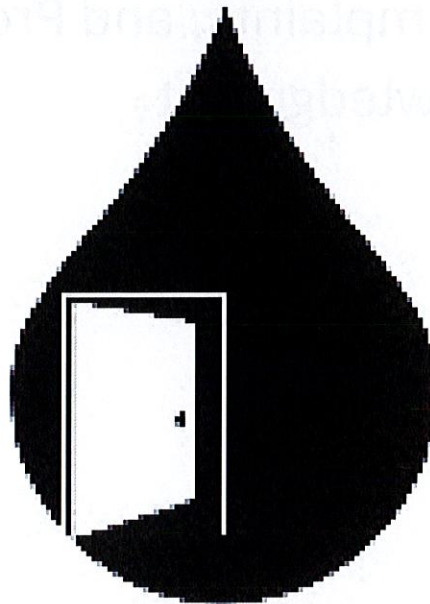


DROP-IN LEARNING CENTER

Family Handbook

Preschool Early Start and School-Age Before & After Care

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Updated August 2026

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Welcome

Dear Families,

We are delighted that you have chosen the Drop-In Learning Center (DILC) to support your child's learning, exploration, and development. Beginning a new childcare arrangement is an important transition. Our team will work with your family to help your child feel safe, known, included, and ready to learn.

DILC provides a caring, culturally responsive environment that supports cognitive, language, physical, social-emotional, and creative growth. We recognize that every child brings unique strengths, interests, needs, identities, and experiences. We value open communication and look forward to building a respectful partnership with your family.

Welcome to the DILC family. Thank you for trusting us to be part of this important stage in your child's life.

About DILC

Our History

A Drop-In Community Learning and Resource Center, Inc., known as the Drop-In Learning Center, was founded in New London in 1970. What began as an informal after-school learning space grew into a community-based organization serving children and families. Through changes in location and programming, DILC has remained committed to safe care, meaningful learning, and family engagement.

Mission

The Drop-In Learning Center of New London fosters the academic and social development of children and promotes family engagement in the learning process.

Vision

Children and their families are lifelong learners who believe in unlimited possibilities and work to fulfill their dreams.

Our Philosophy

Children learn best when caring adults nurture their curiosity, honor the many ways they learn, and provide developmentally appropriate opportunities to explore, practice, create, and succeed. We believe learning should be joyful, purposeful, inclusive, and connected to family and community life.

Guiding Principles

- Every child has the capacity and the right to learn.
- Growth and learning can be joyful and exciting.
- Families are essential partners in children's development.
- Diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging strengthen our community.
- Success looks different for each person, and every person can make progress.

- Our community is part of us, and we are part of our community.
- Positive change is possible.

Programs and Curriculum

Program	Ages	Schedule
Preschool — Early Start	3–5	Year-round; current daily hours are provided at enrollment and on the program calendar.
School-Age Before & After Care	5–12	On scheduled school days; current before- and after-school hours are provided at enrollment and on the program calendar.

Both programs operate at 76 Federal Street, New London, Connecticut, unless families receive written notice of an approved alternate site or activity. DILC serves children within the age range of 3 through 12 through its preschool and school-age offerings. Placement is based on age, school enrollment, program capacity, licensing requirements, and the child's needs.

Learning Approach

DILC uses an emergent, play-based approach. Teachers observe children's interests and development, then plan experiences that encourage language and literacy, mathematics, science, creative arts, physical development, social studies, problem-solving, independence, and positive relationships. Preschool planning is informed by Connecticut's Early Learning and Development Standards. School-age experiences may include homework support, recreation, creative projects, mentoring, life skills, and community-based enrichment.

Assessment and Family Conferences

Teachers use observation and developmentally appropriate documentation to understand children's growth and plan responsive experiences. Families receive progress information and opportunities for conferences. Families may request a conference at any time. Assessments are used to support learning—not to label, rank, or unfairly exclude children.

Transitions

DILC supports transitions into the program, between classrooms, and into kindergarten or the next school setting. Families and staff share information, establish routines, and identify supports that help each child adjust successfully. Records are released only with appropriate written authorization or when otherwise required by law.

