

# WELCOME TO THE P.A.L. PROGRAM

*(Parent's Alternative to Latchkey)*



## Parent Handbook & Policies and Procedures 2026-2027

Non-Profit Before and After School Childcare Program  
*Serving Kindergarten through age twelve students in the York School District*

PO Box 148 York, ME 03909  
207-363-1441

[www.palprogramyork.com](http://www.palprogramyork.com)

• Located at Village Elementary School in York ME •

### **P.A.L. Program Co-Directors:**

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# Mission

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Parent's Alternative to Latchkey provides safe and affordable before and after school childcare to local working families in York Maine.

# Philosophy

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***“Children need the freedom and time to play. Play is not a luxury it is a necessity.”***

**-Kay Redfield Jamison, Contemporary American Professor of Psychiatry**

Parents need to know and feel that their children are safe and well cared for while they are working. It is our philosophy that on top of safe, quality care, children need to be treated with respect and welcomed into a positive environment with open arms.

# Goals

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To provide parents with a secure, safe and happy place for their children.

To help children learn and grow while following their individual interests and needs.

To engage with every child in a caring and positive manner and to focus on cultivating four core values:

**Honesty • Caring • Respect • Responsibility**

## **The Rights of Children.**

**Children receiving childcare from Child Care Facilities have the following rights.**

1. Children must be free from emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation.
2. Each Child has the right to freedom from harmful actions or practices that are detrimental to the Child's welfare, and to practices that are potentially harmful to the Child.
3. Each Child has a right to an environment that meets the health and safety standards in this rule.
4. Each Child must be provided child care services without regard to race, age, national origin, religion, disability, sex or family composition.
5. Children must be treated with dignity, consideration, and respect in full recognition of their individuality. This includes the use of developmentally appropriate practices by the Child Care Facility.
6. Each Child has the right to the implementation of any plan of service that has been developed for that Child in conjunction with community or state agencies by the Child Care Facility.
7. Each Child has the right to Developmentally Appropriate activities, materials, and equipment.
8. Children with disabilities have the right to reasonable modifications to Child Care Facility policies and practices.

# Parent Involvement Philosophy

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We believe that building strong relationships with families is the best way to meet the individual needs of the children in our program. You are the expert on your child and we encourage you to participate in their care through involvement in our Board of Directors, sharing your families' traditions and culture, and attending family orientated events.

# OUR P.A.L. PROGRAM!

Parents Alternative to Latchkey is an independent Non-Profit 501c3 before and after school childcare program operating within the York public school district since 1989. We are licensed by the State of Maine for up to 75 children. Our program serves children Kindergarten through age twelve from Village Elementary School (VES), Coastal Ridge Elementary School (CRES) and York Middle School (YMS) in York Maine.

P.A.L. has a volunteer Board of Directors. Two family fundraisers are held each school year to help raise funds for the program. Our program follows a daily schedule that provides choices and supports child-centered play and exploration, both indoors and outdoors in the areas of craft, sports, games, homework club and free time, as well as special events.

All staff pass a Federal Fingerprint background check and Child Protective Intake records check. Staff members are certified in Child and Adult CPR/First Aid and receive on average 18-30 hours of State approved professional development training in childcare related courses per year. All staff are Mandated Reporters. We are members of the Maine Roads to Quality professional association and are committed to providing quality care through continued training and education.

## MORNING PROGRAM

### **Opens at 6:30AM**

P.A.L.'s morning session is held in the cafeteria at VES from 6:30am – until the start of school. Parents/Guardians walk their children to the VES café door, ring the bell and sign them in. The children are supervised and involved in daily activities until the start of school.

- V.E.S. Students** – Village Elementary students will walk to their classrooms when the bell rings.
- C.R.E.S. Students** – Coastal Ridge Elementary students are transported by bus to school from P.A.L.
- YMS Students** – Middle School students will walk independently to school from P.A.L. around 7:10am.

**A 'Release of Liability' Walking Form must be signed before your Middle School Student may attend P.A.L.**

**BREAKFAST**– VES students may get school breakfast in the cafeteria when the school bell rings, or if your child attends Coastal Ridge Elementary, they may get school breakfast when they arrive at school. Children may also bring their own breakfast to P.A.L. to eat prior to the start of school if you prefer.

## MORNING SCHEDULE:

**A.M.**

**6:30 - Children begin to arrive & are signed in by parent/guardian.**

Children may choose to do craft, color or play with toys and games.

**7:10 - Middle School students walk to school.**

**7:55 - Clean up the room.**

**8:05 - Gym** (sneakers required) or **Recess** (weather permitting).

**8:30 - Children are dismissed** to their classrooms, or to the bus to be transported to school.

# AFTERNOON PROGRAM

**Closes at 6:00PM**

P.A.L.'s afternoon session is held in the Cafe/Gym at VES from school dismissal until 6:00pm. Children arrive at P.A.L., are signed in and supervised in daily activities until they're signed out by a Parent/Guardian.

•**Y.M.S. Students\*** – Middle School students will walk independently to P.A.L. from the Middle School.

