



Cottontails Childcare & Learning Center

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COTTONTAILS CHILDCARE & LEARNING CENTER

2025 - 2026 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

WELCOME TO COTTONTAILS CHILDCARE AND LEARNING CENTER

We are excited to have you as part of our great team of educators. We are looking forward to helping you learn and grow as early childcare professionals. Please take the time to read through this handbook so you are familiar with Cottontails' policies and procedures. If you have any questions, please reach out to your director or assistant director prior to beginning employment. We look forward to working with you!

OUR PHILOSOPHY

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center is a childcare program for ages 6 weeks to 5 years which provides high quality childcare in a loving, safe, and stimulating environment that enriches the children during these crucial years.

We believe that learning takes place primarily through exploratory activities and discovery. We provide a child-centered environment with a wide range of materials and developmentally appropriate activities, which allows your child to create, manipulate, explore, and discover according to their particular and unique interests.

Each child is valued and recognized as a unique individual with a large capacity for growth and development.

Through both group and individual activities, your child is encouraged to develop socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically at his or her own pace.

Our philosophy also incorporates open communication between the parent and provider which builds the trust needed for a successful relationship.

DAYS / HOURS OF OPERATION

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center is open from 7:30AM – 6:00PM, Monday through Friday.

Cottontails staff will work a nine hour day with an hour break in between. Staff shift hours vary depending on the center's needs. Staff hours are subject to change depending on the center's needs.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center will close with the Stamford Public School system for all inclement weather closings. Please watch local news stations or visit www.stamfordpublicschools.org for weather related closures. Cottontails will make decisions independent of the school district on delayed openings and early releases. An email or text will go out to all staff as soon as a closure, delay, or early release is decided.

In the event of a school closure due to inclement weather, Cottontails employees will be paid only if professional development is completed. The required professional development hours to get paid for a snow day are:

Full-Time Employees	5 hours of professional development
Part-Time Employees	Based on # of hours worked per shift

COTTONTAILS BENEFITS PACKAGE

After a 90-day probationary period, all full-time Cottontails employees will receive holiday pay when the center is closed. See below for a list of holidays observed.

Holidays are subject to change. If one of these holidays falls on a Sunday, it will be observed on the following Monday. If the holiday falls on a Saturday, the school will select either the following Monday or the proceeding Friday as a substitute holiday.

Holidays:

- Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- Presidents' Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- July 4th - Independence Day

- Labor Day
- Columbus Day
- Veterans Day

Vacation:

After 6 months of employment, all full-time Cottontails employees will receive vacation pay when the center is closed for vacation weeks. Vacation time for all Cottontails employees will be during school scheduled breaks in April, August and December. Vacation time will be as follows:

- Stamford Public School's scheduled Christmas Break
- Stamford Public School's scheduled Spring Break
- One week in August (dates will be given one year prior)
- All Vacation week/weeks are at the discretion of the Cottontails Administration and will be based on staff performance and attendance.

August Vacation

If you have used all of your sick and personal time (8 days) between January - August of the same year, and have taken 2 or more additional unpaid days off (10 or more days off total), you will **NOT** qualify for vacation time during the August vacation week. If you have any questions about your personal or sick days, you can ask an admin or look it up on ADP.

Bereavement:

After 6 months, Cottontail's full-time employees are entitled to paid bereavement leave.

- Up to 5 days for immediate family members (Parents, Sibling, Spouse, Grandparent)
- Up to 2 days for extended family (Aunt, Uncle, Cousin)

Healthcare & 401K:

Cottontails also offers full-time employees medical, dental, and vision insurance through United Health Care. Employees may choose to opt in to this package after their 90-day probationary period is completed.

All full-time employees are also offered the opportunity to invest in a 401K plan through Cottontail's Childcare. Employees may choose to opt in to this plan after completing their 90-day probationary period. It is the employee's responsibility to opt out; otherwise, an automatic deduction will occur.

Sick and Personal Time Off:

Full-time employees are entitled to sick and personal time off **after 90 days** of employment.

If your employment at Cottontails began **prior to January 1st 2025**, you are entitled to 5 sick days and 3 personal days, which will renew on the first of each year.

For all new hires **after January 1st 2025**, your allotted sick time, per Connecticut paid sick time law, will be prorated based on your start date. Your allotted personal time, will also be prorated based on your start date. Prorated time off will be designated on the employment contract.

Part-time employees will be allotted one hour of sick time for every 30 hrs worked after 90 days of employment.

Block Days are days/weeks before and after a holiday or break. **Personal time cannot be used on a "Block Day". If you call out on a block day, you will not receive the paid holiday.**

Sick and Personal time can not be used together.

Any remaining sick and paid time off hours left at the end of the year will be paid out.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance is important to the day-to-day running of the Cottontails. We expect all teachers to be in their classroom and ready to work at their designated start time. **All teachers should make sure to use the bathroom and put their belongings away before their designated start time.**

All time off requests must be submitted to the office via a personal time off form. These forms can be found in the teacher's lounge. Teachers **cannot** use paid time off for any scheduled staff development days. Any illness extending over five days will require a doctor's clearance note before returning to Cottontails.

Any unpaid days must be medical or bereavement (for immediate-family members) days only. Medical days must be confirmed via doctor's note, even if it is for one day.

Any medical condition that requires documented accommodations must also adhere to your job description. If your medical condition does not permit you to fulfill your job description, you can apply for FMLA (Family and Medical Leave Act) through the state of Connecticut, until you are medically able to fulfill your job's requirements. Cottontails will do their utmost to accommodate any medical condition as long as it does not create hardship and interfere with the state of Connecticut childcare policies and procedures.

No call, no show:

Failure to notify Administration of your absence before your scheduled shift will result in immediate termination, unless a medical emergency has arisen. Documentation for the medical emergency must be provided to return to work.

