Rising Stars
Early Learning Center
Parent Handbook
2026-2027

Welcome to Rising Stars Early Learning Center (ELC), a community-based early childhood program of Family Promise of Gallatin Valley. Our center is committed to providing high-quality, developmentally appropriate childcare and early learning opportunities for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.

Family Promise of Gallatin Valley

Family Promise of Gallatin Valley's vision is to end homelessness in the Gallatin Valley, one family at a time. Our mission is to empower families experiencing housing insecurity to secure safe, affordable housing, build financial stability, and create a better future for their children. Since 2005, Family Promise of Gallatin Valley has served our community as an independent nonprofit and is part of the national Family Promise network.

Rising Stars Mission

Rising Stars Early Learning Center opened in January 2022 to support families working toward sustainable independence. We provide a safe, nurturing, respectful, and secure learning environment while offering family programming that meets the unique needs of the families we serve.

Our Approach

We believe children learn best through hands-on experiences, individualized care, and meaningful relationships. Our program supports each child's cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development while fostering an inclusive environment where every child and family feels respected, supported, and valued.

Curriculum

Rising Stars uses The Creative Curriculum as the foundation for learning in every classroom. This research-based curriculum supports developmentally appropriate learning for children of all ages.

Preschool classrooms (ages 3–5) also use the Heggerty Curriculum to build early literacy skills and A World in Motion, a hands-on STEM program that encourages exploration, problem-solving, and discovery. Monthly themes are integrated throughout the curriculum to create meaningful, engaging learning experiences.

State Licensing and Regulation

Rising Stars ELC is a licensed childcare center through the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). Being a state-licensed facility means we voluntarily commit to meeting and exceeding rigorous standards for the health, safety, and well-being of the children in our care.

What This Means for Your Family:

- Annual Inspections: We undergo yearly on-site inspections by State Licensors, as well as annual health and fire safety inspections, to ensure our facility meets all Montana Administrative Rules (ARM).
- Background Clearances: Every staff member must pass a comprehensive federal (FBI) fingerprint-based background check and child protective services (CPS) screening.
- Professional Training: Our educators are required to be current on the Montana Early Childhood Project (ECP) Practitioner Registry, completing at least 16 hours of approved professional development annually.
- Safety Standards: We strictly adhere to state-mandated staff-to-child ratios and safe sleep practices to ensure every child receives the individualized attention and protection they deserve.
- Financial Support: As a licensed provider, we are eligible to accept the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, helping make high-quality care accessible to more families in our community. Additionally, we are part of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to support our food program.

You can view all regulations required:
https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcarelicensing/rulesandregulations

Our Commitment to Belonging & Access

At Rising Stars ELC, we are committed to creating a welcoming environment where every child, family, and staff member feels respected, valued, and included. We celebrate the diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages, abilities, and family structures that make our community unique.

Our commitment includes:

- Inclusive Learning: We provide books, materials, and experiences that reflect diverse cultures, identities, family structures, and abilities. Families are welcome to share suggestions or donate items that help expand this representation.
- Language & Communication: We respect and honor each family's home language. Staff will make efforts to learn key words and phrases used by children in their care, utilize translation tools when appropriate, and provide interpretation services for family meetings when needed.
- Accessibility & Support: We strive to remove barriers and provide reasonable accommodations to support the individual needs of each child and family. We may partner with community resources to connect families with additional supports and services.

- Respect for All Families: We recognize and celebrate all family structures and welcome every child with dignity and care.
- Non-Discrimination: Rising Stars ELC does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, language, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or family status. This commitment applies to enrollment, employment, and all interactions within our center.

Inclusion is an ongoing commitment, and we welcome the partnership and perspectives of our families as we continue to build a community where everyone belongs.

Student Observations:

At Rising Stars ELC, student observations are completed as needed in collaboration with teachers, leadership, and families. We use the Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ and ASQ: SE) to support children's developmental growth, identify areas where additional support may be helpful, and guide our classroom environments and curriculum planning.

Families will be informed of any concerns and are welcome to meet with their child's teacher and leadership team at any time. Parents may also observe their child in the classroom through our observation hall with prior notice.

Rising Stars partners with local speech, occupational, and physical therapists who may provide onsite services. Please contact the leadership team if you are interested in a referral.

Communication:

Rising Stars ELC uses the platform **Lillio** to manage our center and communicate with families. This is available online and via an app. This is where you will:

- Communicate with Rising Stars leadership and teachers
- Receive regular updates/photos from teachers on your child's day
- Receive reports of any minor injuries or incidents that may happen during the day
- Messages regarding items that impact the whole center (events, closures, etc.)
- Pay your tuition online
- Update your child's profile, etc.

Please ensure that your notifications are turned on so that you get real time messages. This is for safety reasons as we may need to send out a message in case of emergency. This is under "user settings" and "notifications" within Lillio and the app.

You can access by going to: www.lillio.com as well as searching "Lillio" in your app store.

Rising Stars Direct Line: 406-312-9804

Admission and Enrollment Requirements:

The following required documentation will be needed **AT LEAST** 2 business days before your child can attend Rising Stars ELC and are to be renewed annually, unless otherwise specified:

- Emergency contact form
- Signed Rising Stars ELC Tuition Plan Contract
- Media Release Form
- Over the Counter Medication form (for sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent, diaper ointment or antibiotic ointment)
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Forms
- Current immunization records (See Section 20 for Immunization Schedule)
- Best Beginnings Scholarship Application (if applicable)
- Medication forms if medication is to be administered
- Detailed infant feeding schedule (0 - 24 months)
- Registered on the Lillio app
- Enrollment fee of $100.00 due on child's start date
- The semi-annual supply fee due upon enrollment as well as every October and every March:
    - 0-2 year old classrooms: $125 (2 times a year)
    - 3-5 year old classrooms: $50 (2 times a year)
- First month's tuition payment by the 5th of the month or within 2 weeks of enrollment

Reminder: Your child **cannot** start until the Leadership Team receives and reviews all required documentation, and you have made a parent account on our communication app Lillio.

We offer an Enrollment Hold Contract for parents who are offered a spot but do not want to begin immediate care. This Contract will hold your spot for up to 60 days. The fee for this Contract is the cost of your first month's tuition. The fee is applied to your first month of tuition. The fee is non-refundable after 30 days of holding the spot.

Enrollment of one child does not guarantee the enrollment of the other. If you would like to enroll another child, you are required to go through the admission and enrollment process again. Please fill out a new parent interest form online. We do not offer a sibling discount.

