

STARFISH

FAMILY SERVICES

Early Childhood Education Family Handbook



Strengthening Families to Create Brighter Futures for Children
Founded 1963

StarfishFamilyServices.org

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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, and one that supports the whole child and the whole family. Whole child 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.

- Supplemental handbooks are available for some program- or center-specific locations.

Can't find an answer to your question? Connect with your friendly Starfish Family Service Guide, 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 just society in which all children & families have equitable 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



15
centers in Wayne County
(11 early childhood education & 4 behavioral health)



3,619
children & young people supported annually (ages 0-5 in early education & ages 0-21 in behavioral health services)



700+
volunteers, including individuals, corporations, local schools, contribute 20,978 hours per year (a value of \$517,971)



We deliver programs via an integrated "One Starfish" approach. It steers our course so we are aligned around 3 areas of well-being:

- **Healthy Families**
- **Successful Students**
- **Empowered Families**



420+
employees (including therapists, social workers, educators, administrators)



18
board of director members, representing early- and higher-education professionals, corporate and community leaders, Starfish parents



.88¢
of every dollar goes directly to services for Starfish children & families

OUR REACH

Wayne County



- Early Childhood Education Centers
- 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 15 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**:



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.

Culture of Trauma Care

"Individual trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."

(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Starfish incorporates a culture of trauma care into every aspect of our work.

- **Studies show that by the time they are in preschool, 1 in 4 children have experienced recurring trauma.**

When children experience traumatic events without protective buffers the stress from the experiences can damage the developing brain and body, which can impact development and physical and mental health.

Since children's brains are rapidly developing during early childhood it is an ideal time to support the development of positive childhood experiences, so children begin to establish lifelong skills to cope with stress, anxiety, and other big feelings.

There is hope because experiencing trauma does not have to define a person's life or determine their future. Science shows that positive childhood experiences can buffer against the effects of trauma and support healing.



Starfish's culture of trauma care **supports positive childhood experiences** in four ways.

1. The most important way is by developing supportive, nurturing relationships with children and families.
2. We strive to create safe, stable, equitable environments for children to learn, live, and play.
3. Our programming tries to help children to feel connected to community, culture, and traditions in order to develop a sense of belonging.
4. We provide lots of opportunities for play and learning so children can develop skills to express their emotions, manage stress, communicate effectively, and build relationships with other children.

We also foster a **culture of awareness through education** about what childhood trauma is, the impact it can have on an individual's life, and the capacity for healing.

- All employees working in our early childhood education centers attend [Trauma Smart®](#), a trauma awareness training that supports social-emotional development for children.
- Preschool Behavioral Health Therapists are available at each center to support social-emotional development, family wellness, and support referrals to mental health services.
- Parents/Guardians can gain trauma awareness by attending trainings at Starfish or by attending Parent Meetings where information is shared.

About Starfish 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 has unique strengths rooted in their family's culture, background, language, and beliefs.
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 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 to assist them in accessing their **community's 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 a culture of innovation, collaboration, inclusion, 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 and teacher assistants have degrees in Early Childhood Education and/or Child Development (CDA) credentials.



Family Service Guides

Your family will be paired with a specific Starfish Family Service Guide (FSG) to help you navigate the ECE program, steer you toward services, and address any barriers that may arise. Your trusted FSG works with you to achieve your family's unique goals. They are your partners to ensure your family has a successful school year!



Preschool Behavioral Health Therapists

Each Early Childhood Center has an on-site licensed Preschool Behavioral Health Therapist (PBHT). They visit the center weekly to observe all children in all classrooms and to support families and teaching staff.

How does a PBHT support teaching staff? They provide advice to teaching staff about how to meet the social and emotional development needs of children and they help to identify children who may need further assessment.

How does a PBHT 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 Preschool Behavioral Health Therapist, contact your Early Childhood Center. Your PBHT may also contact you directly to discuss your child's adjustment or other concerns that may interfere with growth and development.