Scheduled coming in late/ leaving early:

- Must have submitted a request form at least **two weeks prior**, which has been approved by an administrator.
- Employees who are leaving early or coming in late are responsible to find coverage for their shift. It will need to be a teacher in their department. It is their job to notify the Admin team on who will be switching shifts with them.
- **During the first two weeks of the school year following the August break, request forms will not be approved. Staff are not permitted to arrive late or leave early during this timeframe.**

Scheduled days off:

- Must have submitted a personal time off form **two weeks prior** to the date needed which has been approved by an administrator. If your request for personal time off is denied and you call out the day you requested, doctor documentation will need to be provided or you will be subject to a write up.
- Scheduled personal time off **cannot** be used on block days, or in the month of a scheduled vacation (**August, December, April and first two weeks of the school year following August break**).

- Cottontails administration will approve time off requests at their own discretion. You are **not** guaranteed any time off requests until a written confirmation is received from the director or assistant director.

Calling out:

- Call outs must be made before 6:30am via email (cottontailsstamford@gmail.com, adcottontailstamord@gmail.com)
- Calling out for two or more consecutive days will require a doctor's note.
- Absence of 5 or more days will require an updated doctor's note, which includes clearance to return to work and an excused absence for the previous 5 days.

Personal and sick time will be tracked and recorded in ADP. Employees can view their personal and sick time balances on ADP at any time. Once days have been used, the system will automatically deduct those days from the balance. It is mandatory for supervisors to review and approve requests in a timely manner.

Teachers **must** adhere to the same illness policy as Cottontails children. Please read the Child Illness Policy in full to know when it is necessary for staff to stay home.

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Teachers should arrive at Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center at least 10 minutes before their scheduled start to give themselves time to put their belongings away and use the bathroom **prior** to clocking in for the day.

Being on time is **critical** to the operation of Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center. If you are more than 5 or more minutes late, that is considered tardy. After **three** tardies in a one-month period, a verbal warning will be given. Any additional tardies after a verbal warning will result in a written warning. After **one** written warning has been issued, any further disciplinary action may result in **suspension** or **termination**.

All employees are expected to work their entire scheduled shift. If all children in your class leave prior to the end of your scheduled shift, please see the director or assistant

director for further instructions. You may be asked to cover a different classroom, assist in cleaning, or other tasks until the end of your shift.

Please remember to **clock in** and **clock out** each day. This includes clocking in and out for your scheduled 60-minute lunch break. If you forget to clock in or out, please speak with the director or assistant director as soon as possible to get your timecard amended.

CLOTHING & PERSONAL BELONGINGS

While Cottontails does not have a specific dress code, all staff are required to wear appropriate clothing. We encourage teachers to dress **comfortably** and **practically**. Teachers must avoid spaghetti straps, crop tops, low cut shirts, etc. Please consider daily activities and dress accordingly.

Backpacks, handbags, purses, or other bags belonging to adults, staff, or program staff for carrying personal articles should never be accessible to children.

LUNCH BREAKS

All teachers (full-time and part-time) will get a minimum 15-minute break after working directly with children for 4 hours. All full-time teachers will be given a 60-minute lunch break each day. The timing of this break may vary depending on coverage. If a teacher has something scheduled during their lunch break, the director or assistant director should be informed at least **two weeks** prior so coverage can be guaranteed.

Teachers will be expected to clock in and out each day for their lunch. Staff members must be in their classroom **before** clocking in from their break. If a teacher has to use the bathroom or put their belongings away, this should be done **prior** to clocking in.

It is important that all lunch breaks are completed in a timely manner so the next break can begin on time.

If, at any time, a staff member feels they are unable to perform their duties safely and appropriately, they may request a brief, immediate break. Teachers should do this by using their classroom walkie-talkie. An administrator or floater will come to the classroom to relieve the teacher for a few minutes until they are ready to return.

TERMINATION

All Connecticut employees are “at will,” which means an employee can be terminated by the program for any reason. The following are steps which are taken using progressive discipline:

Step One: Verbal Warning

If a staff member’s job performance is not meeting program standards, or if a staff member is in violation of any policy, he/she will be informed of the problem and possible penalties if performance does not improve. Suggestions on ways to improve job performance are discussed. Verbal warnings may be given for violation of policies, failure to follow procedures, unsatisfactory performance, absenteeism, or tardiness. Verbal warnings will be discussed and signed by both the staff member, director, and/or assistant director. After three verbal warnings have been issued for any reason within a period of six months, a written warning will be issued.

Step Two: Written Warning

A written warning is given if a problem identified by multiple verbal warnings has not been corrected. Written warnings will be recorded, discussed, and signed by both the staff member and director and/or assistant director. A staff member may receive only one written warning during a six month period. After one written warning has been issued, any further issues or actions subject to the disciplinary procedure may result in suspension or termination. Written warnings will be issued immediately for refusal to follow lawful instructions or any other serious policy violation, which endangers the safety or integrity of a child or staff member.

Step Three: Termination

Termination may result when using progressive discipline if steps have not produced satisfactory and acceptable performance. Termination may be immediate without using progressive discipline. Reasons for immediate termination may include, but are not limited to:

- Child abuse or neglect under Connecticut law
- Abuse of a parent/guardian of a child or another staff member
- Harassment
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol while at work
- Theft
- Possession of a weapon

- Violation of any policy

*The above violations are only examples and are not meant to be all-inclusive. Disciplinary action up to and including termination may be taken immediately at the discretion of the director.

If termination of employment occurs, whether by Cottontails or by employee, no accrued sick, holiday, or personal days will be paid. Employees cannot use sick or personal days after notice of termination is submitted.

Non-disparagement agreement

I agree that I will not, at any time, go through any channels, included but not limited to, the press, internet or any forms of communication, that would disparage, defame, or diminish the reputation, integrity or professionalism of Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center. Cottontails will in turn, not perform any of these acts upon any present and past employees.

