



NHA LEARNING CENTERS
After School & Summer Program

Parent Handbook

Norwalk Housing Authority

24 ½ Monroe Street

Norwalk, CT 06854

Approved by the NHA Board on May 15, 2019

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Welcome to the NHA Learning Center Program!

This handbook is designed to give parents and guardians a helpful insight into the Learning Center program offered by the Norwalk Housing Authority. It includes detailed information about program activities, procedures, and policies. Please read this handbook carefully and keep it in a safe place for easy reference during throughout the year.

The Learning Centers strives to provide an atmosphere where children can enjoy, grow, and learn. The staff always welcomes suggestions and ideas that will help us to make your child's time at the centers beneficial and rewarding. We encourage you to share your thoughts and ideas with us at any time.

Many thanks to the NHA Board and the City of Norwalk for their ongoing commitment to the Learning Center Program, to the staff of the program for their energy and the outstanding job they do with the children each and every day, and to the parents and guardians of the children in the program for their continued support and encouragement. The children benefit greatly from the many special qualities contributed to the Learning Center Program by so many wonderful and caring people!

If you have any questions about the content of this handbook, please feel free to call me at 203.852.1144.

I look forward to the time that we will be spending together,

Best regards,

Wendy Gerbier

Director of Learning Centers

Learning Center Program Office Contact Information

20 West Ave.

Norwalk, CT 06854

For concerns about your child and/or questions about schedules, tuition, policies, or staffing, please call the Director, Wendy Gerbier or Assistant Director, Tiana Brown at 203.852.1144. the Learning Center office is open Monday-Friday from 12pm-8pm.

To report an absence, a change of pickup information, or a pickup delay, please call your child’s specific learning center.

20 West Learning Center 20 West Ave Norwalk, CT 06854 203.810.5607	Colonial Village Learning Center 128 Scribner Ave Norwalk, CT 06854 203.810.5605	Roodner Court Learning Center 261 Ely Ave Norwalk, CT 06854 203.810.5604
King Kennedy Learning Center 43 Chestnut Street Norwalk, CT 06854 203.810.5608	Meadow Gardens Learning Center 49 Meadow Ave. Norwalk, CT 06854 203.810.5606	
Learning Center Office 20 West Ave Norwalk, CT 06854 203.852.1144	Norwalk Housing Authority 24 ½ Monroe Street Norwalk, CT 06854 203.838.8471	

Contents

PHILOSOPHY & COMMITMENT.....4

DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION.....5

DELAYS, DIMISSALS & CLOSSINGS.....6

STAFFING & SUPERVISION.....7

REGISTRATION.....8

IMMUNIZATION.....9

MEDICATION POLICY.....10

PARENT COMMUNICATION RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES.....11

PARENT PARTICIPATION.....12

ATTENDANCE: SIGN IN & SIGN OUT.....13

LATE PICK-UP POLICY.....14

CUSTODY.....15

CURRICULUM.....16

OUTDOOR PLAY.....17

SNACKS & MOVIES.....18

FIELD TRIPS & TRANSPORTATION.....19

HOMEWORK POLICY.....20

TECHNOLOGY POLICY.....21

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT.....22

INCIDENT REPORTS.....24

ACCIDENTS, EMERGENCIES & SAFETY OF CHILDREN.....25

DISCONTINUATION OF ENROLLMENT.....26

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION.....27

PHILOSOPHY AND COMMITMENT

NHA Learning Centers, established in 1997, work in partnership with Norwalk Public Housing students, their families and partner schools to enable meaningful and positive changes in the areas of academic achievement, life skills and character development in order to compete and succeed in the larger community.

The Learning Centers are a year-round program that takes place at three centrally-located NHA Learning Centers that serve approximately 125 students in grades K-8 who attend Norwalk Public Schools. The program objectives are to improve reading, language arts and math skills; provide drama and creative arts enrichment to help promote literacy; engage students in healthy lifestyles and support social-emotional development.