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.

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 school readiness of children by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

- Preschool programs provide a learning environment that supports children's growth in many areas such as language, literacy, and social and emotional development.

Home-Based Option

The Home-Based program offers educational and child development learning opportunities through **weekly home visits** and **monthly socialization events** for pregnant moms, parent(s), and their children. The Home Visitor partners with you to develop and plan developmentally appropriate activities reflective of your traditions, cultures, and 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.

Home-Based Curriculum: Growing Great Kids



[Growing Great Kids \(GGK\)](#) is a comprehensive and skills-focused home-visiting curriculum that takes a strength-based approach to growing nurturing parent-child relationships and supporting healthy childhood development. GGK modules are specifically designed to build protective factors for children, strengthen family foundations, and cultivate parental resilience.

ECE Curriculum: HighScope®

HighScope® is the curriculum most Starfish Family Services Early Childhood programs utilize to meet the needs, interests, strengths, and development of all children. With more than 50 years of proven experience, HighScope® research shows that “high-quality early education improves a child’s chances for long-term success and that the positive impact of high-quality early education goes beyond the child to improve the lives of future generations.” [Learn more about HighScope®](#)

- **Active learning** is at the center of the HighScope® curriculum. It serves as the foundation for children to gain knowledge through natural play and interactions with the environment, events, and other people. The space and materials in a HighScope® setting are carefully selected and arranged to promote active learning. Separate areas include block play, art activities, house play, large and small toys to manipulate and handle, computers, books, writing materials, and sand and water play.
- Children in HighScope® settings are encouraged to **make choices** about materials and activities throughout the day. As they pursue their choices and plans, children explore, ask and answer questions, solve problems, and interact with classmates and adults.

- Teachers give children **a sense of control** over the events of the day by planning a consistent routine that enables children to anticipate what happens next.

How does the HighScope® program teach math, language, and literacy skills?

- Teachers thoughtfully design 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?

- Teachers approach children with disabilities by positively emphasizing the wide cognitive, social, and physical abilities that are inherent in all children rather than focusing on a child's perceived weaknesses.
- Teachers identify where a child with disabilities is developmentally and then provide a rich range of experiences that would be appropriate for a developing child at that level.



Does HighScope® promote diversity?

HighScope® has made racial equity, diversity, and inclusion central to their ongoing research, curriculum development, professional training, and program evaluation. [According to the HighScope® Racial Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement](#), "In all aspects of our work, we celebrate, respect, and incorporate the diversity of all members of the HighScope® community."

This aligns with Starfish values, and we honor our panorama of community through such efforts as practicing phrases or singing songs in other languages,



- Black (64.1%)
- White (17.2%)
- Multiracial (10.2%)
- Other (7.3%)
- Asian (0.8%)
- American Indian/Alaska/Hawaiian Native/Pacific Islander (0.4%)
- Unspecified (0.1%)

