



STARFISH
FAMILY SERVICES



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FAMILY HANDBOOK

Connect With Us



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Family Feedback Form



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome to the Starfish Family.....	5
About Starfish Family Services.....	6
Blueprint for Brighter Futures	7
About Starfish ECE Programs.....	8
Program Goals.....	8
ECE Program Staff.....	9
Center Leaders	9
ECE Teachers	9
Family Advocates	9
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants.....	10
Early Intervention Coordinators.....	10
Education Coaches	11
Types of ECE Programs	12
Prenatal & Infant/Toddler Programs (Prenatal–Age 3)	12
Preschool Programs (Ages 3-5)	12
Great Start Readiness Program (4-year-olds)	12
Marygrove P-20 Partnership	13
Home-based Option (Prenatal–Age 3)	14
Curriculum.....	14
Home-Based Curriculum: Parents as Teachers.....	14
ECE Curriculum: Creative Curriculum ®	15
Marygrove Curriculum: Great First Eight	16
Marygrove Preschool Curriculum: Connect4Learning.....	17
Developmental Screening.....	18
Ongoing Assessment.....	18
Early Learning Outcomes	19
Social-Emotional Development.....	19
Friends School.....	20
Typical Daily Routine	20
Sample Schedule.....	21
Diapering & Toilet Training.....	21
Outdoor Play.....	22
Nutrition & Health: Healthy Families	22
Nutrition Services	22

Infant Feeding	23
Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).....	24
Early Childhood Health	27
Starfish Screenings and Follow Up	27
Well-Child Visits.....	27
Dental Care	28
Immunizations.....	28
Medications and Child Health Plans	30
Childhood Illness Prevention & Care.....	31
Parents as Advocates & Leaders: Empowered Families	33
Parent Leadership Opportunities	33
Parent Committee	33
Head Start Policy Council	34
Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee.....	34
ParentCorps Parenting Program.....	35
Family Volunteer Opportunities	35
Fatherhood Involvement	36
Volunteer Guidelines	36
Other Starfish Support Programs	37
Behavioral Health Services	37
Nurse-Family Partnership Program	37
Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Home-Based Program	37
Policies and Procedures.....	38
Communication System	38
Service Delivery Environment	39
Positive Discipline	39
Expressing Our Feelings	39
Supporting Challenging Behaviors	40
Attendance	41
Attendance & Absences: Center-Based	42
Attendance & Absences: Home-Based.....	43
Withdrawal Procedures	44
Arrival/Sign-in & Release.....	44



Late Arrival Policy	45
Late Pick-up Policy	45
Clothing Guidelines.....	46
Child Injury/Emergency	47
Center Closing	48
Bad Weather	48
Holidays	48
Home Visits & Parent-Teacher Conferences	49
Threat to Safety.....	49
Center/Campus Environment	50
Substance/Smoke/Vape-Free Environment	50
Parking Lot Safety	51
Video Cameras	52
Picture-Taking	52
Appendix	53
Starfish Center Locations and Times	53
Client Rights	54
Right to Review Records	54
Grievance Procedures	54
Rights of Students with Disabilities	56
Child Custody Conflicts	57
Child Abuse/Neglect	57
Confidentiality Statement	58
USDA Nondiscrimination Statement	59



WELCOME TO THE STARFISH FAMILY

We are thrilled that you and your little learner(s) are joining the Starfish family!



We're committed to providing the **best education possible** for our youngest children that supports the whole child and family. A whole child and family approach includes **mental, physical, social, and emotional development**.

Did you know? Essential brain development occurs during the first three years of a child's life. This means the years before kindergarten are critical, and Starfish is here for every step of the way.

This is your Family Handbook where we've attempted to provide a full spectrum of information about your child's journey and your journey.

Can't find an answer to your question? Connect with your friendly Starfish Family Advocate, your teacher, or your Center Leader.

ABOUT STARFISH FAMILY SERVICES

Starfish is recognized as a champion for children and families who lack access to **essential resources in metro Detroit.**

Our vision: A society in which all children & families have opportunities to grow, learn, and thrive.

We believe: A strong community starts with strong families.



Starfish partners with parents, caregivers, and their children to strengthen the well-being of the whole family.

BY THE NUMBERS



17



4,000+



63%

centers in Wayne County for early childhood education and behavioral health

children, youth & adults supported annually through integrated & holistic programs that focus on healthy families, successful students & empowered families

of those served are young children, ages 0-6



450+



18



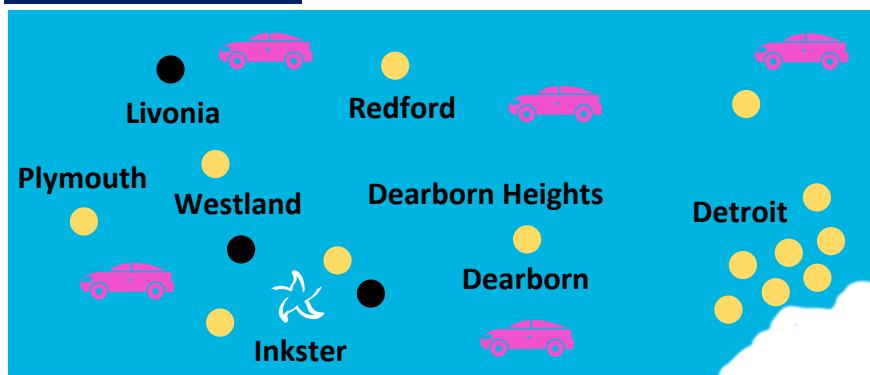
\$0.87

employees (including therapists, social workers, educators and administrators)

Board of director members representing early- and higher- education professionals, corporate and community leaders, and Starfish parents

of every dollar raised goes directly to services for Starfish children and families

OUR REACH



- Early Education Center
- Behavioral Health Services
- Home-Based Early Education and Behavioral Health Services
- ★ Main Office (Inkster)

Blueprint for Brighter Futures

The Starfish *Blueprint for Brighter Futures* is a comprehensive strategy for how we deliver services. With 17 centers across Wayne County, our reach continues to grow. And as we grow, it's important for us to ensure that the way we collaborate is innovative, mindful, consistent, creatively flexible, sustainable, and ultimately leads to even brighter futures for children and families.

As a roadmap, it steers our course so that we are aligned around **three primary areas of well-being**:



#OneStarfish

Healthy Families

Families are supported so their physical and mental health needs are holistically addressed.

Successful Students

Academic and social success are achieved through high-quality early childhood education and addressing behavioral health needs.

Empowered Families

Families actively partner with us to identify and achieve goals; parents and children always have a voice at Starfish.

ABOUT STARFISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) PROGRAMS

At Starfish, we believe that early learning has lifelong benefits.

Program Goals

1. To create a **responsive and respectful learning environment** that welcomes all children and families. Every child and family have unique strengths and experiences.
2. To assist children in **developing age-appropriate skills** that will help prepare them for later school experiences, develop understanding and knowledge of our world, and buffer against the effects of stressful and scary experiences.
3. To give children opportunities to relate to adults and to participate **in new learning and social experiences**, both at home and at school.
4. To **involve parents and teachers** in experiences in the home and classroom that encourage the emotional, social, intellectual, physical growth, and development of children.
5. To provide parents with an opportunity to **build on their own strengths** in order to meet the needs of their children. This goal is based on the premise that a parent is a child's first and best teacher.
6. To acquaint parents with and assist them in accessing their **community resources**.
7. To assist parents with obtaining comprehensive medical, dental, and behavioral health **services for their child**.
8. To provide **nutrition information and assistance** to children specifically, and the entire family where possible.

9. To encourage and develop **employee-family interaction**, an essential component of Early Childhood programs, through home visits, parent meetings, parent/teacher conferences, and classroom involvement.

ECE Program Staff

Center Leaders

Each Starfish ECE center is headed by a center leader. They are responsible for working with employees and parents to create an environment of innovation, collaboration, and empowerment. They set the tone for the overall center experience by fostering a high-quality, responsive, respectful, and safe environment, and ensuring effective operational and instructional practices.

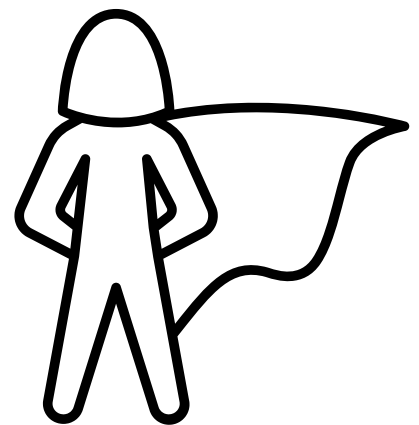
ECE Teachers

We are proud to say that Starfish teachers are exceptional educators! They are committed to creatively inspiring and nurturing young children because they know they are setting the foundation for little learners to soar. Our teachers (and teacher assistants, and coaches) also work closely with parents because your involvement is key to success.

The Starfish Difference! All our 100+ teachers have degrees in Early Childhood Education and/or Child Development (CDA) credentials.

Family Advocates

Your family will be paired with a specific Starfish Family Advocate (FA) to help you navigate the ECE program, steer you toward services, and address any needs/barriers that may arise such as medical, mental health, food, clothing or housing resources. Your trusted FA works with you to achieve your family's unique goals. They are your partners to ensure your family has a successful school year!



Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants

Each Early Childhood Center has an on-site Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant (IECMHC). They work to support strong relationships and supportive environments for children, providing deeper understanding about healthy social-emotional development.

How does an IECMHC support teaching staff?