Full-Time Care Model

Rising Stars ELC operates as a full-time childcare program and does not offer part-time care under normal circumstances. All enrolled children are expected to attend on a full-time schedule as outlined in their enrollment agreement.

In certain special circumstances, such as a parenting or custody plan that prevents full-time attendance, exceptions may be considered. Families should be aware that, even in these situations, they remain responsible for paying the full tuition as stated in their enrollment agreement, regardless of the child's actual attendance. This must be communicated before enrollment.

This policy ensures consistency for staffing, classroom ratios, and program planning, while maintaining a fair and predictable structure for all families and staff.

Tuition and Fees (effective September 1, 2026):

Rising Stars ELC understands the strain that childcare costs may place on families. However, it is necessary for us to charge tuition rates that help us cover costs to operate a high-quality childcare and early learning environment. We base our costs on the classroom your child is enrolled in.

Tuition Rates for Standard Hours of Operation (7:30 am to 4:30 pm):

- Dreamers, Adventurers, & Pathfinders (infant-early 2-year old): $1,700/month
- Trailblazers & Pioneers (2-year-olds & early 3 year olds): $1,600/month
- Explorers & Groundbreakers (3–5-year-old): $1,450/month

After Hours Care Program

Rising Stars ELC offers after hours care, **Monday through Friday from 4:30 pm to 5:30 pm**. **After care is an ADDITIONAL $200/month per child.**

To enroll in after care, please give us a 30-days' notice so that we can make any necessary staffing changes. To unenroll, please give a 30-day notice. Inquire with Rising Stars leadership about how to enroll or unenroll.

Supply Fees

Rising Stars ELC provides all diapers, wipes, two meals a day, and one snack. To help offset the costs of this, we have an annual Supply Fee that is due upon enrollment. We also bill families annually (typically in August/Sept.) for these fees.

- 0–2-year-old classrooms: $125 twice per year (October and March)
- 3–5-year-old classrooms: $50 twice per year (October and March)

Billing and Payments Policy:

- Tuition invoices will be billed at the end of each month and are due by the close of business on the **5th business day of each month.**
    - Example: You will receive an invoice on May 27th for June's tuition and is due on June 5th.
- All invoices are sent electronically through the Lillio platform. If you require a hard copy invoice, please let us know.
- Payments not received by the 5th of each month will be subject to a late fee of $40.00.
- If your account becomes past due, including any unpaid late fees, more than 10 days, care may be suspended until paid.
- If your tuition payment is not received by the end of the month, you are at risk of losing your child's spot. Rising Stars reserves the right to terminate care if tuition or fees become past due more than three times.
- If you need to split up your tuition payments to be paid twice monthly, or weekly, please reach out. We can accommodate payment plans.
- Tuition rates are not subject to pro-ration for illness, holidays, center closures, or vacation absences. All services will be pre-paid.

How to pay Tuition:

- We prefer payments be made through Lillio. You can set up your bank account, debit card, or credit card in the platform as methods of payment.
    - NOTE: We are charged a fee for using credit cards. An additional $35/month will be added to your tuition to accommodate this.
- Checks/Money Orders made to: Family Promise of Gallatin Valley. You can drop off at the front desk.
- PLEASE no cash
- Our Billing and Payments Policy applies to our after-hours care program and all subsidized programs.

Tuition and Fee Adjustments

To maintain the high quality of care, competitive staff wages, and comprehensive programming at Rising Stars ELC, it is occasionally necessary to adjust our tuition rates, co-pays, and fees. These adjustments allow us to keep pace with the rising costs of operation, including supplies, salaries/benefits, nutritious meals, and facility maintenance.

As part of these adjustments, we are committed to:

- Advance Notice: Families will always be provided with **a minimum of 60 days' notice** prior to any tuition increase taking effect.
- Annual Review: Tuition rates are reviewed annually by the Leadership Team and Family Promise Board of Directors, to ensure we are meeting the operational needs of the center while remaining a sustainable resource for our community.
- Notification: All rate change notices will be sent via email and posted within the Lillio app to ensure families have ample time to plan accordingly.

Child Care Scholarships:

If you are in need of financial assistance to pay for childcare, you can apply for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship through the Montana DPHHS website. All families on the Best Beginnings Scholarship must:

- Pay your monthly co-payment and any fees not covered by the scholarship (like supply or enrollment fees).
- Renew your contract on time to avoid losing your scholarship and becoming responsible for all childcare costs.
- Provide us with proof of your scholarship to keep your coverage active.

Hours of Operation and Late Pick-Up Policy

Standard Hours: 7:30 am – 4:30 pm
After-Hours Program: 4:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Prompt Closing: Rising Stars ELC closes at 5:30 pm. Doors are locked at this time.

Late Fees: A flat fee of $25.00 will be charged to your Lillio account if:

- You are not enrolled in After-Hours and pick up after 4:30 pm.
- You arrive after our building closes at 5:30 pm.

We offer a five-minute buffer. If you communicate with us regarding a delay, we may waive the fee at our discretion. If a child is not picked up by closing and we have not heard from a guardian, we will call your emergency contacts. If no authorized person is available to pick up the child, we are required to contact law enforcement.

We reserve the right to terminate care if late pick-ups become a regular occurrence.

As a courtesy to our staff, please message us on Lillio about being late.

Rising Stars ELC is closed on the holidays and breaks as stated below:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- Day after Thanksgiving
- Winter Break: Dec. 24-Jan. 1

Rising Stars ELC is also closed for monthly Professional Development days for our staff. These days will be available via the communication app, email, and the annually released calendars. We try to coordinate PD days with the Bozeman school district calendar, as much as possible. Calendars will be provided to families by July of each year that includes the dates for August-July.

Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to make changes to the center calendar or operating schedule, as needed. **Families will be provided with at least 60 days' notice of any planned schedule changes.** This does not include emergency closures due to things like weather, building emergencies, etc.

Schedule Changes, Attendance, and Termination

To ensure proper staffing and a peaceful environment for the children, we ask families to follow these guidelines regarding attendance and withdrawals.