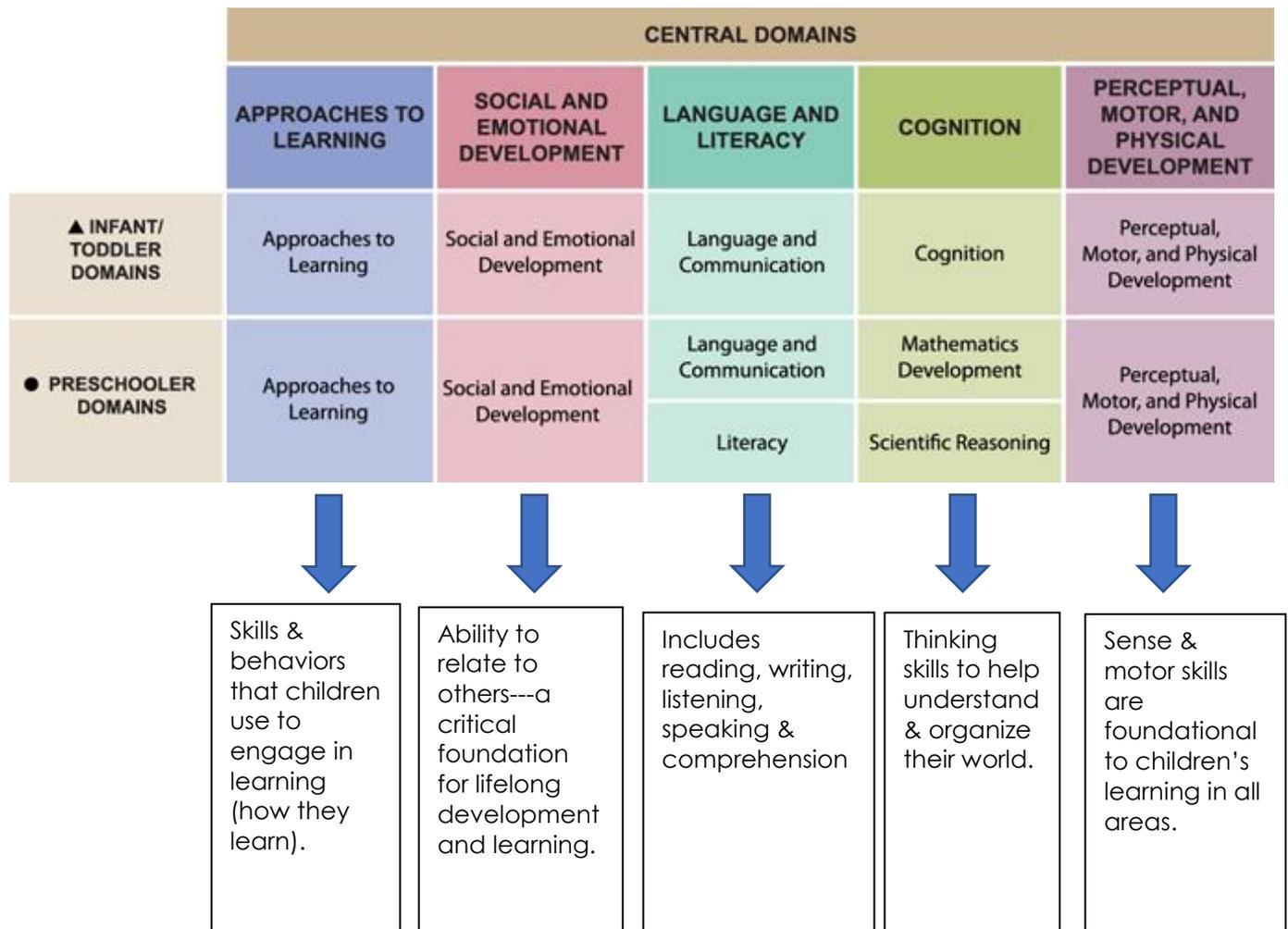
Approximately **18%** of our children are Hispanic/Latino and **15%** of our families speak Spanish as the primary language in the home.

The primary language for **6.2%** of our families is classified as Middle Eastern.

reading books that explore cultures and customs, and ensuring that signs and fliers reflect various languages.

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.



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 is Friends School, which is based on the 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 (with a focus on racial and cultural identities and family pride), 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.