They provide advice to teaching staff, building their capacity to meet social and emotional development needs. They help to identify children who may need further assessment and provide resources or strategies to try.

How does an IECMHC support you?

They offer a nonjudgmental space to talk about concerns, share successes, and explore hopes and dreams for your family. They provide generalized and individualized relationship-based support in these areas: social interactions, emotional regulation, development, and attachment. Additionally, they will support and refer your family to other Starfish programs.

If you wish to make a private appointment to discuss concerns with a Mental Health Consultant, contact your Early Childhood Center. Your IECMHC may also contact you directly to discuss your child's adjustment or other concerns that may interfere with growth and development.

Early Intervention Coordinators

Each site has an Early Intervention Coordinator (EIC) who works to support inclusive learning environments for children of all abilities. All children develop and learn on their own trajectories and in their own way. Some children may need extra strategies or modifications to be as successful as possible at school.

How does an EIC support teaching staff?

EICs may provide strategies or coaching to teachers to help them individualize their lesson plans to meet the individual needs of their students.

How does an EIC support you?

EICs can help children and families with referrals for therapies or educational support. The EIC team can help parents navigate any disability services they are interested in, such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy or Individual Education Plans through the school district. Infants and toddlers from birth to age three may receive early intervention services provided through a state-wide program called *Early On*.

Children and youth from ages three through 25 may receive special education and related services provided through your local school district. If you are interested in any of these services, you can contact your FA or the EIC at your child's center. Children with disabilities or suspected disabilities have certain rights. To review these rights, please see the appendix or contact the EIC at your child's center.

Education Coaches

The Education Coaches support teachers and support staff in identifying area(s) of need to achieve high quality programming as it relates to curriculum implementation and best practices in child development. Education Coaches support teachers on an on-going basis, based on need, through the implementation of evidence-informed coaching practices and an integrated coaching model.



Types of ECE Programs

All Starfish Early Childhood Education programs are designed to promote the development of children during their foundational years. Our programs also emphasize the role of parents as a child's first and most important teacher. It is important that we partner with you to build relationships that support your whole family's well-being.

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. They provide high-quality early childhood education and comprehensive support services for eligible families. Early Head Start serves pregnant women, infants, and toddlers up to age 3, while Head Start serves children ages 3 to 5—helping all children grow, learn, and prepare for kindergarten success.



Prenatal & Infant/Toddler Programs (Prenatal-Age 3)

Prenatal and Infant/Toddler programs provide family-focused services (home-based and center-based) for families with children six weeks to three years and pregnant mothers. **(See also Services during Pregnancy.)**

Infant/Toddler programs provide similar services as preschool programs, but they are tailored for the unique needs of youngest learners. Infant/Toddler programs promote the physical, cognitive (mental processes associated with learning, such as remembering and problem-solving), social, and emotional development through safe and developmentally enriching caregiving. This prepares children for continued growth and development and eventual success in school and life.

Preschool Programs (Ages 3-5)

Preschool programming promotes the school readiness of children by providing a learning environment that supports children's growth in many areas such as language, literacy, and social and emotional development. Our daily routines foster opportunities for building relationships, independence, self-confidence, and regulation.

Great Start Readiness Program (4-year-olds)



The [Great Start Readiness Program \(GSRP\)](#) is Michigan's free state-funded PreK program for four-year-old children administered by MiLEAP, Office of Early Education. Research on PreK programs and specific research on GSRP indicates that children provided with a high-quality PreK experience show significant positive developmental differences when compared to children from the same backgrounds who did not attend a high-quality PreK program. The GSRP program was developed under a grant awarded by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). GSRP applications are prioritized using income eligibility guidelines and additional eligibility factors to ensure children with the highest needs are enrolled.

Starfish is required to work with the Michigan Department of Education to measure the effect of the state-wide Great Start Readiness Program. Information is sometimes collected about GSRP staff, enrolled children, and their families. Information from you and about your child will not be shared with others in any way that you or your child can be identified. It is protected by the law.

Questions about GSRP? Contact Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) at (517) 241-7004.

Marygrove P-20 Partnership

The P-20 Cradle-to-Career Campus at Marygrove will be comprised of educational opportunities from prenatal to Pre-K, K-12 to post-secondary graduate, as well as wrap-around services and community engagement programs. At full capacity, the school will serve roughly 1,000 Detroit children and their families, primarily living in the surrounding Livernois-McNichols neighborhoods. Starfish Family Services operates the Infant, Toddler, and Pre-K classrooms in this partnership.

Homebased Option (Prenatal-Age 3)

The Home-Based program offers educational and child development learning opportunities through **weekly home visits** and **twice-monthly socialization events** for pregnant moms, parent(s), and their children under the age of three. The home visitor partners with you to develop and plan developmentally appropriate activities reflective of your family values. The activities are designed to strengthen the parent-child relationship using daily routines and materials readily available in your home. Visits take place in the family home unless other arrangements would better fit your family.

Group socialization events are opportunities for children to interact with other children and for families to interact with other families and build networks of support. Similar to home visits, activities are developed to offer educational and developmental activities and strengthen parent-child relationships. Group socializations are like “play dates” or “parent/child activity” opportunities. All are free of charge, and home visitors will work with you to find out what type of activities you are interested in.

Curriculum

Home-Based Curriculum: Parents as Teachers



Parents as Teachers is an Evidence-Based Home Visiting Model. The model provides a wide array of services to families with children from prenatal through kindergarten and also offers deep insights into early childhood development. Since 1984, this model has been rigorously tested by peer-reviewed studies and shown to produce outstanding results for families. Parents as Teachers model is a unique combination of research, education and empowerment. In practice, their methods are proven to help caregivers connect with their child’s early development and build a lifetime foundation for academic success.

ECE Curriculum: Creative Curriculum®



TeachingStrategies®

Creative Curriculum® is the curriculum most Starfish Family Services Early Childhood programs utilize to meet the needs, interests, strengths, and development of all children. The creators of Creative Curriculum, Teaching Strategies, believe that “all children deserve a nurturing, engaging, and high-quality learning environment designed to support their unique needs throughout the critical, formative years”. [Learn more about Creative Curriculum here.](#)

- Inspire Children with **Project-Based, Investigative** Learning
- Build children’s confidence, creativity, and critical thinking skills through hands-on, project-based investigations.
- Promote discovery and inquiry with opportunities for children to think critically and develop process skills with rich, hands-on investigations of relevant and interesting topics in the classroom.
- Reinforce learning with family-friendly activities designed for home.

How does the Creative Curriculum teach math, language, and literacy skills?

- Teachers utilize Creative Curriculum studies, activities, and strategies for children each day that lay the foundation for later academic learning.
- Teachers encourage children's beginning reading and writing skills by creating a **print-rich environment** and providing opportunities throughout the day for children to listen to stories, explore books and other print materials, while also working with writing tools and materials.
- Teachers promote **math abilities** by providing materials that enable children to use beginning skills in counting, comparing numbers, and one-to-one correspondence.

What about children with disabilities?

We believe in meeting all children where they are by positively emphasizing the wide cognitive, social, and physical abilities that are inherent in all children. When a child has developmental needs, we work to provide a rich range of experiences that are appropriate for that child. We work to provide modifications and support within the environment to ensure every child's success.

Marygrove Curriculum: Great First Eight



Starfish Family Services has been an educational partner in the development of the Great First Eight curriculum, with teachers, coaches, and administrators offering input and feedback on the curriculum. The Great First Eight Curriculum Development team also held focus groups with family and community members in Livestock and Inkster, Michigan to inform curriculum development.

Great First Eight is a full-day curriculum for children from birth to age 8 and is being developed by a highly accomplished team of researchers and practitioners whose work focuses on building on the enormous potential of children in U.S. metropolitan areas. The core materials for the curriculum will be made available free online, making their widespread use in economically under resourced settings more likely.

Great First Eight incorporates findings from an unprecedented number and range of research studies and is tightly aligned to national standards in science, social studies, mathematics, literacy, social and emotional learning. The curriculum addresses considerably more social studies and STEM than is typical of birth-to-age-eight education through meticulous planning of units and lessons, thoughtful use of technology, and a project-based approach that takes advantage of synergies among learning domains.

Great First Eight is innovative not only in its alignment to the latest research and standards, but also in its continuity from birth to age 8. In the U.S., it is common for young children to experience very different curricula from one year to the next, often resulting in unnecessary duplication and gaps in material addressed from year to year and missed opportunities to build depth of knowledge and skill. In contrast, we are working toward a continuous curriculum from birth through the age of eight. Among other things, this may help address the "fade out" effect, or gradual disappearance over time of the advantages of preschool education. Through

support from an anonymous donor from the tech sector, we were able to develop the infant, toddler, and kindergarten curricula, which launched for full implementation in our pilot classrooms in fall 2021 and for release to the public in fall, 2022. We are in the process of piloting PreK-3 & Pre-K4/TK as well as providing implementation support for kindergarten and first grade. PreK-3 & Pre-K4/TK and second grade will be publicly available in 2025.