The NHA Learning Centers are committed to:

1. Providing a safe haven and supervision during after-school hours.
2. Supporting parents, primarily to provide working parents childcare during the after-school hours.
3. Supporting development, including the social and emotional development of the child (providing role models, developing positive self-esteem, promoting strategies for conflict resolution, and promoting respect for diversity).
4. Providing enrichment and recreational opportunities; activities that youth would not be exposed to otherwise or activities that are not offered during the school day.
5. Providing academic support, including homework assistance, and other activities with the primary aim of improving school outcomes.

DAYS & HOURS OF OPERATION

The NHA Learning Center program is located at 5 center sites during the school year:

- Colonial Village
- Roodner Court
- 20 West
- King Kennedy
- Meadow Gardens
- Monday through Friday
- 3:15pm until 6:30pm during the academic school year.

The Summer program is located at the same 5 center sites:

- Monday through Thursday
- 9:30am to 2:45pm
- Closed on Fridays

DELAYS, DISMISSALS & CLOSINGS:

The Norwalk Public Schools calendar is published and available at www.NorwalkPublicSchools.org. Parents should be aware of days in which school may be closed or dismissed early. The Norwalk Housing Authority Learning Centers will be closed if Norwalk Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather.

Learning Center staff will make every effort to inform parents in advance of adjustments to the learning center hours. The standard hours of operation are 3:30pm-6:30pm. Follow the learning centers on Instagram and Facebook. Please also sign up for our texting notification system by providing your mobile number to the Lead Coordinator.

In case of inclement weather or other emergencies, parents should monitor local radio and television stations to be advised of whether schools are closed. Should there be an NHA holiday which does not mirror a school holiday, learning center staff will advise parents of the hours of operation or closing of the learning centers for that day.

STAFFING & SUPERVISION

NHA staff are qualified professionals who are committed to providing a warm, supportive, learning environment. All Lead Coordinators at each site are minimum Bachelor level. All staff members have a sincere interest in children and complete at least 11 hours of in-service training each year on topics such as child development, health & safety, guidance & discipline, developmentally-appropriate activities, etc.

A major responsibility of staff is to provide for the health and safety of each student. Staff members are alert to the safety and supervision needs of the children, anticipate possible hazards, and take appropriate preventative measures.

The NHA Learning Centers will not exceed the state required staff:child ratio of 1:10 and maximum group size of 20 for school-age children. Maximum group size is defined by the number of children in one group.

REGISTRATION

The Norwalk Housing Authority Learning Centers are offered to residents of NHA public housing. To register, you must complete the Learning Center Enrollment packet and provide a copy of health and current immunization records.

All forms are available at each center site.

IMMUNIZATION

All students enrolled in NHA Learning Center After School Program will follow Norwalk Public Schools immunization policy: Proof of immunization must be on file in the Center's office prior to the student entering the program. In addition to this requirement, students entering the district from a foreign country must also present evidence of a negative TB test or chest x-ray report within the last ninety (90) days and prior to entry into the program.

MEDICATION POLICY

The Learning Centers **will only administer emergency medication** by certified staff who have been trained in the administration of medication which include prescribed inhalers and premeasured commercially prepared injectable medication (i.e. Epi-pens). Non-prescription topical medication and **EMERGENCY** oral medication (i.e. Benadryl). The parental responsibilities include providing the center with the proper medication authorization form, and the medication. The medication administration form must be signed yearly by the authorized prescriber and parent/guardian giving the center authorization to administer the medication. The form is available at the learning center.

PARENT COMMUNICATION RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All parents/guardians listed on the Learning Center Enrollment packet have the following rights and responsibilities:

- To be included in general communications from the NHA Learning Center Administrative Office and Center sites
- To be included in communications and/or receive information from the NHA Learning Center Administrative Office and/or Site Director regarding your child's program attendance and/or behavior during the program

PARENT PARTICIPATION

Parents are welcome to visit and observe the program at any time and are encouraged to participate whenever possible in the activities at NHA Learning Centers. Parents may wish to attend field trips and special events, share a special interest with the children, help with various projects, or simply stop in to enjoy the daily fun! When visiting, please notify the Lead Coordinator of your presence. The Lead Coordinator is available to discuss a child's needs and parents are encouraged to share any thoughts and information about their child at any time. However, due to staff responsibilities and schedules, parents are asked to make appointments with the Lead Coordinator or Program Director whenever it is necessary to engage in lengthy conversations.