Withdrawal and Termination

- Family Withdrawal: A 30-day written notice to the Leadership Team is required to terminate childcare services.
- Center-Initiated Termination: If it is determined that our program is not the right fit for a child, we will provide a 30-day written notice to allow you to find alternate care.
- Immediate Termination: We reserve the right to terminate care immediately if it is determined to be in the best interest of the children, staff, or the overall operation of the center.
- Probationary Period: The first month of care will serve as a probationary period. If during the first month the child's caregivers or the staff/administration at Rising Stars feel this is not the best placement for the child, care will be discontinued. If we are experiencing consistent behavioral issues with your child, we will request a parent/teacher conference. If behavior persists, an additional probationary period

may be put in place. If after all the above steps have been taken and we continue to have behavioral issues, care may be terminated.

Daily Attendance and Drop-Off

- Morning Notification: Please notify us by 10:00 am if your child will be absent, or arriving later than 10:00 am. If we have not heard from you by this time, we will assume your child is not attending.
- Staffing Adjustments: Because we adjust our staffing ratios based on attendance, we may be unable to accommodate late arrivals without prior notice.
- Nap Time Quiet Hours: To protect the children's rest, drop-offs are not permitted between 12:30 pm and 3:00 pm without prior communication and approval from staff.

Authorized Pick Up

Only authorized individuals will be allowed to pick up your children. If we do not recognize them, they must be able to provide ID. Authorized people must be listed on your contact information sheet; anyone not listed on your sheet will not be allowed to leave with your child without prior arrangement or verbal confirmation.

To ensure the safety of all children and comply with Montana state law, all individuals on a child's authorized pickup list must be legally eligible to enter a childcare facility. Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to deny campus access to any individual whose presence violates state geographic restrictions or facility safety protocols.

Open Door Policy:

Rising Stars ELC values family involvement and maintains an Open Door Policy. Parents/guardians are welcome to visit their child or observe the classroom. We appreciate advance notice whenever possible so we can minimize disruptions and maintain classroom routines. Families are also welcome to use our observation hall.

For the safety of everyone in our center, the front doors are unlocked from 7:30–9:00 a.m. for drop-off and 3:30–5:30 p.m. for pick-up. Between 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., the doors remain locked. During these hours, please use the doorbell at the main entrance. Our Leadership Team monitors the entrance by security camera and will admit authorized visitors.

To help maintain classroom routines, please limit drop-off visits to **10 minutes**. In accordance with Montana State Licensing, adults who are not listed on the facility license, including parents/guardians, may not remain in a classroom for more than **15 minutes**.

Cameras:

We have cameras installed within our facility for the safety of our children and staff. Only the Rising Stars leadership team has access, and there is no audio. If you have any additional questions, please reach out to the leadership team.

Parent Conferences:

Parent/teacher conferences are optional at our center. If you would like to request a meeting with your child's teacher, please notify them through the Lillio app.

Maintaining Safe Adult-to-Child Ratios:

At Rising Stars ELC, your child's safety is our top priority. To ensure compliance with Montana licensing regulations and maintain a safe learning environment, parents are asked to adhere to our ratio and group size guidelines.

The following ratios and maximum group sizes are based on state licensing regulations and have been adapted for implementation at Rising Stars ELC:

Age Group	Child-to-Staff Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Newborn – 12 months	4:1	8
12 – 23 months	6:1	9
2 – 3 years	8:1	16
4 years	10:1	20
5 years and older	10:1	20

When children of different ages are grouped together, the ratio and maximum group size for the youngest child must be maintained.

Only the Director, Lead Teachers, Assistant Teachers, Trainees, and Substitute Teachers may be counted as staff when determining ratios.

Group sizes must be maintained at all times except during mealtimes, outdoor play, rest periods, or large group activities such as educational assemblies.

The standard drop-off window is from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., which can be a busy period for the center. In the event that staffing is temporarily limited, Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to pause drop-offs until the Leadership Team has made the necessary adjustments to ensure compliance with state licensing ratios. During such occasions, we ask that parents remain with their child until it is safe to proceed. The opening Leadership Staff will guide parents through this process if it occurs for a particular classroom.

Adverse Weather Policy:

When there is severe cold weather predicted, we have the following procedures in place:

- Advanced notification of any alterations to the normally scheduled operating hours for Rising Stars ELC will be given to families and staff as soon as possible
- Families of Rising Stars ELC will be notified via Lillio communication
- Families and staff are expected to keep in communication with the Rising Stars Leadership Team
- Cold Temperature Pre-Cautionary Measures (taking windchill into consideration as well):
    - -30 degrees F: Operations will remain normal, taking into consideration that families and staff may be late due to the cold.
    - -40 degrees F: Operations will run on a 2-hour delay to ensure the safety of everyone in our community.

Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to close or delay opening due to severe or adverse weather for the safety of our staff and families.

Air Quality

In the event, the air quality due to smoke or other factors is a concern, we will follow the following Air Quality Index before adjusting outside time. If your child has a condition that puts them in the unhealthy/sensitive group, please communicate this with Rising Stars Leadership Team.

Air Quality Index (AQI) Thresholds

AQI Level	Category	Recommended Action for Children
101–150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups	Keep students with chronic conditions (asthma, heart/lung issues) indoors. Young children are considered a sensitive group, so many centers provide indoor space for all.
151–200	Unhealthy	Move all children indoors. Outdoor recess, PE, and activities are cancelled or relocated to a clean indoor environment.
201+	Very Unhealthy / Hazardous	Strictly indoors. All activities are moved inside; indoor activities should be limited to "light" intensity only to reduce heavy breathing.

Outdoor Policy:

We spend time outdoors every day except in the most extreme weather. We take in multiple factors to determine outside time such as temperature and air quality. This time is important for your child's health, growth, and development. We cannot make accommodations to keep one child inside while the rest enjoy outside time. If your child is too ill to go outside, they are too ill to be in childcare.

- Every day, please make sure your child has the appropriate clothing to play outdoors—including shoes, coat, hat, mittens, snow pants and boots. Also, be sure to label all items of your child's clothes with their name or initials.
- During the summer, make sure your child has appropriate sun gear and sunblock that is labeled with their first and last name.
- If the temperature drops below 10 degrees F, children will not be permitted to go outside.
- We have water days every Friday (weather permitting) in the months of June-August.
- If we cannot go outside, we have alternative spaces within our facility that children can utilize for some gross motor fun!

Field Trips & Off-Site Activities

Field trips and community excursions are opportunities for children to explore their world. Rising Stars ensures all off-site activities are planned with the highest safety standards and in full compliance with State of Montana licensing requirements.

1. Communication & Permission

Advance Notice: Families will be notified in writing of all upcoming field trips, including details on the destination, date, time, and special instructions.

Written Consent: A signed permission form from a legal guardian is mandatory for participation. This form must include details on transportation, supervision, and planned activities.