*A 'Release of Liability' Walking Form must be signed before your Middle School Student may attend P.A.L.*

•**V.E.S. Students** – Village Elementary students will be dismissed from their classrooms at 2:45pm and will walk directly to P.A.L. and sign in.

•**C.R.E.S. Students** – Coastal Ridge students will be bussed to P.A.L. and arrive at approximately 3:10pm and sign in.

## SNACK TIME –

A snack is provided by P.A.L. **Please send your child with a drink/refillable water bottle!** Please note that sending an additional snack with your child for the late afternoon is encouraged, especially if they have certain dietary needs or will be with us for the duration of the afternoon. We ask that they be healthy in manner and must adhere to our “peanut free” policy.

\***MIDDLE SCHOOL AFTERNOON SESSION:** Our afternoon Middle School Session is subject to cancellation if enrollment numbers drop below a level that is financially sustainable to operate. In the event that the Middle School session must be discontinued, we will provide a two-week notice.

## AFTERNOON SCHEDULE:

### **P.M.**

**2:00 - Middle School students walk to P.A.L.** - A staff member will sign them in.

**2:15 - Middle School may choose:** Recess (weather permitting), craft, color, play with toys and games or choose to do the special Middle School activity of the day.

**2:45 - Middle School snack.**

**2:45 - Village Elementary students arrive** - sign in and have snack.

**3:10 - Coastal Ridge Elementary students arrive** - sign in and have snack.

**3:25 - 4:00 Recess** (weather permitting)

**4:00 - 5:00 - Children may choose:** Gym (sneakers required), Homework Club, Craft or have free time. They may attend each activity.

**5:00 - Clean up the room.**

**5:15 - Gym or 2<sup>nd</sup> Recess** (weather permitting), or they may play in the P.A.L. room.

**6:00 - Close.**

# DESCRIPTION OF DAILY ACTIVITIES

Our program’s activities are planned based upon children’s interests, skills, and abilities. We conduct daily observations of the children which help implement our curriculum planning in those areas. These activities are guided by an understanding of children’s social and emotional developmental needs. All games, materials and equipment are developmentally appropriate, accessible and reflect all children’s interests.

Our program follows a daily schedule that provides choices and supports child-centered play and exploration, both indoors and outdoors in the areas of craft, sports, games, homework club and free time, as well as special events (information about our events are sent monthly via our Email Newsletters!).



## SNACK TIME

A snack is provided by P.A.L. and served when the children arrive at the program in the cafeteria. Children must sanitize their hands before having snack. Before serving snacks, staff must also sanitize their hands and wear gloves to serve any food or drink. We schedule a daily snack which follows our “**peanut free**” policy. We strive to provide healthy and nutritious snacks that often include fruits, vegetables, gluten free and dairy free options on most days. If our snack does not meet your child’s dietary needs, feel free to pack a snack from home for them to eat at P.A.L. *Please contact a Co-Director if you have any questions or concerns.*

Please note that sending an additional snack with your child for the late afternoon is encouraged, especially if they have certain dietary needs or will be with us for the duration of the afternoon. We ask that they be healthy in manner and must adhere to our “peanut free” policy.

**• PLEASE PACK A DRINK / REFILLABLE WATER BOTTLE FOR YOUR CHILD AND AN EXTRA SNACK FOR THE LATE AFTERNOON**

## CRAFT

A monthly craft calendar is created and sent out in each monthly E-Newsletter. Each day we provide a different craft activity. The craft is supervised and directed by a staff member. Crafts are designed to reflect the children’s interests and abilities, and all materials used are developmentally appropriate. We encourage all children to be creative! They have amazing imaginations and talent!

## RECESS

P.A.L. provides outside recess daily, and is approximately 30 to 60+ minutes long, weather permitting.

In the warm weather seasons, we will have a second recess after clean-up time in the afternoons. We follow a Weather Index chart that we use to help us determine whether it is too hot or too cold for the children to be outside. During winter months we require all children to wear a jacket, hat/hood, mittens/gloves and boots to be able to play outdoors. We encourage these items to be kept in a reusable shopping bag to help contain their belongings. Please send your child with appropriate clothing for outdoor play! Please pack an extra set of clothing for your child.

A first-aid bag is taken out to recess daily. This bag includes instant ice packs, Band-Aids, antiseptic wash, etc. and also includes any emergency inhalers and Epi-Pens that parents have brought in for their children. All staff on recess duty carry a walkie talkie to communicate with other staff.

## *Description of Daily Activities Continued*

### **GYM**

**Children must wear sneakers to play in the gym!** Gym is divided into two groups, K, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade - and 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and Middle School (Please advise if you prefer your child to be in a different group for gym time, based on their needs and abilities). Schedule rotates daily as to which group goes first. Each group will be in the gym approximately 30 minutes. Children first need to warm up their muscles by doing laps in the gym to avoid injury. Organized group games are played based upon children's skills and abilities. Free Play may also be a choice at times. We encourage good sportsmanship and positive behavior.