I agree not to make any false allegations, regarding Cottontails' services and staff to any third party.

I agree not to disclose any false or misleading information about Cottontails' to any former or current parents.

I understand that if I have performed any of these acts against Cottontails and/or any staff members, legal action can be taken.

TEACHER REQUIREMENTS

All new teachers will be required to complete a Health and Safety Training within 3 months of being hired, which includes Care4Kids training and state mandated reporter training.

All new teachers who work directly with children must be certified in pediatric CPR and first aid within 12 months of hire. Teachers are not permitted to be left alone with children if their CPR and first aid is expired or not completed.

All new teachers will be required to read this handbook in full and complete the Staff Orientation Checklist.

All new teachers are required to submit a medical statement signed by a physician, APRN, or PA, completed within twelve months before the date of employment. After the initial statement, teachers are required to get a signed medical statement at least once every **thirty-six months** going forward.

JOB PERFORMANCE

Communication between employees and supervisors or managers is very important. Discussions regarding job performance are ongoing and often informal. Employees should initiate conversations with their supervisors if they feel additional ongoing feedback is needed.

Generally, formal performance reviews are conducted annually. The reviews include written performance appraisal and discussion between the employee and the supervisors about job performance and expectations for the coming year.

EMPLOYEE GRIEVANCE AND RESIGNATION PROCEDURES

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center values each of our employees. Our goal is to create a nurturing, positive learning environment where teachers look forward to coming to work each day.

If at any point and for any reason a Cottontails employee wishes to resign, they are free to do so. Cottontails asks that teachers submit a written and signed resignation letter at least two weeks before their anticipated last day.

MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center staff can only administer **prescription medications** if they have received an Administration of Medication form, filled out and signed by both a physician and parent. Parents can get these forms from the school nurse or our main office. If a parent brings in any prescription medication, please advise them to bring it directly to the main office so the director or assistant director can go over paperwork. **Only teachers who have completed the Medication Administration Training may administer any kind of medication.** *This includes prescription diaper creams.*

If a parent brings in a non-prescription diaper cream, they must fill out a Topical Administration Form, found in each classroom. If a parent gives you a Topical Administration Form, please bring it to the office for review.

If a staff member makes an error when administering **any** type of medication (prescription or non-prescription), the parent should be notified by phone immediately and in writing no more than 72 hours after the error occurred. The error will be documented on the child's records.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

In case of a medical emergency, a qualified staff member will administer first aid as needed. Another staff member will notify the family of the child. Attempts will be made to consult with the child's physician/dentist. If neither is available, the program's medical consultants will be contacted. For extreme emergencies, 911 will be called. An ambulance will take the child and a staff member to the nearest hospital. A staff member will notify the family or alternate pick-up person to meet the child at the emergency room. Additional staff will be called in if necessary to maintain required ratios.

INCIDENT REPORTS

All Cottontails teachers are responsible for filling out incident reports if a child gets injured while under their supervision. Incident reports should be filled out and parents should be notified right away. After the incident report is signed by both staff and parents, a copy should be made so one can be given to the child's parent and the other can be handed in to the office, to be checked and filed appropriately.

All incident reports will be looked over by an admin via camera if needed. If the incident has occurred due to lack of supervision, Cottontails has reserved the right to immediate termination.

MULTI-HAZARDS

Local Emergency Management Director	Phone Number
Lou DeRubeis	(203) 977-4151

MULTI-HAZARD EMERGENCY DRILL

A multi-hazard emergency will be practiced at least annually which includes a demonstration involving all staff, program staff, and children sheltering, locking down and evacuating the facility.

FIRE EVACUATION

In the event of a fire, evacuation from the building will be through the closest fire exit. Staff will be responsible for supervising the children under their care and leading them to the fire exit. Immediately, the group will walk to the nearest door safely away from the building, and line up to take a name-to face-attendance. The director or person in charge will be responsible for taking their first aid kits, tablets with all emergency contact numbers. Should it not be possible to return to the building, staff will walk the children to the Aspire Living and Learning Academy located at 5 Riverbend Dr Stamford, CT. Parents will be notified ASAP. Ratio will be maintained at all times.

SHELTER IN PLACE

In the event of severe weather, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, winter storm, or any other unsafe situation where evacuation is not possible, staff, program staff, and children will remain indoors in a safe location away from closed windows and doors. Staff and children will shelter in place behind a changing table, under a table, in their bathroom or closet if the need to shelter in place arises. Program staff will have appropriate supplies available for the comfort and engagement of the children. First aid program staff will be on hand to administer first aid, as needed, until emergency personnel can arrive. Parents will be notified after the immediate danger has passed.

LOCK-DOWN

Should an emergency or threat that involves potential violence in or around the facility requires the need to stay put, the director/person in charge will notify the staff by walkie talkie and/or phone that they should begin a lock-down procedure. 911 will be called.

Each program staff member is responsible for the children in their care at that moment. The program staff will gather the children to the safest area of the room, away from any windows or doors. Doors and windows will be locked, lights turned off, and curtains/blinds closed to all interior windows.

Program staff will calm the children and help them remain quiet. Attendance will be taken periodically.

The director/person in charge will remain in constant communication with the emergency personnel.

Parents are not permitted access to the facility until it is determined that it is safe to do so.

During the emergency, the director/person in charge will do all they can to notify parents by Procure and/or phone, however, certain emergency situations may preclude this possibility.

Wait for all clear from the emergency personnel. The director/person in charge will communicate all clearly to staff, program staff, and children.

Parents will be notified via Procure text messaging and/or phone after all clear has been given by the emergency personnel.

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR INFANTS, TODDLERS AND CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES OR CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS

In consultation with the child's parent, program staff will develop a plan to ensure the special needs of the child are met during an emergency, including the provision of necessities such as medications, diapers, wipes, formula, and other comfort items. Cribs may be used to evacuate infants, toddlers, and children with special health care needs or disabilities.