2. Age & Transportation Requirements

For safety and licensing compliance, the following age restrictions apply:

Children Age 4 and Older: May participate in field trips involving vehicle transportation.

Children Under Age 4: Rising Stars ELC does not transport children under the age of four. Staff may plan "on-site" special activities or walking excursions within the immediate area

for children under four, provided they remain in accordance with licensing and safety guidelines.

3. Supervision & Safety Protocols

The safety and well-being of our students is our highest priority during off-site activities.

Direct Supervision: Children must remain under the direct supervision of staff at all times.

Ratios: Appropriate staff-to-child ratios must be maintained (or exceeded) during the entire trip.

Emergency Preparedness: Staff are required to carry the following on all trips:

- Emergency contact information and medical consent form for every participating child.
- Necessary rescue medications (e.g., EpiPens, inhalers).
- A reliable method of communication (cell phone).
- Fully stocked first aid kit

Clothing and Personal Belongings:

Please always dress your child(ren) appropriately for the weather. We ask that your child(ren) have proper outside attire available at school, including coat, hat, gloves, snow pants and boots in the winter. We also require that each child has an extra pair of weather appropriate clothes, including underwear and socks available at school always. Label your child's full name on each piece of clothing. If their name is not written on the piece of clothing, we are not responsible for the lost item. We have a lost and found section in our front entry way; at the end of the month if things are left, they will be donated.

If you are unable to provide the required outdoor clothing, please contact your child's teacher or the Leadership Team and we will do our best to provide what your child needs.

Comfort items such as a favorite stuffed toy or doll may accompany a child to school for use at nap or quiet time **only**. Families need to provide a small blanket at school. The blanket must be small enough to fit in the child's individual cubby. For our infant rooms, children may have a sleep sack that is within state guidelines, provided by the family.

Please leave personal toys and belongings at home or in your vehicle. Most of the time it is hard to share personal items. Children are also upset if their items get lost or broken.

Meals:

Rising Stars ELC offers a nutritious breakfast, lunch, and afternoon snack. We have a Nutrition Coordinator who plans and prepares all food, along with the help of other kitchen staff and volunteers.

Rising Stars ELC participates in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), a federal nutrition program that provides a balanced and healthy meal plan for children. The program reimburses Rising Stars monthly to assist with some food costs. To ensure continued support, household income forms must be submitted annually by every family.

Weekly menus will be posted outside the main office and on Lillio. If your child arrives after scheduled mealtimes, please ensure that they have been fed prior to arrival.

For children with allergies or intolerances to regularly served foods (e.g., milk), families are required to provide an appropriate substitute and complete a **Food Allergy Information Sheet**. Whether the restriction is due to an allergy or personal preference, the information provided must be detailed enough for our Nutrition Coordinator and staff to safely accommodate the child.

If your child needs alternative milk instead of the dairy milk we serve and it is not a medical reason, you will need to supply the alternative milk and complete the required paperwork.

Outside food is not permitted in the childcare facility, except as a substitute for a documented food allergy.

Our meals times are as follows:

- Breakfast: 8:30-9:00
- Lunch:
    - Infants 11:30-12:00
    - Toddlers 11:45-12:15
    - Preschool 12:00- 12:30
- Snack: 3:30- 4:00

If you would like your child to attend mealtimes, they need to arrive no later than 10 minutes after the meals are served. If your child arrives as meals are ending, all food has been served and replacement will not be made.

Infant-Toddler classrooms are served meals and snacks in their classrooms.

Preschool-aged classrooms (Explorers & Groundbreakers) eat meals in our cafeteria where we have **family-style meals** to create a communal atmosphere during mealtimes. Instead

of pre-plated portions, children sit together with their teachers to share a meal from common serving bowls.
This helps promote:

- Independence: Children practice fine motor skills by scooping, pouring, and passing dishes.
- Social Development: Mealtimes are a time for rich conversation, turn-taking, and practicing table manners.
- Self-Regulation: Kids learn to listen to their bodies' hunger and fullness cues by choosing their own portions.
- Role Modeling: Teachers sit and eat with the children, encouraging them to try new healthy foods in a low-pressure environment.

We welcome families to join us occasionally for meals if you wish. Please give us at least a 24-hour notice if you plan to join your child so that we can plan accordingly.

Health & Illness Policy (STRICTLY ENFORCED):

Rising Stars ELC is required to adhere to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) Sick Children Policy. Children exhibiting symptoms outlined in this policy will not be permitted to attend care until they have been symptom-free **without medication** (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen) for at least 24 hours, or have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours, as appropriate.

These guidelines have been adapted from state licensing regulations to prevent the spread of illness. If your child displays one or more of these symptoms, please keep them at home to monitor their health for a full 24 hours.

If a child develops symptoms while at the center:

- Parents will be notified immediately.
- Pickup must occur within 30 minutes of notification.
- If parents are unavailable, emergency contacts will be called.

Attendance Following Illness:

- If a child is sent home before 12:30 p.m., they may return the following day after 12:30 p.m. if symptoms have been gone for 24 hours.
- If a child is sent home after 12:30 p.m., they may not attend the following day.

Illness Guidelines

- **Fever:** Children must be fever-free (temperature below 100.4^{o}F) without medication (like a fever-reducer) for 24 hours. Children with immunization-related fevers may attend if they can participate in normal classroom activities.

- **Vomiting and Diarrhea:** Children must be symptom-free for 24 hours. Vomiting includes 1 episode or more within 24 hours. Diarrhea is defined as increased frequency, watery stools, or stool that cannot be contained by a diaper. Children will be sent home after two or more episodes of diarrhea.
- **Bacterial Infections:** Children must be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning. These include:
    - Strep throat
    - Scarlet fever
    - Impetigo
    - Bacterial conjunctivitis (pink eye)
    - Skin infections such as draining burns, infected wounds, or hangnails
- **Generalized Rashes:** A rash with fever or behavioral change or a rash that is quickly spreading must be evaluated by a healthcare provider before returning.
- **Parasitic Infections:** Children must complete treatment before returning. Includes:
    - Lice
    - Scabies
    - Pinworms
- **Viral Infections:** Children must be excluded until symptoms resolve. Includes:
    - Chickenpox – return only after sores have dried (usually 5–7 days); intentional exposure of susceptible children is prohibited.
    - Shingles
    - Roseola
    - Cold sores / fever blisters
- **Jaundice:** Children must be evaluated and cleared by a healthcare provider.
- **Severe Illness Symptoms:** Uncontrolled coughing, difficulty breathing, wheezing, stiff neck, irritability, poor food or fluid intake, or seizures require a healthcare evaluation before return.
- **Contagious Diseases:** Montana law requires that children diagnosed with a specific communicable illness cannot attend care.
- **Immunizations:** Children lacking age-appropriate immunizations per Montana regulations may be excluded.
- **Nasal Discharge:** Children do not need to stay home for a runny nose alone if no fever is present.
- **Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease (HFMD):** Children may return when:
    - Fever-free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication)
    - No mouth sores and not drooling uncontrollably
    - No open sores on any part of the body and all blisters and sores have dried up
    - Well enough to participate in classroom activities

- **Behavioral Concerns:** Persistently crying, unusually irritable, or requiring more care than staff can safely provide.