The Great First Eight Curriculum development project is led by Dr. Nell K. Duke of the University of Michigan, with co-directors Dr. Claire Vallotton for infant through age three and Dr. Marisha Humphries for pre-k through grade two. Named one of the most influential education scholars in the U.S., Dr. Nell Duke has assembled a team of the greatest minds in early education and established partnerships with Starfish Family Services, the Wayne-Westland Michigan School District, the District of Columbia Public Schools, and the State of Louisiana. For more information about the curriculum, please contact Dr. Nell Duke at nkduke@umich.edu

Marygrove Preschool Curriculum: Connect4Learning



Connect4Learning® is a research-based, classroom tested interdisciplinary prekindergarten curriculum. Developed through funding from the National Science Foundation, it integrates research-validated teaching methodologies from early childhood experts in

mathematics, science, literacy, and social-emotional learning. Using research-based and classroom-tested foundations in literacy, science, social-emotional, and mathematics learning, Connect4Learning® weaves together all four domains to ensure that each subject is addressed meaningfully and comprehensively with each child.

Connect4Learning features six curriculum units that are focused on supporting children's development of ten comprehensive cognitive processes. These core processes are both domain specific and applicable across all four learning domains.

Developmental Screening

Understanding Your Child's Development

At Starfish Family Services, we begin each school year by getting to know your child's unique learning needs through developmental screenings. Within the first 45 days, you'll be asked to complete two screenings: the **Ages and Stages Questionnaire, 3rd Edition (ASQ-3)** and the **Ages and Stages: Social Emotional, 2nd Edition (ASQ:SE-2)**. These tools help us understand your child's strengths and areas where they may need support.

Our goal is to help every child succeed—socially, emotionally, and academically. If we notice your child could benefit from extra support, we may talk with you about available services at school or in the community, such as speech or occupational therapy. Any next steps are always your decision, and we're here to support you every step of the way.

Ongoing Assessment

At Starfish Family Services, we use a tool called **SmartTeach** to help us understand how your child is growing and learning throughout the year. SmartTeach is based on daily teacher observations of your child during classroom activities. These notes help us see where your child is developmentally.

SmartTeach compares these observations to what's typical for children at different ages, giving us a clear picture of your child's progress. We check in on their development three times a year — in **Fall, Winter, and Spring**.

This information helps us:

- Track your child's developmental milestones
- Set goals to support their individual learning
- Make sure our curriculum is helping all children succeed

Our goal is to support your child's growth every step of the way!

Early Learning Outcomes

The [Early Learning Outcomes Framework \(ELOF\)](#) for children birth to age five outlines what young children should know and be able to do during their formative years. In order for all children to be successful in accomplishing these goals, teachers will partner with you to create an **individualized learning plan** that is ideal for your child. Early Childhood is just the beginning of your child’s lifelong learning and development. Our hope is that you get involved in this journey with your child and learn all you can about school readiness.

Central Domains					
	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Literacy	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
Infant / Toddler Domains	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
Preschooler Domains	Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
			Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

Skills & behaviors that children use to engage in learning (how they learn)	Ability to relate to others---a critical foundation for lifelong development and learning	Includes reading, writing, listening, speaking and comprehension	Thinking skills to help understand and organize their world	Sense and motor skills are foundational to children’s learning in all areas
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------

Social-Emotional Development

Starfish Early Childhood Education programs take an active approach to teaching toddlers and preschoolers positive social behaviors. Just as we teach letters of the alphabet and counting skills, we also teach children about the importance of relationships.

Friends School

Our social-emotional curriculum for preschoolers is *Friends School*, which is based on a wealth of evidence that young children's social-emotional learning is a critical foundation for school success and lifelong health. Children learn to communicate their thoughts and feelings, develop a positive sense of self, build healthy relationships, and have fun!

There are three **Behavioral Universal Expectations** we teach children each day. You will see them posted in your child's classroom. Let's work together as partners to take children through this wonderful journey of building relationships. At home, you can reinforce these three expectations that are foundational for modeling positive relationship-building.



Typical Daily Routine

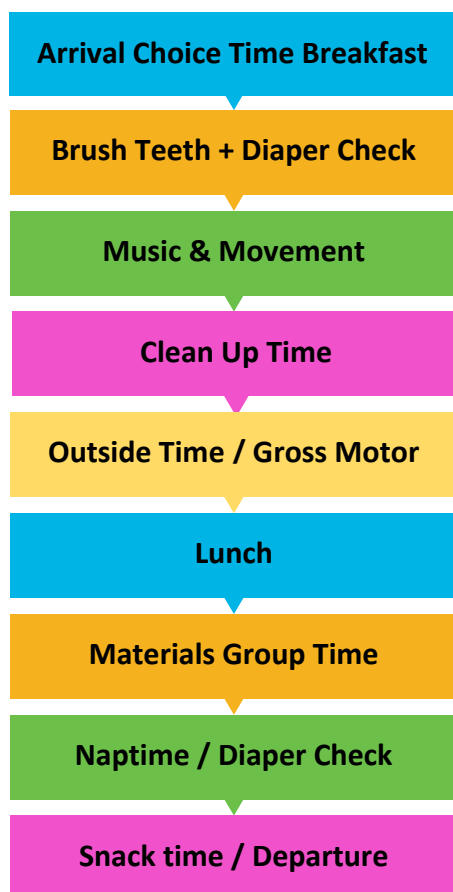
Having a consistent daily routine is incredibly important for young children for many reasons:

- Gives children a **sense of security** because they know what will come next
- Allows for them to **make choices** and **ask questions**
- Encourages children to be **independent**

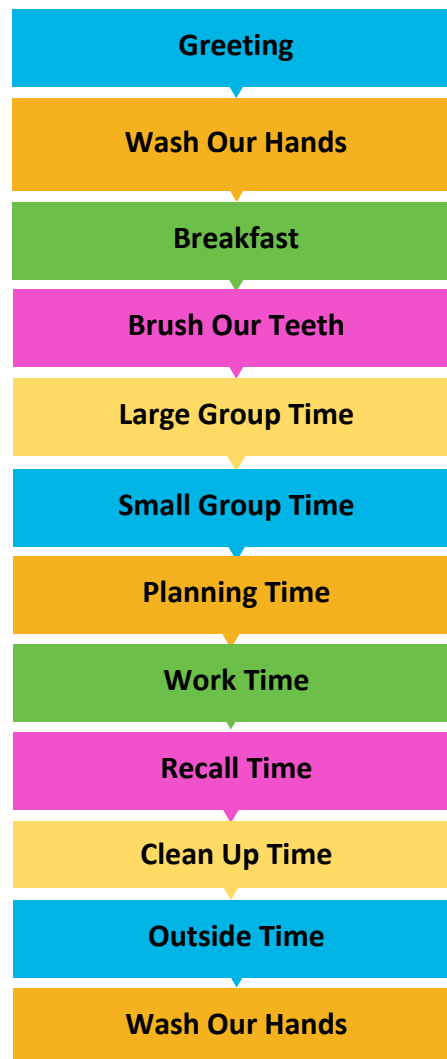
Your child's teacher will post a daily routine in the classroom, which will be shared with you. Following, you'll find some examples of daily classroom routines.

Sample Schedules

Early Childhood Birth to 3 years



Early Childhood 3 to 5 years



Diapering & Toilet Training

Diapers, pull-ups, and wipes are provided by Starfish for infants and toddlers. Diapers will be regularly checked and changed throughout the day. Because consistency is so important in the toilet training process, please let center staff know when you are ready to begin toilet training with your child.

- We will work with you to develop a plan to support you and coordinate efforts leading to success.
- We follow strict guidelines for cleaning up before and after diaper changes and toileting, including thorough handwashing by both staff and children.

Outdoor Play

Children participate in outside play on a daily basis. Going outdoors is fun for children. It gives them a chance to stretch large muscles, breathe fresh air, take in the sunshine, and enjoy the freedom of open space. Young children sleep better, eat better, are more physically fit, and learn better because the outside soothes and stimulates the senses.

- Everyone is expected to go outside every day unless excused by a doctor's note.
- Children will **not go outside** when thunder and lightning threaten; in intense heat or cold; or constant rain or icy conditions.
- Please make sure you **dress your children appropriately** for the weather.

NUTRITION & HEALTH: HEALTHY FAMILIES

Nutrition Services

Whole-child health includes a focus on nutrition. Children need proper nutrients to stay healthy and strong. Nutrition for children can also help **establish a foundation for healthy eating habits** and nutritional knowledge that your child can apply throughout life.

A nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack are served in a family-style setting in all our centers. Children are provided with 1/2 to 2/3 of their daily nutritional requirements.

- Foods served are **low in sugar, salt, and fat**. Substitutions will be noted on classroom menus.
- **Menus** will be dated, posted in classrooms, and sent home periodically to all parents, or can be found on our website.
- Children are encouraged but **not forced to eat**.
- Nutrition education and experience are **part of the curriculum** for children.
- For example, children participate in tasting activities such as introducing broccoli as a “yummy tree” or exploring foods from other cultures.
- **Parent volunteers are encouraged** to participate in the nutrition program!

- You can provide input at parent meetings and on the Starfish Early Childhood Parent and Staff Food/Menu Suggestion & Feedback Form.
- **Nutrition education materials** will be provided to parents in family packs by our Nutrition Specialist.
- **Parent education classes** on nutrition will be offered throughout the school year based on the interests of parents.

Checklist Need to Know: If your child has a food allergy or special diet requirement, a CACFP Special Diet Statement form **MUST** be completed which may require a qualifying medical provider's signature so their dietary needs can be met. A Food Restriction Explanation module must also be completed to further explain any allergies, medical, or religious diets.