MONITORING OF DIABETES

For children with diabetes an individualized care for the child will be developed for both staff and parents, and selected staff members will be trained in monitoring and administering medication. The individualized plan will include:

- Appropriate care of the child to prevent and/or respond to a medical emergency
- Agreeance to check and maintain any equipment in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- Plan of material removal and discard

At the time of enrollment, the child's parent(s) will provide the necessary equipment and supplies to meet the child's individualized needs. These supplies (including materials that need to be disposed of) must be labeled with the child's name and will be stored out of reach of other children.

Cottontails will keep records, as part of the child's medical record, that will be updated annually or when there is any change in the information. A record, written and signed by the child's physician and parents will include:

- The child's name
- The diagnosis of diabetes

- The type of blood glucose monitoring test required
- The test schedules
- The range for test results
- Specific action to be taken
- Diet requirements and restrictions
- Requirements for monitoring physical activity
- Conditions requiring immediate notification of the child's parent(s) or medical professional

Cottontails will notify the parent(s) daily of any test results (blood glucose test) and any action will be taken based on the test results. Incidents and emergencies will be reported to both the child's parents and physician.

CHILD SUPERVISION POLICY

Infants and toddlers must always be supervised by **sight** and **sound**. Preschoolers must primarily be supervised by **sight** and **sound** with brief periods where they may be supervised by sound only (i.e. when toileting), as is developmentally appropriate.

Ratios must be maintained at all times while children are awake, both indoors and outdoors. Group size must be maintained at all times, both indoors and outdoors. A group is defined as the number of children being cared for in one area. This includes classrooms, gym, and outdoors.

While children are under your supervision, all staff should continuously move around the classroom/play areas to maintain direct supervision of all children.

Failure to maintain appropriate ratios and group sizes will lead to immediate termination.

Children under 24 months old:

There must be **one** staff member for every **four** children under 24 months old.

There should never be more than **eight** children under 24 months old in a group.

Children 24-36 months:

There must be **one** staff member for every **five** children 24-36 months old.

There should never be more than **ten** children 24-36 months old in a group.

Children 3 years* and older:

There must be **one** staff member for every **ten** children over 3 years old.

There should never be more than **twenty** children over 3 years old in a group.

*Children between 32-36 months old may be included in 3 year old ratios / group size as long as Cottontails receives written authorization from the child's parent.

ELECTRONIC USE

No electronics (including laptops, desktop computers, or tablets) **should be accessible to children under two years of age.**

Access to electronics (including laptops, desktop computers, or tablets) should be limited to children two years of age and older and only used for educational or physical activity purposes. Children over the age of two years old should not have access to electronics for any more than **60 minutes** per day.

Personal phones should **never** be out around awake children. The provided classroom tablet should be used if teachers are documenting on ProCare. **Absolutely no pictures of Cottontails' children should be on any staff's personal phone.**

If an incident occurs while a staff member is using their personal phone it will result in immediate termination.

PARENT INTERACTIONS

Cottontails' teachers should strive to have positive interactions with parents and caregivers at pick-up and drop-off. Parent / teacher relationships are **essential** to early childhood learning.

All staff should use appropriate language when speaking to parents. Slang terms, curse words, or other patronizing language should never be used.

Parents may also communicate with staff through the ProCare app. Teachers should check ProCare each day at the beginning of their shift and during rest-time to make sure that any parent messages are responded to in a timely manner.

CURRICULUM

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center focuses on each child's individual growth. We believe in every child and in the importance of guiding them toward self-discovery. Cottontails uses a curriculum that aligns with Connecticut's Early Learning Development Standards (CT-ELDS). Teachers should read through the CT-ELDS Standards and familiarize themselves with them.

Teachers will be responsible for creating their own curriculum and activities for their classroom based on the CT-ELDS. Cottontails uses a theme-based curriculum. Teachers will choose a theme and corresponding learning experiences that help children learn and grow. We encourage teachers to collaborate with the other staff in their department, and exchange curriculum ideas and materials. Teachers can also use other outlets such as Pinterest, Teachers pay teachers, Scholastic, education.com, or other online resources to find age-appropriate ideas.

Each classroom should develop and implement a written weekly, bi-weekly or monthly plan that is developmentally appropriate and should be available to parents and program staff. Such plans should reflect the learning and developmental needs of the diverse population of children in the setting, which includes children with cultural, language, and developmental differences, and should incorporate skills across multiple domains, including but not limited to: social and emotional development, cognition, physical development and health, language and literacy, mathematics, creative arts, science and social studies.

Lesson plan templates are accessible to each classroom. Lesson plans should be turned in to the Curriculum Director for review no later than Thursday. After approval, lesson plans should be displayed outside of the classroom.

Teachers will have at least 60 minutes per week of planning time for lesson planning and preparing materials. A floater will cover the classroom during this time to ensure the teacher can have uninterrupted time for planning.

ASSESSMENTS / REFERRALS

All teachers will be responsible for learning the CT-ELDS developmental standards and the CT-DOTS assessment milestones. These can be found in booklets located in each classroom. If you feel like a child is not meeting milestones consistently, please schedule a meeting with the director, assistant director, or curriculum director with proper documentation, to discuss further action.

Teachers should **not** at any point speak to a parent about a referral without first consulting the director, assistant director, or curriculum director. Teachers are **not** qualified to diagnose children with any specific social or learning disability. Specific disabilities should not be mentioned at any point during the referral process unless a formal diagnosis has been made.

DEVELOPMENTAL OR BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

If teachers become concerned about a child's development or behavior, the following steps should be taken to document and reflect in order to support the child in the best way possible.

Procedures for Developmental or Behavioral Concerns.

- Two weeks of observation and documentation of concerning behaviors
- Developmental/ Behavioral Concerns Form is presented to Admin along with documentation.
- Observation with Consultant
- Consultation with Consultant
- Four weeks of implementing techniques and strategies suggested by Consultant
- Two additional weeks of teacher observation and documentation after implementing strategies
 - Has the behavior improved by using suggested strategies?