### **HOMEWORK CLUB**

Homework Club is offered Monday through Thursday and is typically held in the library dependent upon availability. This is a great opportunity for your child to complete their homework assignments and reading in a quiet space. Staff assist children when needed. Attending Homework Club is encouraged but optional. Please inform us if you would like Homework Club to be mandatory for your child (please know that your child will still have the opportunity to participate in Gym, Craft, etc. before/after their homework club time). Your child will earn a P.A.L. stamp on their card for every 15 minutes completed at Homework Club.

### **PAL STAMPS**

'PAL Stamps' were initiated to reward and encourage children to be helpful to others, to be good friends, and to be a great sport. At the end of each day, a 'PAL OF THE DAY' & 'SPORT OF THE DAY' will be chosen and their photo will be posted on the board in the café. They will receive 5 stamps that are recorded on their PAL card. (Children also earn stamps for attending Homework Club and answering the 'Question of the Day'!)

- **PAL OF THE DAY** is a child who was helpful, nice to others or had great behavior.
- **SPORT OF THE DAY** is a child that was a good team player or played well with others on the playground.
- **PAL OF THE WEEK** & **SPORT OF THE WEEK** will be chosen every Monday morning from the previous week. These children are chosen for their exceptional display of kindness and/or good sportsmanship. Their pictures will be posted on the bulletin board in the café. They will earn 10 stamps for this, as well as a 'Good Job' Certificate and a choice from the toy bin!

### **PAL STORE**

At the beginning of every other month, (October, December, February, April, June) children may spend the stamps they have earned at the P.A.L. Store. It is open for one week every other month during both A.M. and P.M. sessions, so all children may have the opportunity to shop. The store consists of toys, stickers, games, etc. The children look forward to the P.A.L. Store, as they have worked hard and look forward to spending their stamps! It is fun to see the children counting, making decisions, and sometimes even deciding to save their stamps to earn a bigger prize!

### **MIDDLE SCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES**

Middle School children have time prior to VES & CRES student arrivals where they can choose recess (weather permitting), craft, color, play with toys and games or choose to do the Middle School activity of the day (science projects, crafts, teamwork activities, etc!). They will also have the opportunity to be a "PAL" helper if they choose, and they will earn extra PAL stamps on their card! Middle School children can volunteer to be helpers in the areas of homework club, craft, and gym time and will be given a special PAL lanyard to wear! This helps create a positive relationship between the middle school children and the younger PAL children! (Helpers are well supervised and are never left alone with any child.)

# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Program Rates -

- **MORNING PROGRAM** – VES/CRES/Middle  
\*Weekly Tuition: \$100
- **AFTERNOON PROGRAM** – VES/CRES/Middle  
\*Weekly Tuition: \$175 (*includes snack*)

## STANDARD FEES

- **ANNUAL REGISTRATION FEE:** \$100.00 (*\$20.00 per additional child*) **non-refundable fee.**  
If registered after March 1st of the current school year, registration fee is \$50.00 (*\$20.00 per additional child*).
- **REFUNDABLE TUITION SECURITY DEPOSIT:** \$100.00 per family, regardless of date enrolled. Deposit will be refunded to your account at the end of the school year. If at that time your account is not in good standing, your deposit will not be returned and will be deducted from your outstanding balance.
- **FUNDRAISING OBLIGATION:** \$200.00 per school year. P.A.L. holds a minimum of two fundraisers per school year. See “Fundraising” section of this handbook for more information.

## CONDITIONAL FEES

- **LATE PICK-UP FEE:** First time being late, \$5.00 per family for every minute after 6:00pm. Second time being late, the charge doubles to \$10.00 per family for every minute after 6:00pm and suspension of care may be discussed by the Co-Directors.
- **NO CALL FEE (pm only):** \$10.00 per child, this fee is charged in addition to your weekly tuition charge. This charge is assessed when P.A.L. has not been notified ahead of time that your child is not attending that day or has been added last minute to a day that we do not expect them. To avoid a “no call fee” we must be notified **no later** than 1:45pm on the day the child will/will not be attending.
- **NON-SUFFICIENT FUNDS FEE:** \$45.00 will be charged when automatic deduction payments do not clear, due to insufficient funds from your account that we have on file.

## REGISTRATION

Forms **MUST** be filled out completely and emailed to: [ThePALprogram@gmail.com](mailto:ThePALprogram@gmail.com)

**Registration Form & Fees** – Once you have emailed your completed registration form, you will receive a confirmation email stating your spot in the program is secured OR waitlisted. The Registration fee and Tuition Security Deposit will be automatically charged to your account on file within two weeks of your spot being confirmed. The first week’s tuition will be charged the Friday prior to your child’s start date at PAL.

**Tuition Express Form and MyProcure** – The Tuition Express Form (included within Registration packet) must be filled out with a valid bank account or Credit/Debit Card to be kept on file. MyProcure Portal is a free online portal for you to access account and end-of-year tax information.

