). This grant requires the lead teacher to hold a Bachelor's degree and the assistant teacher to hold an Associate's degree from an accredited university. Both degrees must be in early childhood or a related field with a minimum number of hours in early childhood.

2. **Staff Professional Development:** Ongoing staff development helps Ideal ensure its staff has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to provide the best quality care and education for the children it serves. General requirements for staff development are detailed above in Section I-F – "Closings." Ideal is required by the DCMR to meet the provision of a minimum of 21 staff training hours. Eleven (11) health and safety trainings are required to be completed annually.

3. **Performance Evaluation:** Staff participate in a mid-year and annual performance evaluation with the Director of Ideal and includes a self-assessment component. Staff rate themselves and gather the evidence to defend their rating. The evaluation form includes a place for staff to outline their plan for continuous self-improvement, professional development, as well as credentials. This evaluation provides a platform to plan for the coming year as well as for staff to provide feedback regarding program needs.

C. Families

1. **Involvement & Contribution to the Program:** Some of the many ways a family can be involved in their child's program are outlined above in section IV-D – "Family Involvement."

2. **Contributions to Child Progress:** Families are considered active participants in their child's program. Families should expect staff to share information about daily performance, any new skills that are observed just as they will when there are concerns. While children spend a good part of their day in 'care', families are naturals in helping development along in the ways they support their child at home. At specific checkpoints, during the quarterly family conference as well as at other times, families are invited to share their observations, thoughts, questions, or concerns with staff. Families can also expect to receive 'tips' to help carryover activities or concepts being introduced in the program.

3. **Expressing Concern:** At any time when a parent/guardian has a concern that needs addressing, a conversation with staff is welcome. If necessary, a conversation with the administrative staff is also possible. Ideal would like to be able to address and resolve any difference of opinion in the care of a child.

   Families should know that they will always have the right to express concern whether informally (within Ideal) or formally (to the OSSE child care monitor or licensing monitor). We encourage parents to start with a conversation with the classroom staff to try and resolve any difficulties. Should that not bring about a resolution, the parent has every right to bring the concern to the supervisor or director for possible resolution. The advisory board may also become involved when needed.

   Our goal is to address and resolve any conflict to the mutual benefit of all parties.

4. **Adherence to Requirements for Participation in the Program:** This handbook provides a wealth of information for our families to understand how Ideal operates as a childcare development center and expectations for all involved. Ideal expects each family to make a good faith effort to adhere to the requirements outlined in this handbook and to speak up when there is any confusion or concern related to any policy.

D. Discipline Guidelines & Challenging Behaviors

Establishing rules and expectations as well as providing guidance and discipline are important components of a structured environment for children in the center. Ideal believes that self-regulation develops over time as children are guided and receive feedback about their actions, impact on other children, activities and the routine.

Ideal staff use a variety of techniques to help children develop the skills to regulate their own behavior:

- Provide a predictable schedule and routine;

- Model the language, behavior, kindness, and forgiveness that we would like to see;
- Plan, do, review – help children know what's coming, talk about expectations and bring closure to the activity;
- Review the procedures and expectations for the day or individual activity;
- Use language and directions that are easily understood for the age-group served – keep directions simple;
- Allow children to work out their problems when possible;
- Recognize and praise the positive behaviors;
- Redirect child activity when possible;
- Ignore inappropriate behavior when possible;
- Provide options for children to take a break from an activity or the routine when needed; and
- Have a talk about the behavior, not the child.

The DCMR provides guidance on expectations for discipline as well as specific information on types of discipline that are prohibited.

The following methods of discipline shall not be employed:

- Physical harm, including punching, pinching, shaking, spanking, biting, yanking and poking;
- Fear and/or humiliation;
- Derogatory remarks and/or profane language;
- Confinement in a locked room or enclosed area;
- Forced feeding, or withholding of food, rest, toilet use or outdoor activities or play; and
- Physical and/or chemical restraints.

Separation, when used as discipline, shall be brief in duration and shall be appropriate to the child's age and developmental level and to the circumstances necessitating the discipline. Any child separated shall be placed in a safe, lighted, well-ventilated room, within the sight and hearing of an adult at all times. Authority to discipline shall never be delegated to another child.

E. <u>Suspected Abuse and/or Neglect</u>

Ideal follows the requirements outlined in the DCMR for identifying, addressing, and reporting suspected abuse or neglect. Any unusual incident that may adversely affect the health, safety or well-being of any child or children in the facility must be reported to the parent/guardian of the affected child as well as the Director, Department of Human Services, and the OSSE immediately. Any staff member who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that an enrolled child is, has been, or is in immediate danger of being an abused or neglected child must report this information to the appropriate authorities.

Ideal is a mandated reporter and as such, is required by the District of Columbia Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Act, shall make or cause to be made an

immediate oral report to the Child Protective Services Division of the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) via the CFSA 24-Hour Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (202-671-SAFE) or the Metropolitan Police Department.

1. **Identification:** Staff is required to perform a 'child check' each day as child arrive at the center and may identify and share an observation with the parent/guardian before they walk away. Any unusual marks, cuts, burns, etc. will be reportedly immediately to the administration and documented. We will reach out to the family for an explanation when warranted. In the case of an injured child or suspected abuse or neglect, steps will be taken to care for the child and Child Protective Services will be contacted immediately.

2. **Reporting Requirements:** An oral as well as a written report is required using the "Unusual Incident Report Form."

3. **Staff Alleged Involvement:** If any Ideal staff member is identified as allegedly responsible for the alleged or actual child abuse or neglect, or alleged or actual risk to an enrolled child's health or safety, that staff member shall be placed on administrative leave or reassignment to duties involving no contact with children until the investigation conducted by authorized government officials is complete.

F. **Accidents and Unusual Incidents**

Keeping every child safe is one of Ideal's primary concerns. Children are always supervised by sight and sound no matter what their age and precautions are taken to prevent accidents. However, scratches, scrapes and accidents may still occur as well as problems with the Ideal centers.

Ideal follows the requirements outlined in the DCMR for 'identifying, addressing, and reporting accidents or incidents.' Any unusual incident that may adversely affect the health, safety or well-being of any child or child in the facility must be reported to the parent/guardian of the affected child as well as the Director, Department of Human Services, and the OSSE immediately.

1. **Observing and Documenting:** Staff document their observations daily throughout the day. These observations may include accidents or incidents. Each accident or incident is required to be brought to the attention of management for a decision regarding seriousness and requirement to be reported to a higher authority.

    a. **Record Keeping:** Documentation regarding any accident or incident is recorded on the appropriate form and included in the affected child's file.
    b. **Reporting Requirements:** Accident/incidents are recorded on an Unusual Incident Report Form and submitted to the OSSE and Department of Human Services within 24 hours of the incident or accident. Depending on the seriousness of the accident/incident, a report may also be required to be filed with the NAEYC.

2. **Follow-Up Requirements:** Depending on the seriousness of the accident/incident, Ideal may be asked to submit to follow-up by the Licensing Unit monitor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF FAMILY HANDBOOK:

I, _____, parent/guardian of the following child(ren):

1: _____

2: _____

3: _____

4: _____

do hereby acknowledge receipt of the "Family" Handbook. My signature below confirms receipt.

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian Signature **Date**

…Please return this signed form to the classroom teacher or Ideal's office