Parents are encouraged to inform NHA Learning Centers of any questions, suggestions, or concerns they may have. Concerns should first be addressed on-site with the Lead Coordinator. Every effort will be made to resolve it at this point. If the situation cannot be resolved on-site, the NHA Learning Center Director may be contacted, and a conference will be arranged.

To keep parents advised about NHA Learning Centers, information will be shared through informal discussions, conferences, emails, texts and newsletters.

ATTENDANCE: SIGN IN & SIGN OUT

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE: Children are greeted by staff as they arrive and signed in by staff. NHA Learning Center cannot assume responsibility for a child until he or she has checked in.

DEPARTURE PROCEDURE: Written permission or a phone call by the parent is necessary for a child to leave the NHA Learning Center program prior to the end of the program day. Children need to sign out and are released by staff to the authorized person. Parents are responsible for the supervision of their child after sign-out.

RELEASE AT PICK-UP: Children will be released only to those persons specified on the registration form. At least one emergency contact listed on the Child Enrollment and Health Information form must also be listed for emergency pick-up situations. If a person not listed on the registration form must pick up the child in an emergency, parents are to provide an email from the address on file with NHA Learning Center, or a signed note giving the person permission to pick up the child. Phone calls will be accepted to grant permission only if they can be readily verified through voice recognition or a return phone call. Staff will check the identification of anyone they do not recognize. Please inform anyone picking up your child of this policy so they are aware we must see a photo ID before releasing the child.

Any person who is suspected of being impaired by alcohol or drugs will be asked to call another designated person to pick up the child. The police may be called if necessary. Your child's safety is our priority!

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

- Parent/Guardians will be charged \$1.00 per minute in accordance with our late policy.
- Fees are to be paid within 1 week. If the bill is not paid by the due date, the student will not be able to attend the program until all fees are paid.
- Students will be placed with the Norwalk Police Department when parents pick up more than 1 hour late.

CUSTODY

All parents/guardians listed on the Child Enrollment and Health Information page of their registration form shall be authorized to pick up his/her child on any day that NHA Learning Center is in session and will be permitted to designate others to pick up his/her child on any day that NHA Learning Center is in session -- unless NHA Learning Center is provided with a copy of a court order or decree that authorizes restriction of these parental rights and the Lead Coordinator is apprised of the court order or decree.

For parents with joint or shared custody, either parent will be permitted to pick up the child on any day NHA Learning Center is in session and to designate others to pick up the child on any day NHA Learning Center is in session. If one parent is the legal custodian of a child, only the parent with legal custody will be permitted to designate others to pick up the child, so long as the court order or decree provided to NHA Learning Center supports such a determination. Parents with shared or joint custody, in the case of an emergency, we will generally try to contact the custodial parent first. But, if we do not reach the custodial parent, we will contact the other parent. Also, in an emergency, we may not have time to look up whose day it is to have custody. If you have questions or concerns regarding these issues and our policy, or if you have a court order requiring otherwise, please contact your Center Lead Coordinator.

These rights remain in effect unless NHA Learning Center is provided with a copy of a court order or decree that specifically authorizes restrictions of any of these parental rights (in the determination of the Director), and the Lead Coordinator is provided with a copy of the court order or decree restricting these rights.

CURRICULUM

The NHA Learning Center curriculum, designed to meet the goals of our program, provides a variety of activities including arts and crafts, sports and fitness activities, music, dramatic play, engineering, cooking, science and discovery, math and literature, special interest areas, and special events. Activities are planned to meet the needs and interests of the children. A calendar of events and programs is displayed each month on the Center's parent information board.

DAILY SCHEDULE

The daily schedule is flexible enough to provide adaptability but structured enough to provide predictability for the students.