If the behavior continues to occur after implementing all suggestions and strategies:

- Meeting with the parents and consultants to discuss outside assistance/ support.
- Parents have 30 days from the meeting with Consultants and Admin to arrange outside support for their child.

If parents refuse outside support for their child:

- Admin will give the parents a 30 day termination notice.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The goal of discipline is to help the child develop self-control and move toward appropriate social behavior. Examples of developmentally appropriate methods utilized for resolving conflict are:

- Positive guidance: When disputes arise among children or between a child and staff, the staff will encourage a “talking out” process where the goal is to acknowledge feelings and find solutions using the children’s ideas wherever possible.
- Setting clear limits: Staff will encourage and model positive behavior, positive reinforcement, the use of peer support and clearly defined rules.
- Redirection: A child who may be aggressive or who is disruptive or destructive of other children’s work, may be asked to make an activity choice in another area.

Staff will continuously supervise children during disciplinary actions.

Staff shall not be abusive, neglectful, or use corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances. Examples of abusive practices include, but are not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking, or striking children.

Staff shall never use physical punishment, psychological abuse, or coercion under any circumstances.

No child will be physically restrained unless it is necessary to protect the safety or health of the child or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

CLASSROOM MEALS

All food and snacks provided by Cottontails through our meal program have been approved by Cottontails’ Dietitian. Meal schedules are posted in each classroom and on the lobby bulletin board. All food provided by Cottontails has been prepared and served

using “Safe Serve” regulations, by a safe serve certified staff member. All fruits and vegetables will be washed thoroughly before they are prepared and served to children.

Staff should never serve food without proper handwashing and hand coverage. Each classroom is provided with food serving gloves that must be worn when food is being served.

Staff should never use plastic or Styrofoam containers, plates, bags, or wraps when microwaving children’s food or beverages.

All children (except infants who are not yet on a solid food schedule) should be served a morning snack, lunch, and afternoon snack. Food should only be served at a table while the child is sitting. Food should not be served while children are moving around the classroom, in the gym, or in a stroller.

Cottontails is a **nut free facility**. Teachers need to ensure that any food that children bring from home is **nut free**. Each classroom should have an allergy list posted. Please refer to this when serving **any** food to children.

Staff should not eat in the classroom unless they are sitting with children during mealtime. This is a great time to talk with children about nutrition and to model appropriate eating habits.

Infant teachers should make sure that parents provide a bottle / food schedule. Please check with parents regularly to update this schedule.

Infant parents should provide prepared and labelled bottles each day. These should be stored in the classroom refrigerator. Each child should have a basket in the refrigerator that is labeled with their name.

All bottles (formula and breast milk) should be discarded after being out of the refrigerator for more than **one hour**.

When infants begin eating solids, parents should provide purees or solids. Purees should be taken out of the jar and served in a separate bowl, unless the entire container is going to be eaten.

ILLNESS POLICY

Cottontails believes in open and honest communication between the parents and staff with regards to any health issues of the individual child and health concerns of the group. All staff are properly trained in CPR and Connecticut Child Care First Aid. A

nurse consultant will visit Cottontails weekly to maintain and review all health records; her weekly visits allow Cottontails an opportunity to use her expertise to address any areas of concern, issues of health or safety, and to educate the staff regarding specific needs. In addition, she is available for consultation at any time.

There are times we may ask a child to stay home, or a child will be sent home if already at Cottontails. We ask that you pick up your child within 30 minutes of receiving a message/Call from Cottontails. If there is any reason we cannot contact the parents, we will contact the emergency numbers as listed on the registration form so that a timely departure can be assured for the best interest of the child and group.

Attached will be a list of common childhood illnesses and the criteria Cottontails will require before the child may return. Cottontails reserves the right to change the criteria needed before a child returns, depending on the individual circumstance.

In terms of our sick policy, the wording ‘two full days’ means two full school days. For example:

A child leaves Cottontails at 9AM Monday with a 100.3 fever. The child must remain home for a full day Tuesday and Wednesday. The child may return to Cottontails on Thursday, as long as they have been fever free without medication for at least 48 hours.

The criterion in the outlined policy below remains the same for children who become ill at home on the weekends. If your child has any of the following symptoms or illnesses over the weekend, please contact Cottontails as soon as possible and keep your child home for the required time.

Please remember that the childcare setting serves the needs of children within a group setting. The health of all the children depends upon the cooperation of all parents with regards to the Sick Policy.

<i>Illness / Symptom</i>	<i>Return to Cottontails</i>
Temperature of 100.3 degrees or higher	Child must remain home for two full days before returning. Child must also be fever free (without medication) for 48 hours before returning.
Diarrhea (defined as a child experiencing at least two frequent, loose stools)	Child must remain home for two full days and have one normal bowel movement before returning.

Vomiting	Child must stay home for 48 hours or 2 full school days after throwing up.
Excessive crankiness or irritability.	Child must remain home until symptoms pass.
Head lice or eggs	Child may return once completely lice free.
Chicken Pox	Child must remain out while actively developing blisters and may return after all pox have crusted over (usually 7 days).
Impetigo	Child may return 24 hours after treatment begins.
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)	Child may return 48 hours after treatment begins.
Strep throat / Scarlet Fever/ Ear Infection	Child may return 48 hours after antibiotics have begun and 48 hours after child is fever free.
Coxsackievirus (hand/foot/mouth disease)	Child with signs or symptoms indicative of Coxsackievirus (bumps around mouth, feet, hands) must remain home until all blisters have crusted over.
Flu/Covid	Child must notify Cottontails immediately. Child must also be fever free (without medication) for 48 hours before returning and not interfere with the child's daily routine.
RSV/Croop	Child must be fever free for 48 hours and have clear airways. Coughing and runny nose should be cleared and not interfere with the child's daily routine.