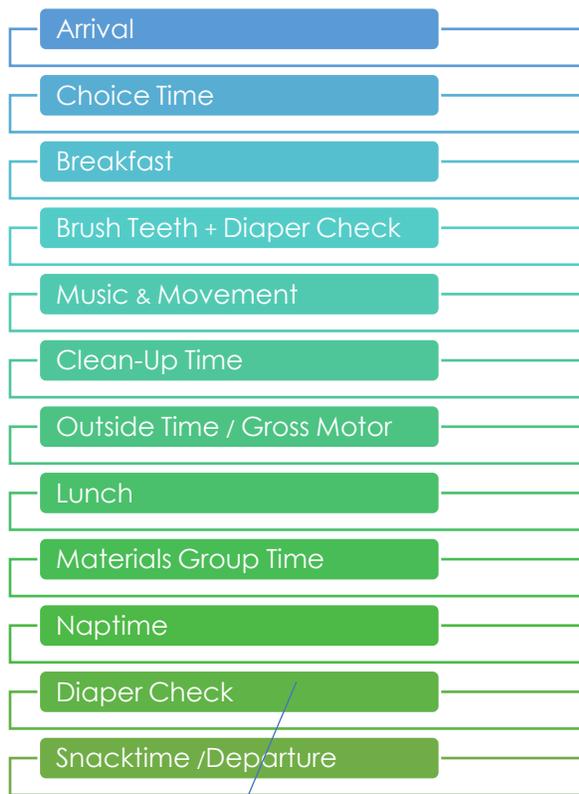
Typical Daily Routine

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.

Early Childhood Birth to 3 years



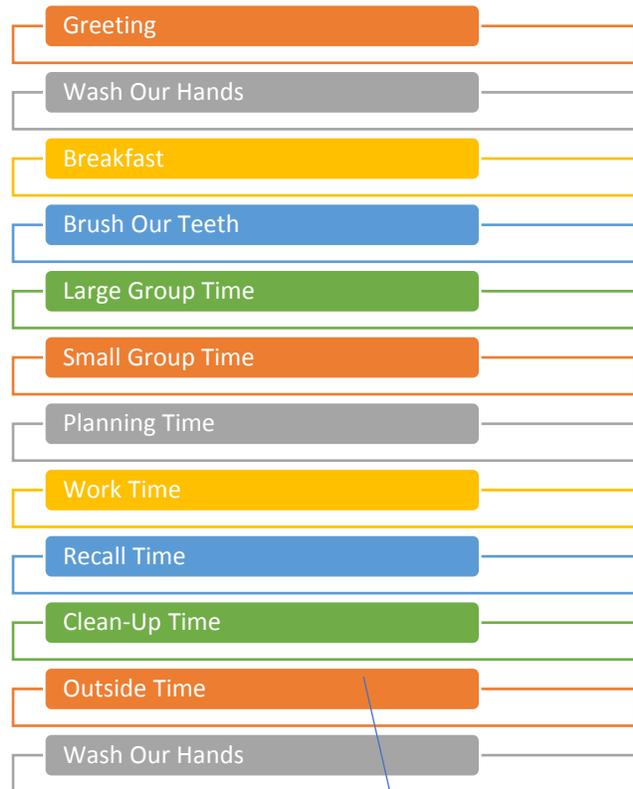
DIAPERING & TOILET TRAINING

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.

Early Childhood 3 to 5 years



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, and to grow up 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.
- 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 interest of parents.



Checklist Need to Know: If your child has a food allergy or special diet requirements for religious or medical reasons, a CACFP Special Dietary Needs Form **MUST** be completed so their dietary needs can be met. A Food Restriction Explanation Form must also be completed to further explain any allergies, medical, or religious diets.

Infant Feeding

- Mothers are welcome to visit the classroom at any time **to nurse 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.
- Babies will be encouraged to but **not forced to eat**.
- We are able to provide a **limited selection of infant formula** for infants up to 12 months of age.
 - 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 re-heated or kept for over one hour. **We will dispose of any excess formula after each feeding.**

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Starfish is a participant in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#), a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. Through meal patterns established by the USDA and supervised by the Child and Adult Care Food Program you can be assured that your child is getting balanced, nutritious meals, and developing healthy lifelong eating habits.

Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is required to verify the enrollment, attendance, and meals/snacks typically consumed by children while they are in our care. MDE staff may contact you about your child's participation in our Early Childhood program.

Sample meal patterns are displayed here.

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

Questions about CACFP? Contact Michigan Department of Education at (517) 241-5353.