3:30 to 4:00pm	Snack time/ social time
4:00 to 5:00	Homework and Math and Reading tutoring
5:00 to 6:00	Enrichment (Art, STEM)
6:00 – 6:30	Social Emotional

OUTDOOR PLAY

NHA Learning Centers provides outdoor play periods for the children each day as the weather permits. In inclement weather, there are center-based physical activities. The outdoor play period may be canceled, or the length of time adjusted for extreme temperatures or threatening weather. Outdoor play will not be provided when there are non-weather-related safety issues outside. When an air quality alert is issued, children will not remain outdoors for extended periods and strenuous outdoor activity will be avoided. Please see that children are dressed appropriately for active play for both indoors and outdoors. This includes appropriate shoes for active play, and hats, gloves, and boots for winter snow play.

SNACK

A healthy snack which provides nutritional value in addition to calories and contains at least one food from each of two of the four basic food groups will be available each afternoon. This snack is not intended to be a meal. If your child does not like the food served or you would like your child to have more, please feel free to send a healthy snack with your child. If children bring a snack from home, they may be seated in a designated area if the site has peanut allergy concerns. A monthly snack menu will be emailed and posted on the parent bulletin board

MOVIES

Only G and PG rated movies will be shown to the students.

FIELD TRIPS & TRANSPORTATION OF CHILDREN

When possible, children may enjoy periodic field trips away from the center. Transportation will be provided by NHA vans. Parents will receive specific information before each field trip, including the destination, the means of transportation to be used and the staff/child ratio that will be followed on the trip. Written permission from a parent/guardian is required for all out of town field trips and swimming activities.

During field trips, a person trained in first aid and CPR will be present. A first aid kit, emergency forms, medications and health records for each child will be available on all trips.

Each NHA staff member will have specific children they are responsible for supervising during the trip. Attendance will be taken before departure from an NHA learning center, upon arrival at the field trip destination, periodically at the field trip site, before departing from the field trip site, and upon returning to NHA. Adult volunteers may also be in attendance to assist with the field trip but are not directly responsible for the supervision of the children. Swimming field trips to area pools will be supervised by certified lifeguards or watersafety instructors and NHA staff.

The NHA Learning Centers provide vans to transport students to various activities and programs. Riding in these vans are a privilege. If any student abuses this privilege by damaging the vans, not following van driver instructions or endangering the safety of others, it may be deemed necessary to take away the privilege of riding the vans. *The safety of all children is very important.*

HOMEWORK POLICY

NHA is not an academic extension of the school day but we appreciate all the demands on school-age children and their families, and we have a commitment to their academic learning.

Our daily schedule includes 60 minutes of quiet Homework/Learning time Monday through Thursday. We provide a quiet, conducive environment for all students to complete their homework. Staff will aid students with their homework; however, it is important for parents to review their child's homework every night. In addition, teachers use homework as a tool to gauge their students' knowledge of a particular core concept. Homework is a review of what has been taught in class and should be a reflection of what your child understands and what he/she needs to review with his/her teacher. Therefore, if a student does not complete homework in an hour, that work is put away and encouraged to be completed at home.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

All children enrolled in the NHA learning Center will have access to use technology during the NHA Learning Center program. Technology uses include, but are not limited to, the use of NHA computers and other devices provided by NHA.

NHA is not responsible for any students' personal devices lost during the program time.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control and move toward appropriate social behaviors. NHA afterschool program enlists the following approaches as developmentally appropriate methods for resolving conflicts. They are:

- Positive guidance
 - When disputes arise among students or between a student and staff, the staff will encourage a “talking out” process where the goal is to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using the students’ ideas whenever possible.
- Setting clear limits
 - Staff will encourage and model positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support and clearly defined rules.
- Redirection
 - A student who may be aggressive or who is disruptive or destructive of other student’s work may be asked to make an activity choice in another area.

Staff will continuously supervise students during disciplinary actions.

Staff will not be abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. No student will be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the students or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

Staff will guide children in a manner consistent with our character values of caring, honesty, respect and responsibility. Children will be encouraged to think about choices they make daily. Staff will use positive reinforcement techniques and discussion to guide children in making positive and appropriate choices. Inappropriate behavior will result in consequences and will be handled in the following manner:

- **Minor Behavior Issues**

Redirection - Children will be redirected to another activity when needed.