Tuition payments will be **automatically** charged weekly to your account on file for the following week’s tuition. If your payment is rejected due to your card being compromised, being over the limit, or if the card expiration date passes, you are responsible to update your account prior to the withdrawal of next week’s funds - otherwise your service for the next week may be suspended until your account is updated. **We must receive a new Tuition Express Form with any updates to your account information.** Parents/Guardians will be responsible for the \$45 Non-Sufficient Funds fee.

# BILLING

- Tuition payments will be **automatically** charged weekly to your account on file for the following week's tuition. Tuition is typically charged on Fridays, but due to Holidays or any unforeseen circumstances, you may not see tuition charged to your account until Monday or Tuesday. You are responsible for having funds available for withdrawal. **Cash and Check payments are not accepted.**
- Parents/Guardians will be responsible for the \$45 Non-Sufficient Funds fee. If we have made several attempts to contact you regarding your account and have had no response, the Directors may decide that suspension or removal from the program is necessary.
- A two-week notice is necessary for Withdrawal Notices (*more info on this in next section*). If you fail to give a two-week notice, you will be responsible for paying your weekly tuition for those first two weeks.

Billing and Financial Aid questions, please contact Co-Director Laura Gilchrest  
via Email: [LauraGilchrest.PAL@gmail.com](mailto:LauraGilchrest.PAL@gmail.com)

**Financial Assistance** – The P.A.L. Program is no longer working with the State financial assistance program (CCAP). If you need financial assistance, please fill out a financial assistance application (found on our website) and return it to Laura Gilchrest. Financial assistance depends upon the amount of funding we receive from donors and fundraising events. Therefore, depending upon the funds PAL receives, assistance may not always be available.

## SCHEDULING INFORMATION

### **SCHEDULING**

A spot will be held for your child to attend the program Monday through Friday every week. You can choose morning sessions, afternoon sessions, or both. If you choose not to send your child 5 days, please indicate on the registration form which days they will be attending every week. We **MUST** be notified ahead of time if your child will not be attending the program for the day, or if they need to be added last minute to an additional day. You will be charged the full weekly tuition for mornings and/or afternoons whether your child attends or not, as this will always guarantee space for your child on those days. If you fail to notify us that your child will be absent on their days or added to additional days, the \$10 No-Call Fee will be charged.

#### ***Schedule Change Notice***

- ♦ A Schedule Change Notice is used when you need to change the days that your child will attend every week. Please see a PAL staff member for this form. You may also view/print the form on our website.

#### ***Temporary Absence Notice***

- ♦ A Temporary Absence Notice is used when you have changes in your child's schedule that will have your child absent from the Program for a consistent amount of time before resuming back to their original weekly schedule (ie. Family vacations, afterschool sports, etc.). This is considered a Temporary Absence and your original contracted rates will still apply during this time frame (so your child's spot is still held). A two-week notice is appreciated so that we may staff accordingly. Please see a PAL staff member for this form. You may also view/print the form on our website.

#### ***Withdrawal Notice***

- ♦ A Withdrawal Notice is used when you no longer need to send your child to the program. Their spot in the program would no longer be held. Please see a PAL staff member for this form. You may also view/print the form on our website.
- ♦ A two-week notice is **required** for a Withdrawal Notice. If you fail to give the two-week notice, you are required to pay your original contracted rates for these first two weeks.

## **ATTENDANCE - If your child does not attend school, he or she may not attend P.A.L.**

- ♦Children may NOT attend the program if they have been sent home from school for behavior problems or illness.
- ♦A two-week notice must be given to Withdraw from the program (see “Schedule Changes” section above)
- ♦If your child will not be attending the afternoon program for any reason – or needs to be added to a day, you must call 207-363-1441 to notify us prior to 1:45pm. Leave us a voicemail on our P.A.L. phone.

***DO NOT email changes; emails are not an acceptable form of notification of schedule changes.*** There is a \$10.00 no-call fee each time you do not notify us by phone of these types of changes. **Your child’s teacher/nurse is not responsible for notifying us. You are responsible for communicating these changes with your child’s teacher.**

## **DAYS OF OPERATION**

P.A.L. follows the York School schedule. P.A.L. does **NOT** operate when school is not in session; during school vacations, holidays, and snow days. The program will not operate if school is delayed (no A.M. session) or released early due to bad weather (No P.M. session). During scheduled Early Release Days, P.A.L. will only be open for the A.M. session. We do not charge tuition when PAL is closed. You will see your tuition charges be less than a typical week when PAL is closed. Since we are an independent program from the school, we have the right to close due to weather, staff illness or any other unforeseen circumstance. If this occurs, all families will be notified of this closure by both phone and email.

## **MORNING DROP OFF POLICY**

When dropping off your child at PAL you **must accompany your child to the door**, ring bell and sign them in.