Enrollment and Attendance

Enrollment

Enrollment is complete when required forms, health records, authorizations, eligibility documentation, and any applicable family payment arrangements are on file. Families must provide accurate information and promptly report changes to contact, custody, health, medication, transportation, or emergency information. Enrollment is subject to available space, program eligibility, and applicable licensing and funding requirements.

Nondiscrimination and Equal Access

DILC welcomes children and families without discrimination based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, ethnicity, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, family structure, disability, age, income, or any other status protected by law. DILC considers reasonable accommodations and works with families and appropriate professionals to support meaningful participation. Families are encouraged to discuss requested accommodations with the Executive Director.

Attendance and Absences

- Notify DILC as early as possible when your child will be absent or late.
- Regular attendance helps children build secure relationships and benefit from the program.
- Families receiving publicly funded care must follow applicable attendance and eligibility rules.
- Extended unexplained absences may affect enrollment after DILC attempts to contact the family.
- DILC follows its announced calendar and communicates closings, delayed openings, or schedule changes.

Arrival, Departure, and Authorized Pick-Up

- A responsible adult must bring the child to the designated entrance and complete the center's sign-in procedure.
- Children may be released only to a parent, legal guardian, or person authorized in writing by the parent or guardian, subject to applicable court orders.
- Staff may request government-issued photo identification.
- Tell DILC in writing when an authorized pick-up list changes. Telephone requests may require additional identity verification and are accepted only at DILC's discretion.
- DILC will not release a child to a person who appears unable to provide safe care. Staff will contact another authorized person and may contact emergency services when necessary.
- A child is not considered in DILC's care until received by a staff member and signed in, and remains in care until released and signed out.

Custody Orders

DILC follows valid court orders in its possession. A parent or guardian is responsible for providing complete, current copies. Without a court order limiting access, DILC generally cannot deny a legal parent access to their child or the child's records, subject to applicable law and safety requirements.

Personal Belongings and Clothing

Children should arrive in comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing suitable for active and messy play. Families should provide labeled spare clothing and any requested personal-care supplies. Toys, electronics, money, and valuable items should remain at home unless requested for a program activity. DILC is not responsible for loss or damage to personal items.

Family Partnership

Families are children's first and most important teachers. DILC welcomes family knowledge, questions, traditions, languages, and participation. Opportunities may include conferences, celebrations, surveys, volunteering, family learning events, the parent advisory group, and sharing a culture, profession, tradition, or talent.

Family Responsibilities

- Keep all emergency and contact information current.
- Read program notices and respond by stated deadlines.
- Share information that affects your child's health, safety, behavior, or participation.
- Treat children, families, staff, and visitors respectfully.
- Follow arrival, departure, parking, health, safety, and payment procedures.
- Protect the privacy of other children and families, including in photographs and social media.

Communication

DILC communicates through conversations, telephone calls, written notices, email, text messages, conferences, and other approved channels. Urgent or sensitive concerns should be discussed directly with the child's teacher or the Executive Director rather than through social media. Interpretation or translated information may be requested, subject to availability.

Visitors and Open-Door Practices

Families are welcome to observe and participate in ways that protect children's routines, privacy, supervision, and safety. All visitors must report to the office, follow identification and sign-in procedures, and remain with authorized staff unless otherwise approved. Access may be limited during emergencies, rest periods, investigations, or when required by a court order or safety plan.

Positive Guidance and Inclusion

DILC uses positive, developmentally appropriate guidance. Staff establish clear expectations, model respectful behavior, redirect children, teach problem-solving and emotional-regulation skills, reinforce positive choices, and adjust the environment or routine when needed.

Prohibited Practices

- Corporal punishment or any physical punishment
- Cruel, humiliating, frightening, threatening, or degrading treatment
- Abusive, profane, or insulting language
- Withholding food, water, rest, toileting, or necessary care as punishment

- Punishment for toileting accidents
- Unsafe restraint, seclusion, or isolation
- Discipline related to a child's disability or protected identity

Individualized Support

When behavior presents a concern, staff partner with the family to identify patterns, strengths, triggers, skills, and supports. DILC may seek family permission to collaborate with qualified professionals. Immediate safety needs will be addressed promptly. Suspension or termination is considered only after reasonable, lawful efforts to support participation, except when an immediate serious safety concern or another lawful basis requires different action. DILC will communicate decisions in writing and, when appropriate, help the family identify resources or another placement.

