



Our Family Handbook

My Little Stars Family Day Care

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**Welcome:**

Hello and Welcome! We have created this handbook to serve as a guide for enrolling your child in our facility. Please take the time to read it thoroughly and familiarize yourself with our policies and procedures. This is a living document and can be modified or changed as needed.

About Our Facility:

My Little Stars is a state-licensed group family daycare in Youngsville, NY. We have been providing top-notch childcare services since 1999 as a "family daycare," we expanded to become a "group family daycare" in 2006, enabling us to serve double the number of children. Our daycare is licensed to care for up to 16 children. It comprises a large family room, kitchen, and a beautiful fenced-in backyard with a whimsical playground, providing the perfect environment for your child's growth and development. We are in the Sullivan West School District, where our children attend school and participate in extracurricular activities. With over 25 years of experience, we have gained an excellent reputation in our community, and our daycare center has been a trusted choice for many families. We are committed to creating a warm, loving, home-like atmosphere for children to learn, grow, and play, and we take tremendous pride in providing a safe and nurturing environment for your child.

About Our Family & Staff:

Kat is an alumna of JYCS, having graduated in 1993. She holds certifications in CNA, LPN, Phlebotomy, and Nutrition Education and has an Associate of Arts in Elementary Education. She is also certified in CPR and First Aid. Alan is an alumna of MCS, having graduated in 1994. He has been employed by SWCS since October of 2001. Before switching to the day shift at SWCS, Alan spent many years working with Kat as her assistant. Our eight children have been raised in our family-owned and operated daycare and are well-versed in the daycare regulations. It's natural for our children's first job experience to be working in the family business. Upon turning 18, each child is certified as a daycare assistant after completing the required training, fingerprinting, and background checks. We do hire staff outside of our family when the need arises. All staff must be medically cleared, pass a federal background check, get fingerprinted, and be CPR and First Aid Certified. Additionally, all of our staff are trained as mandated reporters for child abuse and neglect and attend childcare training yearly as required by NYS.

Our Philosophy:

We value and respect children as unique individuals, recognizing them as capable and full of potential. We understand that every child entering our program has a distinct temperament, family structure, cultural heritage, and learning ability. We provide opportunities to encourage positive social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, all fostered in a safe, healthy, and loving environment. We firmly believe that children benefit significantly from play and discovery.

Discipline:

We believe that discipline should be a means of teaching children. We aim to achieve this through love, consistency, and firmness. Our focus is to foster two main patterns of behavior - respect for people and respect for property. The following methods will be used for discipline: encouraging children to solve problems, intervention and discussion, re-direction, loss of privileges, and natural and logical consequences.

Communication:

We strongly believe that communication is the key to success! We will primarily communicate with you through Brightwheel. You can also visit our website, www.mylittlestars.org, to access a ton of information. If you are on Facebook, please like our page and join our family group! As a parent, we encourage you to use all our resources to stay informed and current about what's happening in your child's daycare.



Our Hours:

Our regular business hours are MONDAY to FRIDAY from 7:30 AM to 4 PM.

Our Tuition Policy:

- ❖ We are an enrollment-based program; your weekly tuition is due every week regardless of any closures or absences. There are no discounts for missed days.
- ❖ **We have a strict No Pay, No Play Policy.** Failure to pay your tuition when it is due will result in immediate forfeiture of your spot. Your tuition for the upcoming week of care is due on FRIDAYS at the end of the business day.
- ❖ We use the Brightwheel App for billing invoices. You will receive your weekly tuition invoice via Brightwheel. Please Note: You are not required to use Brightwheel for payments. We offer multiple payment platforms: Cash, Check, Venmo, Cash App, Zelle, Etc. We can also accept credit cards though the Brightwheel App, but there is a credit card fee if you choose that option.
- ❖ We do accept the Child Care Assistance Program; See Info Below.
- ❖ You must follow your Personalized Schedule of Care in your enrollment packet. A new schedule of care must be completed and approved if you need to make changes to your schedule.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP):

The Child Care Assistance Program is a great way to reduce your childcare costs if you are eligible. Please call the Child Care Council (1-845-292-7166) for more information. If you are approved to receive CCAP benefits, you must submit your approval letter, and your child must be added to our roster before we can accept your benefits.