## **AFTERNOON PICK UP POLICY**

- ♦When picking up your child in the afternoon, please ring the doorbell at the VES café door. A staff member will greet you at the door with a clipboard for sign-out. **Parent/Guardian must show a valid State or Federal photo identification (names on photo ID must match with names listed on Child’s Registration form).**
- ♦**Children will ONLY be released to persons specified on your registration form.** Any permanent changes to the authorized pick-up list must be made in writing and will not be accepted over the phone. If someone is not on your authorized list and will be picking up your child, we need a signed/dated note or an email (to be signed the next day). We will need to verify their identity, so please instruct the person picking up your children to have valid photo identification with them at the door. Names listed must match names on photo ID.
- ♦Children must be picked up no later than 6:00pm, the clock on the sign out desk will be used to determine this. The first time you are late, you will be charged \$5 per minute per family. After 10 minutes the staff will call the contacts on your registration form to come and pick up your child. If by 6:30pm attempts to reach either a parent/guardian or persons on the alternative pick-up list have not been successful, the police will be notified. The second time you are late the fee doubles and suspension of care may be discussed by the Co-directors.

## **RELEASING CHILDREN TO VISIBLY IMPAIRED PERSONS**

As the safety of the children in our program is our number one concern, we feel that this extends through the release of the child to his/her parent or guardian at the end of each day. For the protection of the children, the following procedures have been developed regarding the release of children to parents/persons who are visibly impaired and who may not be able to drive a child home safely. If a parent/person arrives to pick up a child and exhibits behavior such as: slurred or incoherent speech, difficulty walking, or other unusual behaviors that may indicate the use of drugs and/or alcohol, P.A.L. staff will take the following action:

1. A staff member will inform and discuss with the person his/her concerns.
2. The staff member will inquire as to the person’s intended means for transporting the child.
3. If the person intends to drive, the staff member will encourage them to consider alternatives (i.e. calling a friend, or taxi).
4. If the person insists on driving in an impaired condition, the staff will inform them that he/she will call the police with the name of the driver and passengers, vehicle information, home address, and our concern that the child is in danger.
5. A call will also be made to the Department of Health and Human Services.
6. The childcare Director will telephone the parent/guardian the next day to arrange a required meeting. The meeting will include a Director, the staff member involved and the incident will be discussed and the policies will be reviewed. We reserve the right to terminate any contract if parent/guardian fails to attend this required meeting.
7. Due to legal consequences, a second incident requiring staff intervention will result in dismissing childcare services for that family.

# INVOLVEMENT IN OUR PROGRAM

## **FAMILY ORIENTATION**

We encourage parents/guardians to reach out to the Co-Directors with any questions/concerns before enrolling. We also encourage families to schedule an orientation conference to meet with a Co-Director before your child begins at the program. This conference is a great time for us to learn about one another, hear about your child's likes and dislikes, their learning styles and behaviors. It will also help you to learn about our program and policies and make sure that P.A.L. is a good fit for your family. We believe that sharing as much information as possible will help to make your child's experience at P.A.L. a success. Please be assured that we treat all information exchanged with the utmost respect and confidentiality.

## **SCHOOL COMMUNICATION**

Due to confidentiality and privacy, P.A.L. does not communicate with the school about your child without your permission. There is a 'Permission to Communicate' Form that you can sign at P.A.L. if you would like us to be able to communicate with your child's teacher, principal, guidance counselor, etc.

**IFSP/IEP** – If your child has an **IFSP** (Individualized Family Service Plan), **IEP** (Individualized Education Plan) or a **504 Plan** - please know that you are encouraged to share these plans with P.A.L. and you may also choose to have us participate in any necessary meetings as well. If you choose to do so, a 'Permission to Communicate' Form is required. Please contact a Director to discuss this.

## **FAMILY CONFERENCES**

P.A.L. offers opportunities for orientation conferences in August before your child begins at the program. If you choose to have a conference, a Director will email/call you with choice of dates and times available. Please know that you may request a conference with a Director at any time if you choose, to discuss your child's cognitive, social emotional and/or physical development needs.

## **COMMUNICATION**

This handbook is intended to help guide you with information about our program and our policies; it does not cover every situation that will arise. For your child/children to be successful in the program it is important that we maintain good communication. Please feel free to contact our Co-Director Nancy Conrad at any time with questions or concerns. Her email is: [ThePALprogram@gmail.com](mailto:ThePALprogram@gmail.com)  
If you prefer a phone conversation, you may request a time to speak together.

## **INTERPRETATION FOR ELL (English Language Learners)**

At the P.A.L. Program we employ staff from all ethnic backgrounds. The primary language we communicate in is English. If you communicate more comfortably in another language, please let us know. We will make every effort to make our materials and communications accessible for you in your home language.

## **E-NEWSLETTERS**

Email Newsletters are sent monthly. This is a great way for us to communicate with you about important info & events. We use the emails listed on your child's registration forms. If there is another email you would like us to use, please let us know. If you are not receiving the newsletters, be sure to check your Junk/Spam file.