- **Major Behavior Issues**

Removal from an activity - Children behaving aggressively will immediately be removed from the activity. Time outs may be used to a maximum of one minute for every year of age of the child. All efforts should be made to resolve issues peacefully and allow the child to return fully to the program as quickly and safely as possible.

Parents must be notified of incident at pick up or asked to pick up immediately depending on the nature of the incident. Director/Assistant Director should also be made aware of incident with a written incident report.

- **Aggressive behavior**

If behaviors occur once, staff will remind the children that such behavior is not appropriate and will not be tolerated. Staff will make every effort to redirect the child to a positive activity/behavior; if aggressive behaviors continue or escalate the child will be removed from activities for an age-

appropriate time out. Should behaviors escalate or continue, parents and the Director/Assistant Director will be notified, and appropriate disciplinary actions taken.

If aggressive behavior is constant student will be put on a behavior contract that will be signed by the student, parent and Lead Coordinator.

Parents will be informed of their child's behavior at NHA Learning Centers and every attempt will be made to work together with the parents and the child to correct serious or recurrent behavior situations. If a child's behavior frequently requires extra attention from a staff member, parents may be called upon to participate in a partnership to develop a special behavior management plan.

Student's name: _____

Date: _____

NHA Learning Centers Parent and Child CONTRACT

I agree to abide by the following rules:

I therefore agree:

1. I will be respectful of all LC STAFF
2. I will show consideration to others by using an appropriate voice level and by listening and using respectful language and gestures.
3. I will show pride in our center by keeping the grounds and the center free of litter and taking good care of the building.
4. I will protect and care for center supplies.
5. I will not touch or disturb any objects, staff or peers during my time at the center.
6. I will build others "up" and not "down". I will not use put downs, gossip or exclude others.

If I disregard one of the above rules, I know the following steps will be taken:

- 1) I will be asked to not engage in the inappropriate behavior and I know it will be my first strike.
- 2) If I engage in inappropriate behavior again, I will be asked to leave the activity and not interact with others for a temporary period of time.
- 3) If I engage in inappropriate behavior for the third time, I will lose the privilege of participating in the activity for the remainder of that day. My parent will be contacted to be informed of my behavior or pick me up from the center.
- 4) Should I lose the privilege of full participation 3 times, I will be suspended from the Learning Center. Duration will be determined by LC admiration.

I acknowledge and agree to the above rules of the Norwalk Authority Housing Learning Centers.

Parent/Guardian _____

Student _____

LC Lead _____

This contract MUST be signed by the student, parent/guardian, and staff.

INCIDENT REPORTS

In cases of serious or recurrent misbehavior, an incident report will be written. Examples may include but are not limited to causing physical injury to others, taunting, name-calling, encouraging others to exclude a child from a group, threatening physical harm, and damaging property.

Should a child's inappropriate activity or behavior result in damage to any NHA owned or leased property, NHA reserves the right to assess the parent or legal guardian for any and all amounts necessary to replace the damaged items or property.

An incident report is intended to inform parents or legal guardians about inappropriate behavior. Staff will discuss the incident with parents or legal guardians, who are asked to sign the report, review it with the child, and discuss better ways to deal with the situation. A copy of the incident report will be given to the parents and a copy will be sent to the NHA administrative office. Please remember that it is not acceptable for a parent or legal guardian to engage in an argument with or threaten NHA staff and/or children. Examples of such behavior include but are not limited to loud voices, foul language, threatening physical harm, or inflicting physical harm. This type of behavior may result in disenrollment from the program.

SUSPENSION: In cases of serious or recurrent incidents, parents may be called to pick up their child. Following an opportunity for the child to explain his or her actions, a suspension may be imposed. A parent conference may be required before the child returns to the program.