***If you have any questions about your child's dietary needs you can contact one of our Nutrition Specialists.*

Infant Feeding

- Mothers are welcome to visit the classroom at any time **to breastfeed/chest feed their babies.**
- **Weekly menus** will be posted on the parent information board. Any substitutions will be marked on this menu as they are made.
- Babies are **held during all feedings** except when infants resist being held and are able to hold their bottle, are able to sit up unsupported and have good control of swallowing.
- Babies will be encouraged to but **not forced to eat.** We can provide a **limited selection of infant formula** for infants up to 12 months of age.
- Currently we are offering Similac Advance, Similac Sensitive, Similac Soy Isomil, Similac Spit-up, and Similac Total Comfort.
- You may choose to bring in your own formula. If so, it must be in bottles ready to serve. Bottles should be clearly labeled with your child's name and the date.
- For safety reasons, formula left over at the end of a feeding will not be reheated or kept for over one hour. **We will dispose of any excess formula after each feeding.**

Diapers & wipes will also be provided, the brand depends on location & availability.

CACFP Information

Good nutrition today means a stronger tomorrow!

Building for the Future with CACFP



This program receives support from the Child and Adult Care Food Program to serve healthy meals to your children.

Meals served here must meet the USDA's nutrition standards below.

Breakfast	Lunch and Supper	Snack (serve 2 from the 5 groups below)
Milk Fruit and/or Vegetable Grain	Milk Meat or meat alternate Fruit Vegetable Grain	Milk Meat or meat alternate Fruit Vegetable Grain

Children less than one year old: Foods in the infant meal pattern vary according to the infant's age. If your child is less than one year old, please request the infant meal pattern requirements from our center.

Questions? Concerns? Contact Us!

Child and Adult Care Food Program
Michigan Department of Education
PO Box 30008, Lansing, MI 48909
517-241-5353

Starfish Family Services

30000 Hiveley
Inkster, MI 48141
734-728-3400

Learn more about CACFP at USDA's website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/>

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.



Dear Participant/Parent-Guardian:

This letter is intended for adults/parents or parents/guardians of participants enrolled in a day care center. [Name of Center] offers healthy meals to all enrolled participants as part of our participation in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). The CACFP provides reimbursements for healthy meals and snacks served to participants enrolled in care. Please help us comply with the requirements of the CACFP by completing the attached Household Income Eligibility Statement (HIES). In addition, by filling out this form, we will be able to determine eligibility for free or reduced price meals.

1. Do I need to fill out a HIES for each participant enrolled in care? You may complete and submit one CACFP Household Income Eligibility Statement for all participants enrolled in day care in your household only if those in day care are enrolled in the same center. We cannot approve a form that is not complete, so be sure to read the instructions carefully and fill out all required information. Return the completed form to: [Name of Center, address, phone number].

2. Which adult and childcare institutions can receive free meal reimbursement without providing household income information? Adults receiving Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Food Assistance Program (FAP) Family Independence Program (FIP), or Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are eligible for free meals. Children in households receiving FAP, FIP, or FDPIR can get free meals. Foster children and children enrolled in Head Start Programs are also eligible for free meals.

3. Who can get reduced price meals? You may get low-cost meals if your household's income is within the reduced-price limits on the federal income eligibility guidelines, **effective July 1, 2024, until June 30, 2025**, shown below:

Family Size	Yearly Income	Monthly Income	Weekly Income
1	\$27,861	\$2,322	\$536
2	\$37,814	\$3,152	\$728
3	\$47,767	\$3,981	\$919
4	\$57,720	\$4,810	\$1,110
For each additional family member add:	\$9,953	\$830	\$192

Refer to the Instructions for Participants/Parents/Guardians Household Income Eligibility Statement on how to complete the HIES. Find the category that most closely defines your household and follow the directions for completing each part of the HIES. If your household income is greater than the levels shown on the above CACFP income guidelines, it is not necessary for you to complete the HIES form.

Families with Children:

Your family may be eligible to receive health insurance, called MICHild, through the State of Michigan. MICHild is a health insurance program for uninsured children of Michigan's working families. To determine if your family is eligible, call 1-888-988-6300 for an application or access an online application at the MI Child website (www.michigan.gov/michild). You can also access the MICHild brochure that briefly explains the insurance program.

Your family may be eligible to receive Women, Infants & Children (WIC), a health and nutrition program, that has demonstrated a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes, child growth and development. To determine eligibility, call 1-800-26-BIRTH or access online information at Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) website (<http://www.michigan.gov/wic>) to learn about WIC and locate a local WIC agency.

4. May I fill out a form if someone in my household is not a U.S. citizen? Yes. Participants and family members do not have to be U.S. citizens to qualify for meal benefits offered at the center.



5. Who should I include as members of my household? You must include all people in your household (such as grandparents, other relatives, or friends who live with you). You must include yourself and all children who live with you. You also may include foster children who live with you.

6. How do I report income information and changes in employment status? The income you report must be the total gross income listed by source for each household member and the frequency the income is received. If recent income does not accurately reflect your circumstances, you may provide a projection of your income. If no significant change has occurred, you may use last month's income as a basis to make this projection. If your household's income is equal to or less than the amounts indicated for your household's size on the federal income eligibility guidelines listed above, the family day care home will receive a higher level of reimbursement. Once properly approved for the higher reimbursement rate, whether through income or by providing a current FAP, FIP, FDPIR case number, or listing the name of other categorically eligible programs, you will remain eligible for those benefits for 12 months. You should, however, notify us if you or someone in your household becomes unemployed and the loss of income unemployment causes your household income to be within the eligibility standards.

7. What if my income is not always the same? List the amount that you normally receive. For example, if you normally receive \$1,000 every two weeks, but you missed some work in the last two weeks and only received \$900, put down that you receive \$1,000 per every two weeks. If you normally receive overtime, include it, but not if you only receive it sometimes.

8. What if I have foster children? Foster children that are under the legal responsibility of a foster care agency or court are eligible for free meals. Any foster child in the household is eligible for free meals regardless of income. Households may include foster children on the HIES but are not required to include payments received for the foster child as income.

9. We are in the military. Do we include our housing and supplemental allowances as income? If your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative and you receive the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance, do not include these allowances as income. Also, regarding deployed service members, only that portion of a deployed service member's income made available by them or on their behalf to the household will be counted as income to the household. Combat Pay, including Deployment Extension Incentive Pay (DEIP), is also excluded and will not be counted as income to the household. All other allowances must be included in your gross income. In the operation of child feeding programs, the U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal, and where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) If you have other questions or need help, call [phone number].

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at: [USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form](#), from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation.

The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by: **mail:** U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or **fax:** (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or **email:** program.intake@usda.gov This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

USDA Civil Rights Complaint Link:

<https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/USDA-OASCR%20P-Complaint-Form-0508-0002-508-11-28-17Fax2Mail.pdf>

Early Childhood Health

Whole-child wellness includes a focus on physical and developmental health. Regular checkups with your child's pediatrician are especially important. For example, many common developmental delays are discovered during routine checkups---early intervention makes a big difference in getting your child the support they need before something small turns into a bigger issue.

Health Screenings and Follow Up

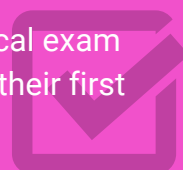
While hearing, vision, blood pressure, lead, hemoglobin, and growth assessments are not routinely performed on every child, they are completed when necessary—particularly if this information is missing from a child's physical documentation.

At the beginning of each enrollment year, we offer **free health screenings** (does not replace physical) for all children in our Early Childhood Education (ECE) program. These screenings provide valuable baseline information about your child's health and development, helping us tailor services to meet their individual needs. They also allow us to identify any early signs that may require further evaluation. The screenings include age-appropriate vision and hearing tests, blood pressure checks, hemoglobin (iron) and lead level testing, as well as measurements of height, weight, and developmental and social-emotional milestones. Families will be informed of the results and notified of any areas that may need additional follow-up.

Well-Child Visits

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) developed a set of comprehensive health guidelines for well-child care, known as the “periodicity schedule.” Click to access the [AAP schedule of screenings and assessments](#) recommended for well-child visits beginning in infancy (three- to five-days old) through adolescence. Additional wellness education resources for families are also available, including Spanish translations.

Checklist Need to Know: Your child must have a current and complete physical exam (called a “well-child visit”) on file with Starfish by the 30th calendar day after their first day of school.



Dental Care

- Starfish Early Childhood programs require that each child receive a dental /oral exam, and all follow-up dental treatment that the dentist indicates your child needs. **Why?** The sooner your child begins regular dental checkups, the healthier their mouths will stay throughout their lives. To assist with this, Starfish arranges for a mobile dentist to visit our children at school twice a year. With parental permission, they offer an exam and cleaning to the enrolled children.
- Early checkups help prevent cavities and tooth decay, which can lead to pain, trouble concentrating, and other medical issues.
- The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) recommends that a child go to the dentist by age one or within six months after their first tooth pops up (around six months of age).
- For parent resources and education about child dental care and positive dental visits, [visit AAPD](#).
- Our staff can assist you in locating a dentist if you do not have a dentist for your child.

The Starfish Difference! We provide each child with their own toothbrush and toothpaste. Children are encouraged to brush their teeth after one of their meals.

Immunizations

Staying up-to-date on recommended vaccinations is essential in making sure children stay healthy and are protected. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children who are not protected by vaccines are more likely to get diseases like measles and whooping cough. These diseases are extremely contagious and can be very serious, especially for babies and young children.

****In order for your child to start school, they must be up to date with their immunizations (i.e., Complete, Provisional, or Waivered).**

Starfish will work with you to ensure your child is protected. Plus, see below for reliable resources and tips.