## **FUNDRAISING**

P.A.L. will host a minimum of two fundraisers per school year, typically one in the Fall and one in the Spring. Families are required to contribute the \$200.00 over the course of the two fundraisers (both fundraisers give the opportunity to sell to friends and family). The \$200.00 total applies to all families who register, regardless of the number of days they attend per year. Families who do not wish to actively participate in the fundraiser sales will be billed for the \$200.00 or any remaining fundraiser balances (you will be notified two weeks prior to the fundraiser balance withdrawal). Unpaid fundraiser balances will be deducted from your tuition security deposit.

# GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

- ◆ Children are entitled to a safe and pleasant environment. All staff use positive methods of child management that encourage self-control, self-direction, self-esteem and cooperation. We stress positive correction practices, such as redirection, providing choices, positive reinforcement, conflict resolution skills and problem solving, and encouraging the use of language skills, when developmentally appropriate.
- ◆ Physical and emotional discipline (*such as shaming, humiliation, withholding food, confinement, verbal or physical abuse*) are strictly prohibited.
- ◆ If a child exhibits challenging behaviors, we will make every attempt at providing positive guidance to change that behavior, which may include creating a written plan with parents or guardians.

## **BEHAVIOR SUPPORT**

It is quite common for all children to exhibit challenging behaviors from time to time. At P.A.L. our trained staff can help identify these challenges and develop plans to correct the behavior. If an issue arises, we will work with you to provide additional support, resources, or educational materials.

## **BEHAVIOR CONSEQUENCES**

We will monitor all children's behavior daily, make corrections and re-directions as needed, and make verbal reports to parents at pick up as necessary. If behaviors become trends or escalate, we may take such action as a call to parents, a written account of a verbal warning, or a written warning. After 2 written warnings for problem behaviors, a one-day suspension may be warranted. If after the one-day suspension the behavior persists, a one-week suspension may be issued. If after a one-week suspension the behavior is still present, we may determine that dismissal from the program is appropriate.

If a child in the program **physically or emotionally** harms another child or staff member in any way, the following guidelines will be followed if appropriate: The first incident will receive written warning, the 2nd incident will warrant a 1-day suspension, the 3rd incident warrants a one-week suspension, the 4th incident results in dismissal from the program for the remainder of the school year.

These guidelines are subject to change and the severity of the incident is taken into consideration. The same consequences will be true for any destruction of school/P.A.L. property or inappropriate language or actions. If a child becomes physically aggressive and harmful to themselves or others or puts the safety of others in the program in jeopardy, the Directors may deem it necessary for that child to be removed from the program, bypassing our stated guideline policy.

## **COMMUNICATION REGARDING BEHAVIOR**

When a child exhibits challenging behavior, it is key that parents and staff communicate clearly and regularly to fully support the child. In certain situations, we may require a family meeting to discuss the issue and develop a plan of action or behavior plan.

If we have made several attempts to contact you regarding your child's behavior and have had no response, the Directors may decide that suspension or removal from the program is necessary.

# HEALTH AND SAFETY

Our P.A.L. staff members receive training on our health and safety policy.

All P.A.L. staff members are certified in Child and Adult First Aid/CPR and will administer treatment when warranted.

## **ILLNESS AND INJURY REPORTING**

If your child is seriously injured and/or having a medical emergency while at P.A.L., we will contact you as soon as possible. If you cannot be reached, we will attempt to call the persons listed on your emergency contact list. 911 emergency services will be utilized if deemed necessary. A reporting form (such as an Accident Form, Serious Illness/Injury and Death Accident Report, etc.) will be filled out by staff for your review, and a parent/guardian's signature will be needed. You may request a copy. Maine Childcare Licensing will be notified by P.A.L. immediately of any Serious Illness/Injury/Death Accident, and they will also receive a copy of the reporting form within 24 hours.

## **ILLNESS AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASE**

### **◆IF YOUR CHILD IS ILL:**

Children who are ill may not attend the program. This includes fever, diarrhea, vomiting, and any contagious illness that is transferable from one person to another (this includes Pink Eye). If your child tests positive for Covid-19, they are not allowed at the program. The current CDC guidelines and recommendations for isolation/quarantine will be followed. You are still required to pay for days your child is out due to illness or communicable disease.

**If your child becomes ill at school** your child may NOT attend P.A.L. Your child must be picked up at school, not at P.A.L.

**If your child becomes ill at P.A.L.** - Masks are required to be worn by children during our program if they are showing symptoms of any potential illness – such as excessive coughing and congestion/runny nose, fever, Pink Eye, diarrhea, and vomiting. This will help to prevent the spread of any possible illness. You will be notified to pick them up as soon as possible. Following Health and Safety guidelines, your child will be quarantined until you arrive. Staff will call the contacts you provided on your registration form to come and pick up your child. Your child must be picked up from the program within 30 minutes of our initial phone call. If you are late picking up your ill child two times, dismissal from the program may be warranted and will be at the discretion of the Directors.

Children with any contagious illness are not permitted to return to the program until 24 hours after the start of the antibiotic medication and/or children must be fever free (without the use of fever reducing medication) and have had no bouts of vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours to be able to return to the program.

Any children with lice, scabies or other parasitic infestation are not permitted to return to the program until 48 hours after symptoms and/or visible infestations are no longer present.