- ❖ You must comply with ALL CCAP rules & regulations.
- ❖ You are responsible for any portion of your childcare tuition not covered by CCAP. CCAP does not pay for program closures, absences, or childcare provided when you are not at work or school.
- ❖ You must pay your family share as determined by CCAP.
- ❖ Your tuition must be paid per our payment policy and when money is received from the county on your behalf, we will credit your account or refund you.

How it Works:

Once you have been approved, your child is added to my CCAP Roster. Attendance is submitted 2x monthly and then the county sends a check directly to me. Unfortunately, these checks are notoriously delayed, and excruciatingly slow to arrive. We generally don't get paid until 4-6 weeks after attendance has been submitted. It is because of this that we now require our clients to pay their childcare tuition weekly and then we will credit your account or refund you once the check is received. For those who choose to credit their account, it is our plan that after 4 - 6 weeks, the subsidy checks will begin to build up credit to pay the upcoming tuition and you won't have to continue to pay upfront every week. Those who prefer a refund will simply receive a refund via Zelle, or Venmo once the check has been cleared. We will not give cash refunds.

Schedule of Care:

Your schedule of care refers to the specific days and times you require childcare services. It is essential that you provide us with accurate information regarding your schedule to ensure that we have the correct staff-to-child ratio to comply with our licensing requirements and helps us to plan our days effectively. Please note that we reserve the right to modify your schedule of care to reflect on your actual drop off and pick up schedule. If your schedule changes, a new schedule of care must be completed and approved.



Early/Late Fees:

Please note that there will be a fee of \$25 per child for any early drop-offs or late pick-ups that exceed 10 minutes outside of your schedule of care. This fee will be charged for every hour your child remains on our premises past their scheduled pick-up time. You must notify us if you will be deviating from your schedule of care for any reason.

Drop Off/Pick Up Policy:

We kindly request parents to drop off and pick up their children on the front porch. We have implemented this policy for several reasons. It helps minimize germ exposure and has successfully reduced illness in daycare and the transition is much easier for the kids, parents and caregivers. In the event your child needs to be picked up early for a non-emergency reason, please arrange pickups before 12:30 or after 2:30 to avoid disrupting naptime for the other children in care. Please note that we do not accept drop-offs after 10 am.

Absences:

Parents must notify us if their child will be late or absent before their scheduled drop-off time. If you are more than 15 minutes late without notification, we will attempt to contact you to ensure your and your child's safety. If your child will be absent for an extended period of time, you are still responsible for your tuition.

Program Closings:

Families should have back-up care in place for our scheduled and unscheduled closings. A yearly calendar is distributed every September, and we also post monthly calendars on Brightwheel. Additionally, a bulletin board on our porch displays the current and upcoming month's calendars. It is your responsibility to utilize these resources to stay informed about our closures.

- ❖ We are closed for ALL FEDERAL HOLIDAYS.
- ❖ We are closed for MOST Sullivan West School District closings. This includes SNOW DAYS & both WINTER & SPRING BREAK.
- ❖ We may be closed for up to 5 PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT or WELLNESS DAYS each year.
- ❖ We may be closed for up to 20 days of VACATION time each year.
- ❖ Occasionally, we have days that we may need to close for SICK or PERSONAL reasons. Like everyone else, we need the occasional day for doctor appointments or family events. We will give as much notice as possible in these situations.

Inclement Weather, AKA Snow Days:

We follow Sullivan West Central School for delays or closings due to inclement weather. Our top priority is for the safety of the children, families, and staff. Snow Day Alerts will be sent through our Brightwheel App.

Contract Terminations:

We understand that circumstances and situations can change unexpectedly. We kindly ask parents to be honest and upfront with us regarding any changes in their plans or needs. Please be courteous and inform us immediately if you plan to terminate our services. We reserve the right to terminate any contract for any reason. Please note that failure to comply with our policies will result in an immediate termination of our services.