- We will notify you when your child's immunizations (shots) need to be updated during the school year. When a child's immunization status becomes incomplete the child may be temporarily excluded until immunizations are brought up-to-date.
- Access the [CDC handy reference guide](#) for recommended vaccination schedules.
- Access the [CDC Vaccines for Children \(VFC\)](#) program, which is a federally funded program that provides vaccines at no cost to children who might not otherwise be vaccinated because of inability to pay.
- Access information about [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services immunization programs](#), including local health department locations.
- Keep your child's immunization record in a safe place. It will be needed many times throughout life.
- Always bring your child's immunization record to your physician or health care provider to update whenever a shot is given.
- Never give your child's immunization record to anyone without making sure it is returned to you.

What about non-medical waivers for immunizations?

A non-medical immunization is a waiver for religious or philosophical reasons. Click to access details from [Michigan Department of Health and Human Services](#).

- If you request a non-medical waiver for immunizations, you must attend an education program provided by the county health department. The program provides information about the benefits of vaccination and the risks of disease, as well as the chance to ask questions that you may have about vaccinations.
- Once you complete the education program, you will receive an immunization waiver certificate. You will need to return this certificate to your child's center.
- We must have a certified State of Michigan Immunization Waiver form on file before enrolling your child.

Checklist Need to Know: Michigan childcare licensing requires an immunization record be on file for each child on or before the first day of attendance or home visit. This is a state law that Starfish Family Services must follow.



Medications and Child Health Plans

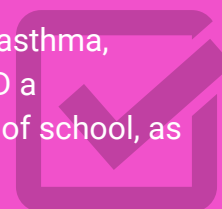
Administering Medication

- If possible, it is preferred that all medications are given at home. The first dose of new medication, especially, should be administered by the parent and monitored for adverse reactions.
- Starfish employees will not give any medication to a child unless it is absolutely necessary and only if their parent has submitted a medication authorization form completed by a health care provider (HCP) along with directions for its use.
- Specific arrangements will be made between parent, HCP, Center Leader, and teacher with written parent permission.
- Starfish reserves the right to contact your HCP to ensure that it is permissible for your child to be given medication.
- Only trained employees will administer medication. It will be given under supervision of two adults.
- Medication must be brought by a parent/guardian to the Early Childhood program office in the original labeled container.
- Scheduled medications will be stored in locked cabinets but when children are present emergency medications are not locked and are readily available as needed.

Changes in your child's health?

Please notify your teacher and Family Advocate if your child has any new health conditions, such as a new cut, bump, bruise, or health diagnosis.

Checklist Need to Know: Children requiring emergency medications (i.e., asthma, seizure) must have a health-care plan from your Health Care Provider AND a Medication Authorization Form completed and on file before the first day of school, as well as reviewed by the Health Specialist (RN) for accuracy.



Childhood Illness Prevention & Care

We will do our very best to lower the risk of spreading illness or communicable diseases in our centers through preventative health practices and appropriate reporting procedures. But we need your help!

Please notify your Starfish center office or your Starfish Home Visitor (for home-based) if your child is sick and will not be attending class/visit.



When to stay at home:

Check your child daily before they go to school and do not send your child to school if they have any of the following signs or symptoms. We also suggest that you check in with your child's pediatrician.

- When a child is generally not feeling well, lethargic, and unable to actively participate in the daily routine they should be kept home and monitored for worsening symptoms. These symptoms can be signs of a more serious illness developing and, in an effort, to stop the spread of illness in our classrooms we ask that parents keep children home when they seem unwell.
 - **High temperature.** A child with a temperature of 100.4°F or greater AND behavior changes or other signs or symptoms (e.g., sore throat, rash, vomiting, or diarrhea).
 - **Abdominal Pain.** If pain continues for more than two hours or intermittent pain accompanied by fever or other symptoms.
 - **Skin Sores** A child with weeping sores on an exposed area that cannot be covered with waterproof dressing.
 - **Rash** A child with a quickly spreading and/or unexplained rash.
 - **Diarrhea or vomiting**

Sick at school: What happens?

If your child becomes ill during the school day with any of the above signs/symptoms, you will be contacted to pick up your child.

- Your child will be released only to those persons 18 years and older who are listed on the Child Information Record (Emergency Card).
- If Starfish is unable to reach you or another person on the Emergency Card, your child will be kept isolated and as comfortable as possible until you arrive.
- According to our policy your child must be picked up within one hour of the phone call.

Returning to the classroom

Children must be free of fever, with no vomiting or diarrhea, and medication free for at least one full school day before returning to school. In some cases of contagious disease or extended illness or injury, a Health Care Provider (HCP) statement may be needed before your child can be readmitted to the classroom. Please check with your ECE center office to see if a HCP statement is needed.

Absence due to illness

If your child is ill and they are out of school for two or more days, we ask that you provide a doctor's note. This same information should be included/clarified in the previous section on Returning to the Classroom.

Communicable Diseases

School and health department regulations require children with certain communicable diseases to be temporarily excluded from school. These diseases include, but are not limited to, measles, influenza, chicken pox, strep throat, and hand, foot, and mouth disease. Most infectious or communicable diseases need to be checked by a doctor.

If Starfish suspects that your child has a communicable disease, we will contact you to pick up your child within one hour of our phone call. Please remember, it may be required that a note from an Health Care Provider be presented to your child's teacher or the center office before your child can return to the classroom.

PARENTS AS ADVOCATES & LEADERS: EMPOWERED FAMILIES

At Starfish, family means everything. Because the success of a happy and healthy child depends on the health and strength of your whole family. Family doesn't necessarily mean Mom and Dad. Anyone who is in a "care-giver" role— brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, grandparents, friends etc.—is family. We embrace all generations of families.

Parent Leadership Opportunities

Parent Committee

If you have a child enrolled in the program, then you are automatically a part of the Parent Committee. Organized and run by parents for parents, the Parent Committee is a monthly **center-level meeting** to which all Starfish ECE caregivers are invited. During your first Parent Committee Meeting, there will be an election and an opportunity for parents/caregivers to be elected as: The Parent Committee Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, Secretary, or Treasurer.

Chairperson Leads parent meetings, helps set the agenda, and works closely with staff to support family engagement activities. Serves as the main spokesperson for the committee.

Co-Chairperson Supports the Chairperson and steps in when the Chair is unavailable. Helps coordinate events and encourages parent involvement.

Secretary Takes notes during meetings, keeps track of attendance, and helps share information with all parents.

Treasurer Keeps a record of any fundraising activities or parent funds and works with staff to ensure accurate tracking and reporting.

There is no experience needed. You will be trained and supported by your Center Leader and/or your Family Advocate. You will receive timely news and up-to-date information about the program and have an opportunity to voice your input. It is also a chance for you to meet and network with other parents.

Head Start Policy Council

The **Policy Council** is a vital part of how Head Start programs are run—and parents like you play the most important role! The Policy Council is made up of current parents and community members who are elected by their peers to work closely with program staff and leadership to help make decisions about how the program operates.

As a member of the Policy Council, you'll:

- Help shape program goals and services
- Provide input on hiring decisions and the program budget
- Share your ideas and concerns to improve the experience for all families
- Develop leadership skills and connect with other parents

Policy Council meetings are held monthly and include training and support, so no previous experience is needed—just your passion for your child's growth and your desire to make a difference!

Why join? Parents who serve on Policy Council often feel more connected, confident, and empowered. It's a unique chance to have a real voice in your child's early education and to become a leader in your community.

Interested? We'd love to tell you more! Ask your Family Advocate or Center Leader about how to get involved.

Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee

Health and Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HMHSAC) is a committee to support children's healthy development. It is an advisory group usually composed of Head Start staff representing Health, Nutrition, Mental Health and Disability Services, local health providers who represent a wide variety of local social service agencies, and parents who are always welcome to attend and participate. HMHSACs help programs make decisions about health services and strengthen the communities where Head Start families live. The HMHSAC meets three times per year, and we look forward to having parental input. Ask your Family Advocate for more information and/or see the minutes from the previous HMHSAC meeting on the Parent Board at your child's center.

ParentCorps Parenting Program

Build a supportive community with other parents/caregivers in a safe, nurturing, and predictable environment, where you share ideas and experiences, reflect, and learn about parenting strategies and child development.

We'll cover topics like:

- Routines
- mealtimes
- positive reinforcement
- discipline choices
- tantrums
- and more



Family Volunteer Opportunities

Remember that we need **YOU** to make our program and your child's school experience the best it can be. As an Early Childhood Education parent, there are so many ways you can be actively involved at Starfish. One of the most important and meaningful ways is to volunteer!

We encourage parents to volunteer at least two times per month in ECE classrooms. In general, however, there are multiple volunteering opportunities in both the classroom setting and at the center level.

- Provide support to teachers
- Work directly with children
- Pitch in to tidy up
- Help with meals and snacks
- Read a book or tell a story
- Share an amazing talent or teach a skill
- Assist with office work/paperwork

Checklist Need to Know: Volunteer time sheets can be found in your child's classroom or center office. If you have any questions about how to fill out a time sheet, please feel free to ask your child's teacher or Family Advocate.



Fatherhood Involvement

We believe that fathers and father figures are essential contributors to the well-being of families. Research shows that an empowered and present father/father figure affects positive outcomes for children, including school success.