Readmission Requirements:
Children may only return when:

- They show no symptoms of illness.
- They have been fever-free (temperature below 100.4ºF) for at least 24 hours without medication.
- They have had no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.
- They have been on antibiotics for at least 24 hours for bacterial infections, if applicable.

These guidelines are mandated by state licensing. Non-compliance could jeopardize the legal operation of Rising Stars ELC. The center reserves the right, at its discretion, to exclude a child for any other health-related reasons not specifically listed above.

Medication Administration Policy:

At Rising Stars ELC, we prioritize the safe administration of medication to children, ensuring the well-being of children, parents, and staff. Medication will only be administered with parental consent and in accordance with healthcare provider recommendations. Medications will be given only when necessary during hours when parents are unavailable to administer them themselves. Administration of medication requires the completion of the **Medication Administration Form**.

All medications will be administered by staff members who have received formal training in medication administration, following these guidelines:

Prescription Medications

- Must be in the original container labeled with the child's full name, date of prescription, and expiration date.
- Must be prescribed by the child's healthcare provider.
- Must be in a child-proof container.
- A parent-signed Medication Administration Form must be completed prior to administration. This form is valid for one week only and must be renewed if the medication is needed beyond that period.
- For medications required for recurring, emergency, or chronic conditions, a Specialized Health Care Form completed and signed by the child's healthcare provider is required.

Over-the-Counter Medications

- Must be in the original container, labeled with the child's full name, including specific directions for the child's age and/or weight and the expiration date.
- If directions are not provided for the child's age, a note from the child's healthcare provider specifying the correct dosage is required.
- Must be in a child-proof container.
- A parent-signed Medication Administration Form is required. This form is valid for one week and must be renewed if the medication is required beyond that period.
- For recurring, emergency, or chronic conditions, a Specialized Health Care Form completed and signed by the child's healthcare provider is required.

Medication Logging and Safety

- Each administration will be recorded in a Medication Log, which becomes part of the child's file.
- Parents will be notified of any adverse reactions, and an incident report will be provided if necessary.
- All medications will be securely stored in the nurse's station at all times.
- Medications remaining at the end of the month will be discarded appropriately if not retrieved by parents.

Medical, Dental, and First-Aid Policy

At Rising Stars, your child's safety is our priority. All staff members are certified in Adult, Child, and Infant CPR and First-Aid. While we strive for a safe environment, we follow these protocols when injuries or illnesses occur:

Minor Injuries

For minor scrapes or bruises, staff will provide first aid (band-aids, ice packs, and TLC). We will notify you of the incident at pickup and send a message and photo through **Lillio**. If we feel that the injury is more serious, we will call you and inform you of the situation to let you decide which action should be taken.

Emergency Procedures

In the event of a serious accident, sudden illness, or suspected poisoning requiring immediate medical attention, we will:

- Call 911 (or Poison Control)
- Administer immediate First-Aid/CPR until emergency personnel arrive.
- Notify parents (or designated emergency contacts) immediately.

- Ensure Care: The child will be separated from the group and appropriately cared for until a parent or ambulance arrives. A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital with their health records.
- Licensing & Requirements
  To comply with Montana licensing and ensure rapid response, we require the following:
    - Emergency Authorization: A signed authorization for emergency treatment must be on file for every child. This is located on the Emergency Contact and Consent form which is updated annually.
    - Current Information: It is vital that emergency contacts and provider names are kept up to date. Please submit any changes immediately in writing or via email.
    - Documentation: An injury report is completed for all incidents; a copy is provided to parents through Lillio or upon request.
    - Financial Responsibility: Parents are responsible for all costs associated with emergency medical treatment, including emergency transportation.

Immunization Policy:

This policy follows Montana law regarding immunization of children (ARM 37.95.140) within childcare facilities. It is essential that children who are too young to receive immunizations or have medical contraindications are protected. Our policy is to receive children's immunization records upon enrollment and after each new round of immunizations, assess records, inform parents of non-compliance, and maintain 90% or higher up-to-date immunization records to receive a "Certificate of Excellence" award from the Montana State Immunization Program. You are required to bring in your child's immunization record each time they receive new immunizations (influenza and Covid vaccines are not required). We require your child's immunizations to remain up-to-date always. If the records we have are not up-to-date you will receive a verbal warning and be asked to supply the updated records within 2 days, if we do not receive the up-to-date records within the first 2 days you will receive a written warning and an additional 2 days to comply. Failure to comply with the written warning will result in discontinuation of care until we receive the child's record that your child is up-to-date on his/her immunizations.

Below is the state mandated immunization schedule:

By 3 Months	By 5 Months	By 7 Months	By 16 Months	By 19 Months	By 6 Years
DTaP 1 dose	DTaP 2 doses	DTaP 3 doses	DTaP 3 doses	DTaP 4 doses	DTaP 4 doses[3]
Hep B 1 dose	Hep B 2 doses	Hep B 2 doses	Hep B 2 doses	Hep B 3 doses	Hep B 3 doses
Hib 1 dose	Hib 2 doses	Hib 2 or 3 doses[1]	Hib 3 or 4 doses[1]	Hib 3 or 4 doses[1]	Not required after 5 years
Polio 1 dose	Polio 2 doses	Polio 2 doses	Polio 2 doses	Polio 3 doses	Polio 3 doses[3]
PCV 1 dose	PCV 2 doses	PCV 3 doses	PCV 4 doses[2]	PCV 4 doses[2]	Not required after 5 years
			MMR 1 dose[4]	MMR 1 dose[4]	MMR 2 doses[4]
			Varicella 1 dose[4]	Varicella 1 dose[4]	Varicella 2 doses[4]

(1) varies depending on vaccine type used and age started
(2) varies depending on age started
(3) one dose must be given on or after the 4th birthday
(4) first dose must be given on or after the 1st birthday

This schedule must be followed before a child may attend Rising Stars ELC. In the case a child is not up to date on immunizations per ARM 37.95.140, the parent/guardian must provide one or some of the following:

a. Completed HES-103A "Conditional Attendance" form
b. HES-101 Section IV "Medical Exemption" form
c. HES-114 "Religious Exemptions for Haemophilus Influenza Type B" form
d. DPHHS-115 "History of Varicella" form

The Rising Stars ELC Leadership Team will assess immunization records using the Montana State Immunization Status Report every 6 months to ensure every child attending has an up-to-date immunization record.