Serve Tasty and Healthy Foods in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
Sample Meals for Children Ages 3-5

What is in a Breakfast?
Milk (6 fl. oz. or ¾ cup)
Vegetables, Fruit, or Both (½ cup)
Grains (½ serving)

Sample Breakfast: ½ serving Whole Grain Pancakes, ¾ cup Unsweetened Low Fat (1%) or Fat Free (2%) Milk, ½ cup Total Strawberries

What is in a Lunch or Supper?
Milk (6 fl. oz. or ¾ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate (1½ oz. eq.)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruit (½ cup)
Grains (½ serving)

Sample Lunch/Supper: ¾ cup Unsweetened Low Fat (1%) or Fat Free (2%) Milk, 1 Taco Made with 1½ oz. Lean Ground Beef, ¾ cup Lettuce and ¾ cup Chopped Tomatoes, ½ serving Enriched Fiber Tortilla, ½ cup Rinsed Sweet Potatoes, ½ cup Rinsed Beans, 1 second, different vegetable may be served in place of Beef or Pork, 1½ cup of Applesauce, 1½ cup of Raisins in the lunch pattern, and the ½ cup of Raisins may be substituted for some portions of vegetable in the lunch pattern.

What is in a Snack?
Pick 2:
Milk (4 fl. oz. or ½ cup)
Meat/Meat Alternate (½ oz. eq.)
Vegetables (½ cup)
Fruit (½ cup)
Grains (½ serving)

Sample Snack: ½ cup Apple Slices, ½ oz. Cheddar Cheese

Offer and make water available all day.

All grains served must be whole grain-rich or enriched. Breakfast cereals may also be fortified. At least one grain served each day must be whole grain-rich.

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.

Starfish Screenings and Follow Up

We conduct **free health screenings** for every child in our ECE program at the start of each enrollment year. It's a great first step in getting to know your child's "baseline data" and helps us plan and individualize services. It also helps us to identify "red flags" for further examination or evaluation.

Screenings include age-appropriate vision testing, hearing testing, blood pressure, hemoglobin (blood iron), lead, height and weight measurements, and developmental and social-emotional milestone measurements. You will be notified of screening results and any potential areas of concern.

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.

- 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 us (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 every meal.



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.

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.
- 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 up-to-date 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.
- All medications will be stored in locked cabinets.

Changes in your child's health?

Please notify your teacher and Family Service Guide 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.

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.

- **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.

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 Sheet).
- If Starfish is unable to reach you or another person on the Child Information Record, 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 phone call.*

Returning to the classroom

Children should 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.

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—is family. We embrace all generations of families.

If you are interested in any of the outlined opportunities, please connect with your Center Leader or Family Service Guide. Note that meetings may be held virtually or in-person. For in-person meetings, some may reimburse you for travel (e.g., Policy Council).

Parent Leadership Opportunities

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. 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.

Policy Committee

The focus of Policy Committee is **program level across all ECE centers**. Parents are elected to represent their center at this monthly agency-level meeting and participate in decision-making that helps to steer Starfish programs. For example, the committee votes on policies, and may assist with ECE employee interviews. Committee members also attend conferences, workshops, and trainings. (Note: Western Wayne centers do not have a Policy Committee but elected parents do participate in Policy Council.)

Policy Council

Policy Council is a **cross-agency leadership initiative**. Elected officers and representatives from each agency in our Thrive by Five collaborative work as an approval body and review and vote on such items as policies, hires and separation of key staff, bylaws, personnel policies, and program budgets. Policy Council members also have the opportunity to attend conferences, workshops, and trainings.

What is Thrive by Five? A collaborative partnership among three Detroit social service agencies: Development Centers, Focus: HOPE, and Starfish Family Services. The goal is to offer innovative Infant/Toddler and Preschool programs to families in Detroit. Starfish serves as the lead agency.

Health Services Advisory Committee

The Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) is composed of parents, professionals, and volunteers from the community. HSAC addresses issues and concerns related to health, nutrition, mental health, and safety for our Early Childhood Education programs. Parents are encouraged to participate on the committee and represent Starfish Early Childhood programs.