At Starfish, we respect fathers and help encourage engagement by:

- Creating a father-friendly environment
- Supporting and implementing child/father activities
- Encouraging fathers to be active role models
- Providing volunteer opportunities for fathers
- Encouraging leadership roles and responsibilities
- Partnering with fathers to set personal goals and celebrate successes

Volunteer Guidelines

We gladly welcome and encourage parents and community friends to volunteer at our centers. It is important, however, for anyone on a Starfish campus to follow rules that create a safe and healthy environment for everyone. All individuals who wish to volunteer on site will be screened through the Public Sex Offender Registry to identify any criminal offenses that would prevent them being in close contact with children or on school grounds. If your volunteer time exceeds 4 hours a week for more than two consecutive weeks, you will need a TB screening and a fingerprinting clearance on file.

The following inappropriate behaviors are not acceptable for any adult while at a Starfish center or during any program activities. If a parent or adult engages in such behavior, Starfish has the right to prohibit that individual from future program activities and/or from access to the school.

- Offensive language; sexual, racial or ethnic slurs; cursing/name calling
- Violating confidentiality
- Smoking
- Sexual harassment
- Neglecting, endangering, or abusing children

- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol
- Possession of drugs or alcohol
- Verbal or physical threats or intimidations
- Any act of violence
- Damaging or stealing property
- Possession of a weapon

OTHER STARFISH SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Behavioral Health Services

Are you, or your child, struggling with emotional or behavioral challenges? As a parent or caregiver, are you stressed, overwhelmed, or need support? **You are not alone.** Our experienced team of professionals are here for you and your family.

- **Well-being for the whole family.** We invest in the health and wellness of children, youth, and families through programs that have a comprehensive and holistic approach.
- **Your journey is unique.** We support you in crafting **your own personal plan** of action. We partner with you to ensure you have the tools and resources to create **your version** of a positive, nurturing family dynamic where everyone feels safe and connected and all are empowered to effectively manage life stressors.
- **Your journey of strength.** We build service plans based on your family's values, culture, beliefs—and strengths.

Outpatient and homebased programs for pregnant persons, children birth to 8, and adults are available. **For more information about our many programs,** visit our [Starfish Behavioral Health Web page](#), call Starfish directly at (888) 355-5433, or speak with your Family Advocate or Mental Health Consultant.

Nurse-Family Partnership Program

[Nurse-Family Partnership \(NFP\)](#) works by having specially trained nurses regularly visit first-time moms-to-be, starting early in pregnancy, and continuing through the

baby's second birthday. This close relationship is based on the unique needs of YOU and your family, and includes:

- Exploring prenatal best practices
- Maneuvering together through challenges after giving birth
- Crafting health and development plans for you and your baby
- Life coaching for you and your family

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health (IECMH) Homebased Program

As a baby grows through infancy, toddlerhood and the preschool years, each experience—positive or negative—becomes a building block for their future wellness. The IECMH program helps children, and their families, build a strong foundation and supports them when that foundation cracks. This program is designed to meet the unique needs of your family and is available to pregnant persons, and families who have children birth to age six who live in Wayne County and qualify for Medicaid health insurance. Services take place in your home and/or community.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Communication System

For your convenience, we will be using the Remind app for communication. This is a reliable communication system that allows you to communicate back and forth with your Teachers and Family Advocate. It also allows us to share important program information and updates. This system communicates through email, text, and the app. Starfish Family Services will add you to the system and you'll be able to adjust your settings based on your personal preferences. For more information check out this link: <https://www.remind.com/families>



Service Delivery Environment

Starfish Family Services believes in providing a safe and nurturing environment where children, their families, and employees can learn and grow. Therefore, it is the policy of Starfish Family Services, that all children, parents/caregivers, and agency staff, **have the right to a physically and psychologically safe environment free of discrimination, harassment, and verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.** If this policy is violated, action will be taken by a Starfish Family Services management team member to inform the individual of the violation. This may result in the following actions, but is not limited to, 1) a safety plan being put in place, 2) being asked to leave the premises for a designated amount of time, or 3) being asked to leave the program indefinitely.

Positive Discipline

The primary responsibility of the Starfish Early Childhood Program is to provide a safe, secure, and healthy environment in which children can learn, play, and grow. We take a positive approach in guiding children's behavior, which is designed to support children to foster **strong positive relationships** with peers as well as adults learn to **recognize, understand, and express feelings**; develop **self-control**; and **build resiliency**.

We use a variety of strategies for positive discipline and guidance in the classroom, including:

Positive environment

- Interacting with children in a positive, friendly, and socially supportive way.
- Establishing, following, and referring to a consistent routine throughout the day to promote predictability and safety for children.
- Planning ahead to prevent problems when possible and utilizing redirection or distraction.
- Establishing a few simple, clear, reasonable, and developmentally appropriate rules, focused on health and well-being, safety, respect for property, and respect for others.

Positive verbal cues

- Stating rules positively rather than negatively: “Please walk” instead of “Don’t run.”
- Using descriptive encouragement and other positive means of recognizing appropriate behavior: “Thank you for giving the truck to Daniel when you were finished with it.”

Positive choices and problem-solving

- Providing children with positive choices. When limits are necessary, they should be clearly defined and consistently maintained.
- Providing guidance and encouragement for problem-solving and exploration.

Personally positive

- Clearly stating expectations for appropriate behavior based on what is realistic for the developmental level of each child.
- Giving children clear, simple directions and positive reminders based on what is realistic for the developmental level of each child.

Expressing Our Feelings

We help children learn how to identify and express their feelings in safe ways. Each classroom includes age-appropriate social-emotional materials for children to explore, as well as materials to support children in learning how to calm down.

- Sensory tools such as glitter wands, squish balls, thinking putty, and breathing balls support regulation and increased attention/focus. Sensory items also help children to feel calm and ready to learn.
- Calm-down and safe-place areas are located within each classroom.
 - Children can use the calm-down area when they have big feelings and want some space from other children.
 - Children can use a safe-space area to get away from the activity in the classroom, especially if they feel overwhelmed or just need some alone time. The safe place will never be used as punishment. This space will always be supervised for the safety and protection of children.

Supporting Challenging Behaviors

Sometimes challenging behaviors can get in the way of a child’s learning and be difficult for adults because we are not sure how to handle them. We will work with you to identify and discuss appropriate responses to your child's behavior. The sooner we find out the cause, the easier it is to help the child.

Discovering the cause

All responses to unsafe or inappropriate behaviors are grounded in the understanding that a child's behavior conveys a message. Unsafe or inappropriate behaviors are almost always signaling distress or unmet needs.

- We will partner with you and make every effort to understand the causes of such behavior and find solutions that support the healthy social-emotional development of your child.
- Responses to behavior will be individualized based on the needs, situation, and characteristics of each child.

Individual observation

Staff or families may request an individual observation to help identify supportive strategies for challenging or unsafe behavior.

- Program staff and the Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultant, as well as the Early Intervention Coordinator depending on the needs of the child, are available to meet with you to discuss any concerns, review the individual observation, formulate an individual plan for your child, and assist with making referrals to support services, including mental health services.
- It is important for Starfish staff and families to use a consistent approach to support a child at school and at home.

Attendance

Based on our experience, early learners who maintain good attendance receive the full benefit of early childhood education programming.

Your child can start building good attendance habits now, so they learn that going to school **on time, every day** is important. Let's work together toward achieving regular attendance, **which is defined as 85% of enrolled days or higher.**

- Many studies show that attending a high-quality early learning program strengthens **school readiness** and **long-term success** in high school, college, and at work.
- Attending school regularly helps children **feel better** about school—and themselves.

- Our program is designed to deliver **skills that build on one another**. If a child is absent, they often miss the foundation skills they need to learn the next skill.
- Children who attend early childhood programming on a consistent basis learn to build **strong and secure bonds** and relationships, which is an integral part of creating a safe, unified early learning classroom.



Attendance & Absences: Center-Based

We recognize that your child may have to miss school. **Please contact your ECE office or your child's Family Advocate if your child is going to be absent for any reason on any day.**

- If you do not contact us to report your child's absence, your Family Advocate will contact you.
- If your child builds up a series of absences, your Family Advocate will connect with you to help overcome any barriers that may be preventing coming to school while developing a custom Attendance Action Plan.

Absence due to illness. If your child is ill and they are out of school for two or more days, we ask that you provide a doctor's note.

Absence due to a doctor's appointment. We ask that you provide written notification if you plan to take your child out of programming for a planned appointment.

Attendance Follow-Up & Enrollment Status

- Your child's enrollment in the ECE program may result in being dropped from active enrollment and placed on the program's waitlist if any of the following situations occur:
 - Low attendance/lack of attendance (below 85% average daily attendance)
 - Failure to report your child's absences

- Staff are unsuccessful with their contact attempts regarding attendance-related issues/concerns
- The completed Attendance Action Plan did not resolve the attendance-related issues and/or the child's attendance did not significantly improve.
- If your child is absent for 14 days/2 weeks without contact, the Family Advocate will send a notification stating your child is now in the process of disenrollment.
- If your child enters the disenrollment process, the Family Advocate will send a final notification stating your child has completed the disenrollment process (removed from active enrollment) and replaced by a child on the waitlist.

Attendance & Absences: Homebased

Regular attendance in any educational program option is important for children to experience consistent growth, learning, and development.

The home-based program option is designed to support regular attendance and includes weekly home visits. Each home visit is 90 minutes long and includes time for discussion of educational and developmental progress, addressing any potential challenges and resources, and engaging in learning activities.

The home-based program runs 48 weeks and families are expected to participate in at least 46 home visits. Starfish home visitors will make every effort to support families and address any barriers that prevent completion of home visits. If multiple unexcused absences build up, your home visitor will work with you on a custom Attendance Action Plan. **Parents are also expected to participate in a minimum of two group socializations each month.**

Established regular visits The time and date for weekly home visits will be established during the first home visit and reflect the family's regular schedule, routines, and diversity.