**LICE POLICY** - All Children are observed at the program. If it is noticed that your child is excessively scratching their head or has any live lice and/or visible eggs (nits) in their hair, parents/guardians will be called to pick up their child from the program immediately, and they are not permitted to return to the program until **48 hours after** the visible eggs and/or live lice are no longer present.

**MEDICATIONS** - Our staff does not administer medication to children, except Epi-Pens and Emergency Inhalers. Do not send medications with your child to the program. We do not transfer any medications from P.A.L. to school.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICATIONS**

◆If your child requires an Epi-Pen or inhaler, specific Action Plan forms are required. These forms must be fully completed and returned with the registration forms before your child may attend. All staff members are trained by a licensed professional to administer Epi-Pens and Emergency Inhalers. If administered, you will be contacted, and it will also be documented and kept in a log sheet with your child's Epi-Pen and/or inhaler.

## ***'Emergency Medications' Continued***

- ◆ The Action Plans must be completed by your child's healthcare provider. They are considered valid for one year from the date of the provider's signature. Should the Action Plans expire during the school year they must be replaced immediately. If the plans are expired, the child will not be allowed to attend until they are replaced.
- ◆ Parent/Guardians are responsible for providing P.A.L. with unexpired medications in their original packaging, exactly as listed on all action plans; substitutions may not be made. Should the medications expire during the school year, they must be replaced immediately. If the medications expire, the child will not be allowed to attend the program until they are replaced. Parents/Guardians are responsible for monitoring their children's medication expiration dates.

**REPORTING ILLNESS TO THE CDC** - As a childcare facility licensed by the State of Maine Department of Health and Human Services, we are required by law to notify the Maine CDC of cases or suspected cases of certain reportable diseases or conditions. This is in effort to minimize the exposure of specific health threats and highly contagious diseases. A list of notifiable conditions can be provided to you upon request.

**DIAPERS AND PULL-UPS** - P.A.L. does not have the facilities, nor do we have access to facilities to change diapers or pull-ups. Children entering the program must be out of diapers and pull ups.

**SOILED CLOTHING** - We know all children may have a toileting accident or soil their clothing at some point. If this happens, we expect that the child be able to clean and change themselves without staff support or assistance in 15 minutes or less. We will provide baby wipes if necessary (and we encourage everyone to have an extra change of clothes with them in their backpack). We are not able to physically assist them in cleaning themselves. Unless under special circumstances (see below); we will not enter the bathroom with a child.

### **REFUSAL TO CLEAN THEMSELVES:**

- ◆ Children will not be allowed to stay in soiled clothing. If your child refuses to clean themselves within the 15-minute time frame, parents will be called & expected to pick them up within 30 minutes of the initial phone call.
- ◆ When a child refuses to clean and change themselves twice, they will be suspended from the program until they are able to do so on their own. If upon return to the program this behavior repeats (two times again), they will be dismissed from the program for the rest of the school year.
- ◆ Late pick up for a child with soiled clothing who refuses to change:  
If this happens two times, the family will be dismissed from the program.

### **SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES - Diarrhea and/or Vomiting:**

Two staff members will enter the bathroom and stay with the child to provide care and comfort. We will give support, such as providing clothes and wipes and a bag for soiled clothing. Staff cannot physically help the child to clean themselves up, they must be able to do so on their own. We will stay in the bathroom with them until they are able to come out, after which they will be quarantined until a parent/guardian can pick them up.

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### **FIRE DRILLS**

Our program practices monthly Fire Drill procedures with the children in both morning and afternoon sessions. Our program also practices an Emergency Evacuation drill twice per school year.

### **EMERGENCY/DISASTER EVACUATION**

In the event of an Emergency or Disaster in which evacuation of the building is necessary, we will walk the children to our evacuation location outside of the Village Elementary School building. P.A.L. childcare services will continue until all parents/guardians have been notified and all children have been picked up. In the event emergency officials need to relocate staff and children, parents/guardians will be notified via phone when and where to pick up their children. **\*Refer to page 14 for complete Emergency Preparedness Plan.**

# EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

## Emergency Plans and Evacuation

In the event of an Emergency or Disaster in which evacuation of the building is necessary, we will walk the children to our evacuation location outside of the school building (via the safest route available at the time).

In the event of an emergency, P.A.L. childcare services will continue until all parents/guardians have been notified and all children have been picked up. Staff will stay with their assigned school group, and depending on the needs of children, staff members will be assigned to guide them.

## Coordination with Local Emergency Officials

In the event of an emergency, Staff will use the P.A.L. phone and/or personal cell phones to contact the police and fire department.

## Procedure for Notifying Parents

During an evacuation and when emergency officials have advised, P.A.L. will use the Registration Book on hand and each child's Parent or Legal Guardian will be notified via phone of when and where to pick up their children.

## Emergency Relocation Site

In the event emergency officials need to relocate staff and children, P.A.L. staff will safely walk with the children to our relocation site at the York Middle School, 30 Organug Road York ME. Parents/Guardians will be notified via phone when and where to pick up their children.