Screen Time Policy:

At Rising Stars ELC, screen time is never a required activity and will not replace planned physical activities, including outdoor play. Alternatives will always be available for all children.

When screen time is utilized:

- Content will be carefully monitored before and during viewing to ensure it is educational, non-violent, and age-appropriate.
- Educational programs will be used to facilitate group discussions and extend learning.

- Screen time will not be permitted during mealtimes or immediately prior to nap time.
- Screen time will not be permitted for children under the age of two (2 years).
- This policy ensures that screen time remains a safe, purposeful, and developmentally appropriate part of our curriculum.

Classroom Transitions:

At Rising Stars ELC, children transition to new classrooms based on both age and developmental readiness. These transitions support each child's continued growth and learning within an environment that best meets their needs.

Major classroom transitions typically occur twice per year, in September and January, with the possibility of a smaller transition period at other times during the year. Parents will be notified of upcoming transitions through Lillio by their child's current Lead Teacher. Families and staff will receive information regarding two designated transition days, along with all necessary details about the new classroom.

September serves as our largest transition period and coincides with our open enrollment cycle. A center roster will be posted in the main entrance approximately one month prior to the September transition. All related communication will also be shared via Lillio.

Please note that classroom transitions are not guaranteed. While we make every effort to transition children according to age and developmental milestones, placement in the next classroom is dependent upon availability and enrollment capacity.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding classroom transitions, please contact the Rising Stars Leadership Team.

Guidance and Discipline Policy:

At Rising Stars ELC, we use positive reinforcement and redirection as the primary methods for addressing behavior and resolving disagreements. Our goal is to provide guidance that helps children take care of themselves, be sensitive to others, and develop awareness of the world around them.

Expectations for Staff:

- Yelling, harsh language, or punitive measures are prohibited.
- Staff will use natural consequences, choices, and structured guidance to help children learn appropriate behaviors.
- Conflict resolution skills will be taught and encouraged, and disputes between children will be addressed whenever possible.

- Children may take a break in a safe space with a staff member if they need time to calm or reflect.
- This approach ensures a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all children, staff, and families.

Shaken Baby Syndrome and Head Injury Prevention

Your child's safety is very important to us. Our staff are trained to recognize and prevent shaken baby syndrome and other serious head injuries. They learn how to identify warning signs and respond appropriately.

We understand that young children may cry or become upset. Our staff use calm, gentle techniques to comfort children and meet their needs. If a child is very distressed, staff may seek support from another team member to ensure everyone remains patient and responsive. At no time will a child be shaken or handled roughly.

Behavior Policy:

At Rising Stars ELC, we recognize that challenging behaviors are often a normal part of early childhood development. Young children are still learning how to regulate emotions, communicate needs, and interact appropriately with peers. Our goal is to respond to challenging behaviors in a way that supports learning, ensures safety, and promotes positive social-emotional development.

We are committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment for all children, families, and staff.

Behaviors That May Require Intervention

Challenging behaviors may include, but are not limited to:

- Biting
- Scratching or pinching
- Hitting, kicking, head-butting
- Throwing objects
- Pushing
- Spitting
- Throwing body on ground and causing injury to self
- Repetitive inappropriate language/name calling
- Repetitive inappropriate touching
- Bullying
- Persistent unsafe behavior

- Destructive behavior
- Repeated refusal to follow safety instructions

While these behaviors can be developmentally typical, especially in infants and toddlers, they cannot be permitted when they compromise the safety of others.

Response to Incidents (Including Biting and Scratching)

When a child engages in behavior that results in injury (e.g., biting, scratching, hitting):

- Immediate care and comfort will be provided to the injured child.
- The child exhibiting the behavior will be redirected and supported in learning appropriate alternatives. May be removed from the classroom for a short period of time.

- A bite report will be filled out with parent signatures of both parties (biter/bitten)
- It will also be documented on Lillio and parents will be notified at pick up
- Children's names will be kept confidential
  If your child continues to bite 3 times in a day or breaks the skin at least once, your
- child will need to go home for the day.
- Parents/guardians of both children will be notified.

All incidents will be documented and tracked to identify patterns or triggers.

Repeated or Escalating Behaviors

If challenging behaviors become frequent, intense, or pose ongoing safety concerns:

- Staff will increase observation and implement targeted strategies.
- A parent conference will be scheduled to collaborate on a behavior support plan.
- Environmental adjustments, routine modifications, or additional support may be implemented.
- Families may be asked to consult with their child's healthcare provider or early intervention specialist if appropriate.

Temporary Removal from Care

To ensure classroom safety:

- A child may be sent home if behavior results in serious injury (such as breaking skin through biting or scratching).
- A child may also be sent home if behavior is repeated multiple times in one day and cannot be safely managed within staff-to-child ratios.
- If a child is sent home for behavior-related concerns multiple times, a formal conference will be required.

Discontinuation of Care

If, after documented interventions and collaborative efforts, a child's behavior continues to pose a safety risk to themselves, other children, or staff, Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to suspend or discontinue care at the discretion of the Leadership Team. This decision will only be made after reasonable efforts to support the child and family have been implemented.

Partnership with Families

We believe behavior support is most effective when families and educators work together. Open communication, consistency, and mutual respect are essential in helping children develop the skills they need to succeed socially and emotionally.

Our priority is always the safety and dignity of every child, as well as a supportive and developmentally appropriate learning environment

Toilet Training Policy:

Learning to use the toilet is an important developmental milestone in your child's life. The staff at Rising Stars ELC are excited to partner with families and support children throughout this process in a positive, encouraging, and developmentally appropriate manner.

Staff will use accurate and age-appropriate anatomical terms, such as *penis* and *vagina*, when discussing body parts with children. Using correct terminology supports children's understanding of their bodies, promotes healthy development, and helps children clearly communicate with trusted adults about their safety and well-being.