Undiagnosed rash	Child may return once seen by his/her pediatrician with a release.

DIAPERING POLICY

Diapers should be checked every hour and changed every 2 hours. Changing's should be imputed to Procure. This will be checked by the admin frequently. If the Diapering policy is not being met, a meeting to review the policy with administration will be necessary.

The following procedure must be posted in each diapering area, and followed:

1. Staff will put on protective gloves.
2. Child will be placed on disposable changing paper.
3. Soiled diapers will be removed and the child will be cleaned with wipes.
4. Soiled diapers, wipes, and changing paper will be disposed of in a covered, washable, lined waste receptacle which will be removed outside at least daily.
5. Gloves will be removed and a new, clean diaper will be applied.
6. If needed, diaper cream, ointment, or powder will be applied using new gloves.
7. Staff will wash their hands and the child's hands.
8. The diaper area will be washed and disinfected after each use.
9. Changing paper will be replaced
10. Staff will wash their hands again and dry with a paper towel.

CLOTH DIAPERING POLICY

The following procedure must be posted in each diapering area, and followed:

1. Staff and children will wash their hands thoroughly and dry them with paper towels.
2. Staff will put on protective gloves.
3. Child will be placed on disposable changing paper.
4. Soiled diapers will be removed and the child will be cleaned with wipes.
5. Soiled clothing and diaper (un-rinsed) shall be placed in a sealed zip-lock bag and labeled with the child's name.
6. Gloves will be removed and a new, clean diaper will be applied.
7. If needed, diaper cream, ointment, or powder will be applied using new gloves.

8. Staff will wash their hands and the child's hands.
9. The diaper area will be washed and disinfected after each use.
10. Changing paper will be replaced.
11. Staff will wash their hands again and dry with a paper towel.
12. Parents must remove soiled clothing and diapers daily

HANDWASHING POLICY

Staff shall wash their hands:

1. Before and after changing a child's diaper
2. After toileting or assisting a child using the toilet
3. Before eating or handling food, preparing bottles, or feeding children
4. After handling bodily fluids (saliva, nasal secretions, blood, vomit, etc.)
5. After handling soiled items, such as garbage
6. After handling animals/animal cages
7. Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Children shall wash their hands:

1. Before and after each diaper change
2. After toileting
3. Before eating meals or snacks
4. After blowing their nose, coughing, or sneezing
5. Before and after water or sensory play
6. After playground use/outdoor play
7. After handling animals/animal cages
8. Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Proper handwashing technique:

1. Wet the hands and apply a small amount of liquid soap to the hands
2. Rub hands together vigorously with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about two rounds of the "Happy Birthday" song!)
3. Wash all surfaces of the hands, including the backs of the hands, palms, wrists, between fingers, and fingernails
4. Rinse hands thoroughly to remove the soap lather
5. Dry hands with a single use disposable towel
6. Turn the faucet off with the towel.

INFANT SAFE SLEEP POLICY

The following standards must be met when placing infants under twelve months of age to sleep. All staff are to be diligent in their awareness and implementation of infant safe sleep practices for all children under the age of 12 months.

All staff responsible for the supervision of infants will ensure the following:

- Infants shall be physically observed at least every fifteen minutes to assess the infants' breathing, color, temperature, and comfort.
- Infants are placed in a supine (back) position for sleeping in a well-constructed, free standing crib or other piece of equipment designed for infant sleeping and appropriate for the particular child.
- The mattress is snug fitting and covered by a tightly-fitted sheet unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for an alternative sleep position or alternate piece of equipment.
- When infants can easily turn over from the supine to prone position (back to front), they will be put down to sleep on their back but then allowed to adopt whatever position they prefer for sleep.
- No items including, but not limited to, pillows, soft bumpers, toys and blankets, including weighted blankets, weighted sleepers, and weighted swaddles, shall be placed with an infant in a crib or hung over the side of the crib or other piece of equipment designed for sleeping except for a pacifier without attachments unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for its use.
- Bibs and garments with ties or hoods shall be removed from infants that are placed to sleep.
- No toys or objects shall be attached to sleeping or rest equipment.
- No infant shall be put to sleep on a sofa, bed, couch, soft mattress, waterbed, or other soft surface.
- No infant shall be put to sleep or allowed to remain asleep in a child restraint system intended for use in a vehicle, an infant carrier, a swing or any place that is not specifically designed to be an infant bed unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying a medical reason for their use.
- No infant shall be swaddled unless the child has written documentation from a medical provider specifying instructions and a timeframe for swaddling the infant.
- No child under 3 years of age shall have access to teething necklaces, teething bracelets or other jewelry that could present a choking or strangulation hazard.

EQUIPMENT, HEALTH AND SAFETY MAINTENANCE

If any facility equipment (playground equipment, shelving, storage areas, technology, bathroom fixtures, etc.) needs non-emergency maintenance staff should fill out a maintenance form. These forms can be found in the teachers lounge. Maintenance staff will address any concerns as soon as possible.

Any emergency maintenance concerns addressing health and safety are a priority and should be addressed with the director or assistant director of maintenance staff right away.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All new teachers are required to complete a Health and Safety training within three months of hire. All teachers who work directly with children must be certified in pediatric CPR and first aid within 12 months of hire.

All staff members are required to complete 20 hours of professional development each year. At least one of these trainings **must** be on a health and safety topic area. Cottontails will provide employees with numerous training opportunities throughout the year to help staff meet these goals.

Training may include, but is not limited to, early education and child development, licensing and regulations, emergency preparedness, prevention and control of infectious diseases, prevention of sudden infant death syndrome and use of safe sleep practices, administration of medication, prevention and response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions, building and physical premises safety, child maltreatment, prevention of shaken baby syndrome, pediatric first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, nutrition, and programming for children with disabilities or special health care needs.