Brightwheel App

We require you to download and use the Brightwheel App. We use this app to maintain attendance records, conduct health checks, manage billing, and communicate with you. All our communication and notifications are delivered through Brightwheel. The app is included in your enrollment and is needed to sign your child in and out each day. Please remember to turn on notifications and check the app regularly to stay informed.

Meals:

Parents are required to provide a healthy and ready-to-serve lunch for their child every day. A thermos is a good option if you want your child to have a hot lunch. If your child has a special diet or food allergies, you must provide all the food and drinks daily and an allergy form must be completed by your pediatrician. Your child may not enter with any open food or drinks. This is a safety issue and will be strictly enforced! Children are not allowed to walk around our home with food or drink, not only is this a choking hazard, but we must be mindful of food allergies and unsanitary food sharing.

- ❖ Lunches must be packed daily in a lunch box or bag with your child's first and last name on it. All non-disposable food containers must also have your child's first and last name on them. We will label any item that is not labeled. Lunch bags should fit in a 12 x 12 cubby.
- ❖ All food sent with your child must be ready to eat. We will not prepare, cut, peel, cook, or reheat food.
- ❖ There will be a \$10 charge per child per day if lunch needs to be supplied by us.
- ❖ We do not send any uneaten or opened perishable food/snacks home for food safety reasons.
- ❖ We do not clean any dishes, bottles or cups before sending them home at the end of the day.

Supplies:

We have almost everything we need to take care of your child. You will need to supply the following items:

- ❖ You must supply your child's lunch every day. (See our section on Meals.)
- ❖ Formula/Breast Milk/Baby Food. (Formula not made into bottles must be in original container.)
- ❖ Bottles/Pacifiers. (We have tons of sippy cups.)
- ❖ A complete extra change of clothing in a Ziploc bag labeled with their name.
- ❖ Diapers. We supply Parents Choice Unscented baby wipes.

Pets:

Our pets are part of our family; we take their safety and well-being seriously. We have several dogs and cats, and bearded dragons. All of whom are family-raised, regularly vaccinated, and receive routine check-ups from a qualified veterinarian. Additionally, we raise poultry for both eggs and meat. Despite our best efforts to keep them within their pen, they tend to "escape" and roam around. We take pet care and child safety very seriously. We teach all children under our care the importance of respecting and caring for pets. We believe that pets can play a crucial role in your child's personal growth and development by fostering independence, responsibility, patience, kindness, and discipline. Moreover, pets can help ease transitions for your child. However, if your child has allergies or develops allergies to our animals, we require that you make alternate childcare arrangements.

Toys:

We prefer you don't bring toys to daycare. Any toys brought from home will be confiscated and put away until dismissal time. Children at this age find it difficult to share their toys, and it only causes tears and heartache. We will not be held responsible for lost or damaged toys. **Absolutely no tablets, cell phones, or other electronics are permitted to be brought in from home unless your child has an IEP or other plan that warrants them.**

**Sick Policy:**

To preserve the health and well-being of each child in our care, especially our infants, we must strictly adhere to our Sick Policy. We do not provide care for children who are ill, and we are not authorized by NYS to administer medication.

Siblings: If one sibling is sick, all siblings must stay home until everyone is better or cleared by a doctor. Children can be carriers without symptoms, making it easy for germs to spread.

Dope & Drop: The practice of medicating your child before dropping them off to hide symptoms and not letting us know is grounds for immediate termination. You must inform us daily if your child was given any medication.

Immunization Policy: If your child receives immunizations, they may not attend daycare on that day. They may return the following day as long as they have been fever free for 24 hours and are not showing any other symptoms. Parents must submit an updated immunization record after their child receives any immunizations.

Cold or Allergy? Sometimes it's hard to tell the difference. Allergy medication should relieve allergy symptoms. When in doubt, seek the advice of a doctor or keep your child home for a day or two. Viral infections are the most contagious in the first 2-3 days.

Symptoms Requiring Exclusion from Daycare (No Exceptions):

If your child develops an illness or any of the following symptoms in our care, you will be called to get them within 30 minutes. Your child may not return to care for 36 hours from pick up and must be symptom-free for a minimum of 24 hours.