- Agreement to the home-visit schedule is evidenced by a signed contract.
- Starfish recognizes that during the year, a family's schedule may change for a variety of reasons and will update/revise the agreement as necessary.

Visit cancellations

- Starfish home visitor: Should there be a need to cancel a home visit due to inclement weather or other unforeseen event, your home visitor will contact your family as soon as possible.
- Your family: Should contact your home visitor if your need to cancel a scheduled home visit.
- All canceled home visits will be rescheduled.

Withdrawal Procedures

Please notify your child's ECE center if you wish to withdraw them from our program. Your child may re-enter the Starfish ECE program as space is available. The requirements for re-entering are the same as the enrollment process.

Arrival/Sign-In & Release

Children must be accompanied to and from school by an adult (18 years or older), who can provide a picture ID.

Child Information Record (aka Emergency Card)

- At registration, parents/guardian will complete a "Child Information Record" (Emergency Card). This form indicates the names of those individuals other than a parent or guardian to whom the child may be released.
- Staff **will only release** a child to an adult, 18 years or older, who is listed on the Child Information Record. No exceptions will be made.
- Children's information/emergency cards must remain current throughout the school year.
- In the event of parental legal disputes, legal documentation **must be** presented to prevent a child from being released by our staff to their legal parent or guardian.
- Parents/guardians must come into the office to make any necessary changes. **Staff will not make changes over the phone**; this is a legal document and can only be altered by a parent/guardian in person.
- All parents/guardians are asked to sign their child/children in and out



Late Arrival Policy

Starfish Family Services Early Childhood Education program maintains a strict policy regarding “Late Arrivals”.

- Arrangements must be made if a child arrives after the start of class. Therefore, the parent/guardian must contact ECE program staff to make them aware of the late arrival.
- Late arrivals are not only difficult for your child but are disruptive to the entire learning environment. It is best for everyone when you arrive on time.
- We understand that on occasion, families run late for different reasons that results in a late arrival. However, all late arrivals are documented and followed up by ECE staff to ensure late arrivals do not happen regularly. If late arrivals become consistent, we will ask that you attend a meeting at your center to determine a plan that will resolve the late arrivals.

Late Pick-up Policy

Starfish Family Services Early Childhood Education programs maintain a strict policy regarding “Late Pick-Ups.”

First incident

- You will be given a verbal, documented warning when you arrive late to pick up your child. In addition to the warning, you will receive a letter reinforcing the program’s policy regarding late pick-up.

Second incident

- Same procedure as outlined above.

Third incident

- You will meet with your Center Leader/and or Family Advocate to discuss issues that may be preventing you from picking up your child on time. They will work with you on a reasonable plan of action to help solve the problem. Your child will not be able to attend class until you have met with ECE staff.

Fourth incident

- If another late pick-up occurs after an action plan has been agreed upon, your child will not be able to attend the ECE program and will be removed from active enrollment.
- If your child is removed from active enrollment, you may choose to re-enroll your child, so they are placed on the ECE waitlist. Your child may re-enroll into the ECE program in accordance with ECE's program selection process. While waitlisted, you must make arrangements to ensure your child will be picked up on time, if an enrollment slot should become available for your child.

Clothing Guidelines

Since we will be doing a variety of activities during the time your child is in the classroom, please dress your child in comfortable clothes that they can get messy in.

Extra change of clothes: It is a requirement that you send an extra change of clothes for your child to keep at school. Sometimes children have bathroom accidents, and juice and milk spills can occur at mealtimes.

Shoes: For your child's safety in the classroom and especially outside in the playground area, please have your child wear shoes that are closed toe, flat soled, have non-slippery soles such as tennis shoes, and fit appropriately.

- Shoes such as flip-flops are not considered safe shoes for active play.

Favorite blanket: Children may bring a favorite blanket from home to be used only at nap time. The blanket will be sent home every Friday to be washed. Please be sure to label your child's blanket, coat, and other items with their name.

Toys from home: It is important that children do not bring toys to school. We would not want their toys to be misplaced or broken. Children may not bring toys from home into the classroom.

Child Injury/Emergency

In the event of an emergency, Starfish will contact you immediately. The primary concern is the safety of the children. Please refer to the following in case of an emergency:

Incident/Accident

- Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR.
- Staff will provide necessary treatment for minor accidents such as bumps, small scratches, etc.
- Staff will notify you by phone if your child has an injury that may need more attention, ie, bumping their head.
- Staff will write up a case note for you to review, sign, and date.
- Staff will complete an online Incident Report and attach the signed case note.

Medical Emergency

- Staff will call an ambulance and begin providing emergency care.
- Staff will contact you immediately by phone.
- If we can't reach you, staff will contact the next available emergency contact.
- If necessary, staff will ride in the ambulance with your child---to provide comfort and security.

Fire

- Staff will evacuate the children to a designated and safe location.
- Staff will contact you immediately by phone.

Tornado

- Staff will escort children to the tornado shelter or a designated safe place.
- We will contact you when the "all clear" is provided by local weather authorities
- Starfish encourages you to stay where it is safe until the "all clear" is given.
- As necessary, we will alert you about any severe building damage or fallout, such as power outages, that may affect programming.

Center Closings

Bad Weather

Early Childhood programs are canceled when bad weather conditions occur and create unsafe traveling conditions. School closings are announced via Remind and on the local news stations (online as well as during the live broadcast). Please look for the name of your center to be announced. If your child's center closes for reasons other than the weather, we will make every effort to contact you before school begins for the day. Please note that we do not always follow district school closures.

Holidays

Starfish believes that the best way to respect and support all families is to remove holiday celebrations in our Early Childhood Education centers. **Why?** Each family celebrates holidays differently and some families do not observe holidays at all.

Although Starfish does not officially celebrate holidays, we do follow a "closing schedule" that is similar to that of most school districts. We also understand that many families take family planned vacations during these times. All Early Childhood programs including home-based options follow the schedule below:

- Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following (*the Wednesday before Thanksgiving for Thorne Center only)
- Winter Vacation
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
- Spring Vacation
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Week of Independence Day (4th of July)
- Home Visit Days
- Additional Staff Training Days

Home Visits & Parent-Teacher Conferences

Home Visits and Parent-Teacher Conferences are valuable in building supportive and respectful relationships with parents and in developing a broad understanding of every child in our program. The visits and conferences enhance your knowledge and understanding of the developmental progress of your child.

Center-based early childhood programs are required to have two (2) home visits and two (2) parent-teacher conferences during the program year. This includes one home visit before the school year begins.

Even more benefits:

- Get to know each other and share information
- Children will meet their teachers in their own home
- Discuss Starfish programs and leadership opportunities
- Develop school readiness goals for your children
- Solicit parent/guardian ideas for classroom curriculum related to your child's interest and skills
- Share child progress with parents/guardians

Threat to Safety

The safety of all children and adults is a prime concern of Starfish Family Services. A Threat to Safety could include national or natural disasters, a bomb threat, or an identified community threat.

The following procedures will be followed when there is a community or national threat.

If a threat is detected or seemingly imminent, executive-level Starfish staff will be on alert and may contact local school districts (if in session) to inquire about district protocols.

- Parents will be contacted directly and alerted about stay-in-place or evacuation protocols.

- **Stay in place:** If it is determined that it would be safest to remain in the building, the following procedures will be initiated.
 - All outside building doors will be locked, and no one will be allowed in or out without authorization from agency staff.
 - If a threat occurs during the time children are leaving school, it will be determined for the safety of all if parents will be allowed in the building to pick up their children.
- **Evacuation:** Executive-level Starfish staff will determine when, and if, an evacuation is necessary.
 - Children and adults will be safely escorted out of the building according to the Starfish evacuation and procedures plan.
 - You will be given the name of your identified evacuation center at Parent Orientation.
 - You may also contact your ECE Center directly or call the Starfish emergency number at (734) 728-3400.

Center/Campus Environment

Substance/Smoke/Vape-Free Environment

Substance/Smoke/Vape-Free Environment

State law prohibits the use of tobacco or tobacco products on school property. “School” includes school parking lots and playgrounds surrounding school property as well as inside the school building. This law also prohibits smoking or vaping during school-sponsored activities.

It is important to protect children from being placed in dangerous situations. If, on arrival to or departure from a center, a parent or guardian appears to be impaired and intends to transport their child in a motor vehicle, our Early Childhood program staff will:

- Let the parent or adult know that it is not safe for a child to ride with them and assist to arrange alternate transportation.
- Inform the police if the parent or adult refuses alternate transportation.



Parking Lot Safety

Leaving Children Unattended in Vehicles

Starfish Family Services has a strict policy regarding children being left alone in or around vehicles. We enforce and abide by the proposed law of Michigan that parents/guardians never leave children alone in or around vehicles, not even for a minute. Children should not be left alone even if you are just running into the building to pick up or drop off another child or dropping off items.

The results of leaving a child in a vehicle may have serious consequence:

- Temperatures can reach fatal levels in minutes.
- Children can be abducted.
- Children can set the vehicle in motion.
- Children can leave the vehicle looking for you.

Turn Off Your Car

Please be sure to turn your car off if you leave it unattended. It only takes a minute for someone to jump in and try to quickly drive off, possibly injuring other parents and children.

Car Seat Safety

Car seats are extremely effective when correctly used and installed, reducing the risk of death by 71 percent for infants under age one and by 54 percent for toddlers ages one to four (*Source: Michigan Department of Community Health Director, James K Haveman Jr.*).