SCHOOL VISITORS

A visitor is a person who is not employed by Cottontails but provides a service to the center or a child. A visitor **is not** a teacher. Visitors cannot provide direct care to children or have unsupervised access to children.

Cottontails visitors include, but are not limited to: consultants, therapists, volunteers, extra-curricular teachers, potential hires.

Visitors can **never** be left alone with children unsupervised or used to meet ratio. Visitors must **always** be supervised by a Cottontails' staff member who has completed their employee orientation.

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Center Director / Assistant Director

The Center Director is responsible for ensuring the health, safety, and quality of education, for all children within the center's care. The Center Director is directly accountable for overall operational management in accordance with well-established guidelines, including curriculum development, staff and facilities management, legal and budgetary considerations, and long range planning. The Center Director ensures that the needs of the students and the goals of the center are met appropriately.

Key Responsibilities

- Establish quality vision for the center. Manage adherence to quality standards in accordance with the vision and with state and local requirements. Maintain quality effectiveness measurements.
- Maintain student records in accordance with established enrollment procedures and guidelines.
- Maintain communications with parents of current and prospective students through direct conversation, newsletters and parent handbook; implement community outreach activities to maintain and promote positive community relationships.
- Approve menus and food purchases.
- Maintain positive relationships with regulatory agencies; ensure legal and financial compliance.
- Oversee all office functions including payroll, accounts payable and receivable, tuition billing and payment, human resources and personnel management (staff supervision) and purchasing.

- Resolve conflicts (including corrective action when necessary) to ensure a positive experience for everyone.
- Manage budget planning and review.
- Establish illness and emergency procedures; ensure staff is trained appropriately.
- Implement strategic plans and goals in keeping with the mission of the program.
- Maintain a personal professional development plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Additional Knowledge, Skills and Experience Required

- Minimum of 3 years of supervisory experience.
- 5 years of direct professional experience in an early childhood setting.
- High energy.
- Strong oral and written communications skills; technology skills.
- Ability to work well with others (staff, children, and parents) and to foster a team environment.
- A strong understanding of child development.
- Strong finance and budgeting skills.
- Excellent leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills.
- Infant/child CPR and First Aid certification.
- Must clear a full background check.
- Must pass health screening.

Educational Requirements

- Bachelor's Degree or Master's Degree in early childhood education or related field of study with a minimum of 30 credits in ECE.

Lead Teacher

The lead teacher is responsible for developing a cohesive teaching team, coordinating the curriculum, and managing the day-to-day operational activities of the classroom. Teachers must understand children's cognitive, social, emotional and physical development in order to ensure a safe and stimulating classroom environment, where children are actively engaged and encouraged to succeed. The lead teacher must be skilled in communicating with both children and adults in order to meet the needs of the children, effectively guide teacher assistants, and resolve parental concerns.

This position reports to the Director and Assistant Director

Key Responsibilities

- Coordinate and implement educational curriculum by developing classroom activities based on developmentally appropriate practices and early learning standards.
- Lead by example; encourage teaching team success through modeling and coaching.
- Plan individual and group age-appropriate activities to actively engage children and encourage social, cognitive and emotional growth.
- Maintain frequent communications with parents through informal discussions, progress reports, and parent-teacher conferences.
- Ensure all center policies and state regulations are met.
- Ensure a healthy classroom environment – including maintaining appropriate hygiene and cleanliness standards and safety and security of children.
- Supervise teacher assistants, floaters, and classroom volunteers to ensure they are following planned activities, hygiene and safety standards.
- Maintain accurate records, forms and files.
- Maintain a personal professional development plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Additional Knowledge, Skills and Experience Required

- Minimum of 2 years of professional child care experience.
- Strong oral and written communication skills and basic computer skills.
- High energy and the ability to work well with others (staff, children, and parents) and to foster a team environment.
- A strong understanding of child development.
- Excellent leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills.
- Infant/child CPR and First Aid certification.
- Must clear a full background check and must pass health screening.

Assistant Teacher / Floater

The assistant teacher / floater supports the lead teachers by helping to create a caring and safe environment for the children and assisting in activities to improve the overall care and quality of education. S/he must be able to communicate, listen and work well with others in a team environment. Assisting the staff in implementing a quality educational program and in developing positive relationships with the children and their parents, the Teacher Assistant / floater observes and documents children's interest and progress, and relays that information back to parents and staff. Teacher assistants / floaters are responsible for implementing developmentally appropriate activities based on children's interests and needs under the direction of the lead teacher and the Director.

This position reports to the lead teacher.

Key Responsibilities

- Assist in the implementation of curricula activities and encourage participation by children.
- Actively engage in activities; manage cleanliness, maintenance, and availability of classroom materials.

- Maintain frequent communications with parents through informal discussions and progress reports.
- Encourage self-help and good hygiene through behavior modeling.
- Follow all center policies and state regulations.
- Maintain a personal professional development plan to ensure continuous quality improvement.

Additional Knowledge, Skills and Experience Required

- Minimum of 1-2 years of professional child care experience.
- High energy.
- Ability to work well with others.
- Strong oral and written communication skills and basic computer skills.
- An understanding of child development.
- Excellent leadership, organizational, and interpersonal skills.
- Infant/child CPR and First Aid certification.
- Must clear full background check and must pass health screening.

Child Safety and Mandatory Reporting Policy

Mandatory Reporting of Abuse or Neglect

All Cottontails staff are *mandated reporters* and are required to immediately report any suspicion, disclosure, or observation, of child abuse or neglect to a Cottontails administrator. Delays in reporting are not permitted under any circumstances. The administrator will ensure that the appropriate steps are taken in accordance with state laws and licensing regulations.

Failure to report concerns may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination, and may carry legal consequences under mandated reporter laws.