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
- Work on family newsletters
- 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 Service Guide.

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 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

The Starfish Difference! Fraternity of Fathers is a multi-week support program exclusively for male caregivers with children ages birth to 18. Facilitated by specially trained staffers, this safe space allows men to connect and explore parenting from a uniquely male perspective.



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. For more information about our many BHS programs, visit our [Starfish Behavioral Health Web page](#), call Starfish directly (888) 355-5433, or speak with your Family Service Guide or Preschool Behavioral Health Therapist.

- **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 options: Our four warm, friendly centers are located in Dearborn, Inkster, Livonia, and Westland.

Telehealth options: We offer a convenient and secure video platform for many services. This means maintaining a nurturing relationship via phone and/or video.

Services during Pregnancy

While there's certainly a lot of joy involved in becoming a new parent, it is perfectly normal to also feel overwhelmed, worried, or anxious. With all the new experiences that come with pregnancy and preparing for your baby to arrive, new moms and dads have a lot to navigate.

ECE Early Home-Based Program

Your personal certified & trained Starfish educator will work with you to discover what YOU need. They will arrange biweekly in-home visits that take place year-round, which include:

- Prenatal education
- Screenings: health, dental, developmental
- Emotional and social support
- Assistance with referrals & resources



Nurse-Family Partnership Program

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

Policies and Procedures

For ready reference, there is a Starfish Early Childhood Education Policies and Procedures binder at your child's center.

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.

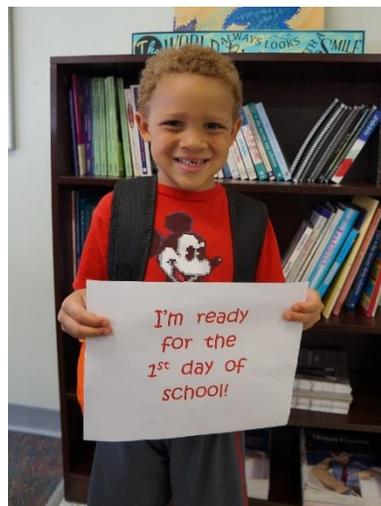
- Program staff and the Preschool Behavioral Health Therapists are available to meet with you to discuss any concerns, review the individual observation, formulate an individual plan for your child, and assist with making referrals to support services, including mental health services.
- It is important 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

Note: The following information applies to typical programming. For Safe Start Guidelines associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, see the Safe Start Family Handbook.

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

- If you do not contact us, Starfish considers an absence to be "unexcused."
- If your child builds up a series of absences, your Family Service Guide will connect with you to help overcome any barriers that may be preventing coming to school and to develop 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 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:

- **Absent 1-7 days.** Family Service Guide will contact you to determine the reason for the absence(s).
- **Absent 8-10 days.** Family Service Guide will send a letter regarding pending disenrollment.
- **Absent 11-15 days.** Family Service Guide will send/mail a letter of disenrollment. Your child will be removed from active enrollment and replaced by a child on the waitlist.

Attendance & Absences: Home-Based

Regular attendance in any educational program option, center- or home-based, 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 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 course of a 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 you 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.

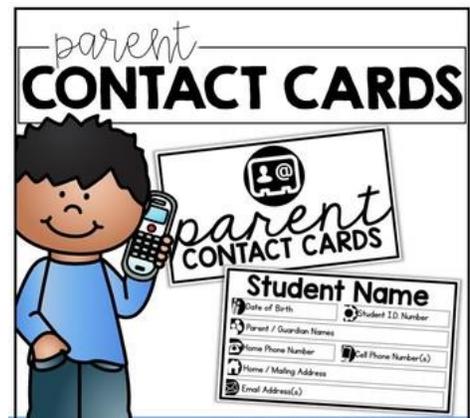
Arrival/Sign-in & Release

Note: *The following information applies to typical programming. For Safe Start Guidelines associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, see the Safe Start Family Handbook.*

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 daily. A sign-in sheet is located by the door of every classroom.