When you feel your child is ready to begin toilet training, we ask that parents:

- Review the Potty-Training Readiness Checklist
- Complete and sign the Potty-Training Policy Agreement
- Begin toilet training at home at least one week prior to starting at school, with demonstrated initial success
- To promote consistency and confidence, children should show signs of readiness before beginning the process in the classroom.

While your child is in our care:

- Staff will provide encouragement, reminders, and support in a positive and patient manner.
- Toilet routines will be incorporated into the child's daily schedule.
- Accidents will be handled calmly and respectfully.

- Consistent communication between home and school is essential. Parents are asked to communicate regularly with their child's teacher through Lillio to ensure continuity and progress throughout the process.

Clothing and Supplies

- Children must wear easy-to-manage clothing, allowing them to independently pull pants up and down (e.g., elastic waistbands; no belts, overalls, or complicated fasteners).
- Parents are responsible for providing pull-ups and extra clothing, as needed.
- Teachers will notify families via Lillio when supplies need to be restocked.
- If you have any questions or concerns regarding toilet training, please contact the Rising Stars Leadership Team.
- Our goal is to make toilet training a supportive and successful experience for both children and families through collaboration, consistency, and encouragement.

Safe Sleep Policy:

Rising Stars ELC is committed to providing a safe sleep environment in accordance with state licensing regulations and current safe sleep recommendations.

Infant Sleep Practices
Infants will always be placed on their backs to sleep.

- A physician's written note is required for any non-back sleeping position. The note must specify:
    - The medical reason the child cannot sleep on their back
    - The approved sleep position
    - The duration for which the modified position is required
- Cribs will remain free of toys, stuffed animals, pillows, bumpers, and loose bedding.
- Blankets are not permitted in cribs.
- Sleep sacks or wearable blankets may be used in place of blankets, provided the child's arms remain unrestricted. Families are encouraged to provide an appropriately sized sleep sack.
- Swaddling is not permitted.
- Wedges or positioners will not be used.
- Infants will not be placed in cribs with bottles or sippy cups.
- Infants may not sleep for more than 15 minutes in a swing and will not be left sleeping in car seats or other upright devices.
- If a pacifier is used, any attached lanyard or clip must be removed during sleep.

- Infants will be checked frequently while sleeping and awake. Room temperature will be maintained at a level comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- Supervised tummy time will be provided daily for awake infants to promote muscle development and healthy growth.
- All staff are required to complete state-mandated Safe Sleep Training and remain current on safe sleep policies and procedures.
- Each infant classroom has a designated nap area with an assigned crib for each child.
- Rising Stars provides crib sheets, which are washed at least twice per week.
- Extra sleep sacks are available if needed.
- For questions regarding infant sleep safety or sleep training practices, please contact a member of the Leadership Team.

Nap Mat Policy (Children 12 Months and Older)

- Children over 12 months and under 18 months of age may transition to nap mats with written parental permission.
- Nap mats are 2 inches thick and provide a firm sleeping surface.
- Mats meet FDA standards and U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines.
- Children transitioning to the preschool hallway, beginning in the Trailblazers classroom, will use nap mats full-time.
- After each rest period, nap mats are thoroughly sanitized using an approved bleach and water solution in accordance with licensing guidelines.

Nap and Rest Time Policy

- Throughout the day, children engage in active learning and outdoor play, which makes rest time an important and necessary part of their routine.
- Nap/rest time is a state licensing requirement.
- Staff cannot prevent a child from falling asleep during designated rest time.
- If a child does not sleep, quiet activities such as books or calm table activities will be provided.
- If you would like a time limit placed on your child's nap, please communicate directly with your child's teacher so arrangements can be discussed.

Support for Nursing Mothers:

We support and encourage the breastfeeding mother's decision to continue to breastfeed their child. Our program will provide a welcoming atmosphere that encourages mothers to initiate and continue breastfeeding after returning to work or school. We will train staff on the benefits of breastfeeding and how to safely store, handle and freeze breast milk. Breast

milk will be stored in a designated space within the refrigerator or freezer, labelled with each infant's name and date the milk was expressed. Breast milk will be warmed gently with a bottle warmer or warm pot of water and temperature tested before feeding. Thawed breast milk will be used that day, and any extras will be disposed of after the last feeding of the day. We will also provide a private area for mothers to nurse, which will have comfortable seating and washing facilities, as well as provide space in the infant classroom. We ask that all breast milk be labeled with the infant's full name (first and last) and the date it was expressed. Please communicate all daily feedings with infant lead teacher.

Support for Bottle Feeding:

Rising Stars ELC wants to be able to help parents make infant feeding decisions that promote healthy growth, whether you choose to breast feed, bottle feed, or both. If your infant isn't bottle trained before attending, there are no restrictions, but we do ask for flexibility and open communication. You will be required to write out an established feeding plan with designated times you can come breastfeed. Bottle training should be a collaborative effort that translates from the home environment to the school environment. Please reach out to your child's teacher or Leadership Team for any questions or concerns

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Policy:

At Rising Stars ELC, the safety and well-being of every child in our care is our highest priority. As part of our legal and ethical responsibilities, any suspected case of child abuse or neglect must be reported immediately.

Reporting Requirements
Staff are mandated by law to report any suspected abuse or neglect to Child and Family Services (CFS).

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical, emotional, or sexual abuse
- Neglect, including improper care, supervision, or feeding
- Unsafe transportation, such as not using a proper child safety seat, or not having a helmet when on a bike or motorcycle.

Parental and Community Guidance
If parents or community members suspect abuse or neglect, they are encouraged to contact Child Protective Services directly at: **1-866-820-5437**.

Rising Stars ELC follows all legal requirements to ensure the protection of children and to promote a safe, secure, and supportive environment for all families.

Emergency and Safety Procedures

The safety of children and staff is our highest priority. Rising Stars ELC maintains written emergency and disaster procedures, with evacuation plans posted in every classroom. Staff are trained in emergency response and participate in at least ten emergency drills each year, including two unannounced drills as required by Montana State Licensing.

Evacuation Procedures
If an evacuation is necessary, children will be safely relocated to a designated emergency site. During drills, classes evacuate to the sidewalks near the apartments across the parking lot. In an actual emergency, children may be relocated to Perennial Apartments Community Room (Apartments to the North of Rising Stars) or another safe location. Families will be notified as soon as possible through Lillio, and emergency personnel will be informed of our location.