ACCIDENTS, EMERGENCIES & SAFETY OF CHILDREN

The safety of the children is of greatest concern at NHA Learning Centers. Several procedures have been devised to assure the safety of the children:

- A telephone is available at each site for emergencies (Phone numbers are listed on the front page.)
- A staff member trained in first aid, communicable diseases, CPR, and child abuse/neglect recognition and prevention is always on-site.
- In the case of a minor accident/injury, NHA staff will administer basic first aid. For a more serious injury, first aid will be administered, and the parent will be contacted immediately to assist in deciding an appropriate course of action. If an injury is life threatening, the police will be contacted, parents will be notified, and a staff member will accompany the child to the hospital with all available health records.
- A written incident/injury report will be completed and given to the person picking up the child whenever a child:
 - Has an illness, accident or injury which requires first aid
 - Receives a bump or blow to the head
 - If a child requires emergency transportation by ambulance the report will be available within 24 hours.
 - Reports for serious incidents or injuries will be sent to OEC as required by licensing regulations
- If transportation is required for an emergency, it will be provided by the police/ambulance, or the parent depending on the nature of the emergency.
- Monthly fire drills and periodic tornado and safety drills will be conducted for all children and staff. A written plan explaining the action to be taken in case of fire, severe weather alerts, or general emergencies will be followed. This plan includes a diagram of evacuation routes and is posted in each center. In the event of an environmental threat or threat of violence, children will be secured in a safe area, the proper authorities will be contacted, and their directions will be followed. Parents will be informed as soon as the situation allows.
- In the event of an emergency evacuation due to fire, weather conditions, utility emergencies, etc., the children may walk or be transported by van to a designated emergency destination (listed below). A sign will be posted at the NHA site indicating the location where you can pick up your child.
- Parents will be contacted as soon as possible. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency contacts listed on the registration form will be called.

NHA SITE	EVACUATION SITE
Roodner Court	Ely School, gymnasium
Colonial Village	109 Suncrest, Maintenance office
20 West Ave.	Macedonia Church

DISCONTINUATION OF ENROLLMENT

A child's enrollment may be discontinued, or enrollment may be denied by NHA Learning Centers for any of the following reasons:

- Falsifying information on registration forms or required paperwork.
- NHA determines that the child is unable to abide by the NHA rules, or the child's behavior is unsafe or unmanageable, or the child is unable to benefit from the program, or the program is unable to meet the needs of the child in a group childcare setting.
- NHA determines that the behavior of the parent is inappropriate in the presence of children at NHA, in the presence of NHA staff, or directed at NHA staff;
- The parent is unable or unwilling to work respectfully, cordially and cooperatively with the staff and other parents to resolve a problem, or the parent is unwilling to accept the resolution recommended by NHA staff or the NHA Executive Director regarding any matter.
- Please understand that by enrolling, parents have agreed to work cooperatively with NHA.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- Unless the parent or legal guardian informs NHA Learning Centers in writing, to the contrary, the parent or legal guardian gives NHA permission to use and/or publish your child's photograph and/or likeness, your child's name, and/or your child's work (including but not limited to art work, drawings, writings, poetry, crafts, etc.) in the media, newspapers, the internet, newsletters, videos, publicity materials, and/or any other format or medium.
- The NHA Learning Center telephone must be available for emergencies. For this reason, children are permitted to use the phone only for emergencies at the discretion of the NHA staff, and parents are asked to call their children only when it is necessary. Children K – 5th grade is not allowed to use personal cell phones for texting or calling without the permission of an NHA staff member.
- Although staff will make every effort to help children keep track of their personal belongings, the final responsibility rests with the child. Appropriate items may be brought to the program, but if they are lost, stolen, or broken, NHA cannot be held responsible for replacement or repair. This includes any electronic devices which may be used at NHA only during homework time and on scheduled dates. Please check with your Head Teacher at your site for more information.
- To provide consistency for the children, the NHA staff will have on-going communication with the school staff. The release form is part of the registration packet.
- A parent may take photos of his/her child or children at NHA -sponsored events. However, parents may not post any photos from NHA events on the internet or on social media if they include other children (children for whom you are not the parent or legal guardian). Many parents do not wish their child's photo to be on the internet or on social media, and NHA respects their wishes. This applies to all NHA personnel media page(s).