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 Service Guide 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 Starfish 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 Starfish program. They will be placed on our ECE waiting list until arrangements are made that will reliably result in your child being picked up on time.
- At that time, if an opening is available, your child will be re-enrolled into our program in accordance with Starfish's program selection process.

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, washable clothes that they can get messy in.

Extra change of clothes: If you can, please 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 mealtime.

- Starfish resource closets are also stocked and available with extra clothing items.

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. 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.

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.
- Staff will write up an incident report for you to review, sign, and date.

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.

Severe Storms

- Staff will escort children to the tornado shelter or 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.

Communicable Diseases

Note: The following information applies to typical programming. For Safe Start Guidelines associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, see the Safe Start Family Handbook.

School and health department regulations require children with certain communicable diseases to be 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 HCP be presented to your child's teacher or the center office before your child can return to the classroom.

Center Closing

Bad Weather

Early Childhood programs are canceled when bad weather conditions close your local school districts. School closings are announced on the radio or on television. Please look for the name of your school district to be announced. If your child's center closes for reasons other than weather, we will make every effort to contact you before school begins for the day.

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 depending on religion, culture, ethnicity, and personal beliefs. 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
- 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
- Access goals for child and family
- Kindergarten transition

Volunteer Guidelines

Note: *The following information applies to typical programming. For Safe Start Guidelines associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, see the Safe Start Family Handbook.*

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.

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

Threat to Safety

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

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.).

- All infants should ride in a rear-facing car seat until they are at least two years of age or reach the highest weight or height allowed by their car-seat manufacturer requirements.
- Children between 40 and 80 pounds should ride in a booster seat, using the vehicles lap- and shoulder-belt for best protection.

For additional car seat and booster seat information, visit the [National Highway Transportation Safety Administration \(NHTSA\)](https://www.nhtsa.gov) site.

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 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

Center	Center Leader	Address
Cecil	Janice Morales-Rivera	5690 Cecil Avenue Detroit, MI 48210

Central Avenue	Karen Robinson	4330 Central Avenue Detroit, MI 48210
Covenant House	Jennifer Skeens	1450 25 th Street Detroit, MI 48216
Crestwood	April Sawyer	12100 Beech Daly Redford, MI 48239
Fort Street	LaCrecia Brown	2237 S. Fort Street Detroit, MI 48217
Hiveley	Krystle Dionise	30000 Hiveley Inkster, MI 48141
Livonia	Michelle Broniak	32765 Lyndon Livonia, MI 48154
Marygrove	Celina Byrd	8245 W. McNichols Detroit, MI 48221
Plymouth/Canton	Carrie Graham	11100 N. Haggerty Plymouth, MI 48170
Thorne	Marilyn Bester	25251 Annapolis St. Dearborn Hts, MI 48125
Westwood	Ashley Pierce	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.
 - To access your record (utilizing a request process that may include a charge for the cost of copies).
 - To understand the complaint resolution process and seek assistance with concerns or grievances including responses that are timely, objective, fair and understandable.
 - 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**
- Notices of Privacy Practices are available at your child's center.**

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 Service Guide. 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 to 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 Committee Report Form.

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.

Early Intervention for Children with Exceptional Needs

The [Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act](#) (IDEA) is the federal education law that requires schools to provide special education and related support services to children with disabilities.

Infants and toddlers from birth to age 2 may receive early intervention services under IDEA Part C. These services are provided through Early On.

Children and youth from ages 3 through 21 may receive special education and related services under IDEA Part B. These services are provided through a Local Education Agency (LEA) which include school districts.

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 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 according to [The Center for Parent Information and Resources](#) 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 has a special need please discuss this with your child's teacher, home visitor, family service guide, or disability specialist.

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 Service Guide 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.

USDA Nondiscrimination Statement

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET

Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint](#) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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