Michigan's updated Child Passenger Safety Laws, which take effect April 2, 2025, provide improved precautions to help protect child passengers.

- Infant to two years: A child must be in a rear-facing car seat until they reach the maximum weight or height allowed by the car seat's manufacturer or the child is 2 years old.
- Two to five years: The child can then move into a forward-facing car seat until they reach the maximum weight or height allowed by the car seat's manufacturer or the child is 5 years old.

- Five to eight years: The child can then move to a belt-positioning booster seat using a lap-and-shoulder belt until they are 4 feet 9 inches or 8 years old.
- All children under 13 years: Must ride in the rear seat of a vehicle if the vehicle has one available.

For additional car seat and booster seat information, visit the [National Highway Transportation Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](https://www.nhtsa.gov/) site or <https://www.michigan.gov/mspnewsroom/news-releases/2025/03/25/updated-child-passenger-safety-laws-provide-extra-protections-for-children>

Holding Hands for Safety

The parking lots at our Early Childhood Centers are very busy, especially during drop-off and pick-up times. Our children are very small and cannot always be seen by drivers. For the safety of your child, you must hold their hand while navigating the parking lot.

Handicapped Spots

As in any public parking lot, handicapped parking spots are only for those persons with official handicapped tags or stickers.

Video Cameras

Starfish Family Services may utilize video cameras to ensure the safety and security of our children, families, staff, and volunteers. Video cameras are not located in areas where there is an expectation of privacy including, but not limited to, restrooms or diapering stations.

Picture Taking

All parents will be asked to sign a Photo Release Form as part of your Parent Permissions and Understanding packet. If you choose not to allow either your or your child's photo to be taken, we will honor your request.

- In order to protect every family's privacy, we ask that parents refrain from taking pictures of other children.



APPENDIX

Starfish Center Locations and Times

All Centers are open 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM Monday through Thursday except for Marygrove Early Education Center which is open Monday through Friday and offers After Care from 4:00 PM to 5:30 PM for an additional fee.

Center	Center Leader	Address
Cecil	Towana McGuire	5690 Cecil Ave, Detroit, MI 48210
Central	Valerie Phillips-Mason	4330 Central Ave, Detroit, MI 48210
Covenant	Jennifer Skeens	1450 25th St, Detroit, MI 48216
Crestwood	April Sawyer	12100 Beech Daly, Redford, MI 48239
Fort Street	LaCrecia Brown	2237 S. Fort St, Detroit, MI 48217
Hartford	Ramona Brown	13735 W. Seven Mile Rd, Detroit, MI 48236
Hiveley	Carmen Price and Emmanuel Israel	30000 Hiveley, Inkster, MI 48141
Livonia	Kelsey Hadyniak	32765 Lyndon, Livonia, MI 48154
Marygrove	Lenice Scott and Katrel Angry	8245 W. McNichols, Detroit, MI 48221
Plymouth/Canton	Carrie Graham	11100 N. Haggerty, Plymouth, MI 48170
Salvation Army	Trecy Zarrieff	3737 Humboldt St, Detroit, MI 48208
St. Suzanne	Celina Clanton	19321 W. Chicago, Detroit, MI 48228
Thorne	Rhonda Bryant-Butler	25251 Annapolis St. Dbn Hts, MI 48125
Westwood	Lyndsey Butts	26429 Michigan Ave, Inkster, MI 48141

Client Rights

- To be treated with dignity and respect.
- To be free from harm or abuse.
- To receive services in a clean and safe environment.
- To privacy and to have your information be kept confidential (unless reporting is required by law).
- To be involved in the planning of my/our services.
- To be free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, political affiliation, or religion.

Notices of Privacy Practices are available at your child's center

- To understand the complaint resolution process and seek assistance with concerns or grievances including responses that are timely, objective, fair and understandable.
- To access your record (utilizing a request process that may include a charge for the cost of copies).
- Open communication (phone, mail, or other means unless otherwise restricted in a behavior plan).

Should you feel that your rights have been violated or if you have a complaint, please call (734) 728-3400 and ask to speak to the Client Advocate or email:

Quality@sfish.org

Right to Review Records

Parents/guardians have the right to review and request a copy of their child's record. If a parent/guardian is interested in reviewing their child's record, please make an appointment with your Family Advocate. We will assist families within 24 hours of their request to review the records and make copies, if needed.

Grievance Procedures

Step 1:

- Try to resolve the problem on an informal basis. For example, make personal contact with the person with whom you have a grievance.

- Schedule a time discuss the concerns or grievance.
- Bring as much information as possible to your meeting, including specifics regarding times and dates.
- If the matter has not been resolved in **10 calendar days**, then follow step 2.

Step 2

- Request the Starfish Early Childhood Program Grievance Form from your ECE Center.
- Follow the instructions on the form. Provide as much detail as possible.
- Submit the form to your Center Leader and/or the immediate supervisor of the person with whom you have a grievance.
- Keep a copy of the form for your records.
- Your Center Leader and/or immediate supervisor will schedule a joint meeting, which will be held within 10 calendar days after receipt of the Grievance Form. The meeting will include the complainant (person with the complaint) and the person against whom the grievance is alleged.
- The purpose of this meeting is to review the information on the Grievance Form and attempt to resolve the problem. The outcome of this meeting must be recorded on a Starfish Family Services Early Childhood Program Grievance

Step 3

- If the problem is not resolved, or you are not satisfied with the action taken, you may then contact the Starfish Family Services Early Childhood Program office to request an additional meeting to discuss your grievances.
- A detailed account and clear documentation of all prior meetings will need to be reviewed.
- Within 10 calendar days after receipt of a further request, the appropriate delegate staff will coordinate a new meeting for those involved in the grievance.

Fair and Objective Mediation Rules

- If and when level 3 is reached, the appropriate staff will bring all documentation of the submitted grievances to the meeting for all to review.
- In order to maintain objectivity, separate one-on-one meetings will not be called prior to this group meeting.

- During the meeting session, no verbal attacks are allowed; professional conduct, behavior and language will be required at all times.
- It is important to note that the goal of these meetings is to come to an amicable resolution.

Further action may need to be taken. Please see the additional Grievance Procedures in your child's center office.

Rights of Students with Disabilities

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act](#) (IDEA) is the federal education law that requires public school districts to provide special education and related support services to children with disabilities, if eligible. Starfish collaborates with school districts so that children and families receive the care their child is eligible for.

As a parent or legal guardian, you play a very important role in your child's education. You and your child have legal protections and rights (procedural safeguards) during the evaluation and Individual Education Program (IEP) process under IDEA. The Local Education Agency (school district) handles supplying a written explanation of your rights under both IDEA and our state's laws.

Some of the important procedural safeguards include:

- The right of parents to receive a complete explanation of all the procedural safeguards available under IDEA and the procedures in the state for presenting complaints.
- Confidentiality and the right of parents to inspect and review the educational records of their child.
- The right of parents to take part in meetings related to the identification, evaluation, and placement of their child, and the provision of FAPE (a free appropriate public education) to their child.
- The right of parents to obtain an independent educational evaluation (IEE) of their child.

- The right of parents to receive “prior written notice” on matters relating to the identification, evaluation, or placement of their child, and the provision of FAPE to their child.
- The right of the parents to give or deny their consent before the school may take certain action with respect to their child.
- The right of the parents to disagree with decisions made by the school system on those issues.
- The right of parents and schools to use IDEA’s mechanisms for resolving disputes, including the right to appeal determinations.

If you suspect your child needs some extra developmental and educational support, please discuss this with your child’s teacher, home visitor, Family Advocate, or Early Intervention Coordinator.

Child Custody Conflicts

Child custody situations will be handled in the following manner:

- Until custody has been established by a court action, one may not limit the other parent from picking a child up from the center.
- It is not within our legal right to withhold a child from a parent, unless there has been a court action which limits one parent’s custody of the child.
- A copy of the Judge’s order that establishes custody must be turned into the Early Childhood Education program office. It will be maintained in your child’s file.
- Please be sure to bring any new orders or documentation showing changes in custody to the Family Advocate and or Center Leader.

Child Abuse/Neglect

Definitions:

- The word “child” refers to any person under 18 years of age.
- Child abuse means harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare, which is non-accidental, physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, or maltreatment.

- Child neglect means harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's welfare which occurs through negligent treatment including the failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing, medical care, and inadequate supervision.

The Law and Staff Responsibility

The Child Protection Law of 1989 requires that a staff person, "Who has reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect must immediately by telephone or otherwise make an oral report, or cause a report to be made of the suspected child abuse or neglect, a written report shall follow."

- Parent/guardian may or may not be informed of a report.

Parent Responsibility

Any person, including a child, who has reasonable cause to **suspect** child abuse or neglect, may report the matter to the Department of Health and Human Services or any law enforcement agency. The identity of the reporting person is confidential and can be disclosed only with their consent or by the courts.

Confidentiality Statement

Starfish Family Services is committed to protecting the privacy of all children and families in our program. Staff are required to maintain strict confidentiality regarding all child and family information and records. These records are securely stored and will only be shared with others when we have the parent or guardian's written permission, except when required by law.

As members of our early childhood education community, we also ask parents and guardians to respect the privacy of others. In the course of program activities, you may learn personal information about other children or families. We trust you to treat this information with the same care and confidentiality you would expect for your own family.

Together, we create a respectful, safe, and supportive environment for everyone.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

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

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

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

Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
email: Program.Intake@usda.gov

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

(Last revision: 07/31/25)