Safe Distance from Heating and Cooling Devices

To ensure the safety of all children, no child may come within 1 foot of any heating or cooling device, including but not limited to: space heaters, radiators, air conditioning units, vents, or fans. Staff are responsible for maintaining appropriate boundaries and supervision at all times to prevent accidental injury or burns.

This policy must be reviewed during staff orientation and acknowledged annually.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT POLICY

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center has a responsibility to prevent child abuse and neglect of children enrolled in the program.

Abuse, as per the Conn. Gen. Stats. § 46b-120(7) (2017); Operational Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect, DCF Policy Manual § 34-2-7, will be defined as:

“A child or youth may be found ‘abused’ who (A) has been inflicted with physical injury or injuries other than by accidental means, (B) has injuries that are at variance with the history given of them, or (C) is in a condition that is the result of maltreatment, including, but not limited to, malnutrition, sexual molestation or exploitation, deprivation of necessities, emotional maltreatment or cruel punishment.”

Neglect, as per the Conn. Gen. Stats. § 46b-120(7) (2017); Operational Definitions of Child Abuse and Neglect, DCF Policy Manual § 34-2-7, will be defined as:

“A child or youth may be found ‘neglected’ who, for reasons other than being impoverished, (A) has been abandoned, (B) is being denied proper care and attention, physically, educationally, emotionally or morally, or (C) is being permitted to live under conditions, circumstances or associations injurious to the well-being of the child or youth.”

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center is required by law to report suspicions of child abuse or neglect concerning any child enrolled in the program. Staff members are protected by law from retaliation or discrimination as a result of reporting abuse or neglect. If any staff member suspects any form of abuse or neglect, they are responsible to call DCF at the DCF Care-line number: 1-800-842-2288.

All staff members will be required to complete training in (at a minimum) the facility's abuse and neglect policy, prevention and detection of child abuse and neglect, and reporting requirements as a mandated reporter.

The director is responsible for informing parents/guardians, making an oral report to DCF within 12 hours, with the staff member or witness, and assuring that a written report is sent within 48 hours. Children who need medical care are taken to Stamford Hospital or their pediatrician by a staff member.

Any suspected child abuse or neglect will be documented, and records will be maintained.

Cottontail's Childcare and Learning Center has a zero-tolerance policy for abuse and neglect of children. Any staff member who is accused of such is immediately removed from the facility and is subject to an investigation by DCF

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Cottontails Childcare and Learning Center understands that our line of work can be stressful. We encourage all employees to reach out to community mental health resources if they are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or depressed. Below is a list of local community health resources. Teachers can also visit 211.org or call 2-1-1 for a complete list of mental health resources in the community.

- Stamford Health System Outpatient & Community Services
 - Dubois Center
1351 Washington Blvd. Stamford, CT
(203) 388-1600
 - Optimus Behavioral Health
1351 Washington Blvd. Stamford, CT
(203) 621-3754
 - Community Health Center
141 Franklin St. Stamford, CT
(203) 969-0802
- Counseling and Mental Health Evaluations
 - Center for Hope
590 Post Rd. Darien, CT
(203) 655-0547
 - Connecticut Counseling Center
20 North Main St. Norwalk, CT
(203) 838-6508

Employee Contract

Employee Name: _____

Date: _____

Position (circle one): Lead Teacher

Assistant Teacher

Floater

Starting Wage: _____

Hours: _____

Employee hours are subject to change at any time to meet the needs of the center.

Allotted Personal and Sick Time for 2025:

Personal Time (# of days): _____ Sick Time (# of days): _____

Any overtime must be approved by an Administrator. If overtime is not approved, it will not be granted.

To be considered a full-time employee at Cottontails, you must work a minimum of 35 hours per week. If your contract states you are working less than 35 hours per week, you will be considered a part-time employee and **not** be eligible for the same benefits as full-time employees.

All Cottontails employees will be paid bi-weekly.

Employee Responsibilities:

I agree that in addition to these policies and those outlined in the Employee Handbook, the following is also expected:

- To arrive ready to work at my scheduled time and be prepared to stay until my shift is over.
- Assist with infant feedings and diaper changes
- Prepare meals as directed
- Assist with clean up duties and proper sanitation.

- Keep all client information confidential.
- Wear child friendly clothing and accessories.
- Refrain from personal communications.

I agree to report any accidents/incidents to the operator immediately for appropriate documentation.

I agree to report any actual or suspected child abuse or neglect, or the imminent risk of serious harm to any child to the Department of Children and Families as a mandated reporter.

I will not allow anyone to engage in any sexual activity with the day care children while in attendance at Cottontails.

I will not or allow abusive, neglectful, physical, corporal, humiliating or frightening treatment or punishment, and shall not tie or bind children and shall not physically restrain children except for the protection and safety of the child or others, using least restrictive methods, as appropriate.

I will manage the child's behavior using techniques based on developmentally appropriate practice, including positive guidance, redirection and setting clear limits that encourage children to develop self-control, self-discipline and positive self-esteem.

If I terminate employment with Cottontails and begin working at another child day care service or open a child day care service within one (1) year of my last day of employment with Cottontails, I will be required to reimburse the operator for all professional development paid for on my behalf. If I open my own child day care service after termination of employment with Cottontails, I agree not to enroll any client of Cottontails for a period of one (1) year without prior approval of the operator.

I agree to engage in "professional development" in childcare as defined in CT law. Professional development is required for one (1) percent of the total annual hours worked. Such education may include, but is not limited to, early childhood education and child development, licensing and regulations, health issues, nutrition, first aid, social services, child abuse laws and programming for children with disabilities or special health care needs.

I agree to read in full the entire Cottontails Parent Handbook and Cottontails Employee Handbook before beginning employment at Cottontails. I agree to comply with all policies and procedures of Cottontails Childcare & Learning Center outlined in both handbooks.

By signing below, you confirm to have read the Cottontails Employee Contract and Cottontails Employee Handbook in their entirety and agree to comply with all policies and procedures.

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Operator Signature _____ Date _____