- **Fever:** A temperature of 100.4 or higher is considered a fever. A child needs to be fever-free, without the aid of any fever-reducing substance, for a minimum of 24 HOURS.
- **Cough:** Your child may not attend daycare if they have a cough that prevents them from participating in our daily activities or a cough that causes vomiting.
- **Vomiting & Diarrhea:** It doesn't matter what the reason is, you must be symptom-free for 24 hours. 2 diapers with loose or liquid stools will be considered diarrhea.
- **Runny Noses:** Any color discharge other than clear is not accepted. Clear or colored runny noses that must be continuously wiped are not accepted. Use allergy medicine if needed.
- **Rashes:** Any unexplained rash requires a doctor's note stating it is not contagious.
- **Runny and/or Crusty Eyes:** Watery, gunky, matted, and/or red/pink eyes are unacceptable in childcare.
- **Excessive Crankiness:** If your child is irritable, excessively whiny, cranky, or wants to be constantly held, or requires more attention than I can provide without disrupting our daily routine, then you must keep your child home regardless of other symptoms.
- **Inability to Participate:** If your child is too tired, ill, or irritable to participate in our daily activities, they may need to be sent home.
- **Any Highly Communicable Disease:** This includes, but is not limited to, the following illnesses: COVID-19, Influenza, Pink Eye, Strep Throat, Gastroenteritis, and 5ths Disease. Your child will be accepted back into care when they are no longer contagious and must have a doctor's note stating they can return. All other parents will be notified of the communicable disease and what symptoms to watch for.



Staff Personal Days and Emergencies:

We do our best to schedule staff effectively to avoid the need to close the daycare for sick or personal days. However, unforeseen circumstances can arise. We may or may not inform parents of any changes in staff for a particular day. If we have to close, we will notify you as soon as possible.

Medical Emergencies:

Emergencies can happen at any time, and the health and safety of your child are our top priority. We take all necessary measures to prevent accidents and injuries from occurring. However, if an injury does occur, we will promptly administer basic First Aid and/or CPR as needed. In such a situation, we will inform parents about the injury and the steps taken to address it. If the injury requires transport to a hospital, we will call an ambulance first and then notify the parents. If the parents have not arrived yet and a substitute is available, we will accompany the child to the hospital.

Daycare Loss of Power Policy:

In the event of a loss of electrical power at the daycare facility, parents or guardians will be notified promptly regarding the outage. All families will be required to pick up their children as soon as possible, as daycare services will be temporarily suspended during any period without electrical power. This policy is in place to ensure that a safe and appropriate environment is maintained for all children. Services will resume only after full power has been restored and it is confirmed that the facility is safe for occupancy. The health, safety, and well-being of every child in our care remains our highest priority.

Evacuation Plan:

During an evacuation, the provider and children will go directly across the road to Ridley's house. If we need to evacuate the immediate area, we will go to The Cacklin' Hen. If we must evacuate from the town, we will go to the SWCS Elementary Campus. The SWCS Elementary Campus is an official shelter for the town of Callicoon. Attendance will be taken and documented before the provider leaves any building or evacuation site. Parents will be contacted via text and/or phone to pick up their children. We will keep that child in our care if a parent cannot be reached. A message will be left at the parent's home, cell, and/or place of work where the provider and child can be reached.

Shelter-In-Place:

If we need to "shelter-in-place," we will take shelter in the Playroom. We will close and lock all doors and windows. Shades will be drawn. Parents will be notified via text/phone. Children will be kept as comfortable and secure as possible. We will stock sufficient water and food for all children in care for up to 3 days. Everyone will remain sheltered until public officials broadcast that it is safe to evacuate the building. We will hold 2 drills per year.

Other Emergencies:

In some emergencies, a trip to the hospital or an immediate evacuation of the premises is not called for—things like loss of utilities, dangerous weather, or personal emergencies. Parents will be called to pick up their children in this situation, and the daycare will be closed. No one expects an emergency to occur, but we have no control over certain things; sometimes things happen. Safety for the children in my care will be the primary concern in any emergency. It is also important for parents to be cooperative and understanding in such situations.