## Lockdown and Shelter-in-Place

In the event of a lockdown or shelter-in-place, staff will stay with all children in the designated safe area for the duration of the situation. Parents and legal guardians will be notified by P.A.L. staff of the event.

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### **York Police Department**

9 Hannaford Drive  
York, 03909

Emergency 9-1-1  
24 Hour Emergency Communication Center  
(207) 363-4444

### **York Fire Department**

1 Firehouse Dr.  
York, ME 03909

Emergency - 911  
Non-Emergency - 207-363-1015

# **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

## **PERSONAL BELONGINGS**

P.A.L. asks that all toys and electronics stay at home. Children are not permitted to use their cell phones or hand-held devices while at the program. The goal of our program is to stay “Unplugged”, which gives the children the opportunity to play, build friendships and explore their creativity!

Please label your child’s clothing and belongings. There is a lost and found bin at the site. P.A.L. is not responsible for personal belongings that become damaged, lost or left at the program.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY**

Photographs of the children are taken throughout the year during special events and activities. These pictures may be made public through advertisement, newspaper articles, press releases, social media, and other venues, provided parents and/or guardians sign a photography release form. Parents and/or guardians have the option to decline consent, and any photographs with images of their children will not be used outside of the program.

## **USE OF PASSIVE MEDIA**

The use of passive media such as television, films, and computer games are limited to developmentally appropriate programming. We watch films on a very limited basis and only those with a ‘G’ or ‘PG’ rating will be shown. The staff will preview all movies and music before it is viewed or listened to.

## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY (STATEMENT OF INCLUSION)**

It is our policy to serve all children to the best of our ability while adhering to our state guided child/adult ratios. Within reasonable accommodations, we will include all children with and without special needs in our program.

P.A.L. follows the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. P.A.L. does not discriminate on the grounds of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, including transgender status and gender expression, national origin, citizenship status, age, disability, genetic information or veteran status, in employment, education, and all other programs and activities.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

We at the P.A.L. Program are very sensitive to the fact that information concerning you, your child, and your family is private and personal. Trust and confidentiality are essential to building positive relationships. We are committed to maintaining your privacy and protecting your personal information. P.A.L. will not disclose information except as required by law.

## **NON-DISCLOSURE / TERMINATION OF CONTRACT**

The P.A.L. Program reserves the right to terminate any contract without notice when termination is in the best interest of the children in our Program, and the Program itself. We also reserve the right to terminate any contract without notice if parents/guardians fail to comply with the policies and procedures as outlined in this handbook. To best serve you and your family and to create a safe and healthy environment for all the children in our program, it is vital that we be made aware of any health, behavioral or safety concerns and conditions that may affect the well-being and safety of your child and others at P.A.L., and are supported by medical documentation by a licensed health care provider. We must be notified immediately upon registration or as soon as they develop. Should you fail to inform us of a serious condition, we reserve the right to terminate your contract and we will not be subject to liability.

## **REPORTING ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

“Abuse or neglect” means a threat to a child’s health or welfare by physical, mental, or emotional injury or impairment, sexual abuse or exploitation, deprivation of essential needs or lack of protection from these, by a person responsible for the child.

All staff members are trained State Mandated Reporters. We are obligated to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Health and Human Services via the Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-452-1999.

## **REPORTING LICENSING VIOLATIONS**

P.A.L. is fully licensed by the State of Maine. Suspected violations can be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services Childcare Licensing Unit, 207-287-9300.

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# **COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

**211:** Dial 211 or go to [www.211maine.org](http://www.211maine.org) to connect to resources in your area.

### **Child Developmental Services and Screening: Maine Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP)**

Kate Sullivan and Emily Smolin – ECCP Consultants for York County:

[ksullivan@comcareme.org](mailto:ksullivan@comcareme.org) (207) 852-0257      [esmolin@comcareme.org](mailto:esmolin@comcareme.org) (207) 852-9745

**MaineCare:** Provides health programs and food stamps. Call 1-800-482-0790 or visit the State of Maine website at <http://maine.gov/dhhs/OIAS/public-assistance/index.html> .

**Maine Coalition to End Domestic Violence:** Statewide Domestic Violence Helpline:

1-866-83-4HELP, <http://www.mcedv.org/>

**York Community Action:** Provides information and referrals for advocates and emergency assistance for shelter, utilities, heat or food. Call 207-439-2699, <https://www.yccac.org/>

**York Community Service Association:** Help for people who live in York with emergency situations/needs such as rent, medication, heat, food, etc. Please call 207-363-5504, <http://ycsame.org>



## **P.A.L. Program Co-Director Contact Information:**

- Nancy Conrad – Registrations/questions & concerns/changes  
[ThePalProgram@gmail.com](mailto:ThePalProgram@gmail.com)
- Laura Gilchrest – billing & financial aid questions  
[LauraGilchrest.PAL@gmail.com](mailto:LauraGilchrest.PAL@gmail.com)