Behavioral Health Crisis

If a child presents an immediate danger to self or others, staff will use the least restrictive safe response, contact the family, and seek emergency or mobile crisis assistance as appropriate. In a life-threatening emergency, DILC calls 911.

Fees and Financial Assistance

Family fees are determined using household income and the number of people in the family, together with applicable program, grant, subsidy, and funding requirements. Families must provide requested income and household documentation and report changes that may affect eligibility or the fee amount.

- Each family receives written notice of its assessed fee and payment schedule.
- Fees are reviewed when eligibility is renewed or household circumstances change.
- Care 4 Kids or other assistance may cover only part of the cost; families remain responsible for their assessed share and any authorized charges not covered by assistance.
- Questions about an assessment, hardship, balance, or payment arrangement should be directed promptly to the DILC office.
- DILC provides written notice before taking enrollment action for unpaid balances, consistent with applicable funding and legal requirements.

No fixed fee is stated in this handbook. The written fee notice issued to your family controls. Ask the office for the current income and household-size schedule.

Health, Nutrition, and Medication

Health Records

Children must have health assessments, immunization records, emergency information, and other documentation required by Connecticut law, licensing rules, funding requirements, and DILC policy. Families must promptly provide updated records and tell DILC about allergies, chronic conditions, disabilities, dietary restrictions, medications, and emergency action plans.

When a Child Should Stay Home

Keep your child home when the child cannot participate comfortably, requires more care than staff can safely provide without compromising care for others, or may expose others to a communicable illness. Examples include fever with illness symptoms, repeated vomiting or diarrhea, difficulty breathing, uncontrolled coughing, unusual lethargy, unexplained rash with illness, or a condition identified by a healthcare provider or public health authority. DILC may request medical guidance before return when needed. Exclusion and return decisions are based on the child's condition, current public-health guidance, and applicable requirements—not diagnosis alone.

Illness During the Day

A child who becomes ill will be supervised in a comfortable area away from group activity as appropriate. DILC will contact the family or authorized emergency contact for prompt pick-up. Families must arrange timely transportation. Call 911 for a medical emergency.

Medication

Medication is administered only when DILC has the required written authorization, health-care instructions, properly labeled medication, trained personnel, and documentation required by law and policy. Medication must be delivered directly to staff; children may not carry medication unless a written, approved self-administration plan permits it. Emergency medications must remain current and accessible according to the child's care plan.

Allergies and Individual Health Plans

Families must identify allergies and provide current action plans and prescribed emergency medication when applicable. DILC works with families and health-care providers to develop appropriate care and emergency procedures. DILC cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment but uses reasonable precautions to reduce exposure.

Nutrition

DILC promotes balanced meals and snacks and follows applicable food-safety and nutrition requirements. Menus and meal information are available to families. Notify DILC in writing of allergies, medically necessary diets, religious practices, or other dietary needs. Food is never used as punishment or reward in a way that interferes with healthy eating practices.

Injury and Emergency Medical Care

Staff provide first aid within the scope of their training and document injuries as required. Families are notified based on the nature and urgency of the event. For a serious or potentially serious emergency, DILC calls 911, provides available emergency information, and contacts the family. When transport is necessary, emergency responders determine the appropriate destination; Yale New Haven Health's Lawrence + Memorial Hospital is DILC's identified local emergency facility unless responders direct otherwise.

Safety and Emergencies

Supervision and Security

Children are supervised by qualified staff using active supervision appropriate to the children's ages, activities, and needs. Doors, visitor procedures, attendance records, authorized pick-up controls, and staff communication support program security. Families must not allow unknown persons to enter secure areas.

Emergency Planning

DILC maintains plans for fire, severe weather, utility failure, hazardous conditions, medical emergencies, security threats, evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, and events involving Millstone Power Station. Staff practice required drills and follow directions from emergency management, public safety, public health, and licensing authorities.

Evacuation and Reunification

13. DILC accounts for all children and brings emergency contacts, attendance records, needed medications, first-aid supplies, and essential care items.
14. Staff accompany and supervise children throughout relocation.
15. When transportation is required, DILC coordinates with First Student, the local school-bus provider, and follows instructions from public authorities.
16. Families receive the reunification location and instructions through available emergency communication channels. Because authorities may designate a location based on the incident, families should rely on DILC's current message rather than an older printed destination.
17. Do not come to DILC during an ordered evacuation unless authorities or DILC specifically instruct you to do so. Bring identification to the reunification site and complete the release procedure.

Millstone Emergency

DILC is within the Millstone emergency-planning area and follows official instructions to continue operations, shelter in place, evacuate, or take other protective action. DILC maintains its own supply of potassium iodide (KI) tablets. KI will be handled only in accordance with current public-health instructions, required permissions, and individual medical information. KI protects only the thyroid from radioactive iodine and does not replace evacuation, sheltering, or other protective actions.

Family Emergency Responsibilities

- Keep emergency contacts and authorized pick-up information current.
- Tell DILC about disability-related, communication, transportation, medication, or other emergency support needs.
- Monitor official alerts and DILC messages.
- Avoid calling repeatedly during an emergency unless you have urgent information; staff must focus on children's safety.
- Follow the reunification instructions provided for the specific incident.

Closings and Delays

DILC may close, delay opening, dismiss early, or change operations because of weather, building conditions, public-health concerns, staffing emergencies, transportation interruptions, or official orders.

Families will be notified through available communication channels. Families are responsible for maintaining a back-up care plan.

Child Protection and Confidentiality

Mandated Reporting

DILC staff who are mandated reporters must report suspected child abuse, neglect, or imminent risk as required by Connecticut law. Emergent concerns are reported to the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) Careline as soon as practicable and within required timelines; non-emergent reports may be submitted through the state's mandated-reporter process. Staff do not need family permission to make a required report and may be prohibited from notifying a family when notice could increase risk or interfere with an investigation.

Connecticut DCF Careline: 1-800-842-2288. Call 911 when a child is in immediate danger or needs emergency assistance.

Confidentiality and Records

DILC protects information about children, families, and staff and limits access to people with a legitimate program, safety, funding, licensing, or legal need. Parents and legal guardians may request access to their own child's records, subject to applicable law, court orders, and identity verification. Information is released with written authorization unless disclosure is permitted or required by law. Families must respect the privacy of others and may not photograph, record, or post information about other children without authorization.

Photography and Media

DILC obtains family permission for uses of a child's image or work beyond routine internal documentation. Permission choices may be updated in writing, subject to materials already published or legal record-retention requirements.

Concerns, Complaints, and Program Review

Resolving a Concern

18. Discuss routine classroom questions with the teacher.
19. Bring unresolved, sensitive, or program-wide concerns to the Executive Director.
20. Submit a written concern when documentation or formal follow-up is needed.
21. DILC will review the concern, protect confidentiality as appropriate, and communicate a response or next step.
22. Families may contact the appropriate public agency at any time when they believe a health, safety, licensing, discrimination, or legal concern requires outside review.

DILC prohibits retaliation against a person who raises a good-faith concern or participates in an authorized review.

Program Evaluation

DILC reviews its services through family feedback, staff reflection, child-development information, incident and attendance data, licensing guidance, and community input. Families may be invited to complete surveys or participate in the parent advisory group.

Annual Handbook Review

Management reviews this handbook at least annually and when laws, regulations, funding requirements, emergency plans, or program practices change. DILC communicates material revisions and provides families access to the current handbook. A current written policy or official notice may replace an older handbook provision when clearly identified.

Questions

Drop-In Learning Center
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Family Acknowledgment

I acknowledge that I received or was given access to the Drop-In Learning Center Family Handbook. I understand that I am responsible for reviewing its policies, asking questions when I need clarification, keeping my family's information current, and following written program requirements. I understand that the handbook may be revised and that DILC will communicate material updates.

Child's name: _____

Parent/guardian name: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

DILC representative: _____