Medical Emergencies
In the event of a serious injury or medical emergency, staff will provide first aid or CPR, call 911 when necessary, and contact parents/guardians as soon as possible. Children will remain supervised at all times.

Allergies and Food Safety
Staff are informed of children's allergies and monitor food carefully. If an allergic reaction occurs, staff will respond immediately, administer emergency medication if authorized, and call 911 when needed.

Incident Reporting
All injuries and incidents are documented. Families will receive an incident report, and a copy will be kept on file. Child Care Licensing will be notified within required timeframes, when applicable.

Shelter-in-Place and Lockdown Procedures
During severe weather or safety concerns, children and staff may shelter in place or enter lockdown. Doors will be secured, children will remain supervised in designated safe areas, and no one will enter or leave the building until authorities determine it is safe. Families will receive updates through Lillio.

Emergency Communication and Reunification
Families will receive emergency updates and reunification instructions through Lillio. Children will only be released to a parent/guardian or authorized emergency contact listed in their file, and photo identification will be required. We ask families not to call the center during emergencies so phone lines remain available for emergency responders.

Individual Needs
We make every effort to meet the individual needs of all children during emergencies, including those who require additional support, accommodations, or medication.

Emergency Closures and Utility Outages
During a power outage, children may remain at the center for up to two hours. If power is not restored within that time, families will be required to pick up their children. The center may also close or require early pick-up if there is no hot or running water or if other facility or environmental conditions create an unsafe environment. Rising Stars ELC reserves the right to close or adjust operating hours due to emergencies or circumstances beyond our control.

Parent Engagement

At Rising Stars ELC, we value strong partnerships between families and our program. Parents and guardians play an important role in supporting their child's learning, development, and overall experience at the center. We encourage families to be actively engaged and involved in a variety of ways throughout the year.

Volunteer Opportunities
Parents and guardians are welcome to volunteer in the center. Volunteer opportunities may include:

- Helping in the kitchen
- Reading in the classrooms
- Helping with events (setup, teardown, etc.)

All volunteers are expected to follow the same policies and procedures as staff while on campus, including safety and confidentiality guidelines. If you would like to volunteer in the classrooms on a regular basis, you will have to go through the proper steps to be on our childcare license. Volunteering in the kitchen requires a background check.

Family Events and Celebrations
We are committed to offering meaningful opportunities for families to connect with our school community and support their child's educational journey.
We will begin the year with Back-to-School Night, welcoming both new and returning families to meet teachers, learn about classroom expectations, and establish a positive foundation for the year ahead. Our calendar also includes several cherished traditions that bring our community together, including but not limited to:

- **August** – Back-to-School Night
- **November** – Pie with Parents
- **May** – Muffins with Mom
- **June**
  - Pre-K Graduation
  - Donuts with Dad
  - Family Promise Summer Carnival

Family Partnership and Code of Conduct

At Rising Stars, we believe that a successful childcare experience is built on a foundation of mutual respect and clear communication between staff and families. To maintain a safe, professional, and supportive environment for everyone, we adhere to the following guidelines.

Official Communication Channels
To ensure that all information is documented correctly and that our teachers can focus on the children during the day, we use specific tools for communication:

- **Lillio App:** Our primary tool for daily updates, photos, and non-urgent messaging.
- **Email & Office Phone:** For scheduling, billing, or detailed discussions regarding your child's development.
- **Staff Privacy:** Employees must not be contacted via personal phone numbers, social media, or personal devices for any Rising Stars–related matters. We ask that you respect our staffs' work-life balance by using only official channels.

Expected Conduct and Professionalism
We strive to model regulated, respectful behavior for the children in our care. We expect all parents, guardians, and visitors to:

- Communicate with all staff, children, and other families with courtesy and respect.
- Use a calm, professional tone when discussing concerns, even during stressful situations.
- Respect the center's hours of operation and transition protocols.

Family Gift & Teacher Appreciation Policy
At Rising Stars Early Learning Center, our staff are grateful for the kindness and appreciation shown by our families. While gifts are never expected, we understand that families may occasionally wish to recognize the dedication and care provided by our teachers.

To maintain fairness and professional boundaries, individual gifts given to staff members may not exceed a value of $25.

Throughout the year, the center may organize opportunities for families who wish to participate in group expressions of appreciation, including contributions during Teacher Appreciation Week. Participation in these opportunities is completely voluntary, and all families are welcome to show appreciation in whatever way feels meaningful to them.

Zero-Tolerance Policy for Inappropriate Behavior
To ensure the safety of our center, certain behaviors are strictly prohibited and may result in immediate removal from the premises or **termination of childcare services without notice**:

- Aggressive Behavior: Including yelling, swearing, or using intimidating body language toward staff, children, or other families.
- Threats: Any verbal or physical threats directed at staff, families, or the organization.
- Harassment: Persistent unwelcome behavior or derogatory comments.
- Physical Safety: Any action that compromises the physical or emotional safety of children, staff, and fellow families.

Conflict Resolution and Grievances

We understand that concerns may arise. We are committed to fair and timely resolutions through the following process:

- Direct Communication: If appropriate, please speak with your child's lead teacher first.
- Formal Complaint: If the issue is not resolved, or if it involves a breach of policy or concern about a staff member, contact the Rising Stars Leadership Team in writing within 48 hours.
- Review: Complaints will be reviewed by Leadership and Family Promise Executive Director. We aim to provide a formal response or resolution meeting within 3–5 business days.

For general concerns, please contact the Leadership Team (contact information at end of handbook).

If your concern is not addressed, or the situation is high-risk, you can contact Teri Whitsitt with the Montana Licensing Department (406-522-2271) directly to ensure prompt attention and resolution.

Communication and Feedback
Families are encouraged to communicate openly with teachers and leadership staff. Your input is valued and helps us continually improve the program. Opportunities for engagement may also include surveys and parent-teacher conferences.

Who to Contact

Direct Line: **406-312-9804**

Leadership Team's contact information:

- Kate Reedy, email: kreedy@familypromisegv.org (Early Learning Center Manager)
- Mandy St. Aubyn, email: mstaubyn@familypromisegv.org (Operations Director)
- Johannah Nelson, email: jnelson@familypromisegv.org (Operations Coordinator)
- Allison Bradac, email: abradac@familypromisegv.org (Executive Director)

Montana State Licensing Department contact information:

- Teri Whitsitt: 406-522-2271
- https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcarelicensing/